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## LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION AS CATALYST FOR POLITICAL CHANGE IN NIGERIAN

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria as a multi-cultural society is faced with nefarious problems bordering on violent conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment and bad governance among others. The report card is the absence of Leadership. Most of our leaders are self-serving. This has resulted to sociopolitical and economic failure on the polity. It is a source of concern on the part of theoreticians, policymakers and academics. The paper submits that Nigeria needs a transformation leadership which will motivate and mobilize her citizenry in the process of nation building. Transformed leaders affect citizens' values and beliefs and influence their behavior in this regard. Its source of data is essential secondary involving books, journals; articles on the subject matter under review. Data sourced were qualitatively analyzed using descriptive method.

**Keywords:** Change; Leadership; Nigeria; Political; Transformation

### **Introduction**

Crisis is responsible for Nigeria underdevelopment and not lack of resources; (because Nigeria is the most endowed country in Africa). However, there is lack of authentic leadership. This lack is expressed in three fundamental areas: lack of servant leaders, lack of impeccable leaders; and massive manifestation of mediocrity. In our society there is the clarion call for the evolving of servant leaders who are upright and effective. The issue of quality services and products is a far cry for Nigeria. Biblical record shows that David governed his people with integrity of heart and with skillfulness of hand (Psalm 78:72). These two qualities are the hallmark of good leadership. Jim Collins, in defining successful leaders who lead Good to Great organizations, observes that these kinds of people are not "high profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities; the good to-great leaders seem to have come mars (meaning they are not like the usual leaders you and I know of today). They are self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy-these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (Collins, 2001). Achebe (1983), started that the trouble



with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. He went further to explain that there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigeria character and that the Nigeria problem is the inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility to the challenge of personal example which are the hall mark of true leadership.

Olusanya (2002) added that Nigeria has unfortunately, expressed a huge difficulty of good governance and that this was due to the existence of an unpatriotic and morally bankrupt political class which has no vision and no conscience. He went further to say that its god is mammon; so much so that its consuming passion is the satisfaction of its own inordinate greed and ambition. All these statements are a sort of confirmation that leadership at both political and organizational level in Nigeria are performing below expectation and are therefore responsible for the failures and the poor rate of growth in the country, as well as the high rate of poverty. In Utomi view (2011), the problem of Nigeria stems from the decline of our institutions, collapse of our culture and the patrimonial state and goal displacement on the part of leaders. He observes with regret that there is a disconnection between the leaders and the people they lead. Nigerian leaders are connected to those godfathers who put them in the office and not the electorate. In some Caribbean nations like Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago, the leaders knew that they lacked human capital to build great economies and began to look outside their countries to hire the required manpower. In Trinidad the police chief is from Canada while the Auditor General of the state is a Nigerian from Imo state. Similarly the founding president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama hired a Nigerian jurist at a time when his country had not produced great jurists. Conscientiously he developed the human capital of his country and established a competent, value driven civil service.

The difference between these leaders and the leaders of the Nigerian state is in their capacity to envision (create in their mind's eyes) the future of their people, pass it through rigorous thoughts to bring it to manageable objectives which the people can understand and by into. The vision is thereafter driven with passion and commensurate political will. Why is our national development effort since independence unable, till date, to support a decent life and a promising future? Why are all the symbols of promised economic growth suddenly stunted and even in reverse gear? Have we truly given thought and sufficient reflection to the meaning and scope of development and leadership? The truth must be told here. Development is certainly much more than crunching GDP figures, drilling oil, erecting skyscrapers or even blindly accepting the western economic theories of privatization, stabilization and liberalization. Development is strictly about the transformation of society. It is not just about slogans, they have to be coded in the values of direction. Transformation must be about what kind of society we seek to build, and for what goals and purposes. This is the only way that transformation acquires its true meaning, and that is why development experts insist that transformation is also a process mechanism that affects not only what we do, but how we do it. At the end of the day therefore, an accurate conception about Nigerian development is essentially about quality of life issues; issues such as poverty eradication; peace and security, true and broad health care, and education beyond basic literacy. Yet it is also about economic security, the creation of safety nets, a democratic, equitable, and sustainable development, but this paper examines leadership transformation as a catalyst for political change in Nigeria. First, it looks at the conceptual clarification of the concept



