

Leadership and Effective Decision Making in Management

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Abstract— *The first quarter of the 21st century has been characterized by enormous and perilous problems and challenges the world over. Ranging from the unparalleled threats from global terrorism, global warming and devastating climatic change, accumulation of venomous warheads by antagonistic nations, competition for global hegemony, threats posed by the ever-increasing violent non-state actors, retrogressive effects of globalization, to the intricate and life-threatening pandemics such as COVID-19 and the ever unending HIV and AIDS are just some of the real-time challenges the century and its leadership is grappling with. In order to effectively address these challenges that threaten the very existence of humanity, the leadership needs to be astute, proactive, salient, and sensible and above board in their foresight in identifying, addressing, and dealing with problems inflicting world nations. Laxity among world leadership in clamping COVID-19 and their unending political blame-game has led to the suffering and deaths of a multitude of innocent people, least to mention the historic shrinking of world nations' economies. Effective leadership ought to keep an eye on potential threats, respond promptly and communicate the vision, keep situations under control and reach out to others with less sensitivity to context and situations; maintain effectiveness in identifying and solving problems, and avoid time-wasting blame games. Leadership position brings with it unique demands. Leaders are looked upon as authority figures, as saviors, as fixers of things that are broken, as spiritual guides, as mentors, as models, as inspirers, as teachers; leaders are called upon to serve selflessly. Fundamental to the task of leadership is the capacity to identify, effectively address and solve problems and generate solutions to the many challenges facing those under their jurisdiction and beyond. This article examines some of the positive traits, skills, attitudes, and dispositions of effective leadership, the best ways to identify and deal with problems, and make decisions; and some of the challenges leadership face in the execution of duty.*

Keywords— *Leadership, problem solving, decision making.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The need to structure human society and create sensibility and purpose for human existence has been a concern for sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists and even the very ordinary cluster of human beings. Naturally, it has been the case that human beings left on their own; the passion for self-gratification pushes them to competition of which result is anarchy and collapse of order. The conflict between humans is often occasioned by competition to access limited resources in the state of nature, the rapacious quest to accumulate wealth and the ego impulse to control and submerge others. As a result, it's natural that human beings left on their own without strong institutions to mitigate and control their lust for control, accumulation and submerging others, they quickly collapse into a state of anarchy reminiscent of the Hobbesian state of

nature where, its war of all against all; and life of the human person is not unworthy, but uncertain, short, nasty, harsh and brutish.

In such an anarchic condition, it is very difficult to talk of peaceful cooperation between human beings without an overarching authority, with clout to mitigate conflicts and establish requisite institutions to guard, guide and secure the interests of each member of the commonwealth. In the absence of this, human beings will violently compete in order to secure the basic necessities of survival, and to make other material gains; challenge others and fight out of fear as to ensure their personal safety; and use all means possible to seek reputation or glory, both for its own sake and for its protective effects, so as to intimidate and compel others into fearing and surrendering to them.

Accordingly, the human ego, informed by the quest for self-gratification is the breeding mill to disharmony and social discord in human society. Human beings are selfish, self-wanting and egocentric. They are also at the same time cowardly, insecure, suspicious and, always desperately concerned with how others see and perceive them. This human dichotomy has implications on why governments are constituted, and leadership framed as an antidote to human contradictory dilemma. Understood from this viewpoint, what is leadership and what qualities define an effective leader?

II. QUALITIES OF GOOD LEADERS

As a term, leadership is elusive and carries different faces. Leadership is one of the few terms that have been abused and misused most. Today, it's not uncommon to hear even those on the edge of insanity proclaiming themselves as leaders; the fortunate blabbermouths, having inherited family wealth and used part of it to buy their way through to power and positions of leadership without a clue of what the institution of leadership tags along with it proclaim themselves leaders; while the polished, humane and gifted in steering human society struggle to access and offer service in order to salvage fellow humans from perpetual want and deprivation with no success, the requisite skills and dispositions of leadership they possess cannot unlock the fortified gates of the corrupt and the incompetent.

Distant from such insensitive definitions, I want to argue with John C Maxwell who defines leadership as, "*...the one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.*" What I take from this definition is that a leader is an instrument that proves the difference between success and failure. A good leader has a futuristic vision and knows how to turn his ideas into real-world success stories; he has the potency and acumen

of turning problems and challenges into great potentials and success. In this article, I define leadership as the capacity and prowess to inspire, motivate, set and share vision, articulate desirable values, influence, guide, empathize, show direction, take risks, mitigate conflicts, and serve indiscriminately.

