Responsible Leadership and Accountability: A Panacea for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at responsible leadership and accountability in the political leadership of Nigeria. Being an emerging social science concern, responsible leadership is looking at how far, the political leaders addressed the variables militating against sustainable development in Nigeria. It also examined the degree of accountability within the leadership system in Nigeria especially as it concerns responsive service delivery. The paper made use of qualitative research method, anchoring its theoretical basis on authentic leadership theory. From the analysis of the themes with the available extant literature, we were able find amongst others that; the leaders in Nigeria, have not been responsive enough, to the yearnings of the Nigeria masses in all spheres of development. We therefore recommended that; the solutions will start with the recruitment of public office holders to enable us wriggle out of the malaise.

Keyword: *Responsible leadership, Accountability, Sustainable development*

INTRODUCTION.

From the creation of man, leadership has been an issue with relative challenges even in the holy bible. From time to time, no matter how small it appears, we require leaders in whatever we do as a people. In most cases, leadership amounts to nothing, if it has zero impacts on the led. Now for us to examine the impact of leadership, we must look at the various options and possibilities within the surroundings of the leader. On how that is, we will then look at the level of results achieved thus far within the period under review.

In Nigeria, the parameters for measuring the responsive nature of leaders, has been set. Year in, year out, governmental and non-governmental agencies examines the level of development in Nigeria and at each occasion, we are usually left in the dark. One therefore, wonders, what exactly the problem with the Nigerian system is. From all indices, Nigeria is endowed with numerous resources, good enough to catapult the nation into a development hub of the world. Observers has noticed that indeed, what Nigeria requires, are responsible leadership. A leadership that will be effective enough to deliver, and be humble enough to take responsibility where necessary.

In fact, Suzana (2016) observed that, effective leaders believe that people want to excel, so they create an environment in which success is not only possible, but also contagious. They think that putting the right person in the right position is essential and that diverse teams are more innovative than homogeneous teams. Efficient leaders also believe in change, so they strive to learn and grow hence acknowledging that organizations often need to renew themselves. The best leaders also comply with their personal values. Her views suggest that, for a society to have effective leaders, they must develop an attitude of putting the right people, into leadership positions. She noted that, for a leader to be effective and responsive, he must demonstrate the following; - Taking

responsibility for the direction and actions of a team, - Setting objectives, - Organizing and motivating others, - Taking the initiative, - Persevering when things are not working out, - Taking a positive attitude to frustration and failure, - Accepting responsibility for mistakes or wrong decisions, - Being flexible: prepared to adapt goals in changing situations, - Knowing what followers need.

Again, Christian Voegtlin's article, ''Development of a Scale Measuring Responsible Leadership,'' as cited in Nicola & Maak (2011), extends understanding of responsible leadership with an ideal of discourse ethics that enables leaders to act morally and engage in dialogue with all affected constituents, which grants the organization a license to operate. To them, this understanding of responsible leadership might address the challenges of globalization better than existing leadership concepts.

The above standpoints, practically agrees to the fact that, responsible leadership, has gradually taking the center stage in addressing the challenging issues of leadership and poor accountability in Nigeria's polity. It is therefore, the intention of this paper, to critically examine the phenomena, with a view to contributing our own quota, in the ongoing intellectual debate and struggle for a more effective sustainable development in Nigeria. To achieve that, we shall undertake the study, with the following approach; - conceptual explanations, empirical reviews, theoretical framework, conclusion and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Explanations

Responsible leadership.

As a departure from the norm, the emphasis has left just a mere leadership to responsible leadership, and therefore, the question on the lips of researchers and scholars alike, is why responsible leadership? Interestingly, Nicola & Maak (2011) noted that, the answer to this question is multifold. In the introduction to their article on an ''alternative perspective of responsible leadership,'' Waldman and Galvin (2008) as cited in Nicola & Maak (2011), suggest a response related to the deficiencies of existing theory and its influence on leadership practice. Specifically, they propose that responsibility is missing from established leadership descriptors, such as transformational charismatic, authentic, participative, servant, shared, or even spiritual and ethical leadership, ''and that it is actually this element that is at the heart of what effective leadership is all about. In a nutshell, to not be responsible is not to be effective as a leader'' (Waldman and Galvin 2008).