leadership transformation; secondly, the dilemma with Nigeria. Finally concludes the paper.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Transformation is a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of a person, an organization or a society, such that the world is seen in new ways and new actions and results become possible that were impossible prior to the transformation (UNDP-LDP, cited by Asobie 2012). It is a mandate for a radical, structural and fundamental re arrangement and re-ordering of the building blocks of the nation. It portends a fundamental re appraisal of the basic assumptions that underlie our reforms and developmental efforts, that will and should alter the essence and substance of our national life. The expectation of most Nigerians is for development blueprint which will transform the economy, reinvent the politics of our nation, secure the polity, care for the underprivileged, and provide responsible and leadership transformation (UNDP-LDP, cited by Asobie 2012). Transformational leadership refers to the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve results greater than originally contemplated. These leaders create the vision and are able to carry people along in the realization of the vision. Transformational leaders fundamentally alter the parameter of the status quo through providing a vision for the future and then investing the time and effort in having others share that vision. Through sharing the vision, they clarify the present, explain how the past has influenced the present, and promote a view of the future. They are good listeners, and are generally consistent, persistent and focused in order both to empower others and maintain momentum.

### **Herbert (2012:2) captures the point most poignantly:**

With transformational leadership, a land locked country can create coastal waters and become powerful states like Israel with transformational leadership, Japan, a country devastated by world war Two and devoid of natural resources became a leading industrialized nation. With transformational leadership a country can convert its desert into an oasis, like United Arab Emirate that is now a world class tourist's destination and international financial centre. With transformational leadership, countries can transits from third world to first within 20 to 30 years, like Singapore under Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. With transformation leadership ,a country can transform from a backwater, commodity exporting country to become one of Asia Tiger's economies, like Malaysia under prime Minister Mahathir Bin Mohamad.

In the affairs of men, leadership, above all else, holds the greatest potential for being the source and driving spirit of any society, or potential as the rallying point of the people's aspirations. Laws for the governing of the society issue from the leadership and these laws, when they are fair and reasonable must be obeyed, regulate social life, economic life, political life, religious life and general living. Whatever the leaders do, in discharge of their responsibilities as leaders, have impact on the society. Thus, the importance of leadership, a good leader will emphasize the welfare of the people. By so doing, he will create a conducive atmosphere for growth and development. He will create conditions for the material and psychic welfare of the people. Psychic welfare refers to the rest of mind, the feeling of personal safety, and the feeling of relevance



which are inherent in an atmosphere of fairness and justice. A leader who is consumed by a craving for the greatness of his country and for the psychic and physical wellbeing of his people may get the people to do what is good for them and what he wants. That is the hall mark of strong leadership.

One of the most enduring challenges for leadership in Africa remains the example of Late Dr Nelson Mandela, a man fired by the zeal for his father land. At great personal risk, he put his life on the line to salvage his people from bondage to colonialism, apartheid, poverty and want. He paid a great price—nearly thirty years in the gulag, dehumanized, brutalized, scandalized and thoroughly traumatized with great patience, candour and humility, he paid his dues. The day came that he swept to victory on a groundswell of the people's vote. He despised last citizen soon became the first citizen. He assumed power as President of the republic of South Africa without any bitterness, without any hint of vindictiveness. He became the glue that held his country together, a symbol that inspired young and old to great nobility of character and personality such was his popularity that if he wanted to be president for life, it was easily within his grasp. But no, he declined a second term in office. He would rather prefer the younger ones were given the opportunity to grow; he paid the price, but held out the prize to his countrymen. When he was the anvil, he bore a tremendous lot; but when he became the hammer, he was most reluctant to strike. When Nigerian produces a Mandela, our national hurts and divisions will be healed.

#### **Mandela eight lessons of leadership**

- Courage is not the absence of fear- it is inspiring others to move beyond it. He learned as a leader to pretend to be fearless, and through the act, inspire others. He knew that he was a model for others, and that give him the strength to triumph over his own fear.
- Lead from the front – but do not leave your base behind. He had a vision and conviction to chart a new course for his people, but he also knew that his support base was his strength. He got the people to buy into the vision and be part of the new; he took them along at each turn.
- Lead from the back-and let others believe they are in front. In herding cattle as a boy, he learnt that cattle can only be led from behind .he developed quite early the need to form consensus as a leader. "The trick of leadership is allowing you to be led too. It is wise to persuade people to do things and make them think it was their own idea".
- Know your enemy- and learn about his favourite sport. The leader must understand the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy and formulate tactics according. Whether fighting with the enemy, the leader's destiny is tied to the enemy's.
- Keep your friends close- and your rivals closer. Keeping a wide circle of acquaintances is a means of neutralizing those that cannot be trusted, with charm. Embracing rivals is a way of controlling them; they are more dangerous on their own than within the leader's circle of influence.
- Appearances matter –and remember to smile. Symbols matter as much as substance; and often perception is more powerful than reality. A smile can be all



### *Leadership Transformation as Catalyst for Political Change in Nigerian*

the message friends and rivals need. For Mandela, white South Africans found in his smile, an absence of bitterness; and for the Blacks, it was a symbol of his sure triumph.

