

Editorial

Governance and Public Leadership: Bundles of Democratic societies?

Professor Benon C. Basheka
Department of Governance-Kabale University
Email: bbasheka@kab.ac.ug

Like an elephant being described by blind men differently depending on where each of them touches, governance and public leadership are concepts prone to different interpretations by different people. Some commentators would even uncourteously question whether a certain theme falls within the scope and intellectual boundaries of Governance and Public Leadership. Yet Governance and Public leadership are themes that have walked the practices and theoretical debates about running of society and ought to have a certain degree of uniformity in their understanding. Governance and leadership have solved problems of mankind but they have also in innumerable ways contributed to creation of problems of mankind. As such, they are concepts whose significance to the management of societal affairs ought to be appreciated and understood. A failure in governance and public leadership affects every person in society.

When man started living in organized societies, the subject of governance and leadership emerged (Ball and Peters, 2005:3). As soon as people began to live together in groups, there was a need to find ways to govern the emerging societies and some members of society who had certain credentials had to take on leadership roles. What is known today as government did not start today. Governmental institutions of whatever form and nature have existed for a reasonably long time. Ancient people had their own governance and public leadership systems and those who had a duty to be in leadership positions were required to demonstrate qualities of a good standing. Understandably, the governments of those times are different from those of the later periods. Subsequent governments tended to demonstrate some degree of complexity and so became public leadership. Modern governments are faced with more complexities never known to the governments of the past.

Within the African governance architecture, there were pre-colonial governments and these were based on indigenous systems and practices. Then came the colonial period with what perfectly fits to be colonial governments) and subsequently the post-colonial governments both immediate post-colonial governments and the contemporary governments. One theme that connects all forms and types of governments is that of public leadership. For better governance to exist, as viewed in Montesquieu's "The Spirit of Laws" (1748), there ought to be a government that works for all.

Adeola (2007:107) tells us convincingly that the history of great nation has been linked to visionary and purposeful leadership and by implications, the history of bad nations is also linked to poor leadership. Good public leadership has seen socio-economic development and political emancipation of countries. Yet, attention seems always directed to the 'hardware' elements at the expense of 'software' elements in form of leadership and governance. On this unfortunate approach, Bratton and Rothchild, (1992:263) remind us that it is surprising how, for too long, social scientists dealing with Africa's development have concentrated on economic issues, overlooking the highly important political dimension of the process. Governance and leadership constitute the political processes. Even when Leadership is reportedly one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth, debates on the subject matter of leadership and governance presents no major ground of intellectual confrontation (Basheka,2020).

Governance has myriad meanings and is a word that is attached to anything-political governance, corporate governance, environmental governance, health governance, economic governance, e-governance, good governance and many more. Those in the business world attach it to corporate to make corporate governance, those in environment attach it to their thing to coin environmental governance, those in politics attach the same to produce political governance as economists easily come with economic governance. It has become a rather promiscuous term. Lawyers use governance to measure the performance of governments on rule of law and protection of human rights. Getting good governance calls for improvements that touch virtually all aspects of the public sector - from institutions that set the rules of the game for economic and political interaction, to organizations that manage administrative systems and deliver goods and services to citizens, to human resources that staff government bureaucracies, to the interface of officials and citizens in political and bureaucratic arenas (Grindle, 2002:1).

Governance need not be exclusively conducted by governments (Keohane & Nye 2000:12). Hughes (2003:76-7) attempted to differentiate government and governance by stating that government was the institution itself while governance was a broader concept describing the forms of governing which are not necessarily in the hands of formal government. Private firms, associations of firms, non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), Community-Based-Organisations (CBOs), civil society organisations, and individual citizens are all engaged in governance (Grindle, 2010). The practice of leadership and governance in contemporary period straddles complexities of networked societies, influenced by the ICT revolution and the beauty of the 4th Industrial Revolution; notwithstanding the fact that Africa still lags behind this revolution. In contemporary times, issues of gender and equity now sound significant than they were in the old times. The requests by the youth; possibly out of frustration have no respect for elders and governing or leading in such a context is challenging. Patriotism and love for one's country and culture are on the decline. The modern world seems to be have led to a society characterized by hatred, love for self-aggrandizement and greed. The temples of justice as they used to be called are slowly turning into temples of injustice. The legislatures which were once institutions of respect are now institutions of mockery. The human rights abuse and harassment with which the ordinary man on the straight is subjected to by those who serve on behalf of this man depicts a society that has run in deficits as far as governance is concerned. Such is the environment where a journal of governance and public leadership expects scholarship works.

In this inaugural issue, five articles written from different contexts are presented. They all touch on the scope and subject matter of governance and public leadership.

