

Innovative Pathways for Effective E-Governance in Africa: The Imperative of Authentic Leadership

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Abstract: The evolving concept of e-governance has become one of the leading praxis of the 21st Century. This again reinforces, not just the importance of governance in human societies, but the need to redefine, reappraise, reinvent and redirect the path of governance towards effective and efficient service delivery. The paradigm of Science and Technology therefore presents the leading edge in our contemporary world thereby validating the viability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in governance at diverse levels of operations. This paper, employs secondary data and presents the position that in the light of the fact that e-governance covers areas such as government, citizens and businesses/interest groups, the central place of leadership that will authenticate trust and confidence in the effective delivery of the e-governance protocols therefore becomes an imperative. In the gamut of literature on leadership, this paper identifies authentic leadership as a necessary condition that will facilitate effectiveness and efficiency of e-governance. This paper concludes that since there is a human dimension to the process of e-governance, creating innovative pathways for its effectiveness in Africa calls for authentic leadership which emphasizes constructive and developmental interactions between leaders and followers.

Keywords: development; governance; politics and psychological capital

1. Introduction

Mapping out innovative pathways for effective e-governance in Africa brings along with it the need to seek viable platforms and instruments to achieve this. In the same vein, the imperative for driving improvements in the quality of good governance is what has advanced the introduction and implementation of e-governance across a number of nation states and organizations today. The recent advances in communication technologies and the Internet has provided opportunities to help governments and citizens leverage their relationships by

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enhanced interactive platforms, thus contributing to the attainment of more efficiency and more effectiveness. Kofi A. Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations further validates this, according to him, “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” It can therefore be inferred that e-governance can serve as an engine of development by promoting governance that is responsive, citizen-centric and socially inclusive (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2012). Leveraging on e-governance will strengthen the governance framework of Africa Nation States, it will also make a number of demands on the existing structures and tools of governance as it will require capacity, reliability and integrity of the core institutions in place. It will also demand accountability for actions, transparency in decision-making (Misuraca, 2007). The imperative of leadership, with specific reference to authenticity of leadership forms the major thrust of this paper. This paper therefore flags off an innovative pathway for the implementation process of e-governance driven by authentic leadership which is organizationally savvy, results driven and intricately in touch with multimodal levels of awareness of human behavior. This to a large extent will facilitate the actualization of the benefits of e-governance.

2. Methodology of the Study

This study employs qualitative method. Qualitative study refers to the method which relies on text and image data, and draws on diverse strategies of inquiry (Creswell, 2003).

The study engages secondary source of data which includes books, texts, journals and other materials that form the body of scholarly works on the two variables in this research work.

The techniques for analyzing these secondary data are textual analysis and explanatory method. Textual analysis implies analyzing the content of books, journal articles, monographs, unpublished theses, research projects and internet materials. It is defined as “the study of recorded human communications such as books, websites, paintings and laws” (Babbie, 1990).

According to Mckee (2003), textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. According to

him, when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text.

3. Literature Review

3.1. From Governance to E-Governance

Shamsul Haque's observation of the transition in public governance is very instructive in interrogating the transition from governance to e-governance. According to him, "in all societies, the formation of public governance is largely dependent on its contextual parameters, including social structure, economic condition, political atmosphere, cultural pattern and technological trend. The nature of governance often changes depending on the intensity and speed of transition in some of these surrounding factors. In the current age, one of the most significant contextual phenomena affecting public governance is the revolution in information and communication technology (ICT)" (Haque, 2002, p. 1). The reason e-governance has assumed a global lexicon in politics is due to the evolutionary transformation of Information and Communication Technology.

The transition from governance to e-governance does not mean that there is anything fundamentally wrong with governance as a concept that the 'e-' has come to correct. The dimension of the 'e-' is to improve on governance such that it uses the platform of information and communication technology (ICT).

3.2. What is governance?

We will consider some definitions of governance as defined by some countries.

France: "Governance is the art of governing, articulating the management of public affairs at various levels of territories, regulating relationships within society and coordinating the interactions of the various actors" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006).

Ireland: "Governance is essentially understood as the way in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (IrishAid, 2009, p. 1).

United States USAID: "Governance issues pertain to the ability of government to develop an efficient, effective, and accountable public management process that is

open to citizen participation and that strengthens rather than weakens a democratic system of government” (USAID, 2009, p. 1).

