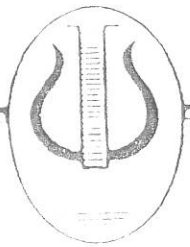
E R C S PUBLISHERS

COUNSELLING ISSUES FOR THE NIGERIAN POLITY

Edited by

Ibrahim A. Kolo Ph.D



Conference Series No.2 of the

Counselling Association of Nigeria

CASSON

EDITORIAL NOTE

Counselling Issues for the Nigerian Polity is the second of the conference proceedings published by the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON). When the idea of publishing on a yearly basis the proceedings of the Association's annual conference, little was it thought that at its second publication, the conference series would register such a readership audience. We can, therefofe, say at this stage without mincing words that the conference series of CASSON has arrived.

As with the publication of the first conference series on Family and Youth Problems from a Guidance and Counselling Perspective, the series No.2 no doubt will be found a monumental document of some of the best papers presented during our annual conferences. It is in this respect that the present issue has laid out topical discourses from the Lagos 1993 conference which centred around the relevance of counselling to national development in Nigeria. Thus, Counselling issues for the Nigerian Polity revolves around the subthemes of the utilisation of counselling to foster effective leadership and citizenship in the country, combat the tidal wave of corruption and societal vices, and initiating efficient technological development in the country.

The present book comes at a time when Nigeria is facing a myriad of national problems ranging from ineffective leadership, barreness of committed citizenship, inept followership, brazzen corruptive lifestyles to utter, naglect of the scientific and technological basis for societal development. The consequence has been a grossly underdeveloped polity called Nigeria which yet has the most viable human and natural resources potential for modern development in Africa. Papers articulated into chapters in this proceedings have all brilliantly carried cut a place of relevance for counselling psycholotgists in the search for solutions to Nigeria's political, economic and social problems.

Practising counsellors, psychologists, sociologists and persons in positions of leadership and influence in Nigeria will find Counselling Issues for the Nigerian Polity a useful book to read and keep for upcoming generations.

Dr. Ibrahim A. Kolo
(Editor)

COUNSELLING ISSUES FOR THE NIGERIAN POLICY

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THE SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR OF THE BANKRUPTCY OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWESHIP IN AFRICA

OLUFUNMILAYO MOWAIYE

ABSTRACT

The leadership problem in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) is not unrelated to the socio-political problems of the continent itself, pricipal amongst these are poverty, illiteracy, traballism/nepotism and political status quo syndrone. Attention is focused on these socio-political problems and based on this, attempt is then made to explain why effective leadership and followeship has eluded Nigeria and Africa as a result of these problems.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria and black Africa in general, is a politically troubled land (Ikiddeh, 1992). From one country to the other, none can be said to be troubled free. Rarely too, does one find a true leader; one who is capable of inspiring his country to greater heights and lofty goals. Development (social, economic and political), therefore eludes most African nations.

The general low literacy level, the multifaceted nature of tribes in the nations and the high poverty level in the nations all contribute to the underdevelopment of effective leadership and follwership (Owiti 1993).

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POVERTY

The poverty level in Nigeria is high. This takes its toll on the people. Poverty is a situation where the amount of property owned or controlled does not ensure the basic needs in the form of adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical facilities for the people (Owiti 1993). This can be said to be the first level of poverty and also the obsolute poverty. The second level of of poverty reflects the amount of property owned or controlled relative to what the society owns or controlls. This can be said to be the relative poverty (Owiti 1993). Majority of Nigerians, suffer from both the absolute poverty

and the relative poverty. A high proportion of people cannot afford to feed well, clothe and house themselves (African concord, 1992). Many, therefore, suffer from absolute poverty, and are under psychological stress for want of their daily needs. Many are in constant and incessant struggle to make money. Few care less how the money is made. (Newsfirst, 1989).

Psychologists agree that part of the basic needs of man include food, shelter and clothing (Bakare, 1990). When these are yet to be met, everything else is wished aside. For a man who has not been able to fulfil these basic personal needs, bothering about who is the leader and his effectiveness would not be one of his utmost problems. It can only be so, if it is perceived that the leader could be a ray of hope, in fulfilling these basic needs. But most often than not, leaders only worsen the situation for the people rather than ameliorate the situation. This pshychology of poverty accounts for the apathy which citizens have toward their leaders. This also accounts for why leaders get away with virtually anything while they are in public service and the reason for the non-existence of the sense of probity on their part.

