

Politics, Good Governance and The Imperative of Leadership Mentoring

Chukwuemeka Udaya, MNI

National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Nigeria

Chinedu Okoye

National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Nigeria

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjpsa.2013/vol12n12837>

Published: January 27 2024

Citation: Udaya C. and Okoye C. (2024) Politics, Good Governance and the Imperative of Leadership Mentoring, *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.28-37

ABSTRACT: *The success or failure of governance is determined primarily by the quality of leadership overseeing the affairs of the entity in question. In a democracy, good-governance is berthed when political leadership is nurtured from the onset by a deliberate leadership mentoring process that inculcates the values of transparency, accountability, responsibility, productivity and efficiency on the mentee. This paper in its hypothesis, ties up the three key variables of politics, good governance and leadership mentoring, proffering the latter as the foundational tonic needed to nurture, grow and institutionalise a culture of effective political leadership, good-governance and progressively-working institutions for the benefit of the nation (Nigeria) and its citizens. Case study examples are drawn from the People's Republic of China and India as nations which have harnessed and optimised suitable leadership mentoring processes to raise and nurture leaders who have gone on to facilitate the growth and development of their respective nations. This paper, which harps on Nigeria, concludes by recommending the institutionalisation of structured leadership-mentoring schemes and their liberalisation nationwide as critical paths to nurturing upcoming and young actors across, political parties, civil society, educational institutions and the society in general, with the requisite leadership ethics, ethos, skill and capacity to positively impact governance for the good and development of the nation.*

KEY WORDS: leadership, good-governance, politics, leadership-mentoring

INTRODUCTION

The yearn for a more purposeful and representative form of leadership, worldwide, can be placed side by side with the desire for good governance among the citizenry, (Banerji, 2015). Leadership and the diverse processes for the selection, election and emergence of its key actors, determines to a large extent how well a community, society or nation will fare especially in terms of the well-being of its citizens, including societal development, progress and infrastructural growth (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012). Overtime, democracy has been heralded – predominantly by the West - as the

best path to attaining popularly elected leadership (Wallace et al, 2021); this notion, however, has been equally discountenanced among the comity of several nations which perceive democracy and its concept as a western engendered narrative whose potency and viability does not necessarily hold or apply globally especially if different ways of life, cultures, demographic and ethnicities are to be factored, (Christiano, 2015).

Nevertheless, in a democracy, politics is widely projected as the vehicle or medium through which the attainment of all forms of representative and people-oriented leadership is achieved, (Wallace et al, 2021). Political parties, in turn, are a major component of democracy and are central to the survival of the political system; they are an organised group of people who exercise their legal right to identify with a set of similar political aims and opinions, and seek to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public office (Barber, 1984). Functional political parties serve as the connecting link between government and society; accordingly, a political leadership should ensure good governance that positively impacts society - including the lives and properties of the people. This has remained the key selling point deployed by those who market democracy as the most viable and potent option for attaining purposeful and impact-driven leadership (Wallace et al, 2021).

Good governance, on its part, is directly tied to effective leadership (Banerji, 2015); leadership mentoring, however, connects both as it ensures a foundational bottom-up growth nurturing process that presents a path to effective leadership and consequently – good-governance, (Olaopa, 2018). Good governance, essentially, refers to the political, leadership and institutional processes as well as outcomes that are necessary to achieve the goal of development, and it is characterised or has the key attributes of transparency, accountability, responsibility, responsiveness, participation and ownership (OHCHR, 2023).

