

**EDO STATE POLTECHNIC, USEN**

**FOUNDER'S DAY LECTURE DELIVERED BY  
RT. HON. BARR. PAUL NOSAYABA  
OHONBAMU**

**TOPIC: LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT AND THE  
VAGARIES OF POWER;  
NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE**

**DATE: 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018.**

## **LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT AND THE VAGARIES OF POWER:**

### **NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE:**

When I received the invitation from the Rector of this institution to deliver the Founder's Day Lecture as part of activities lined up for the convocation of the School, the first thoughts were to decline politely. I did not want to be accused of partisanship due to my present position in the state Government and my stake in the party that is dominant in today's national polity. More importantly one may be mistaken for a fifth columnist when I decide to go over board by doing a critical analysis of the present issue not minding whose ox is gored.

Let me begin by congratulating the management, staff and students of Edo State Polytechnic Usen, for your clear vision, appreciation and support not only for intellectual pursuit and research but for the moral infrastructure that obtains in the school. As well, allow me to particularly congratulate the Rector, **Professor Falodun** for the wonderful work he is doing. Of course, there is much more to do. I have no doubt that the authority would be equal to the task ahead, all things being equal.

I start by asking the question, what is leadership and who is a leader? It should be known that leadership does not mean or imply domination. It entails service, accommodation, inconclusive and collaboration. A leader is not a master; he can be a tutor or what **Rosseau** calls **Lawgiver**.

According to Plato, "Those who think themselves masters over others are only greater slaves than them". Leadership expert Warren Bennis once stated, "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality". Great leaders possess dazzling social attributes. Leadership is both a research area and practical skill encompassing the ability of an

individual to lead or guide other individuals. Unlike management, leadership cannot be taught, although it may be learned and enhanced through coaching or mentoring. According to Dwight D. Eisenhower "leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it". Leadership is management. This is the big one. Leadership and Management are not synonymous.

Good leadership can bring about all round development, both infrastructure and for the people. Where leadership fails, development becomes a major casualty. Development is the process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions.

**THE STATE OF NIGERIA:** To properly situate the issue of leadership development in Nigeria, it has to be put in perspective. Both Military Dictatorship and Constitutional Democracy.

**MILITARY DICTATORSHIP:** During this period, leadership was synonymous with domination, repression and marginalization. Even with regime change by way of coup de tat, the emergent leadership, to gain legitimacy simply white washed and communized the structures and instruments of domination and marginalization and continued with business as usual. That was the lot of Nigerians under military leadership even with oil boom.

At that time, government was not for governance but for looting. There was serious economic distortion and social dislocation. Oil resource that ought to be a blessing was used to punish the people with incessant increase of the oil pump price and all these happened with impunity as the leaders behaved like demented lions in the wilderness. Due to the wicked, reactionary and backward leadership, development took a back seat. It was at the height of all these contradictions that Nigeria received her own epiphany. Then came

what Samuel Houghonton called the third wave which was the democratization that swept through Africa in the late twentieth century.

**THE NIGERIAN TRANSITION:** While we all rejoiced at the liberalization of the political space in Nigeria, we failed to take critical note of some trends and tendencies that appeared to compromise the democratic project. These of course were the visible involvement of Western Governments, International NGOS and the lending liberalization agenda fascinated the encapsulation of the process and its reduction to mere procedural gyrations that failed to alter the structural foundation of the Nigerian predication.

In May 1999, a democratically elected government and leadership emerged and as elected officials, they were guided by the spirit and letter of the constitution. This is because, it is a constitutional democracy. Up tillnow, this is a situation. It is expected that all elected government functionaries, from the President to the Counsellors, are subject to the rule of law. In fact, according to Marcus Cicero in his work "How to run a Country", "The law rules over the President and he governs the people." It can be said that while the president is the voice of the law, the law is his master.