By definition, Nicola & Maak (2011), arguably observed that, this concept, is one of the most under researched in recent time. However, they see responsible leadership as, geared toward the concerns of others and asks for what and to whom leaders are responsible. Similarly, Maak & Pless (2006) defined it as a relational and ethical phenomenon, which occurs in social processes of interaction with those who affect or are affected by leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship. To them, it thereby broadens the view from a traditional leader–subordinate relationship to leader–stakeholder relationships.

They shift the focus to the responsibilities that leaders have in relation to various stakeholder groups and accordingly contend that relationships ''are the centre of leadership'' (Maak & Pless, 2006), such that ''building and cultivating…ethically sound relations toward different stakeholders is an important responsibility of leaders in an interconnected stakeholder society [like Nigeria]'' (Maak & Pless, 2006). In this case, ''others'' are all those with a stake in the leadership project.

Dameto (2009) as cited by Mirvis, DeJongh, Googins, Quinn & Velsor (2010), noted that, a variety of scholars, thought leaders, and consortia of academics and practitioners have sought to define responsible leadership in contemporary organizations. To them, many connect it to corporate social responsibility and sustainability by stressing that responsible leaders operate ethical companies that create long-term economic value and protect the planet and its people. The Global

Responsible Leadership Innitiative (2010) defined responsible leadership as the art of motivating, communicating, empowering, and convincing people to engage with a new vision of sustainable development and necessary change that this implies. Leadership is based on moral authority. Moral authority requires convictions, character and talent. From the forgoing, responsible leadership is not the same thing as corporate social responsibility. In fact, to put it right, responsible leadership can simply be defined as a democratic leadership, where members of an organization or society are deeply carried along in policy formulation and implementation embedded with all the ingredients of motivation, incentives and reward system, in other to keep them committed and hardworking.

Accountability.

The concept of accountability has a long tradition in both political science and financial accounting. In political science, John Locke's theory of the superiority of representational democracy built on the notion that accountability is only possible when the governed are separated from the governors (Locke, 1690, Grant and Keohane, 2005). It was also a major concern for the fathers of the American constitution, and few areas have been as fundamental to thinking about the political system in America as accountability (Finer, 1941; Friedrich, 1940; Dubnick & Romzek, 1993) as cited in Lindberg (2009).

By explanation, Lindberg (2009) opined that, the central idea from that time is still with us: when decision-making power is transferred from a principal (e.g. the citizens) to an agent (e.g. government), there must be a mechanism in place for holding the agent to account for their decisions and if necessary for imposing sanctions, ultimately by removing the agent from power. In accounting, the concept's long tradition is more limited in scope, referring to financial prudence and accounting in accordance with regulations and instructions (Normanton, 1966; Barton, 2006) as cited in Lindberg (2009), but the principle of delegating some authority, evaluating performance and imposing sanctions is essentially the same.

To Schmitter & Karl (1991), accountability was the central key to most definitions of democracy, their claim was met with overwhelming indifference and occasional expressions of hostility (Schmitter, 2004). Lindberg (2009) noted that, a decade and a half later, a quick search with any of the academic search engines using 'accountability' in combination with 'democracy' or 'democratization' generates literally hundreds of results. Expanding the search to cover related fields in the social sciences, one is confronted with a dizzying number of entries, illustrating the magnitude of the explosion of articles on accountability in its various forms.

Dykstra (1939) see accountability as answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving. As an aspect of governance, it has been central to discussions related to problems in the public sector, nonprofit and private (corporate) and individual contexts. In leadership roles. Accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences (Williams, 2006).

In governance, accountability has expanded beyond the basic definition of "being called to account for one's actions (Mulgan, 2001). It is frequently described as an account-giving relationship between individuals, e.g. "A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct" (Sinclair, 1995). Accountability cannot exist without proper accounting practices; in other words, an absence of accounting means an absence of accountability (Schedler, 1999).

