

## Revisiting the Issue of Leadership Challenges in Ghana: A need for a Second Look

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### Abstract

*The present and past leaders of Ghana seem to have failed to provide quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country. Despite different efforts made by some leaders to bring about positive development, the country's leadership has always been marred with challenges. The issue of getting the right leadership to propel good governance has been a recurring challenge in Ghana and developing countries in general. This study examines the current leadership challenges in Ghana. The most critical challenge confronting Ghana is leadership. These leadership challenges are evidenced in political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, which have bedeviled Ghana socio economic development. The reverberation effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are visible and being felt across all sectors and segment of the Ghanaian society. Leadership and good governance are crucial to realizing any giant stride taken in pursuit of development anywhere in the world, Ghana is not an exception. The Contingency Theory of Leadership propounded by Fred Fiedler was adapted. The study assesses the challenges of leadership in Ghana and the characteristics of good governance. It was concluded that, to tackle the challenges of leadership that bedeviled the country, Ghana needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. It therefore recommended that leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.*

*Keywords: Participation, Leadership, Development, Good Governance, Rule of law, Management*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Ghana has been and still is a critical issue that poses multiple challenges. Despite different efforts made by some leaders to bring about positive development, the country's leadership has always been marred with challenges. The issue of getting the right leadership to propel good governance has been a recurring challenge in Ghana and developing countries in general. Ghanaian leadership faces several challenges that hinder the country's progress. Addressing these challenges is critical to achieving national development and growth. Governments are unable to set in place transparent and accountable institutions capable of securing economic progress, governing effectively, and protecting their citizens. Efforts need to be made by leaders to tackle issues such as corruption, tribalism, and weak institutions, as well as prioritize education, infrastructure development, visionary leadership, and political stability. According to Oladipo et al (2013), to assess organizational outcome and its effectiveness is to assess the kind of leadership style demonstrated by leaders or managers since leadership is perhaps one of the most leading human-resource-related outcomes.

Ghana is one of the colonized countries and the first Sub-Saharan country to have gained independence in 1957 from British colonial rule. After independence, those into whose hands power fell, monopolized power, and practiced leadership selfishly (Da Rocha, 1995). That is, the indigenous rulers in the like of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, upon tasting power internalized domination and control to establish a one-party system state. However, with the coming into effect of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the country since has practiced a multiparty system as a rule towards democracy and development (Da Rocha, 1995). Ghana is believed to be the country that is nearest to the center of the earth, with the Greenwich Meridian that passes through Tema, a coastal town in Ghana meeting the equator off the shores of Ghana. Based on the 2013 census data, Ghana's population is estimated to be around 25.9 million, divided across ten regions that form the administrative divisions of the Republic. Ghana has an agrarian economy with estimated 60% of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture. The country is a parliamentary democracy with a 275-seat unicameral legislature governed under a constitution with a president who

serves as both head of state and head of government (Columbia University, 2012). Both the president and the legislature are elected by universal adult suffrage for four-year terms; the president's tenure is limited to two terms. Administratively, there are six metropolitan and 55 municipal councils that are subdivided into 212 districts that form the district assemblies.

Ghana is said to be one of the leading African largest gold producers after overtaking South Africa in 2019 (Garside, 2021) and one of the top two of cocoa production thus becoming the second-largest cocoa-producing country after Cote d'Ivoire in Africa (Shahbandeh, 2021). Also, the World Bank (2020) reports that the country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rose from 6.3 percent in 2018 to 6.5 percent in 2019 to imply economic growth in the country. However, as Joseph Ayee (2013) argues in his study of "The Development State Experiment in Africa, he said although GDP has seen growth over the years in Ghana, it has not reflected in the living conditions of people. Similarly in an earlier book titled "The State Development and Politics of Ghana", the author highlighted series of problems such as poverty and problem with health care delivery system and that has existed in the country over a long period of time (Hansen, 1989). Indicating that instead of coming out with appropriate ways to achieve socio-economic development, economic and social issues are hidden in numbers and glorified in the 21st economic indicators successes. Reinforcing that, though the country seems to be doing well on the surface, it has over the years lacked leaders and structures that will champion the burden of development (Ayee, 2013). The study examines the current leadership challenges in Ghana.