- Nothing is black or white. Life is never either for Decisions are complex, and there are always competing factors. Nothing is ever straightforward as it appears. A leader should be comfortable with contradictions, so long as he is pragmatic enough to keep the goal in sight.
- Quitting is leading too. Knowing how and when to abandon a failed idea, task or relationship could be the most difficult challenges for a leader. But it is the duty of the leader to set the course, not to steer the ship. And leaders lead as much by what they choose not to do what they do (Stengel, 2008:23-28).

Transformational leadership was the lightning rod for the metamorphoses of a poor village cattle boy and a jail –bird into an international statesman; the world's Number 1 citizen and a frontline opinion and character moulder. That is the story of the man Late Dr Nelson Mandela, raised from obscurity and irrelevance to become the face of Africa, his ever ready winsome smile the confidence assurance of a continent's ultimate triumph over the forces of hate, greed, bigotry and mindless violence. Mandela became an oracle, not because he went to jail not because he fought apartheid, but because he demonstrated leadership. Leadership moves a nation from the fringes of international relevance from the dungeons of the third world to the centre stage of emerging medium power and industrial and economic democracy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century .That is the story of Late Lee Kwan Yew. He over saw the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965 and its subsequent transformation from a relatively underdeveloped colonial outpost with no natural resources into a "First World" Asian Tiger. He has remained one of the most influential political figures in South –East Asia. Nigeria requires a leader that will articulate a vision that will drive the nation's transformation process-a leader who will dream dreams and mobilize fellow Nigerians to buy into that dream .Such leaders inspire a clear mutual vision for the nation, a clear mission that all citizens will commit themselves to .This is what Warren Bennis calls the *management of attention*.

Leadership is not everything: followership counts! But he gets better following who leads better. Leading better by examples, consistent behavior and courageous decisions, all anchored on blind fairness and justice, a good leader, who is as such seen through like a transparency by his people, gets followed and his examples are copied by his lieutenants and the entire populace. But followership counts: indeed Nigerians can choose between poverty and wealth, between independence of families in terms of economic self-sufficiency and begging; between freedom and bondage, between Nigeria as a superpower and Nigeria as a contradiction of a rich country. Nigerians can choose between switching on the lights and remaining in darkness. Nigerians can choose between heavy money bags and principled visionary leaders who will be fair to all concerned, and get committed to actualize the abiding reason for one sustainable Nigeria: namely, the need to raise the respect and dignity of Nigerian and African people in world Affairs.

Nigeria's transformational leader must be able to build virile teams that will work



with him to transform the polity-not political lightweights nominated by godfathers being rewarded for political patronage. Leaders are not just managers or supervisors; they are team leaders. And a team is more than just a group. A team is a group of people with a high degree of interdependence gear towards the achievement of a shared goal for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Belbin (2003) identifies nine team roles vital to effective leadership:

The plant-These are the original thinkers who generate new ideas, offer solutions to problems, and think in radically different and imaginative ways;

The Resource investigator -these are the creative icons that are prepared to "run with the vision". They are popular extroverts who get things going;

The coordinator -They are highly disciplined and controlled individuals, who have the capacity to focus on objectives and truly unify the team.

The Shaper -They love a good challenge and are achievement oriented-They always go for great and good results;

The monitor Evaluator-These are the analysis -claim, detached objective thinkers, who balance and weigh the various options;

The team worker-This is the diplomat-the good team player, always supportive and cooperative, and wants what is best for the team.

The implementer-This is the expert with great organizational skills with a lot of common sense, who just wants to get the job done;

The completer-These ones are painstakingly conscientious, able to check details and always willing to tidy up after others;

The Specialist -This is the professional with drive and dedication, possessing specialized skill (cited by Templar, 2005).

The leader must satisfy indispensable conditions: he must be trustworthy and be able to communicate his vision. Trust and confidence in a leader is the single most reliable predictor of employee satisfaction in an organization. And effective communication requires a successful application of analogy, metaphor and vivid illustration as well as emotions, trust optimism and hope so the vision can secure the attention of subordinates. Trust is the combination of competencies, constancy, caring, fairness, candour and authenticity at the core organizational relationships that hold together the entire entity. Trust is a balance between ambition, competence and integrity. Predictability makes it possible to anticipate what will happen if certain vacations are undertaken. It is the weakest form of trust. Then there is Reliability, where employees fairly assume that employers will follow through with their promises. This is a stronger form of trust.