It is important to note that, there are various types of accountability which were identified as follows; - business accountability, bureaucratic accountability, audit accountability, client-patron accountability, patron-client accountability, peer professional accountability, fiscal accountability, legal accountability, societal accountability, reputational accountability and political accountability (Lindberg, 2009). To Lindberg, political accountability Political accountability as the type of

accountability where the government, civil servants and politicians are answerable to the public and to legislative bodies such as a congress or a parliament.

In the same vein, Adesoji (2013) defined accountability as the requirement that those who hold public trust account for the use of that trust to the citizens or their representatives. The concept underscores the obligation of an office holder to fulfill the expectations of his office. It is understood to be a measure for the results of an office holder's actions. Public accountability is a sine qua non for any regime that would refrain from corruption and ensure public service delivery to the citizenry.

Sustainable development

Although many definitions abound, the most often used definition of sustainable development is that proposed by the Brundtland Commission, which is seen as a development that occurs without depleting the future resources (Cerin, 2006; Dernbach, 1998; Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011) as cited in Rachel (2015). The key principle of sustainable development underlying all others is the integration of environmental, social, and economic concerns into all aspects of decision making. All other principles in the Sustainable development framework have integrated decision making at their core (Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011). It is this deeply fixed concept of integration that distinguishes sustainability from other forms of policy (Rachel, 2015).

Responsible leadership, Accountability and the Nigeria's Sustainable Development

Responsible leadership is always about change, whether on the individual, team, organizational, or societal levels, or a combination thereof. Leaders, whether by appointment, dedication, or accident, influence followers (stakeholders), and vice versa, which leads to the realization of certain objectives. Reaching the objective implies a change process thus, development (Nicola & Maak, 2011). The leadership responsibility contributes significantly to achieving sustainable business success by (re)building public trust (DiPiazza & Eccles, 2002) and creating value for stakeholders" (Freeman, 2004). It helps to regain the right to operate from society and to earn and maintain a perfect reputation as a "great company" (Collins, 2001). The challenge is to achieve a balance between the needs of the organization and the needs of its stakeholders, to establish the processes of two-way communication with organization stakeholders, to identify areas of converging and diverging interests and to conduct negotiations in order to resolve potential conflicts. It is also necessary to actively engage leaders in solving important social problems in an economically efficient and effective way, using the provided products and services as well. It is therefore about whether taking into account the social and environmental impact of company activity is a necessary element in achieving economic efficiency (Rok, 2009).

Jing and Avery (2004; 2008) highlight various paradigms of leadership in the management and advisory literature: classic, transaction, visionary, and especially the new, emerging paradigm of participatory leadership, co-leadership (the authors use the term "organic leadership"), which exhibits higher levels of trust between leaders and staff. However, effectiveness in ethical conduct does not result from some individual characteristics of a leader, but it is a consequence of implementing superior values that define the long-term way of operating in the market (Collins & Porras 2003). The roles and responsibilities of leaders, which change at the same time, become more complex and varied, expand from an internal leadership perspective to a broader, global one, from a shareholder to stakeholder orientation as regards the leadership mandate (Maak & Pless, 2006). This cannot be achieved by the "great man" on their own or the charismatic leader ("we don't need another hero") (Badarracco, 2001).

The concept of leadership is closely related to the exertion of influence on subordinates by the leader (Yukl, 2006; Griffin, 2001). It is emphasized that the strength and acceptance of responsible leaders among subordinates is based on respect (Cialdini, 2001), rather than on coercive measures (Locke & Kirkpatrick 1991). Bennis and Nanus (1997) argue that leadership consists, apart from exerting influence, of giving new content to activities of company members, or it can be

regarded as a process of social change in the organization. The importance of taking decisions in accordance with own values, which are visible to others, is also highlighted, as well as focusing on ethical and moral conduct, appropriate for the organization, communication with subordinates in a clear and transparent manner, openness to feedback, and attention to the development of subordinates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