With this, there is bound to the sanity with the legislative and the judiciary as strong institutions of government. Under the democratic government, the people have fared better. This shows that leadership improved and development becomes it natural concomitant. With periodic elections, leaders now learn to be promise or covenant keepers. Unlike the military dictatorship in the present dispensation impunity is minimized and people know that they can be called upon to answer for acts committed. Today there is tolerance of dissent because all the freedoms enshrined in the Nigeria constitutions are guaranteed.

Past public office holders like Governors, Ministers, Senators, etc. have been called upon other offences committed while in office. Some have been convicted. All these go to show that leadership has improved. Still on leadership, it is necessary to pause a while to determine who real leader is.

There are leaders and there are those who lead. Leaders hold a position of power or influence. Those who lead inspire us. Whether individuals or organizations, we follow those who lead not because we have to, but because we want to. We follow those who lead not for them but ourselves. While mediocre die at their best, real leaders are always improving and raising their bar on how superbly they can perform and how quickly they can move. The first leadership conservation is that you need no title to be a leader.

According to **Martin Lutter Junior**. "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep street as Michelangelo Painted, or Beethoven Composed music or Shakespeare poetry. He should sweep street so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say 'Here lives a treat street sweeper who did his job well.'"

A leader must give his best in order to get best out of others.

### **NIGERIAN LEADERS OR CUSTODIANS OF STATE POWERS, HOW RIGHT:**

In Nigeria, if we say we have got leadership right, how can we explain the lack of vision and political courage. How can we understand the continuing subservience to foreign dictated economic and political programs? How can we explain the tenacity to office and the privatization of power? Finally, how can we explain continuing corruption, mismanagement, inefficiency, concentration of resources in a few locations, the manipulation of ethnicity, language and identity

and what **Professor Julius Ihonvbere** will described as the pathological fixation on raw power?

We have seen enough of the politics of illusion and the arrogance of power. We have seen the trivialization of the rights of the people, they give it on one platform and a bridge it on another. All these are antithetical to the spirit of good leadership.

Distinguish ladies and gentlemen, in spite of all these, the good news is that **President Mohammed Buhari** has made conscious effort to put Nigeria on the path of progress. His fight against corruption has achieved considerable results.

There has been considerable improvement in our democratic institutions which has increased the confidence in our electoral process. With several innovations and the deployment of technology, elections in Nigeria are now better. Election is no longer taken as an event but a process. It should be noted however, that President Buhari alone cannot fight corruption unless he is supported by all including the legislature and the judiciary. We emphasize corruption because that is the biggest fallout of leadership failure.

We must strengthen our institutions because strong institutions are at the very heart of the fight against corruption. Institutions that would not be personalized, that would be blind to power and that would waste time. Once this is done, Nigeria will be on the path of irreversible greatness. This resonates the positive expectations about Nigeria expressed in a presentation by Professor Patrice Lumumba, the Director General of the Kenya Law School. Distinguished guests, I look forward to the day therefore when corruption will be an exception rather than the rule in Nigeria. I look forward to the day therefore when all the laws and protocols of Africa will be in the museum of history because corruption will be no more.

I look forward to the day therefore when **EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau** and all other organs and institutions set up to fight corruption in Nigeria may be abolished because corruption would be eliminated. I look forward to the day therefore when National Honors in Nigeria will be conferred on men and women who truly deserve them and not to those who have bought them. I look forward to the day therefore when young men and women in our institutions of higher learning will have as their natural instincts, the instinct to do good. I look forward to the day when we will be able to say like the man in the bible "Corruption where is thy sting, corruption where is thy sting".

Finally, in political, social and economic aspects of her life, Nigeria will become the greatest country in the world if only we can do away with the seven social sins which **Mahatma Gandhi** spoke of as affecting the life of India. These also apply **Mutants Mutandis** to Nigeria and indeed other post-Colonial African States. They are;

1. Wealth without work
2. Knowledge without character
3. Politics without principle
4. Pleasure without conscience
5. Commerce without morality
6. Science without humanity and of course
7. Worship without sacrifice

Thank you and God bless this audience