In terms of genre, leaders can be characterized as strong and effective, or weak. Our interest is with the former, to show that good and effective leadership is a necessary condition to prosperity and success of society and its institutions. Basic to good leadership is therefore the commitment to taking the concerns and aspirations of society to new levels of growth, development and prosperity; and to alleviating the plight of the led. Good and effective leadership identifies the potential of the people and they expertise in looking at the future and tapping talents; are propelled by vision and spirit; they look for growth, prosperity and development for all. Effective leadership creates a vision and are agents of change; they are unique and take risk to the ultimate actualization of their goals; they go for the long haul and grow personally as they tag others along with them; and, they build relationships, coach, create and sustain systems.

In order to enhance the above, effective leadership also need to embrace certain skills, traits and dispositions which in turn strengthens their ability to deal with the ever emerging challenges in human society. In nurturing good and effective leadership, these sets of abilities in the mental faculty transforms one from inefficiency to efficiency, inability to ability, laxity to potency, and exclusivity to inclusivity, they include:

Leadership Skills in the critical faculty: Overall to leadership is the ability to exhibit and apply rational and judicial habits of thought. Effective leadership requires the development of skills that will eventually help in transcending passivity. By this I mean that as a leader, one should not just accept the creed which is dominant in his/her own society but rather, one needs to be visionary, continuously committed to and focused on adding value to the worth of life and transforming the society. To do this, the leadership requires skills that include: i) *ability to form opinion*, which involves being able to recognize what is intended to mislead, being capable of listening to eloquence without being carried away, and becoming adept at asking and determining if there is any reason to think that what you believe is true and good for the society and its institutions; ii) *ability to find an impartial solution*, ability to recognize and control biases, coming to view one's own beliefs with the same objectivity with which one view the beliefs of others, judging issues on the basis of their merits, trying to ascertain the relevant facts, and exhibiting the power of weighing arguments before making decision; iii) *ability to identify and question assumptions* - not being gullible; applying constructive doubt in order to test unexamined beliefs, and resisting the notion that some authority has captured the whole truth about the needs and call to duty and service to humanity; knowledge that although ideas work, human society is not static, and as a result, unprecedented changes can occasion new modes of thinking and positive change.

Leadership Dispositions in the critical faculty: The acquisition and retention of skills in itself does not translate into efficient and effective dispensation of duty and services. There are certain essential dispositions which guarantee that the infused skills are exercised and applied in the right and effective modus. These dispositions, sometimes also called habits or practices to suggest the actual translation of skills into actual human behavior are essential in the process of problem solving and decision making; they include: i) *the habit of impartial inquiry*, suggesting that we must think in a multi-faceted way and refuse to accept that one-sided opinions hold solutions to the challenges bedeviling human society; and, resist the notion that truth is a reserve for the privileged and it solely depends on time and place of their education, their social or economic backgrounds, and political systematization; being cognizance of the fact that biases, prejudices and native egocentricism often lurk beneath seductive and often persuasive yet superfluous and empty rhetoric; ii) *the habit of weighing evidence*, coupled with the practice of not giving full assent to schemes which there is no reason to believe to be true; iii) *the habit of attempting to see things truly*, as contrasted with the practice of merely collecting whatever reinforces existing prejudice and stereotypes; resisting to fly on others' wings however irrational or rational they may be but reflecting on facts until its established to warrant justified true belief; and iv) *the habit of living from one's own centre* - being astute and self-directed- a certain independence in the will, intelligently motivated and constantly inspired by reason. These habits are best exercised in leadership intelligently, devoid of any pint of distortion occasioned by emotion and native egocentricism. (Namwambah 2012, Paul, R & Elder, L. 2013)

Because these dispositions are not merely reflex responses in which leaders are drilled, the habits in effect reflect one's willingness, or readiness to act and respond in various ways to emerging challenges in human society. Examples of this readiness include: i) *a readiness to admit new evidence against previous beliefs*, which involves an open-minded acceptance of whatever a critical examination has revealed and acting accordingly; ii) *a readiness to discard hypotheses which have proved inadequate*, where the critical test proves otherwise, the willingness and preparedness to abandon beliefs which once seemed promising but are now ineffective, irrelevant and redundant; and iii) *a readiness to adapt oneself to the facts of the world*, not merely going along with whatever happens to be in the ascendant, which might be wrong and misleading, but taking a leap to transform through creative ingenuity and strategic prowess for the wellbeing of humanity. To be ready to act, or react in this modus suggests an awareness that the habits in question are appropriate and as such, ethical commitment to their execution is indubitable. What these dispositions have in common is the virtue of *truthfulness* which is a *conditio-sine-qua-non* to leadership propriety. (Meissen 2010, Namwambah 2012)