The failure of political leadership, especially amongst several countries that lay claim to years and decades of uninterrupted democratic practice, raises questions that serve to critique what was earlier espoused of democracy as the best path to leadership and good governance. Failure of political leadership in these countries under reference is symbolised by widening inequality and social injustice, increasing poverty, food insecurity, scarcity of basic commodities, poor socio-economic and infrastructural growth, poor access to basic health and education, spiraling crime and insecurity – which fuel or engender loss of lives and property, (Omoyibo, 2013). Furthermore, the failure of political leadership often times has its foundation dug in poor internal democracy, ethics and practices within the political parties who sponsor these leadership candidates and, on whose platform, they are nurtured and sponsored for wider and general electoral contest, (Alhassan & Sanusi, 2020). Defective and poorly equipped leadership candidates once presented by political parties and elected by the wider electorate, are bound to offer poor governance.

The imperative of leadership mentoring - as a foundational leadership nurturing and building process - that aims to equip individuals with the skills and attributes to be successful leaders and administrators, cannot be overstressed. Leadership mentoring, though often times not overtly emphasised, is at the root of every deliberate individual, community, corporate and government effort at raising future leaders that are fully equipped with the competency, temperament, know-how and emotional intelligence to lead and govern tomorrow's institutions, organisations or communities, (Olaopa, 2018).

Politics

The definition of politics, according to Modebadze, 2010, 'varies from time to time and from place to place'. Modebadze, 2010, goes further to explain politics as a 'loaded term with a wide range of meanings when used in everyday life'. To further expatiate, Modebadze 2010, posits that there exists both a narrow and broad definition of politics. The narrow definition of politics she defines as what takes place between governments and state departments with the active involvement of key actors such as politicians, government officials and bureaucrats and political party members. In contrast to the former, she submits that the broad definition of politics is simply what takes place daily in all aspects of human life and not confined to a particular sphere of life or socio-political activity. Politics, according to Heywood, is defined 'as the exercise of authority, making of collective decisions, allocation of scarce resources, practice of deception and manipulation, and so on' (Heywood, 1997). Bentley, et al, (1995), posits that politics defines the conflict which arises from the expression of differing views; they equally submit that politics is at the center of all choices that have to be made in the management of people's infinite wants as well as societies scarce resources. Dowse & Hughes (1972), define politics as the product of differentials in power. Haralambos & Holborn (2013), suggest that 'any social relationship which involves power differentials is political', hence politics is also obtainable within families and the home.

However, as pertains to governance, Heywood (2013), submits that politics involves a set of activities that is associated with or puts in motion a mechanism that ultimately ends in leadership selection and governance for or on behalf of a group of persons, community or a nation-state. It is also associated with making negotiations, reaching consensus, lobbying or engaging in power relations that is deliberately projected to bring about a formal or informal style of leadership and governance, and this primarily designed to ensure the welfare, wellbeing, prosperity and development of a people, group of persons, community or state (Barber, 1984). Politics can also be described as complex intricacies involved in the distribution of resources, patronage, class or status (Leftwich, 1984). Politics encompasses or can be contextualized to imply the art of clandestine negotiations, diplomacy, horse-trading, and power-play in both governmental and non-governmental entities alike, as well as private circles including families and businesses (Heywood, 1997).

Good Governance

Governance involves interactions that are intrinsically guided by set norms and laws and represents a decision making and implementation process, that can be applied within the corporate, local, national and international context (Wolfe, 2018). Governance represents the way norms and laws are structured, regulated and held accountable (Iyaya & Iyaya, 2006). Governance is effected through governing bodies whose responsibility is to either make or implement rules, laws or decisions that are binding on those that are governed (Wolfe, 2018). The most popular of governing bodies is the nation-state government which exercises authority or power derived from the constitution in managing the country's political, economic, diplomatic and administrative affairs. Other type of governing bodies includes non-governmental organisations, socio-political groups, charities and private sector corporations.

Good governance, in turn, is a term often used in international development to describe the various standards that guide the ways and processes public institutions deploy in conducting the nation's affairs as well as in managing its assets and resources (Vanlalhlmpuii, 2018). Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broader societal consensus which includes all societal spectrum and class in decision-making and allocation of resources (Onichakwe, 2016).

