

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PROF. EUGENE NWADIALOR'S LEADERSHIP MODEL OF *ONYE AGHANA NWANNE YA*: THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROVIDING DIRECTION AND MOTIVATING PEOPLE IN TANSIAN UNIVERSITY

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#### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Professor Nwadiakor Eugene as the Vice Chancellor of Tansian University opened a new page in the historical evolution of the young institution. It marked the beginning of several firsts and the advancement and expansion of several dimensions of the Institution already initiated by previous administrations. These few years, with the benefit of hindsight, can be described as the golden age of the times of Tansian University, and this is possible given the leadership paradigm of Prof. Nwadiakor, which this chapter titles in Igbo language as *Onyeaghananwanneyaleadership model*. *It is an inclusive leadership paradigm which means No one should leave his brother/sister behind.*

This chapter in honour of the Vice Chancellor focuses on the leadership model of Prof. Nwadiakor, which this chapter identifies as a heritage, and thus intends to articulate for the nourishment of the next generation. It is, therefore, not a song in praise of a hero, even though he is; it is not the tale of a great man who has handled

power in a humane manner, even though he did; it is not the story of the proverbial tall man whose shoulders became the stepping stone of so many to greatness, even though his shoulder is. This is the story of a distinguished scholar whose integrity has not been corrupted by power, and whose leadership model deserves an attention especially in our times of leadership casualties.

### **THE PHILOSOPHICAL CANONS OF PROF. NWADIALOR'S LEADERSHIP MODEL**

There are three philosophical canons on which the leadership model of Prof. Nwadiakor seats. These canons spring from his historical and cultural background as an Igbo.

- a. The first is the Igbo Social Construction of Reality which understands the life of a human person as circumscribed within the *uwa* (the world).<sup>1</sup> In the contention of Oguejiofor “This unitary conception of reality pervades the Igbo world in a remarkable way”.<sup>2</sup> The Igbo, therefore, does not see himself or herself as an individual without noticing immediately the need for the other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. A. Kanu, The concept of life and person in African anthropology. In E. Ezenweke and I. A. Kanu (Eds.). *Issues in African traditional religion and philosophy* (pp. 61-71). Nigeria: Augustinian, 2012

<sup>2</sup>J. O. Oguejiofor, *In praise of African Philosophy*. 14<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture delivered on 28<sup>th</sup> January at the NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, 2010

<sup>3</sup>I. A. Kanu, Towards an Igbo Christology. In E. Ezenweke and I. A. Kanu (Eds.). *Issues in African traditional religion and philosophy* (pp. 75-98). Nigeria: Augustinian, 2012

**a. Thesecond is the Igbo Resilient world,in which one must struggle and work hard right from birth.**

Circumscribed to the *uwa*(world), the human person is faced by difficulties and frustrations. This makes survival in a tolerable way a major concern for the Igbo, and it to a large extent determines the Igbo attitude to life. To face the struggles of life, the Igbo generate a corporate front, partnering with the other to avoid being overwhelmed.

b. The third is the Igbo philosophy of universal purposefulness of existence, often expressed in phrases such as: *ekereoru eke* (everyone has his own role to play). In this sense, the relevance of the leader is based on the people whom he or she is leading; if there are no people, there can't be a leader, and the ability of the people who constitute the state to achieve their national goal, is dependent on the ingenuity of the leader. So the leader needs the led as much as the led needs the leader. This springs from the understanding that every reality has its purpose of existence.<sup>4</sup>

These three philosophical canons are at the base of Prof. Nwadiolor's *Onye Aghana Nwanneya* model of leadership.

## **THE DIMENSIONS OF PROF. NWADIALOR'S LEADERSHIP MODEL**

A cursory glance at the leadership model of Prof. Nwadiolor, specific and classic dimensions are observable, and these dimensions include:

**a. Listening Leader**

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of listening in leadership, which is an approach that many leaders have failed in. He refers to the approach of listening as the approach of Jesus who listened to the little children even at a time when what they were

saying might not have made sense to the apostles who wanted to send them away. The problem with many leaders is that instead of listening to people attentively, “all too often, there is a tendency to provide prepackaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge”.<sup>5</sup> This is a virtue through which Prof. Nwadiakor has distinguished himself. He allows people to make their contributions, indicating his appreciation of new sensitivities and openness new questions.

### **b. Empathizing Leader**

The leader is like a mother who watches over and cares for her children. A mother weeps when her children are hurt. She weeps as though it was her who is hurt. Leaders, therefore, must never fail to weep before these tragedies of their people and our time. Pope Francis teaches that “anyone incapable of tears cannot be a mother”;<sup>6</sup> in the same way, anyone who cannot weep cannot be a leader. Prof. Nwadiakor is not the kind of leader who judges the situations of others from the ivory tower of his reasonable comfort. He feels with others what they feel, and approaches the situations of others from the context of its peculiarity.

### **c. Sensitive Leader**

There are three distinct but complementary levels of sensitivity that is observable in Prof. Eugene's leadership style. The *first kind of sensitivity* is directed to *the individual*. This level of sensitivity concerns listening to someone who is sharing his very self in what he says. A sign of this willingness to listen is the time we are ready to spare for others. More than the amount of time we spend, it is about making others

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<sup>4</sup>I. A. Kanu, (2017). Igwebuikwe as an Igbo-African Philosophy of Inclusive Leadership, p. 166

<sup>5</sup>*Final Document of the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 8. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20181027\\_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html).

<sup>6</sup>Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019, no.75

feel that my time is their time, that they have all the time they need to say everything they want.<sup>7</sup> The *second kind of sensitivity* is marked by *discernment*. This level of sensitivity is when we ask ourselves what is it that the other person is trying to tell me, what they want me to realize is happening in their lives. Asking such questions helps me appreciate their thinking and the effects it has on their emotions.<sup>8</sup> The *third kind of sensitivity* is the ability to *perceive what is driving* the other person. This calls for a deeper kind of listening, one able to discern the direction in which that person truly wants to move. Apart from what they are feeling or thinking right now, and whatever has happened up to this point in their lives, the real issue is what they would like to be.<sup>9</sup>

#### **a. Servant Leader**

Prof. Nwadiakor is one among the very few who make no distinction between leadership and service. For him, to lead is to serve and to serve is to lead. He strongly believes that a balanced leadership must begin from the desire to serve from which a person makes a conscious effort to lead. It is on the basis of this that he has been able to support the greater good of the body that he leads even if it means temporarily sacrificing himself and his ideas. He knows that meeting the needs of others is what allows the group to reach its full potential.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing places Prof. Nwadiakor within the parameters of leaders who place the good of the led over their self-interest. This is the leadership that promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, and the promotion shared power. He has shown that leadership is not a position, rather, it is about how well we work together; the great leader is the one who has been able to connect to the different dimensions of society, not minding the depth of its diversity. This is what makes the deciding difference.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Post-Snodal Apostolic Exhortation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019, no.292

<sup>8</sup>Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Post-Snodal Apostolic Exhortation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019, no.293

<sup>9</sup>Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Post-Snodal Apostolic Exhortation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019, no.294

<sup>10</sup>I. A. Kanu, *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Philosophy of Inclusive Leadership*, 2017, p. 167

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*Pope Francis, Final Document of the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 8.*  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20181027\\_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html).

*Pope Francis, Letter to the People of God (20 August 2018), 2: L'Osservatore Romano, 21-21 August 2018, 7.*