Finally there is mutuality, a state where employers and employees share expectations of each other, and so feel comfortable in taking actions with limited communication. This is the strongest form of trust. Nigerians are yet to see a leader they trust, who will not lie to them, and who will model the best virtues that we desire to see in ourselves and our children.

The leader is responsible for the major determinants of how to act within an organization:

**Culture and climate:** While culture is the deeply rooted nature of the organization resulting from long held formal and informal systems, rules, traditions and customs,



climate is a short –term phenomenon created by the individual and shared perceptions and attitudes of organizational members. Organizational climate is directly related to the leadership and management style of the leader, based on the values, skills attributes and actions as well as the priorities of the leader. The character of the leader is the single most important factor that impacts the climate of his organization. So what culture and climate have Nigerian leaders fostered within the Nigerian nation? How have they set the agenda for productivity reward and incentive schemes, and standard of performance? We need a leadership that makes people do the will of the visionary leader as if they were following their own will. This is the leadership which makes very intelligent and independent – minded followers to follow the leader like robots while the leader accepts himself as a robot in the hands of God. Followership which comes from the leader with the fear of God and respect for man is the A.B.C of wisdom, this leadership generates good leadership. These are the two sides of the buttocks robbing on each other and equilibrating the poise of the social body.

The immediate task of political leadership in Nigeria is restoration of hope. To pull our people out of the pit in which they have found themselves. To rescue the people from the ravages of the ruling clique. The strategic goals, objectives must be to actualize the reasonable expectations, hope which the situation of Nigeria clearly justifies. The challenges before political leadership in Nigeria are enormous, serious, urgent and important. A political leader of Nigeria has work to do. He will need vision, organizing ability, wisdom, administrative skills and more. But not everybody can possess all these in abundance .Some of these attributes can be acquired by a leader through wise recruitment and effective use of talents in other persons. What cannot be loaned or hired are those correct and sound principles of personnel character which generate good thoughts and right actions. It is a common Nigeria fallacy that politics is the sphere of the filthy. The fact is that we cannot be dirty in politics and be acceptable in the sight of God .There is no domain in human life from which God can be excluded. If there were to be any, certainly politics, which deals with the affairs of man, God's highest creation, cannot qualify.

Without doubt, Nigeria's need for the moment, the heart –cry of the citizenry is for a transformational leader who:

- Is genuinely interested in serving rather being served;
- Has the ability to create the vision, inspire and motivate followers and through consistent, persistent and focused guidance, empower individuals to achieve results greater than they ever imagined;
- Models what he preaches, and whose claim to leadership rests on the force of his convictions, the elegance and style of his performance on the job, and the integrity of his life and practice.
- Unites rather divide us, ennobles rather demean us, truly transforms rather than deform us-who will diligently search out and celebrate subordinates better than himself.



## **The Dilemma with Nigeria**

Nigeria is blessed with natural, mineral, and human resources. Our lands are so fertile that if you plant a finger a human being can grow. Our long suffering shock – absorbing people are warm, friendly and peace loving. Hurricane ‘Ivan’ missed our hemisphere altogether in its rampaging rage, even blasting Jamaica which had been hurricane free for 40 years. ‘Ivan’ handed over the relay baton to ‘Jeanne’, whose contributions thus far include 1000 dead, over 1000 missing, in Haiti alone. Most Nigerians cannot conceptually spell ‘hurricane’, ‘typhoon’, ‘earthquake’, ‘volcanic eruption’, etc. The giant of Africa is thus proving the point that “Possessing mere potentials seems to be inadequate for transformation to greatness. Good leadership is critical as it provides the required governance that can exploit all the potentials for the good of the citizenry” (Obi 2009). The true test of “good governance” is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key question is: *are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing the right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, quality education, air justice and personal security?* (Human Rights, 2007). The point must also be made that the mismanagement of our country has led to the extinction of institutions of national significance and pride such as Nigerian Airways, National Shipping Lines, Steel Rolling Mills, car assembly plants and even the national soccer team, the Super Eagles, which used to be the symbol of the nation’s collective unity and pride, that some Nigerians now refer to as Super Chickens. Poor managers that we are, we have mismanaged our natural resources, particularly the oil that is the cash cow of the national economy today, to the extent that most observers and commentators of the industry now believe oil is a curse on Nigeria.