Good governance as a concept emerges as a model for differentiating effective and ineffective approaches to leadership and governance. Good governance therefore sets a standard for measuring how well, or not, institutions or organisations manage their collective affairs and resources, ensuring they do so in ways that are accountable, responsive, reliable, and devoid of abuse, corruption and waste. Good governance mostly adheres to the rule of law and does so without fear or favor. Good governance encompasses policy design and implementation processes that culminate in sustainable state building, improved social welfare and overall citizen wellbeing (Banerji, 2015).

Leadership

Leadership involves a relationship between two or more people in which one attempts to influence and gain the confidence of the other towards the accomplishment of set goals and objectives. It is a process of influencing activities or a group of persons towards the achievement of agreed goals and objectives (Hollander, 1992). Nelson Mandela, simply defined leadership as, "working with and for others to achieve a common goal that benefits everyone". Osuntokun (1987), defined leadership as the direction and example provided by an individual or group of individuals who are elected, selected or who by accident of history find themselves at the helm of affairs, governance and control of a country, state, institution as well as human and material resources. Northhouse, (2010), posits that leadership is not only political with regards to apex oversight, guidance or control, but also applies to and embraces the administrative, economic, educational and security sectors or spheres of life. Keohane (2010) described leadership as the core factor that makes a

difference between the success or failure of a country/entity, he went further to define leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working without difficulty and involves giving guidance and direction to citizens who remain the most valuable and critical assets of the country. According to Northhouse (2010), leadership entails that leaders influence their followers as well as give them legitimate directions and guidance on how best they deem fit for their instructions to be carried out.

Leadership embodies deliberately cultivated knowledge, motivation, accountability, vision and courage; it is driven by genuine patriotism and determination to serve and encompasses an influence process exerted over people, groups, organisations, communities or society to accomplish an objective or set of objectives (Hollander, 1992; Yukl, 2006). Leaders, by virtue of the positions of trust they occupy, should be able to positively inspire, empower, influence and lead their people or followership to positive change and prosperity (Dagaci, 2009). Majority of experts are however in agreement that leadership should primarily be about addressing the pressing needs of the people they serve.

Politics, Good Governance and The Imperative of Leadership Mentoring

The challenge confronting Africa, has its roots in the lack of effective leadership, which in itself has inhibited the proper management of the continent's rich and vast resources for the good of its citizenry (Claude, 1996). Leadership is key to societal development and transformation, and it primarily drives efforts at unlocking a country's potentials, while mobilising people and resources to deal with perceived or real challenges. Within the larger context, Africa as a continent embodies the same leadership challenge as its constituent country – Nigeria, such as endemic graft among leading political and public officials; resource mis-management; lack of accountability and transparency; laundering of proceeds of crime, etc. Wastefulness, poor socio-economic investment of scarce state resources; incoherent policy formulation; and poor policy design and implementation, all serve to impact to the detriment of the continent. Leadership failure within the continent, has also led to armed conflict including loss of millions of lives. For example, it's been widely revealed that instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is as a result of the failure of its leadership in managing volatile groups, leading to the 'Second Congo War', which partly destabilised and drew in neighbouring countries such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda and Rwanda (CPA, 2023). On the part of governance, the Centre for Preventive Action (CPA), submits that violence, rape, human right violations and poverty has continued, "largely due to poor governance, weak institutions and rampant corruption in the DRC". Weak governance structures costs DRC's political leadership effective control of the nation's up to \$24 trillion largely untapped mineral resource wealth (CPA, 2023). Similar political leadership and good-governance deficit scenarios and the consequent impact are easily perceived or obtainable in other continental countries like Somalia, Sudan and a host of others which are with a visible gap in leadership mentoring structures.