### 1.1 Conceptual Clarification

The word Leadership has been defined in so many ways by different scholars and as a result, it has become almost an impossibility to come up with a single definition that is acceptable to scholars of various divides. Leadership has been defined as a necessary phenomenon in political field. It is the capacity in a person or in a group of persons to inspire confidence and thereby regard for himself or themselves to guide and govern the followers (Okaneme, 2017). Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behavior Ogunmilade, Nwoko & Akhigbe (2017). Political leadership is the decision on social policy and resources allocation, as exerted by pattern representatives (Okadigbo, 1987; Abbott, 1947; Cranston, 1964). These definitions suggest that the leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power.

Leadership is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a group or organization, set goals, for the group, formulate paths to the goal and create some social norms in the group (Uveges, 2003). Leadership involves the exercise of social power. Thus, by exerting a profound effect on personal behaviour, individual and organization productivity, adjustment to working situations, and morale in organizations, leadership should not be viewed separately from social power (Nwagboso & Duke 2012). Omolayo (2006) describes leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working without any difficulty. According to him, leadership makes the difference between success and failure in a country. The qualities of good leadership according to Orji and Ekpo (2010) include transparency, accountability, honesty, diplomacy, etc. A leader is someone who leads a group of people in the direction of the accomplishment of set goals.

Leadership cannot be discussed without including the concept of development. Development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are raising peoples' living levels, i.e. incomes and consumption, levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes, creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect and increasing peoples' freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Development is therefore realisation of increased self-esteem and self-reliance. People should be capacitated to have power to influence and control their own future. i.e this concept does not only mean capacity building for socio-economic achievement, but also political empowerment so that people have power to influence their future (Wetmore & Theron 1997).

According to Kolade (2012), Governance involves participation by both the governor and the governed (i.e. the leader and the follower). Salman (2009) asserts that Governance entails the procedure through which governments are selected, monitored, held accountable, and replaced; it is government's

ability to judiciously manage resources well and formulate, implement as well as enforce good policies and regulations; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction between them. Dickson (2011) said that good governance in relation to a popular democracy ought to be hinged on two basic things; the first is a constitution fit to the distinct needs and circumstances of Ghana as ethnoreligious, multi-dimensional, and political economic structure. Secondly, a leadership fit not only to the pressing needs of Ghana but the exact needs of its citizens. He reiterated that generally, good governance does not call for ordinary type of leadership but it requires tolerance, breadth of outlook, intellectual comprehension, hard work, selfless devotion, statesmanship, a burning sense of mission, etc. to make a success of leading Ghana as a nation.

## 2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on contingency theory of leadership propounded by Fred Fiedler in 1958. The Contingency Theory of Leadership states that a leader's effectiveness is contingent upon with how his or her leadership style matches to the situation. That is, the leader must find out what kind of leadership style and situation he or she thrives in. Fiedler believed that one's effectiveness to lead depended on their control of the situation and the style of leadership. The Contingency Theory can be used to create leadership profiles for organizations, in which certain styles can be matched with situations that have proven to be successful (Gupta, 2009). Contingency Theory is a useful (although not always practical) tool for predicting leadership success within an organization. Contingency Theory believes that leadership styles are fixed and promote matching leaders with situations.

### 2.1 Challenges of Leadership in Ghana

**Lack of Rule of Law:** The rule of law is a principle or system where a society or nation is governed by a set of legislation instead of by an individual making the whole decision. Rule of law makes it impossible for one person to have the unrestrained exercise of power over a society or nation. It applies and puts a limit or check to the behavior of everyone including government officials. The level of poverty and illiteracy in Ghana is also a limitation to the rule of law. A lot of people live in ignorance of their constitutional rights which makes it easy for people to infringe their rights. Ghanaian leaders do not show respect to the rule of law, especially, judicial decisions. This hinders the judiciary from discharging its duties effectively. The judiciary is so unpredictable because the political elites still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments, and judicial administration is marked by weak enforcement capacity.

**Absence of Accountability and Transparency:** lack of openness and accountability remain a frightening legacy of the Ghanaian leadership since gaining independence in 1957 to date. A country where corruption is entrenched can never have a transparent and accountable system. Transparency and accountability are absent in Ghanaian leadership. An accountable government is one that is responsive to the demands of the citizen. Accountability is best enforced through the instrument an independent judiciary and the of rule of law. Citizen can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission or commission by a government and its officials. However, Ghana has not done well in this regard; it has been corruption at all levels. And this corruption is not unconnected with profuse index of weak accountability and lack of transparency. Ghanaian leaders abuse public office for private gain.

