

# Chapter 16

## Institutional Leadership and Governance: The African Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter, which is about institutional leadership and governance, examines leadership from the institutional perspective, but, in the African context. Context is virtually important because it shapes the opportunity structure of any time (Mayo & Nohria, 2005). The peculiarity of the African continent would require that the chapter examines leadership and governance as most of the economies of Africa are still practically dominated by government activities in so many dimensions where governance is poor. Neglecting governance therefore would mean not doing justice to the leadership context. Since leadership in context is not leadership that emerges solely from the qualities of the human character, but leadership that springs forth from an appreciation and understanding of one's situation in the world, and the situation, in this respect includes; economic, social and political conditions that change over time, and these changes require distinct leadership styles and approaches for success, the tripod of institution, leadership and governance are therefore critical for success.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*...Africa's most valuable resources is not its oil, it's not its diamond, it is the talent and creativity of its people. The true wealth of Africa is its more than 900 million consumers, and its countless entrepreneurs and business leaders who are already demonstrating the wealth of the continent by building successful enterprises... Mahajan, 2009*

The concern of this chapter is not only about leadership but also about governance. The peculiarity of the African continent gives credence to the fact that we examine not only leadership but governance as most of the economies of Africa are still practically dominated by government activities in so many

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dimensions and governance in the public sector has been at a significant distance from what obtains in the private sector. Neglecting governance therefore would mean not doing justice to the leadership context as should be the case (Adair, 2010).

Leadership in context is not leadership that emerges solely from the qualities of the human character, but leadership that springs forth from an appreciation and understanding of one's situation in the world. What really is this situation? It means and includes; economic, social and political conditions that change over time, and these changes require distinct leadership styles and approaches for success (Mayo & Nohria, 2005). Governance, on the other hand, is all about the exercise of power within the limits placed on leadership. In other words, governance is the exercise of the power of leadership with the sole purpose of meeting the expectations of the constituents that entrusted the leader with the responsibility of leadership.

It is therefore important to note from the onset that the concept of role is key to our understanding of leadership. We may want to begin to wonder that by origin, a role is a part taken by an actor in a play. However, and in the wider perspective that we have used the concept, it means a person's characteristic or expected function (Adair, 2010). It is from this perspective that the phrase, 'role model' emerged as a person who is regarded by others as an outstanding good example of a particular role. Thus the role of the individual is sometimes synonymous to the activities by which the leadership performance of the individual is adjudged.

Every man has the potentials of leadership. While some actualise the potentials, some others do not. At one time or another in our lives, we face the challenges of leadership and the need to tap into those potentials to address them. It is established that in the today's world, there are no limits to the opportunities that one may face or encounter. The challenges seem to be increasing, but through our various responses, and the manner of those responses, the extent of change and impact we exert on the world in which we live and work is determined (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

This chapter in addition to the above introduction includes a theoretical framework conceptualizing institutional leadership and governance. This is followed by a background on African Leadership and Governance, and Contextualizing African Leadership as Leader of Ship or Leader of Sheep? The concept of 'Leadership Presence' is the subject of the section that follows with emergence of the concept of 'Leadership Absence' in Africa. The concluding part of this chapter is on Successful Leadership Measures and the Recipe for Africa.

## **2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The concept of leadership has changed over time. In the past, we have been told that leaders are born. This began with the premise that there was a trait that marked a leader, and originally that trait was heredity. In the African setting, this was a very prominent basis for leadership. Based on this premise, the firstborn son of a reigning king was automatically considered a leader in waiting or leadership material (Lundy, 1986; Lippit, 2002). However, history has revealed the problems with depending on bloodlines for leadership determination that it is now clear that leadership does not necessarily have to be hereditary.

As a result of the problems of relying solely on heredity to determine leadership, studies shifted from heredity trait to charisma as a basic determinant of leadership. This was also very prominent in the early days of the independent nations of Africa. Charismatic personalities emerged as the leaders of the various African states, but their performances revealed that the basis of their selection (charisma)

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