

LEADERSHIP AND THE FUTURE OF UGANDA: ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the effects of poor leadership on the social, political and economic development of a resource poor country like Uganda. Discussions focussed on the challenges and lessons learnt from the colonial to post independence leadership systems and their impact on the present and future Uganda. The study revealed that the current leadership mistakes and challenges in Uganda are as a result of the past bad colonial leadership systems that were mainly self-centred and not people oriented. It was concluded that until Uganda has visionary leaders who can serve the people beyond personal interests and use available resources optimally & equitably, only then, will she have economically healthy people who can meet the current and future global economic pace.

Keywords: Leadership, social, political, economical, development

INTRODUCTION

Leadership can be looked at as the ability to inspire others to struggle to achieve shared objectives and fulfil shared aspirations. On the other hand it can be looked at as a social process in which one individual influences the behaviour of others to achieve the organisational or society roles without use or threat of violence of any kind. According to Kotter (2005), leadership is not a province of the chosen few, a rank, title, privilege or money but an important responsibility. The focus of a real leader is mainly put on increased service to others rather than to one's self. This can be achieved by a leader being sensitive in separating personal objectives from those of the organisation or a country in this respect. It is always important for a leader to know where he wants his society or a country to be in future and therefore has to think a head of his subjects to develop long-term ideas for the future of his country or society. The mind of an effective leader is always haunted by one major question.

A leader at this level develops attractive vision that is eventually shared with his/her subjects. All efforts are then focused in achieving such a vision by aligning people and resources around the vision and keeping them in the right direction. A leader who undertakes what is explained above can be referred to as a visionary leader. It is important therefore, to note that, the future of Uganda depends on how visionary the past leaders were and how the present and those to be leaders are.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF LEADERSHIP IN UGANDA

Uganda became independent in 1962. This was almost after 100 years of colonial leadership given the fact that the first explorers Mr Speke and Grant arrived in Uganda in 1862. In 1874 Henry Manton Stanley introduced Christianity to Mutensa 1 the Kabaka

of Uganda and finally Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894. Leadership in Uganda therefore changed from the long-term indigenous leadership under the kings like Kabaka and others to colonial leadership under the British rule (Uganda protectorate 1974- Wikipedia), the colonial rule extended up to 1962.

Colonial leadership destroyed the existing structures of indigenous leadership like kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro and Ankole where people had lived harmoniously together for centuries. The proponents of the new colonial leadership had ill self-motives of creating reservoirs of raw materials and human labour for their industries back home. Leadership was therefore characterised by divide and rule among the subjects for self gain. New chiefs were then put in place to lead and were supported and aligned to serve interests of their masters other than those of their own people. Some few people in leadership positions would be rewarded with land and other materials so long as they remained loyal agents to their masters in mobilising raw materials and human labour for the western market. Leadership decisions in Uganda were being taken outside the country in Britain by non-Ugandans. The decisions were neither based on the country's situational analysis and future needs nor on the input of Ugandans themselves. This was a bad type of leadership that has had long term effects on the future of Uganda.

THE CURRENT AND FUTURE IMPACT OF PAST LEADERSHIP

Owing to the past bad leadership in Uganda, the current leaders are still repeating the old historical leadership mistakes. Almost all post independence leaders in Uganda after getting into positions of leadership, think of serving themselves and their close relatives first instead of serving the general society. They front their personal objectives above society's objectives like the past

leaders. Currently, leadership in our society and nation is not balanced and resources are un-evenly distributed. Our leaders have completely lost vision on democracy and this has resulted in high level of corruption that goes unchecked. A few people in the country become wealthy at the expense of the majority.

This situation impacts a lot on the future of Uganda due to increased level of poverty among the majority. Poor leadership in the past has led to the persistent tribal conflicts in some parts of the country like northern Uganda. Past leaders used divide and rule strategy within the country among different tribes to have their interests served. The same mistakes are still repeated and the resultant tribal wars in Uganda have led to economic loss in terms of resources, death of people and disruption of social services. Poor leadership in the past is also partly responsible for the current low rate of economic development in Uganda. One cannot underestimate the country's economic drain through the lost raw materials and human labour to the western world. Uganda would be a step ahead, had it not been subjected to the colonial leadership for a period of about 100 years.