Timothy Marango and Leonard Chitongo, writing from the Zimbabwean context start off the first article entitled ‘Trust a Resilience Builder for Sustainable Development in a Disaster-Prone District: Insights from Chimanimani Rural District, Zimbabwe’. Public leadership and good governance require trust between the governors and the governed, the leaders and the led. The authors demonstrate how politics, social diversity and the current economic meltdown have divided citizens of Zimbabwe especially when they compare their society of the post-independence period where leaders had a degree of trust from their citizens. In the immediate post-colonial period, in that country as told to us by the authors, infrastructural, political and socio-economic growth was based on the generality’s trust in the newly-independent country’s institutional systems. However, corruption, non-transparency and failure to put in place systems of accountability have tainted the functionality of community and government institutional systems. This is a sign of a severe human factor decay and they blame it on lack of trust. Their conclusions were based on an assessment of the level of trust of the Chimanimani community in 29 institutional systems. They conclude that little trust or no trust among individuals and institutions is the biggest disservice to resilience building and disaster management.

The current pandemic in the world has seriously questioned the governance architecture of countries and the leadership capacity of those in charge of public affairs. Not only has the pandemic disrupted the functioning of society but it has also sharply opened the governments to scrutiny. To help us understand public leadership and governance in these contexts, **Njanji Prince and Zhou Gideon** from Zimbabwe to their credit walk us through a second article on ‘The COVID-19 “new normal”: Implications for public sector management and governance’. Their study which adopted a comparative public administration stance reviewed the selected governments’ responses to COVID-19 pandemic in China, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Zimbabwe to come to their conclusions. From an analysis of their data, they found that the theme of leadership resilience was shown to be one of the determinants of smoothly adapting to the demands of the ‘new normal’. They argue that to continue governmental roles, most governments, especially those that have been lagging behind, continue to fast-track the implementation of digital services such as telemedicine, contactless learning, and electronic public services, among others. This equally requires good leadership.

Inextricably, governance and public leadership debates are incomplete without a mention of the unique situation of the role of gender. In this respect, the article by **Mastullah Ashah Mwanga, Paul Shimiya and Wilfred Lajul** brings the issues of women in governance and public leadership. The authors forcefully defend the women cause through their article entitled ‘Governance Challenges to Women’s Realisation of The Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health: The case of Women in Polygamous Marriages in Uganda’. The authors seem to have been motivated by the discrepancy of failure to acknowledge women’s competence to consent to health care which amounts to a violation of their right to equality before the law.

Rights of women is a key governance issue in contemporary governments. Their study was of a qualitative strand and was conducted in the districts of Arua, Buikwe, Gomba, Jinja, Mayuge, Namayingo and Iganga districts in Uganda. Their findings revealed that the effect of polygamous relationships have serious reproductive and /or health consequences for women. The analysis of the realization of sexual reproductive rights in Uganda was based on family planning, HIV/Aids concerns, quality of maternal health care, battering, mental health, emotional stress.

Tonny Muzaale, in the fourth article entitled 'Management function and Water quality service concerns: Emerging management issues in selected town councils in Uganda' brings a new dimension to the subject of public leadership and governance. He unquestionably makes it clear how water is an indispensable natural resource for the survival and wellbeing of humankind. Fulfilling this demand of all members of society calls for leadership and better governance. Unfortunately, the author observes that many urban communities in sub-Saharan Africa still lack clean water for basic needs such as drinking and washing. Even where water points have been constructed, many break down prematurely or provide inadequate, seasonal or poor-quality water supplies. While technomanagerial factors are relevant in explaining these problems, attention is needed to the institutional and political-economic dynamics shaping policy outcomes on the ground. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as a manifestation of multivariate analysis was used as an instrument for decision making in factor analysis of water quality service. These problems are a direct result of poor leadership and bad governance.

What would a reader of an African Journal of Governance and Public leadership miss without knowing the journey of governance and public leadership itself? This vacuum is addressed by **Basheka and Uwizeyimana** writing jointly from the Ugandan and South African contexts where they delve into article titled '**trekking the historical concerns for efficiency and effectiveness in the study and practice of public administration**' delve into the concerns of efficiency and effectiveness. Their article is clothed with debates that touch the classical thinkers and the contemporary writers on the subject. They attempt to re-introduce the ideologies of governance and leadership through historicizing the debates and then make a case for their relevance in today's public administration systems. They suggest to us that public administration in its dual nature of being first; a discipline of academic study and second; a field of practice has indeed trekked a long journey and has had its primary concern being that of how to ensure governments work better in the managing public affairs.