IMF: “Governance is the process by which decisions are made and implemented (or not implemented). Within government, governance is the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Good governance refers to the management of government in a manner that is essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law” (IMF, 2007, p. 128).

In all the above definitions, the concept of management of resources for effective service delivery is recurrent. The IMF definition moved from governance to good governance which implies that it is not just about the management of public resources for the good of all but that the resources have to be judiciously utilized. On the premise of good governance, some pillars become the defining factors such as transparency, accountability, consensus, rule of law, efficiency among others. Thus, we can conveniently argue that it is not just **e-governance** that should be the focus of our present quest for a better way of administering the collective wealth of the society, we need to embrace the idea of *good e-governance*. Therefore, we are calling for *good e-governance just the way governance was taken beyond mere governance to good governance*.

UNESCO definition captures both governance and e-governance. According to it “Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities.” (UNESCO). As noted by Haque (2002, p. 232), “one of the most significant dimensions of e-governance is the creation and maintenance of websites by legislatures, ministries, agencies, political parties, local institutions, and so on”.

E-governance is defined as “the application of *electronic means* in (1) the *interaction* between *government* and citizens and government and businesses, as well as (2) in *internal government operations* to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance” (Backus, 2001, p. 2). We could therefore refer to e-governance as a means of returning hegemony to the people as

it relates to the necessity of the involvement of the citizens in the process of governance. The people have the moral right to get involved in shaping the policies that affect their collective existence within a geographical territory referred to as 'the state'.

In order to ensure effectiveness in the implementation of e-governance, Sachdeva (2002) reflecting on the Indian experience, holds that there is a need to build '*e-readiness*' in preparation for e-governance. For him, this entails strengthening infrastructural inadequacies, reducing the barriers to e-governance, and strengthening the drivers to e-governance. He goes further to identify seven areas where *e-readiness* must be built namely:

- i. infrastructure;
- ii. institutions;
- iii. laws;
- iv. leadership and commitment;
- v. human capacities;
- vi. technology;
- vii. data systems.

While all of these areas are important, the central focus of this paper is to underscore the major role leadership plays in ensuring the availability of the remaining six areas. Leadership is the human force that gives meaning to all the activities in the society. The enablers of e-governance or e-government are the following namely: *technology, process and finally the people*. The most important aspect of the people is the leadership segment that ought to provide a form of vision and direction to the society at large. And importantly, the leaders within the society are in control of the resources of that society which they ought to deploy for the wellbeing of the citizens. On the importance of funding to e-governance, Sachdeva (2002) writes that funding is the foremost issue in e-governance initiatives. More so, in discussing what he termed as the critical success factors of e-governance, Bhatnagar (n.d) alludes to several things among which was 'strong political and administrative leadership'. The most simplistic definition of e-governance holds that it implies "information and communication based interaction between government and citizens" (Fiser, et al, 2012, p. 187). The human factor is always recurrent in both governance and e-governance. The 'e' is not self-sufficient; it needs the input of the human factor. Thus, e-governance does not

necessarily translate to good governance. It is the leadership factor that determines whether it is a *good e-governance* or *bad e-governance*.

As stated earlier, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with **governance** as a hard concept except that e-governance seems preferable because it:

- i. reduces the cost of governance;
- ii. reduces the delays in service delivery;
- iii. encourages and enhances citizens' access to public information;
- iv. ensures transparency and accountability;
- v. discourages totalitarian tendencies;
- vi. empowers civil society and promote democracy.

As earlier stated above, if e-governance would work, the human factor as represented first by the leaders is important. Our quest must move beyond e-governance to *good e-governance* in the place of good governance. In order to raid our society of the obstacles to effective implementation of e-governance, the leadership question becomes an imperative. This type of leadership is known as authentic leadership.

4. E-Governance and the Imperativeness of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership refers to values and morals based form of leadership, and leading by a guiding principle to 'simply do the right thing' (Leupold, 2011). George (2003) describes authentic leadership as a lifelong process through which one remains true to himself while simultaneously serving the common good. He operationally defines authentic leadership through five dimensions: understanding your purpose, practicing solid values, leading with the heart (i.e., engaging and inspiring others), establishing enduring relationships, and demonstrating self discipline" (Leupold, 2011). Authentic leadership has as its core the need to serve the common good and the display of self discipline in the process of adjudicating social goods and social burdens.

According to Avolio & Gardner (2005), authentic leaders are those who are acutely aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' moral and value perspectives, knowledge, and strength. Authentic leaders are people-oriented instead of self-oriented therefore they are accepted by the people and are able to connect and communicate with the people.

Authentic leadership is “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243). Authentic leaders are confident, hopeful, resilient, and of high moral character. They understand themselves, and how they think and behave (Avolio et al., 2004). Displaying positive behaviours and provoking positive emotions in the followers are also central to authentic leadership. They give hope to their followers. In simpler terms, authentic leadership is “a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behaviour that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow” (Avolio et al. 2009, p. 424). This kind of leadership is what exactly will make e-governance transcend from e-governance to good e-governance. Above all other leadership typologies, authentic leadership is ethical, optimistic, resilient and encourages an openness in sharing information and embracing other peoples' opinions.

The current issues globally call for an authentic dimension of leadership as argued by Northouse (2010). “Upheavals in society have energized a tremendous demand for authentic leadership. The destruction on 9/11, corporate scandals at companies like WorldCom and Enron and massive failures in the banking industry have all created fear and uncertainty. People feel apprehensive and insecure ... they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good. People's demand for leadership makes the study of authentic leadership timely and worthwhile” (Northouse, 2010, p. 205).

There is a call, given the evils in the modern world, for leaders that are transparent, ethical, optimistic, accountable among others. Authentic leadership suggests that authentic leaders show to others that they genuinely desire to understand their own leadership to serve others more effectively (George, 2003). The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future oriented and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders. The authentic leader is true to him/herself and the exhibited behavior positively transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves. The authentic leader does not try to coerce or even rationally persuade associates but rather the leader's authentic values, beliefs and behaviors serve to model the development of associates (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243).

The fundamental elements of authentic leadership outlined above are of great importance to the survival of e-governance in Africa. The ideas of moral rectitude, optimism and commitment to the transformation of followers to leaders are important in this study. All of these dovetail to the fact that an authentic leader transcends selfishness and self-centeredness as presently displayed in some quarters today in African societies.

For Shamir & Eilam (2005, p. 396-398), authentic leadership has four broad principles. They are:

- a) authentic leaders do not fake their leadership;
- b) relatedly, authentic leaders do not take on a leadership role or engage in leadership;
- c) activities for status, honour or other personal rewards;
- d) authentic leaders are originals, not copies;
- e) authentic leaders are leaders whose actions are based on their values and convictions.

Authentic leadership in the political arena, for instance, depersonalizes his political position in order to ensure that the peoples' welfare is guaranteed. An authentic leader is not reward, status and honour driven. A charismatic leader may not be an authentic leader but an authentic leader can be a charismatic leader. Authentic leadership “focuses on the formation of authentic relationships between the leader and followers that are characterized by trust and integrity” (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005, p. 389).

From all the above descriptions by different authors, certain values are recurrent. To successfully operate *good e-governance* in Africa, there is a need to integrate authentic leadership, considering its basis elements discussed above, into our quest for operationalization of e-governance in Africa. This is necessary so that, after awhile, we do not begin to search for another paraphernalia in our desire for effective service delivery to the people.

Bhatnagar (n.d) conceives e-governance as “a process of reform in the way Governments work, share information, engage citizens and deliver services to external and internal clients for the benefit of both government and the clients that they serve”. The definable variables in e-governance are government, citizens and businesses or interest groups. While the external variables are citizens and businesses/interest groups, the internal variable is the government itself. These relationships must be built on trust, integrity, compromise, consensus, optimism,

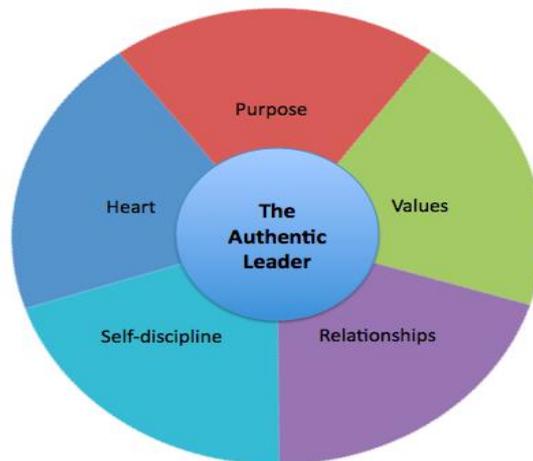
resilience and effective information sharing. All of these are the hallmarks of authentic leadership. It is derived from the existentialist philosophers' concept of authenticity. It prioritizes the existence of the larger community of people vis-à-vis the existence of the leader. The leaders' self-awareness is only realized in the face of the self-awareness of the followers (the citizens).

The advancement of science and technology has thrown up the pragmatic introduction of dimension of *electronic* to governance and government. In order to do this, the government employs information technologies such as World Wide Web, Internet, Wide Area Networks and mobile computing to grant access to its citizens, businesses and other arms of government.

One recurrent phenomenon that will guarantee effectiveness of *good e-governance* is the tempo of leadership. As we begin to clamor for a transition from governance to e-governance in Africa, we must again re-evaluate the leadership parameters that will aid the effectiveness of e-governance. The obstacles to e-governance in Africa are not just the illiteracy of the masses and the absence of the infrastructures that will make it work. Beyond all of these is the leadership that will be committed to making e-governance work by eradicating the aforementioned obstacles in order to make room for real civic engagements. It is therefore wise to turn to our analysis of the leadership imperatives in e-governance in Africa.

4. Components of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders have been found to invest in building enduring legacies over time. Authentic leadership has been prescribed for twenty first century organizations on the basis of the benefits it brings on board: purpose driven, value Driven, integrity driven, people driven.



Source: (George, 2003)

a. Positive psychological capital

Luthans & Avolio (2003) identified the positive psychological capacities of confidence, optimism, hope and resiliency as personal resources of the authentic leader. Because of the dynamic situations of the African continent, this is the type of leader that would make e-governance work.

b. Positive moral perspective

Luthans & Avolio (2003) also assert that authentic leadership and its development encompasses an inherent ethical/moral component. May et al. (2003) provide an extensive discussion of this moral component, describing an ethical and transparent decision making process whereby authentic leaders develop and draw upon reserves of moral capacity, efficacy, courage, and resiliency to address ethical issues and achieve authentic and sustained moral actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). Our focus here shifts to the moral content of the operators of e-governance. We are in need of men and women of high moral rectitude. Information Communication Technology, the platform for effective e-governance, is an inept tool that lacks the capacity for self-usage. This is where the operators of e-governance come to play. At this point, we are calling for moral dimension in the operation of e-governance so that we would be able to talk of *good e-governance* in Africa.

c. Leader self-awareness

Self-awareness is fundamental to authentic leadership. Self-awareness is not a destination point, but rather an emerging process where one continually comes to understand his or her unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs and desires (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). There are four elements of self-awareness which are relevant to the development of authentic leadership: values, cognitions regarding identity, emotions, and motives/goals (Gardner et al., 2005; Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324).

In his self-awareness, the leader becomes aware of the existence of others and he thus sees a nexus between them. He identifies both his strengths and weaknesses.

d. Leader self-regulation

An authentic leader exercises a high level of self-regulation or what is also known as self-control. He aligns his internal disposition with a situation he ought to react to. "Self-regulation is the process through which authentic leaders align their values with their intentions and actions. ...we explore in detail the self-regulatory processes whereby leaders achieve this alignment, thereby making their authentic selves (e.g., values, motives, goals) transparent to followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 325).

Here self-control and transparent lifestyle are necessary in our operation of e-governance in Africa. There is also a need to exercise self-control in acquisition of wealth by our political leaders.

e. Leadership processes/behaviors

As noted by (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 326), "authentic leaders are described as leading by example as they demonstrate transparent decision making, confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, and consistency between their words and deeds". Furthermore, Gardner et al. (2005) and Ilies et al. (2005) both argue that authentic leaders seek to develop associates by modeling and supporting self-determination (i.e., internalized self-regulation) (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 326). It is also argued that authentic leader influences his followers through emotional contagion and positive social exchanges. All of these assist the followers to identify the values of the authentic leader.

f. Follower self-awareness/regulation

The authentic leader shapes and heightens the self-awareness of the followers such that the former develop greater clarity about their values, identity and emotions and thus move towards internalized regulatory processes, balanced information processing, transparent relations with the leader and associates, and authentic behaviour (Gardner et al., 2005; (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 326-327). They come to know and accept themselves and self-regulate their behavior to achieve goals that are, in part, derived from and congruent with those of the leader. Hence, we expect an authentic relationship between the leader and followers to emerge which is characterized by open and positive exchanges as they pursue shared and complementary goals that reflect deeply held and overlapping values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 327).