The psychology of poverty which pervades the citizens makes the leaders give out "stipends" during campaigns for office (s) a practice thought to be more useful to the poor than eloquence of speech. The citizens feel a sense of satisfaction, even if momentarily at whatever, "stipend" is given, for it goes a little way to ease the poor man's problems. For as portrayed by Owiti (1993), a good candidate for an office is one who gives a lot of money during the campaigns, who brought "sugar and flour and beer" and possibly promises to pay the school fees of electorate' children when he gets into office.

The psychology of poverty also explains why some African accumulate wealth for themselves a practice which they think will save them when they are out of office. Some leaders also go out of their ways to use political office to enrich friends and relations.

The sense of poverty also turns the citizens into sychophants and praise singers of their leaders. Thereafter, blessed are those who can do these things, for they are sure of being rewarded materially. Whatever is made is "something" and the gimmick continues. The result of this is that leaders turn out not only to have a false sense of popularity but also, get away with virtually any crime against the society. Leaders, therefore, do not think of what positive legacies they will leave behind them in office and what they will offer posterity to remember them by (Hotline 1993).

In some cases, leaders enjoy the booty of public life much as that a life outside the "power lane" cannot be envisaged by them. This leads to the sit-tight syndrome amongst leaders.

Aspiring "leaders" and the youths dream of the day they'll get a chance to be in public

life, not because of the down-trodden citizens, or desire to make a positive change in the society, but because of the prevalent attitude that the only route to get out of the poverty lane is to be in public office (The News, 1993).

PROBLEMS OF LOW-LITERACY

Not up to fifty percent of the Nigerian citizens can be said to be literate and enlightened (Owiti 1993). Many are not aware of the goings on in the public life. Many are more concerned with carrying out their menial jobs and making ends meet. This also accounts for the ease with which leaders succeed in buying votes. In view of the high illitaracy rate, the leaders have no sense of accountablity to the citizens, under the pretext that the majority cannot ask for it. Many people do not know their rights or how to make recourse to legal structures within the society.

The high illietracy level also make leaders to see themselves not as servants of the people but as demi-gods. The average citizen may be aware of something being wrong in the societal make-up, but he knows not how to effect change.

High illiteracy level also makes people who are not versed in the art of governance to get into government. Many have no clear-cut objectives and goals to accomplish. A sense of direction is missing. Since no man can give more than what he is, what is given to the nation is a sort of trial and error government. This could be why Adebayo (1982) proposed that to curb maladministration, corruption and "unreasonable political directives", there should be the post of administrative commissioner to act like the public complaints commissioner.

THE PLAGUE OF TRIBALISM

Africa is a multifaceted tribal entity, made up of many tribes and hundreds of dialects. The citizens have great tribal sentiments and affiliations (The Sunday Magazine 1991). Tribes see themselves more from their affiliation to groups than from the larger national entity. The plague called tribalism has not helped in fostering effective leadership in the society. Leaders are the very people to be sentimental to their tribal affiliations and, therefore, take every advantage of it. During campaigns for offices or while in office leaders appeal to this sentiment. The citizens, no matter how inefficient and ineffective a leader is, support him and do not criticise him because he is one of them. The citizens also see him as a way out of poverty, because it is percieved that he will bring a level of development to his people before he leaves office and more of his 'town' people would have gained by his being in office, either monetarily or by appointment into public offices.

Leaders submit to this pressure, so as to be seen by people to be good. It also accounts for why inefficient people get key posts in government because more often then not, it is where he comes from or his relationship the with powers that be that accounts for his getting the post (The Sunday Magazine 1991).

Most leaders do not know what leadership entails and act as "tribal" leaders. Even if people are hollowing in abject poverty such leaders keep squandering public money (The African Guardian., 1992) The citizens still have the sense of satisfaction that one of "them" will be counted as a leader when the roll of those who have occupied the seat is called.

CONCLUSION

In view of these tendencies, leaders sometimes spend most of their time thinking of how to satisfy their people and curb to anger of other tribal groups, rather than think of what legacies to leave behind. By the time the tribal game is played forth from the leader to the citizens, and from the citizens to the leaders, another government takes over on the excuse of inefficiency on the part of the outgone government and of course, the cycle continues. Effective leadership eludes the nation and the citizens do not get any better for all the efforts. Leadership in Africa is perceived more of the position a leader occupies. However, effective leadership is greater than this as it is more of what a leader does with his position. Effective leadership also entails tangible and intangible qualities. Which the leader and the led must eschew.

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