**Corruption Challenges:** Although corruption is a global problem, Ghana appears to suffer greatly from this menace. Corruption is the huge problem in Ghana has been fighting with since independence. It started with government officials and has gradually eaten deep into every other area of the economy. It's very rare to see a government official who isn't corrupt nowadays. This problem has been there since independence and has gotten worse. The countless reforms and lack of honesty by our leaders have left Ghana poor as poor can be. Politicians are expunged and later re-admitted into their parties, then, what hope for good governance when the leadership is deeply entrenched in corrupt practices. Corruption is one of the greatest threats to good governance today (Iyoha, et al 2015). It is a social problem which hampers development and robs people of the chances for any significant economic as well as social advancement (Okeyim, Ejue, & Ekanem 2013). Corruption slows down economic growth and investment.

**Lack of Ideology:** The lack of ideology is the tragedy of our politics since 1992. An ideology is a collection of ideas or beliefs shared by a group of people. It may be a connected set of ideas, or a style of

thought, or a world-view. There are two main types of ideologies: political ideologies, and epistemological ideologies. Political ideologies are sets of ethical ideas about how a country should be run. Epistemological ideologies are sets of ideas about the philosophy, the Universe, and how people should make decisions. In Ghana, the political elites constitute a nonproductive class who rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over-politicization of the Ghana is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.

## 2.2 Characteristics of Good Governance

The primacy of leadership in the governance project (Chikendu, 1987) rests on the ability of the leadership to see beyond the perceptual vista of the people, appreciate their needs and inspire and motivate them to cherish and desire these needs as goals that should be achieved. Indeed, ensuring good governance for achieving peace, security and sustainable development rests with the leadership. Governance should have a number of characteristics to be considered as good governance. Reviewing the relevant literature, it has been found out that various international organizations have set different types of characteristics for good governance. This paper discusses the main characteristics of good governance as below:

**Transparency:** Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them. Good governance requires transparency in public procedures, process, investment decision, contracts and appointment. It is not sufficient that information simply be available, it must also be reliable and presented in useful and understandable ways to facilitate accountability (Rahman 2016).

**Consensus orientation:** is a group decision-making process in which group members develop, and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole group or common goal. It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of deliberating and finalizing a decision, and the social, economic, legal, environmental and political effects of applying this process. Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, Where possible, on policies and procedures.

**Rule of law:** Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. One of the main characteristics of good governance should be its capability to formulate effective and implementable laws and policies. Good governance should have the ability to implement the established rules, regulations, laws and policies of the land. Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force

**Accountability:** Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisations and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation. The extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (Mogilevsky, 2010). Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders.

**Strategic vision:** Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded. The leader should have the qualities of a visionary: he must lead others to see a future that could be different notably from the present and to adhere to this vision by inspiring them through his words and his actions. Indeed, visionary leaders develop values and create and interpret the objectives of the institution, they are models, and they produce meanings, open doors and shape the culture of the

organization. They are persistent and consistent and have such a powerful vision that they know what they want from each interaction. Their visions do not blind others, but give them strength (Egan, 1985 cited in Korbi 2015).

**Securing Property:** Securing the properties of the people is one of the most important characteristic of good governance. Players of Good Governance at every level at the national, international, and corporate level should be able to secure people's properties.

**Control of Corruption:** Corruption remains a priority concern to the Ghanaian Government and People. Corruption affects all aspects of public life, continues to undermine the social, economic and political development of the country and is a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Good Governance should be in a position to control corruption (Mogilevsky, 2010)

**Participation:** All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively (Rahman 2016).

### 3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To truly clean up the bad leadership and corruption, Ghana needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. The country needs people who are educated, and sincere and honest both in administration and leadership styles. In the Ghanaian leadership situation, self-less and charismatic leaders are needed to amend the wrong. The most fundamental measure required in confronting the challenge, and averting Ghana from failure and collapse is strategic and progressive leadership. The importance of strategic leadership is that it identifies and harmonizes national capabilities to achieve the national interest.

The following recommendations classified as long-term are proffered to meet this challenge. Undertake concerted development, broadly understood as progress toward stable, accountable society. Restructure the polity to ensure equity, justice and fairness. Leader should be creative. Indeed, creativity plays an important role in the quality of decisions: the ability to propose innovative solutions is essential to decision-making process such as the development of new opportunities and problems diagnosis. Leaders should help arouse their followers' uniqueness and potential innovation perspective for more effective problem solving without direct intervention from their leader. Leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.

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