In Nigeria, fraudulent and corrupt practices of the elected political leadership cadre as well as insincere and dishonest internal party-politics have for long undermined Nigeria's capacity for good-governance, with corruption fostering low levels of accountability and transparency. Transparency International has for some time now insisted that corruption consumes a significant chunk of Nigeria's wealth, constituting a barrier to effective resource mobilisation, and deployment for sustainable growth, productivity, and sub-national and national development (Transparency International, 2014). That Nigeria, an erstwhile highly rated global exporter of cash and food crops such as groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil, cassava and yams, today relies majorly on a monolithic oil/gas powered economy, can be attributed to a long successive train of leadership deficit and less pragmatic governance.

Leadership in the wrong hands breeds corruption and inefficiency which ultimately limits equity and economic development, it also stunts growth, fosters political instability, impedes fiscal policy planning, implementation and its roll-on effect on GDP and foreign investor confidence (Theophilus et al, 2017). It undermines the legitimacy and reputation of the country among the comity of nations.

In a democratic nation like Nigeria that relies on politics and political parties for the emergence of its national and sub-national leadership, the leadership capacity and competency of emerging politicians is very important if short, medium and long term good-governance is to be achieved. Nigeria's next generation of leaders remains her surest path to investing in a progressive future. Any nation desirous of securing its prosperity, growth and development tomorrow, must today invest into leadership capacity development and competency enhancement amongst its youth and other young prospective and emerging political actors, (Moghalu, 2017). In the absence of an instituted and active political mentoring process, gaps will exist which enable the exploitation of youths as political thugs, agents of destruction and destabilisation, as well as tools in undermining the sanctity and integrity of the nation's democratic process (Okoronkwo, 2023). The increasing destruction of critical election resources, facilities and infrastructure during general elections is instructive, especially as it is perpetrated by predominantly by people who are comfortably within the youth-age bracket (Gadau & Malami, 2022). This should definitely not be seen from people who are projected as, 'leaders of tomorrow' – a cliché popularly bandied especially in Nigeria. Inadequate or poor preparation for leadership impedes good governance (Omoyibo, 2013). A meticulous leadership recruitment process must include a foundational mentoring process, which contributes in no small measure to yielding good governance. Mentoring is indispensable in facilitating an effective and successful leadership. Leadership mentoring, makes a difference as it works directly to positively influence the development and growth of a generation of deliberately nurtured, astute and pragmatic leaders that better appreciate peculiar societal needs and the impact they can make in changing society through a prepared and purpose-driven leadership, (Berabely, 2020).

Leadership recruitment is best made by picking from mentees who have been well groomed through the rudimentary processes and stages of leadership mentoring. A country which is desirous of improving its leadership potential and capacity, must tie its leadership-recruitment process to a deliberate leadership-mentoring programme, (Blass & Ferris, 2007). Countries like China have become global socio-economic leaders in the world today on the back of its successful apex leadership mentoring and recruitment scheme epitomised by the Communist Party (Li, 2009). Though the People's Republic of China is widely held to be with democratic credentials, standards and ethos that are largely questioned by the West, the Communist Party has undoubtedly over the past three decades mentored, recruited and delivered well prepared national and sub-national leaders who have all contributed in leading China into the transformational growth it has achieved today (Li, 2016). China, today, sits comfortably amongst the world's top three largest economies. India represents another fast-growing global economy which has benefited from a deliberate leadership mentoring and recruitment process. A majority of the country's 19th to 21st century apex political leadership has come through the mentorship of the centrist Indian National Congress also known as the Congress Party. Mahatma Gandhi remains one of its most famous leaders who went on to inspire the mentoring and recruitment of mentees who have played key roles in driving India's socio-economic growth for over three decades (Weber, 2004). These leaders have played key governance roles at sub-national levels across its 28 States, and Union Territories. India, today, is an industrial and infrastructural powerhouse with an increasingly surging GDP.

When the youth, who are in the majority, are not mentored for leadership, but rather left idle, crime and poverty amongst them would thrive. A youth-targeted leadership mentoring and recruitment process is therefore imperative because of its potential and eventual impact on good governance in the short, medium to long term.