According to Ketol (2009), when working towards a responsible leader's identity, six areas of difficulty should be dealt with: value basis, self-image vs. external image, time perspective, (4) role experimentation, anticipation of achievement, and leader-follower relation. If one wants to find one's true identity, it is necessary to thoroughly examine one's value basis. At the organizational level, the company or other organization has to find a set of values that all its members will identify with and accept. This happens when organizational values correspond to individual values. It is essential to answer the question about responsible leadership: Do you feel that your self-image is consistent with the image you present to others? Or is your self-image better/worse than your external image? Those who are arrogant boasters or submissive subordinates cannot become responsible leaders. Responsible leadership reflects the hierarchical level; it can reduce unethical behaviour among primary stakeholders, namely, employees, and has a direct influence on the job satisfaction of employees who report directly. Responsible leaders have an indirect effect on job satisfaction as they help create a more ethical work environment (Voegtlin, 2012).

Sustainable Development is actually a function of proper accountability at the individual, organizational and national level (Thomas 1998; Ninalowo 2003, 2008, Richardson 2008) as cited in Gberevbie, Shodipo, & Oviesogie, (2013). According to Ninalowo (2003), "accountability implies that government functionaries should be prepared to be answerable for their actions at all times to members of the public and be able to justify their actions at the level of moral and ethical standard." In the same vein, Agba *et*. *al*. (2008) posit that "accountability demands that the public should know when money came into government treasury and how the money was used." On his part, Richardson (2008) holds that accountability is a fundamental requirement for proper management of resources for development in any society. According to Koppell (2005) as cited in Gberevbie, Shodipo, & Oviesogie, (2013), accountability has five dimensions, namely, transparency, liability, controllability, responsibility and responsiveness. These five dimensions are fundamental for the proper management of resources in an organization or a nation for enhanced performance.

To Omona (2010). accountability is vital to good governance; and good governance "seeks to improve the capacity of the state, encompassing a variety of strategies to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government performance. For Adamolekun (2005), a government is accountable when its leaders are responsive, when they have respect for the rule of law, and when citizens can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission and commission by the government and its officials. In the same vain, Gregory (2007) holds that accountability arrangements "are intended to ensure both the constitutionally appropriate use of elective political power itself, and the coordinated, systematic and planned bureaucratic implementation of the policy purposes defined through the exercise of that power."

Ajagun (2003) conceptualizes sustainable development as advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, including the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious. On their part, Uga *et*. *al*. (2005) see development as the process of economic and social transformation within countries. According to Yunusa and Okeke (2008), "development is about the issue of self-reliance. It is a self-generating and self-sustaining phenomenon." For Ibude (2008), development implies the manner in which individuals cooperatively cultivate the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships to bring about growth in the quality and quantity of goods and services that are readily available in a country for the enhancement of the living standard of its people.

Borrowing from the extant literature, we can infer that, in-between responsible leadership and accountability, lies our major setback to sustainable development in Nigeria. Historically, Nigeria have experienced individuals but, what remains a herculean task, is the transparent nature of our

public office recruitment style (ie. The electoral process). In a society where the culture of accountability is treated with contempt, the culture of unethical practices as a means of doing business, both in the public and private sectors, is bound to be enthroned. As a result, the funds that would have gone into development programmes are wasted by public officials. Thus there is a relationship between, on the one hand, authentic leadership that subscribes to proper accountability in the management of public resources and, on the other, development in a society (Gberevbie, Shodipo, & Oviesogie, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Leadership theories abound in literature to explain the character, attitude, disposition and behaviour of a leader requisite to achieve enhanced performance either at the organizational or national level. These include authentic, path-goal, inspirational, visionary, charismatic, transformational, transactional, complexity, distributing, contingency, trait and situational leadership theories (Avolio *et*. *Al*. 2009; Kuada 2010; Gberevbie 2011). According to Hartog and Koopman (2001, 166-187), these theories "attempt to explain how certain leaders are able to achieve extraordinary levels of follower motivation, admiration, commitment, respect, trust, dedication, loyalty and performance."

