

The leadership now

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The debate on what really makes a good leader has been ongoing for a long time now. Scholars have often posited that whatever decisions a leader makes on most occasions largely depend on the circumstances surrounding the situations. Leadership is a process. A leader is one who takes charge of the process as he/she seeks to influence a social group towards a common goal (Stogdill, 1974 : 23).

Leadership is therefore the process of organizing social influence towards the accomplishment of a utilitarian goal. Motivating and enabling others to contribute positively towards the realization of the common good. Generally, leadership entails vision and development towards that vision (Bennis, 1989 : 17). That is why there is talk of millennium development goals in Africa. Each and every country or organization has its vision and its leader's immediate task is to provide leadership towards the attainment of the vision.

For any leader to qualify as good, then he/she must show certain characteristics which have been largely accepted across the board. Such a person ought to be visionary and passionate about the realization of that vision. With that, a good leader sets out to rally his people to contribute to the attainment of the vision. This calls for charisma. A good leader must be charismatic for a positive personal attribute that inspire the people (Philip, 2007 : 29). He must remain dedicated to the course and lead by example.

A good leader must also appear to be just in his actions. Honest dealings instill public trust which is very critical in any stewardship. All these qualities can be summarized by one bigger attribute – integrity. Any leader who passes and displays integrity in all his dealings is bound to succeed. Such

individuals never veer off from their mission which is normally driven by the goals and aspirations of the people. In this sense, a bad leader is the simple opposite of these qualities.

Some of the top qualities of a good leader is being charismatic. A person who is able to rally public opinion on a given issue through personal qualities can lead very well. Africa has a few of such individuals like Ivorian leader Alassane Ouattara and Ghana's John Atta Mills as well as Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Although many of them danced to power, African political leaders such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguemo Mbasogo, just to name but a few, have stuck to it through coercion instead of charisma. Patience is also another top quality of any good leader. He must be able to listen more and talk less.

That means he should talk after listening to as many arguments about an issue as possible before offering his guidance. In this respect, Kenya's Mwai Kibaki tops the list. The 81-year old knows when to open his mouth and when to do the listening. Education is important in any leadership role. An educated individual is able to articulate to the people the policies and manifesto he intends to put in place to steer the people to the promised land. This is very crucial for assertiveness.

However, many have often taken education to mean that only those with the highest levels of education can lead best. That myth was however demystified, thanks to former Ivorian strong man Laurent Gbagbo. Despite him being a professor, the country's economy collapsed under his watch.

Zimbabwe's Mugabe is probably the most learned of African political leaders but his country remains among the world's poorest despite much mineral endowments. A good leader should be one with a passion for the vision of a particular people to be lead. In Africa, many leaders have often been elected because of their charisma and other good attributes but end up paying only lip service to the attainment o the people's goals.

Most of them have instead focused on enriching themselves and their cronies. In Africa, the Marxist phrase power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely still lives large.