CONCLUSION

As submitted by Vanlalhlmpuii (2018), the need for social and societal order necessitated the emergence of leadership and governance as a requisite component of human life. She rightly avers that good governance is primarily purposed to fundamentally create an environment that is inclusive, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people including the several challenges encountered within society. Hence, leadership is instrumental in enhancing the life of the people as well as realising the goals of good-governance. Politics and leadership mentoring must therefore be harnessed together to nurture the youth as well as equip prospective and upcoming leaders amongst them with the leadership capacity to influence and achieve objectives that are critical for societal growth and development, while also ensuring the attainment of the highest quality of life and security for all and sundry (Paquet, 1999). The attainment of these fundamentals, underlines good governance.

The Kashim Ibrahim Fellowship (KIF), a one-year non-partisan leadership mentoring programme, founded in 2018 by Nigeria's sub-national - Kaduna State, was designed with the objective of nurturing and equipping young Nigerians with the requisite capacity and experience to rise to top leadership positions across the nation's public, private and non-governmental sectors (KIF, 2018). The KIF is an initiative worth recommending – for sub-national, geo-political and national replication – to executives, policy makers, administrators and resource managers, as a worthy step in kick-starting the implementation of leadership mentoring schemes for the teeming and largely idle youth across the country. Such a mentoring concept can be adopted also by political parties in Nigeria, and indeed, if well tweaked, could mark for the start of the development of truly ideological-leaning political parties in Nigeria.

As such, political parties in Nigeria should establish ideology-driven leadership-mentoring foundations within the party, with the sole purpose of attracting and nurturing young and upcoming party members within the ambits of the parties' ideological leanings, manifestos and core leadership ethos. Young men and women with good leadership qualities and prospects should be encouraged to aspire to elective and leadership positions both at national and sub-national levels through the platform of ideologically driven and well mentored political parties. This would help prevent youths from getting involved or being used in the destruction and disruption of the political process as well as other improper acts that are inimical to good governance, national development and stability. It will also aid in facilitating the equipping and developing of these young prospective leaders of tomorrow with the required competency, capacity and skill.

Ultimately, a leadership mentoring process would help put youths on an enabling pedestal that adequately prepares them for envisaged and anticipated responsibility. This, therefore, should be encouraged to enable them prepare and acquire knowledge that expressly prepares them for leadership, as it would be virtually impossible to have or practice good politics and governance without people who from the onset are well mentored, nurtured and prepared for leadership.

