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The Case of Transformational Servant Leadership in Fostering Good Governance in Africa

Masinde Aseka
International Leadership University

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Abstract

Africa is faced with a serious crisis of leadership and governance. There is a fundamental link between leadership and governance which requires to be explored. That is why there is need to mainstream leadership studies in discourses on African governance. To realize good governance in Africa, this paper explores the need for a new philosophy of leadership. The philosophy of leadership implicit in leadership development programmes of the past ignored critical political economy imperatives of leadership and therefore were not adequate for dealing with the complex problems inherent in African communities and organizations today. They assumed that leadership rests in individuals who must be capable of inspiring and influencing others to solve problems and achieve goals. However, this mistaken heroic view of leadership was often based on a deficiency view of people where leaders were assumed to be heroes, great men (and occasionally women) who rise to the fore in times of crises. It was an approach that was based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forcesof change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few so-called great leaders. As such, this paper emphasizes that a new philosophy of leadership ought to emerge to which broader political economy governance expectations and practices are linked. This must be a post-heroic leadership based on bottom-up transformation fueled by the quest to shared power and responsibilities of community building.

Followers and leaders are linked a clear leadership-followership loop in which leaders produce followers and followers have the capacity to produce effective leaders. The capacity of followers to produce good leaders must be developed as part of the democratization project that emphasizes the relational aspect of leadership. In this project, all citizens should be required to be made aware that there are leadership and followership competencies that need to be cultivated and that can be pooled and drawn upon as needed, when working with others on vital common national issues. It must be emphasized that leadership as relationship that revolves around the idea of a network of fluid relationships and is built on the concepts of empowerment, participation, partnership, and service to the national community is our collective responsibility that can be harnessed for good governance. We also need to view good leadership in terms of community and envision community as the conceptual setting in which

the leadership relationship takes place. This is the sense in which we can build communities of commitment in a view of leadership that represents a shift from competition and self-centeredness to collectivization of leadership. That is why the paper presents a case for transformational servant leadership.

Servant leadership emphasizes the spectre of leadership influence on followers as a result of dedicating their lives to serving others, be they individuals, institutions, groups and organizations. In the sense of transformational servant leadership, the state, its structures and institutions of governance can be reformed by a transformational cadre of statesmen/stateswomen in a way that bring the essence of transformation servant leadership as a cardinal agenda of democratization. This paper demonstrates that democratization does not automatically improve development outcomes. Consequently, in developing and transitional societies such as those of Africa where poverty and social exclusion are high, effective state institutions of good governance are particularly needed to be developed by such leaders for market development, social justice, and environmental sustainability. There is need to explore how good governance calls for initiating appropriate leadership training programmes, strengthening of public sector institutions including the legislative, judicial and executive. These have their respective institutions of governance that need to be re-thought and re-engineered by a transformational and effective leadership that is full of statesmanship/states womanship and its related dynamics of statecraft. The paper demonstrates that such accountability requires clear lines of reporting, clear communication of expectations, and the delegation and judicious use of appropriate authority to bring about appropriate compliance with the institution's policies, standards, and procedures in its quest to meet its national mandates and prerogatives.

Leadership is fundamentally about getting things done. You need a vision, be willing to make tough choices and be disciplined about what you focus on. Without building effective capacity, without establishing governments which are capable of delivering practical things and on a path to release from dependency on aid, then aid can only ever be a palliative – vital to many, but not transformative of a nation. There is need to demonstrate how initiatives lead to rapid improvements in the quality of governance. Efforts to train civil servants may not mean much if they continue to work in unreformed institutional structures, without modern administrative

tools or public oversight. Moreover, even when they have been developed, state capacities can be lost to such 'shocks' as man-made or natural disasters, conflict, or economic or environmental crises. There is need for reforming governance systems under real-world conditions. A reform project in the governance needs to worry about not just public attitudes but also leadership attitudes. That is why a new push for transformational servant leadership is called for.

Throughout the world, the work of government is being reshaped by two ineluctable trends. The first is the movement away from centralized, vertical and hierarchical government machines towards polycentric networks of governance based upon horizontal interactions between diverse actors within complex, dynamic and multi-layered societies. Governance entails governments co-governing with a range of organizations, public, private and voluntary, in what has been called a 'shared power, no-one in charge, interdependent world. Secondly, there has been the rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) which can transform the generation and delivery of public services, thereby reconfiguring relationships between government and citizens, governments and businesses as well as within and between governments. Good leadership and governance therefore has clear e-government imperatives. That is why this paper emphasizes that e-government has the potential to improve the performance of public institutions and make them more transparent and responsive.