It translates to reality of kids who cannot be put in schools who will never learn to read, because there are no classrooms; mothers who die in childbirth because the money for maternity care never made it to hospitals; tens of thousands who died because there are no drugs or vaccines in hospitals; no roads to move produce from farms to markets or enable a thriving economy; no jobs for young school graduates or even ordinary workers and no security for anyone because the money has been stolen and snipped off. Millions of young Nigerians are unemployed. Graduate unemployment has remained a problem in the Country. Daily, unemployed Nigerians roam the streets searching for the elusive white and blue collar jobs. It seems that the government of the day has not been able to tackle the problem of unemployment. The problem of insecurity threatening to tear Nigeria apart may not be unconnected with the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Armed robbers do storm banks in broad daylight to carter away money. Kidnappers seize wealthy people at will and will not release them until they collected huge ransom payments that run into millions of naira. Our health sector is distorted. Well-heeled Nigerians seek medical treatment for minor ailments outside Nigeria. This stalls national development. All these criticisms seem to be pointy pictures of a situation of failures and despair due to lack of trust and poor leadership. The followers or subordinates seem to have no confidence in the leadership and there seems to be no trust. Peters and waterman (1982) stated that human beings are wise enough to distrust words that in any way mismatch our deeds.

God has been so kind to Nigeria, but have Nigerians been kind to Nigeria? Let



us for a moment examine our scorecard within a strategic time-frame, for meaningful scrutiny. To put issues in proper perspective, it is appropriate to first examine our post-colonial experience.

This is deliberate, for benchmarking best practice, and we need to appreciate where we are going. You, as living witnesses, can then assess performance from 1999 to date. Why did post- independence Nigeria become a country spinning on its head, declining-

- Nigeria remains one of the most corrupt nations in the world, according to the latest report by Transparency International. In the group's Corruption Perceptions Index 2013, Nigeria ranked 144th, out of 177 nations in the world, scoring 25 points out of a possible 100 points. Nigeria's corruption performance this year was worse than last year's, when it scored 27 points. This year, Nigeria shared the podium of infamy with crisis-torn Central African Republic and neighbour, Cameroon.
- Nigeria's Human Development index at 0.459 lags behind the sub Saharan Africa average of 0.463 and the world average of 0.682. The inequity adjusted HDI is even further disappointing at 0.278. The low point in the global scale is 0.456. The Multi -Dimensional poverty index (MPI) shows that 54.1% of the population lives in poverty, with 57.3% in intense deprivation (HDI, 2011). The Mo Foundation also instituted an annual prize for good leadership in Africa.
- The 2011 Ibrahim Index of African Governance released by the MO Ibrahim Foundation, ranked Nigeria 41<sup>st</sup> out of 53 African Countries studied. The Index seeks "to provide a robust, comprehensive and quantifiable tool for civil society and citizens to hold, comprehensive and quantifiable tool for civil society and citizens to hold governments to account, to stimulate debate on governance and to provide a framework to assess governance quality in Africa" (Obi,2009). The Index ranks good governance in four major areas: Safety and Rule of Law, Participation and Human Rights, Sustainable Economic Opportunity, and Human Development. Some of the scores proved quite interesting: Cape Verde scored 78.0, Ghana 66.0 Sao Tome 60.2, and Nigeria 46.5 In 2007, the prize was won by Joaquim Alberto Chissano, former president of Mozambique. In 2008, Festus Gontebanye Mogae of Botswana received the prize .The question remains: When and which Nigerian leader will ever receive such prize?
- The nation's Misery Index is on a persistent rise. Indeed, a Preston curve on income distribution in the world indicates that Nigeria is one of the three poorest nations of the world, where more than 80% of the population earn less than \$1 per day (Egwu, 2007).

In a country almost totally devoid of natural disaster, has poor leadership not been the main natural disaster? You are the judge .What about the followership? What about the cheerleaders, the chorus singer...How have our leaders been assessing themselves? How do constituencies assess themselves? You met a full treasury, and left it empty; and yet you say, congratulate me; and people fall over one another to do just that. Who is to blame? All of us! We have underperformed and under achieved.



## Conclusion

The task of transforming our nation from a socio-political and economic perspective requires more than the hard factors of growth and development. Also needed are leadership skills it has been said that there are no underdeveloped countries; only under managed ones. The need of the hour is for transformational leaders able to articulate their vision, possessing assessment skills communication abilities and at the same time very sensitive to the skill deficiencies of their subordinates. They should be able to lead by example, who have the courage to tackle the status quo, and who will place character and integrity above every other thing.

Finally, Nigeria need leaders who have the most attentive ear, instead of bureaucratic hierarchies they have a structure built of energy and ideas; they lead people who find their joy in the task at hand while embracing one another; and they do worry about leaving monuments behind. Great leaders are produced by great groups and by organizations that create the social architecture of respect and dignity.

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