Poor leadership without a vision in the past created a problem of dependency syndrome. The current leaders are still paged to the western world for financial support and AID. The leaders had no vision for the current Uganda. Visionary leaders would have thought of establishing industries in Uganda instead of transporting raw materials overseas. This would have solved the currently observed problem of unemployment and poverty in Uganda. There is a lot also to learn from the bad leadership under President Amin that beset Uganda for 2 decades 1970s-1980s. Prior to his autocratic leadership regime, the country had the best health indices in the sub-region. Poor leadership led to the reversal of all Uganda's health indicators which are now probably the worst health indicators in the region i.e. MMR 435 death per 100,000 live birth and IMR 76 death per 1000 live birth UBOS (2006).

DESIRED LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE OF UGANDA

Good leadership is the only way and a prerequisite for a better future of Uganda. With good leadership, a country attains stability, peace and security; all these create a favourable environment for increased household production and income that eventually lead to economic growth PEAP (1997). Similarly, good leadership goes hand in hand with good policies like decentralised type of governance and encouragement of foreign investment. All these can boost the country's economy and better economy is a good foundation for a better future. While some scholars' claim that leaders are born, it is also largely true that leadership can be learned over time.

A combination of the two qualities makes a better leader. For a better Uganda of today and future there is need for leaders who can listen, learn, consult, and also leaders who are innovative and can act on discipline not emotion. Democratic style of leadership seems to be the way forward for a better future of a nation like Uganda. Based on the Native American Proverb that:

*"We did not inherit this world from our ancestors
but we borrowed it from our grand children. If we
don't protect it very well we may have nothing to
give back in future".*

Uganda needs visionary leaders who can properly use the present situation to plan for the future, leaders who are able to do deeper analysis of the current situation and know how the present can affect the future. There is generally need for Servant Leadership in which, leaders focus on increased service to others and the people they serve rather than to themselves. African leaders could emulate the good example of Nelson Mandela who liberated his country from apartheid and served his people conscientiously to every one's satisfaction. From the article African Leaders on African Leadership (2004), Mandela expressed leadership concerns as follows:

"The task of undoing that past is on the shoulders of African leaders themselves, with the support of those willing to join in a continental renewal. We need a new generation of leaders who know that Africa must take responsibility for its own destiny, that Africa will uplift itself only by its own efforts in partnership with those who wish her well..." Nelson Mandela.

The above statement implies that the current African leaders must strive to make a difference from what the past leaders practiced and the mistakes they made. Good leadership with sound policies results in a healthy people and nation. With good health, people in the nation can achieve their social and economic goals and this definitely makes the peoples future enjoyable. Today the world is facing a challenge of fast paced economic and social change, this together with rapid population growth and increasing rate of industrialisation, results in adverse effects of which if not properly planned for, could lead to more global problems. With good leadership in place however, concerted efforts with leaders from other nations are made to solve such problems that are beyond the capacity of one nation. This therefore ensures the country's future survival in the era of globalisation.

The need for current leaders to develop strategies for meeting the global targets like Millennium Development Goals has become more apparent. The current leadership in Uganda seems to be taking a positive direction in this regard. This is evidenced in the introduction of programs like universal primary education to raise literacy levels and the affirmative action that empowers women economically, politically and socially, to mention but a few. Empowering women and increased literacy levels of the population enables the public to understand government laws and policies; this therefore makes it difficult for egocentric leaders to manipulate the constitution or laws to suit their needs. With

sustained good governance and leadership in a country, a good foundation for future generations is made. A time is eventually reached when a country becomes politically mature and aspiring leaders know that leadership is not about oneself, but a meaningful responsibility and service to others.

In view of the above discussion, it is concluded that, Poor leadership system in the past has had far reaching consequences on the present and future development of poor countries like Uganda. Therefore, until Uganda has visionary leaders who can serve the people beyond personal interests and use available resources optimally & equitably, only then, will she have economically healthy people who can meet the current and future global economic pace. This however takes time but the journey must begin now.

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