REFERENCES

- Afolabi, G.K. (2004) Accountability and transparency in governance. *Babcock Journal of Management and Social Sciences*. 3 (1).
- Alhassan, Y.S & Sanusi, O.A (2020) Effective Political Leadership: A Determinant of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies*. 13 (2) 181 - 195
- Arowolo, D.E. and Aluko, O.A. (2012) Democracy, Political Participation and Good Governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*. 1 (3) 797-809.
- Barber, B. (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Banerji, A (2015), “Global and National Leadership in Good Governance”, in *Implementing the 2030 Agenda: The Challenge of Conflict*, UN Chronicle (4). Retrieved on 2/12/2023 from <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/global-and-national-leadership-good-governance>
- Bennis, W (2003) *On Becoming a Leader*. UK: Magna Publishing.
- Bentley, R, Dobson, A, Grant, M, and Roberts, D (1995) *British Politics in Focus*. Ormskirk: Causeway Press.
- Berabely, K (2020) *Mentoring the Next Generation of Leaders in West Africa*. West Africa Civil Society Institute
- Blass, F & Ferris, G (2007) *Leader Reputation: The Role of Mentoring, Political Skill, Contextual Learning and Adaptation*. *Human Resource Management*. 46 (1) 5-19
- Bush, T. and Coleman, M. (1995), *Professional Development for Heads: The Role of Mentoring*. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 33, 5, 60–73.
- Christiano, T. “Disagreement and the Justification of Democracy”. In: Wall, S (2015) *The Cambridge Companion to Liberalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Claude, A. (1996). *Democracy and Development in Africa*. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35 (4), 745-778.
- CPA (2023) *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Retrieved 28/12/2023 > <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>
- Dagaci, A.M. (2009). *Democracy and the Leadership Question: A Redefinition in the Nigerian Context*. *Lapai International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*. 2 (2) 16-28.
- Dhar, B.K and Mutalib, M (2020) *Leadership of Xi Jinping behind Unstoppable Sustainable Growth of China*. *International Journal of Organisational Leadership*. (9) 39-47
- Haralambos, M & Holborn, M (2013) *Sociology Themes and Perspectives* (8th ed). London: Collins
- Heywood, A (1997) *Politics*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Heywood, A. (2013) *Politics* (5th ed.). New York: Palgrave.
- Hezlett, S. A. (2005). *Proteges' Learning in Mentoring Relationships: A Review of the Literature and an Exploratory Case Study*. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*. 7(4), 505-526.
- Hollander, E. P. (1992). *Leadership, followership, self, and others*. *Leadership Quarterly*, 3(1), 43–54
- Ijaya, M. & Ijaya, G. (2006) *Transparency in Governance and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa: Cross Country Analysis*. *Babcock Journal of Management and Social Science*. 2 (8).
- KIF (2018) *Kashim Ibrahim Fellowship*. Retrieved 23/7/2023 > <https://kif.kdsg.gov.ng/>
- Keohane, N.O (2010) *Thinking About Leadership*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Leftwich, A (1984) *What is Politics? The Activity and Its Study*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Li, C (2009) *The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites*. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. 38 (3) 13-33

- Li, C. (2016). *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping era: Reassessing Leadership*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Moghalu, K.C. (2017). Africa's Leadership Conundrum. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*. 41(2) 171-191
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- OHCHR (2023) About Good Governance: OHCHR and Good Governance. Retrieved 16/12/2023 > <https://www.ohchr.org/en/good-governance/about-good-governance>
- Okoronkwo, K (2023) Godfatherism and the Dearth of Political Mentorship in Nigeria. Retrieved > <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/godfatherism-and-the-dearth-of-political-mentorship-in-nigeria/>
- Olaopa, T (2018) Mentoring Nigeria's Next Generation for Leadership. Retrieved 16/12/2023 > <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2018/06/30/mentoring-nigerias-next-generation-for-leadership-by-tunji-olaopa/?tztc=1>
- Omoyibo, K.U (2013) Leadership, Governance and Poverty in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*. 4 (6)
- Onichakwe, C. C. (2016) The Role of Good Governance and Development Administration in National Development. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*
- Osuntokun, J (1987) Leadership and Development in Nigeria: Development Outlook. 1(9) 113-126. *An International Socio-Economic Development Magazine*.
- Paquet, G. (1999) *Governance Through Social Learning*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Theophilus, A.O., Kazeem, L.O., & Bolanle, S.W. (2017). Leadership Crisis and Nation Building in Nigeria: A Symptom of Governance Failure. *Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*. 6(4), 10- 19
- Transparency International (2014) Nigeria: Corruption and Insecurity. Retrieved 14/12/2023 > <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/nigeria-corruption-and-insecurity>
- Vanlalhlmpuii, J (2018) Leadership and Good Governance. *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*. 5 (2)
- Wallace, J, Kundani, H & Donnelly, E (2021) The Importance of Democracy. Retrieved 16/12/2023 > <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/04/importance-democracy>
- Weber, T (2004) *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*. UK: Cambridge University Press
- Wolfe, D. (2018), "Experimental Governance: Conceptual approaches and practical cases", Background paper for an OECD/EC Workshop on 14 December 2018 within the workshop series "Broadening innovation policy: New insights for regions and cities", Paris.
- Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations* (6th ed.). NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall.