CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP: THE 3C APPROACH AS WAY FORWARD

Oluwaseun Viyon Ojo, Lagos State University
I AM prompted to write this article following a personal experience. I was privileged to face a panel of two interviewers pursuant to an application for an internship with their company.

In the course of the encounter, the key panellist perused my curriculum vitae. However, while apparently appreciating, with a measure of delight, the segment of my achievements and honours, she was quick to express reservations in the event there was no inclusion of leadership experience in my resume.

It was rather fortunate for me that I had held some leadership positions while on campus, and to a reasonable extent acquired some cognate leadership experience. The interview went very well and if I may say, the experience was awesome and worthy to learn from.

My mindset was radically changed and the impression I left with was that most corporate organisations and establishments are in dire need of leaders. They want leaders. They want people with requisite leadership experience to take charge of affairs.

They are only willing to engage and retain the services of persons who can first lead themselves and then be capable of leading others. They need people who can be part and parcel of the leadership and managerial class of their organisation.

They do not just want people with certification from higher institutions but those who possess the requisite leadership skills, abilities and experience.

---

1 Ojo Oluwaseun Viyon is a graduate of law from Lagos State University.
Now turning to my personal experience, I sensed a sigh of relief and delight in her when she heard that I have had reasonable leadership experience in school.

Away from the personal experience and focusing on the crux of this paper, it is apposite to examine the concept of leadership from the definitional perspective and then delve into the challenge of leadership noticeable in Nigeria today. Attention will then be paid to the leadership challenge in the various sectors of the economy, public and private.

Then, emphasis would be laid on the 3C approach on the way forward to be suggested in this paper as part of the many possible solutions to this present challenge with especial respect to youths.

The traditional concept of leadership from the definitional perspective is simply that it is the act of holding an office or position of a leader. Whenever the word leadership crops up, the basic orientation is to think it is the holding of a particular post or bearing a title.

The understanding is not erroneous but just too superficial. In a deep view of it, leadership transcends the concept of holding a position. John C. Maxwell has this to say, “Leadership is Influence.” Wikipedia defines leadership as “a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.”

It went further to state that some understand a leader simply as somebody whom people follow, or as somebody who guides and directs others while others define leadership as “motivating and organising a group of people to achieve a common goal.” To my mind, all the above definitions fit into the contextual understanding of leadership.

In my own understanding, leadership is the ability, skilfully acquired though could be innate, of a person to motivate, inspire and lead others towards the accomplishment of a set mission or targeted objectives as well as shaping, adjusting their pattern of behaviour towards the inculcation of a
positive, progressive value system. The challenge of leadership is clearly evident in the Nigerian system.

Leadership lacuna exists in almost every facet of our life. There is a widespread clamour for credible, reliable leadership in every sector of the economy, for example. Both in the private and public sector, there are leadership gaps.

There is a vacuum of leadership in schools, in the church, public service, corporate organisations and political environment.

Schools are in need of students that can lead and influence their peers towards the accomplishment of the vision and mission of the institution. Churches are in need of Christian leaders who can recruit others into the army of Christ by inculcating in them the right Christian values through role modelling conforming to the image of Christ.

The public sector and the political environment require the service of people willing to sacrifice their time and resources in the running of the government affairs for the overall progress and advancement of the people.

Most indigenous and multinational corporations in our land are in dire need of competent leaders and employees who can freely lead and synergise with others within the corporate environment.

They will work with a view to promoting the corporate vision, mission and objectives, driving the corporate vehicle forward and significantly minimising the cost of operations.

All of these challenges seem herculean but they are surmountable. I have always believed in all my life in thinking and talking less about a problem and thinking more on how to offer practical solutions to it.

In my humble view, I will suggest a 3C approach to dealing with this challenge most especially from the plane of perception of the youths. The 3Cs stand for Character, Competence and Charisma.
These three ingredients, if properly imbibed, will make up a sound and credible leader. I shall presently discuss them in seriatim.

**Character:** It is high time people holding positions imbibed the right character. Most of the challenge we have in leadership in this country is a result of the absence of strong character in our leaders. Most of them mess up big time whenever they mount public offices. Character is the overall mental, moral and spiritual qualities that distinguish a person.

Character is the real nature of a person. It is what he is truly from his inside. It is what he is when others are not there. It is what he is when it comes to critical and delicate issues such as when he is confronted with whether to take bribes or not.

The poor track-record of our leaders in respect of character is rubbing on our youths. It is no new thing that the defective character of our leaders in moral and financial matters is reflecting in the youths.

Most youths have chosen for emulation and as role models leaders with a poor character make-up. This is inadvertently showing in their lives and lifestyles. This may sadly be the state of affairs. As a way out, I suggest youths should go all out to develop very strong character.

Build a strong leadership character that can stand the test and tides of moral and financial issues. Develop the right character today. Do not delay because such character will be needed one day from you.

Character here includes integrity, strong reputation, prudence, probity, accountability, perseverance, good human relations, fear of God and other right values. Consciously, develop these qualities and I can be rest assured that you will be the next model leader.

**Competence:** Gone are the days when companies employ people who are not so competent for reason of paucity of trained and competent hands.
The competition in the labour market is real these days. Few employment opportunities are being chased by many qualified candidates who are products of higher institutions. Even in politics, there is now an influx of competent personality with relevant academic qualifications and requisite professional experience.

To survive in this tense, competitive environment, one has to be so competent to the point of being indispensable. The competence as used here consists in the acquisition and possession of requisite skills, qualifications and experience for the accomplishment of a particular assignment.

Only competent persons will be able to survive the heat of the competitive environment. Even within internal corporate environment, there is competition for higher positions and only persons of value will eventually occupy them.

In simple, forcible terms, the world out there needs competent people. Thus, do not play with time. Invest your time in improving yourselves and making yourselves a person of value. Invest in books and informational materials. Go all out for knowledge.

Be a compulsive and avid reader. Leave your comfort zones and break your fallow ground. Seize opportunities to attend conferences, trainings and seminars.

Stimulate and engage in intellectual discussions. Sit down and write down your ideas in a tablet form (most times, they become useful in the future). Improve your writing skills. Hone your speaking skills. No doubt, all these play significant roles in developing and improving one’s level of competence.

**Charisma:** Charisma is simply the ability to convince others of what you are convinced of. It is the ability to effect a change of behaviour in others through one’s strong power of conviction.
The world has churned out some well known charismatic leaders such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Niccollo Machiavelli, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, to mention a few, who were able to shape the behaviours of their followers (either positively or negatively) through their charisma.

Do not just possess character and competence but also be charismatic. You should be able to persuade people in believing and following your line of thinking through the power of persuasion by words of mouth or by exemplary behaviour.

Crave for opportunity to be able to speak before people as this will enhance your public speaking or presentation skills as practice makes perfect. Seize every opportunity to talk and challenge people. Do not wait for a big opportunity; create one by engaging other youths in your environment.

Do not despise those little beginnings. Form the habit of smart dressing. Be smart all the time. You do not know who you can meet. This also forms part of your charisma. The crux of it all is that you build the right charisma.

The foregoing represents what can be encapsulated in what may be referred to as the 3C approach in tackling the leadership challenge being faced in Nigeria especially as it relates to the youths. They are Strong Character, Competence and Charisma.

If this is put in place, we can be sure that the present vacuum of leadership will be filled and largely narrowed as there will be a large pool of competent and charismatic youths with a strong character to take over the ship of the nation and corporate organisations.