In his first Inaugural lecture at Kabale University, Professor Basheka (2020) themed his presentation on **Governance and Leadership as wrappers of constitutional democracy**. Undeniably, he argued that the African governance systems have passed through traumatic stages and the blame is on the leadership deficits which have characterized the continent for long. Leadership and governance are central to mankind's happiness. Governance and leadership remain the only hope for better management of public affairs. When one examines the long journey of human civilization, one is left with no doubt that the deepest concerns of mankind has been a desire to have a better democratic society. Human beings wish to

have a society where everybody is equal, and liberties are protected by those in charge of the state affairs. Humans wish to live in a society where leaders are accountable and where no man is above the laws of the land.

Democratic societies benefit every man or woman no matter their color, race, religion etc. These societies are characterized by respect for humanity and human rights. Such societies believe in fair and regular elections. Democratic societies are governed by rule of law rather than rule by men. Such societies believe in strong institutions that are characterized by independent press, independent judiciary, where freedom of worship and other fundamentals of human rights are protected. Such a society respects the obligations of the international society where sovereignty is respect. Such a democratic society believes. The African Journal of Governance and Public leadership will be devoted to many such debates in subsequent issues. Democratic societies have respect for each of the branches of government and each executes its mandates. The legislature is the closest institution to the people and needs to do a good job. In the Second Treatise of Civil Government, (1690) Locke cautions that:

the legislative, or supreme authority, cannot assume to itself a power to rule by extemporary arbitrary decrees, but is bound to dispense justice, and decide the rights of the subject by promulgated standing laws, and known authorized judges (Locke 1690:112-113).

Rule of law is critical for a democratic society. Aristotle (384-322); a Greek philosopher and who is credited to have been among the earliest advocates of a democratic society based on his analysis of the Greek city states once said “We must begin”, “by asking an old and fundamental question – whether it is better to be ruled by the Best man or by the Best Laws.” (Aristotle 1962:143). Aristotle’s old teacher and mentor Plato had opted for rule by a philosopher king; for which Aristotle provided an answer as: -

he who asks Law to rule is asking God and intelligence and no others to rule; While he who asks for the rule of a human being is bringing in a wild beast; for human passions are like a wild beast and strong feelings lead astray rulers and the very best of men. In law you have the intellect without the passions (Aristotle 1962:143).

Governance and leadership are considered wrappers of a constitutional democracy. The ultimate goal of any modern government is to create a good quality of life of every citizen (Gildenhuys and Knipe, 2000:90). Governance and leadership determine how society works or does not work. Democracy is not pursued through processes and procedures but there are certain values that go alongside a democratic society. Three most important are individualism-the idea that the dignity and integrity of the individual is of supreme importance. Second is equality-which does not mean that all persons are equal in their talents or possessions, but that each individual has an equal claim to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Third is liberty or freedom. This idea suggests that the individual citizen of a democracy should have a high degree of self-determination. One should have the maximum opportunity of selecting their own purpose in life and the means of accomplishing them (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2009:3).

To have a society of this nature requires good governance, good leadership and good government. There is a warning however which Kanyeihamba (2012:388) in his commentary about election petitions during the presidential elections states that, when he reflects on the dynamics of presidential election petitions and how the establishment attempts to make its way and how the justices of the Supreme court behave whenever called upon to resolve election disputes, he concludes that ‘the road to genuine democracy, the rule of law and constitutionalism remains a long one, bumpy and unpredictable’. Without losing hope, good leadership and governance remain at the center of creating the transformative politics a country needs for its growth (Basheka, 2020).

REFERENCES

- Adeola, G.L. 2007. “Politics and Democratization Process in Nigeria: The Prevailing Issues”, *LASU Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 6 Nos 1 & 2.
- Aristotle 1995. *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford translation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Ball, A.P. and Peters, G (2005) *Modern Politics and Government* 7th ed. Macmillan, London
- Basheka, B.C 2020. Governance and Leadership: Wrappers of Constitutional Democracy? An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Kabale University on 21st February 2020.
- Bratton, M. and Rothchild, D .1992. “The Institutional Bases of Governance in Africa”, in Hyden, G and Bratton, M (eds), *Governance and Politics in Africa*, Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Denhardt, R. B. and Denhardt, J. V. 2000. The New Public Service: Serving Rather Than Steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6):549–559.
- Gildenhuys, J.S.H and Knipe, A. 2000, *The Organization of Government: An introduction*, Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.
- Grindle, M. S. 2002. *Good enough governance: Poverty reduction and reform in developing countries*. Paper Prepared for the Poverty Reduction Group of the World Bank.
- Hughes, O.E. 2003. *Public Management and Administration: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kanyeihamba, G.W.2002). *Constitutional and Political History of Uganda: FROM 1894 to Present*. Centenary Publishing House Ltd. Kampala
- Locke, J. 1690. *Two Treatises of Government*: First, Peter Laslett, Cambridge.
- Montesquieu, C.L. 1748. *The Spirit of the Laws*. New York: Hafner.