In this study, the authentic leadership theory is adopted as the framework of analysis. The justification for adopting this theory is the fact that organizations, whether in the public or private sector, require leaders that are transparent and exhibit proper ethical behaviour in the management of resources as a basis for enhanced performance (Luthans and Avolio 2003; Kuada 2010b). According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), authentic leadership is "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development." The main argument of the theory is that authentic leaders, whether at the organizational or national levels, tend to exhibit transparent and proper ethical behaviours that focuses on accountability, which is required for efficient and effective management of resources for enhanced development (Avolio *et*. *Al*. 2009; Kuada 2010). Leaders with traits of character such as transparency, honesty and accountability motivate people to share information with them and with each other, resulting in the realization of an organization's or a nation's quest for enhanced development (Kuada, 2010).

For Kuada (2010) as cited in Gberevbie, Shodipo, & Oviesogie (2013), "a derivative of the authentic leadership is the servant and coach leadership theory." According to him, "servant leadership is based on the devolution of power to followers." Under this condition, "leaders see themselves as stewards, serving their followers in a manner that allows them to contribute their very best to fulfilling organizational (or national) objectives". Authentic leadership theory, has welcomed numerous scholarship accolades andhave been adjudged to be effectively working in areas where they were applied. In fact, Avolio et al, put it this way;

> Authentic leaders were leaders who acted in accordance with their core personal values and beliefs in order to build credibility and earn the respect and trust of their followers through the process of actively encouraging diverse viewpoints and building transparent and collaborative relationships with them. Such leaders could be described as charismatic …participative, or transformational, in addition to being described as authentic (Avolio *et*. *Al*. 2004, 801-823) as cited in Gberevbie, Shodipo, & Oviesogie (2013)

Thus, it is evident that the importance of authentic leadership for development, whether at the organizational or national level, cannot be overemphasized. This is particularly so since leaders are supposed to lead by example; that is, followers are to see desirable character traits in their leaders and thereby be motivated to act in such a manner as to promote enhanced performance.

Consequently, no organization or nation is likely to develop beyond the capacity of its leaders to uphold accountability and transparency in the management of resources.

CONCLUSION

From the intellectual discourse in this study, we have been able to x-ray the nexus between responsible leadership and accountability. We have able to understand that, the emphasis all over the world at the moment is on responsible leadership and not just leadership alone. We also seen that, responsible leadership seeks at a leader, demonstrating a personal trait to lead. In other words, it is a leader, going beyond boarders to doing extraordinary things for the purpose of achieving performance without excuses.

On the other hand, we have also seen that, accountability is a very important tool to responsible leadership. From all the available types of accountability, it is evident that, the most important type, is the political accountability. This is so because, the political leadership, determines what next in a society. It is therefore sufficing to say that, the rest of the accountability, have one thing or the other to do with the political accountability. Interestingly, as a nation, Nigeria can achievement the 21st century development if only they are willing. What we mean by this, will be explained in our recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Need to elect good leaders: Nigerians must rise to the occasion and be ready to ensure the needed change which must start with the recruitment of the public office holders. If all the features of a responsive leader, as found in this study is anything to go bye, then we begin by changing the type of leaders we have as a nation. For example, currently, Nigeria has a population of 198 million, with over 250 ethnic groups. The country is a major crude oil exporter at 2.53 million barrels per day on an average sale of USD100 per barrel in the international oil market. In spite of this enormous revenue accruing to the country, most of the nation's population still lives in poverty, without any meaningful means of livelihood and shelter. Despite this sorry state of Affairs, over 70 percent of the recurrent expenditure in the 2012 national budget went to the maintenance of political office holders. For instance, the presidency alone had a feeding allowance of NGN1 billion (USD6.45 million), the budget for medical treatment at the Aso Rock Villa - Presidential Villa Clinic was NGN1 billion, the budget for the fuel and electricity generating set was NGN1 billion, that for two bullet-proof cars was NGN280 million (USD1.81 million), and that for a dining set was NGN300 million or USD1.94 million. The things cannot be happening if we have responsive leaders.

Strengthening of the law enforcement institutions: The Federal Government of Nigeria must reinforce the existing anti-corruption mechanisms. In particular, there is need to amend the relevant pieces of legislation that vest the power to initiate prosecution of corrupt officials on the Attorney General of the Nigerian Federation by transferring those powers to the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). This will facilitate the strict compliance to rules governing the proper management of public resources by public officials as a strategy for enhanced development.

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