We cannot overemphasize the fact that achieving e-governance in Africa is not the job of the leaders alone but rather a collaboration between the leaders and the led. The authentic leader understands the symbiotic relationship that should exist between him and the followers and hence he concentrates on consciously lifting the self-awareness of the followers to the point that they see the need to participate in the pursuit of organizational or societal goal set in place by the leaders.

g. Follower development

As followers internalize values and beliefs espoused by the leader their conception of what constitutes their actual and possible selves are expected to change and develop over time. As followers come to know who they are, they in turn will be more transparent with the leader, who in turn will benefit in terms of his or her own development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 327).

The distinction made between authentic leadership and transformational leadership theory in terms of developing the followers is that while the latter set out to transform a follower into a leader, the former simply transforms a follower into a leader by being a role model to the follower. Both the leader and the follower develop in relational term. One of the problems of the contemporary politics in Africa is that those in leadership position have not been able to lay down positive and good examples for the youths to emulate. A lot of youths see politics as the shortest escape route out of poverty and wants. This is possibly because they have read it on the pages of newspaper how several billions are stolen without the culprits going to jail.

h. Organizational context

In prescribing the organizational context for authentic leadership, Avolio & Gardner, (2005, p. 325), propose that the environments that provide open access to information, resources, support, and equal opportunity for everyone to learn and develop will empower and enable leaders and their associates to accomplish their work more effectively. For effectiveness of both the leaders and the followers in the pursuit of an organizational or societal goal, the leaders must promote an inclusive organizational culture that would enable both of them to continually learn and develop (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

5. Conclusion

Marrying *e-governance* with authentic leadership is a viable pathway to innovative and effective social delivery to the masses. Since e-governance, in many ways, presupposes the need for effective civic engagement - what is also known as democratizing governance - this pattern of leadership with its distinctive features such as purpose, value, integrity and people-centeredness is an imperative in realizing the goal of e-governance. The emphasis of authentic leadership on the symbiotic relationships between the leader and the followers, among other components discussed above, necessitates its fitness for this innovative pathway to effective e-governance in Africa.

Importantly, with authentic leadership, what we will have would not be mere e-governance but rather *good e-governance*. In other words, what will make e-governance achieve effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery is the human element. The human element is overseen by the leader. And bad leadership will produce *bad e-governance*; good leadership will produce *good e-governance*. Therefore, to have *good e-governance*, this paper recommends authentic leadership as a variant of good leadership, responsible and responsive leadership, which is most suitable to engage in delivering our quest for development in Africa.

6. Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are presented and are seen to be pertinent to the realization of *good e-governance* in Africa.

First, there is a need for leadership commitment to the realization of *good e-governance* in Africa. The leadership style that is suitable is authentic leadership

with all its components and elements such as confidence, hope, optimism, resilience and high moral character. As a pattern of transparency, it encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from the followers.

Second, there is a need for commitment to capacity building in order to accommodate the operations of *good e-governance* in Africa. As a matter of fact, authentic leadership is committed to developing the psychological capital of its followers. The point is that for e-governance to be effective, there must be a deliberate training of personnel and agencies that will be committed to its cause.

Third, the infrastructural and institutional apparatuses that will enhance the engagement of e-governance must be put in place. The funding platform and process is also vital. It is at this juncture that the question of leadership becomes relevant again. Sufficient resources must be deployed to build the infrastructures and the institutions needed for *good e-governance* in Africa.

Fourth, there is need for national orientation across all levels of government including educating the masses about the new move within our society. In other words, there is a need to raise peoples' level of intelligence in regards to the usage of ICT.

Fifth, the followers - the masses/citizens - must be committed to the course of realizing *good e-governance*.

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