Leadership traits in the critical faculty: Beyond the skills and dispositions of leadership in the critical faculty, a certain set of attitudes ought to characterize the outlook of good and astute leadership. This is so because leaders are custodians of the

society's evolutionary wheel; and the defining factor of prosperity and posterity of their communities. The inability of an institution's leadership to guarantee protection and secure its people, their property and create an enabling environment for productivity and good living spurs discord and breeds self-destruction; it negates the very true kernel of leadership. By attitudes in the critical faculty we mean a temper of mind central to which a certain stance with respect to professional etiquette, resolve to serve and pragmatism draggle; it involves: i) *a realization of human fallibility*, a sense of the uncertainty of many things commonly regarded as indubitable, bringing with it humility – being conscious of the limits of knowledge, including that of the self; a sensitivity to circumstances in which native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; being sensitive to prejudices, stereotypes and limitations of one's own viewpoint; not claiming more than what one actually knows, and owning up to what is unknown; the absence of cerebral pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit; ii) *an open-minded outlook* with respect to one's beliefs about institutions, an "inward readiness" to give weight to the other side, where every question is regarded as open and where it is recognized that what passes for a procedure is sure to require correction and alteration with time; iii) *a refusal to think that one's own desires and wishes provide a key to understanding society and the world*, recognizing that what we like has no bearing whatsoever on what is and the good of the people and their operating institutions; and iv) *being tentative, without falling into a lazy skepticism* (or dogmatic doubt), holding our beliefs with the degree of conviction warranted by the evidence; having a strong desire to know combined with great caution in believing that what one knows must meet the test of certainty and proof; the assurance that open-mindedness is cushioned against degenerating into being mindless and myopic. (Namwambah 2012, Paul, R & Elder, L. 2013)

The manifestation of the above skills, dispositions and traits assist the leadership to navigate the difficult terrains and enables them to handle difficult problems and generate major decisions that transcend individual interests. As a consequence, effective leadership exhibit extraordinary decorum and physiognomies which eventually define commitment to duty, and selfless service to society. The resulting effect of these traits is a breed of leadership with unsurpassed qualities that make good for the prosperity and posterity of human society: honesty and Integrity, confidence in reason, ability to inspire and motivate others, commitment and passion to duty, courage to face and address difficult situations, effective communication prowess, ingenuity in decision making and effective decision making ability, accountability in action and responsibility and, the willingness to shoulder consequences. Ability to delegate and empower others, creative and innovative potency, discernible constructive empathy, resilience, high emotional intelligence, humility, transparent, and visionary prognosis and resolve; faith on reason - confidence that in the long run, one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions by developing their

own rational faculties; faith that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can learn to think for themselves, to form rational viewpoints, draw reasonable conclusions, think coherently and logically, persuade each other by reason and become reasonable persons; tolerant and persevere, and fair mindedness - being cognizant of and having the awareness of the need to treat all viewpoints alike, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community or nation; adherence to rational standards without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

Let me explicate some of these traits.

Honesty and Integrity: The 34th President of the United States of America, Dwight. D. Eisenhower once said, "*The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.*" Honesty and integrity are two important ingredients which make a good leader. How can you expect your followers to be honest when you lack these qualities yourself? Leaders succeed when they stick to their values and core beliefs, and without ethics, this will not be possible.

Confidence: To be an effective leader, you should be confident enough to ensure that others follow your commands. If you are unsure about your own decisions and qualities, then your constituents will never follow you. As a leader, you have to be oozing with confidence, show some uniqueness and assertiveness to gain the respect of your constituents. This does not mean that you should be overconfident, irrational or boastful, but you should at least reflect the degree of rational confidence required to ensure that your followers trust you as a leader.

Inspire Others: Probably the most difficult assignment in leadership is to persuade others to follow. It can only be possible if you inspire your followers by setting a good example. When the terrains prove difficult to navigate, followers look up to you to show the way; they want to see how you react to the situation before they take any meaningful leap. If you handle it well, they will follow you. A leader needs to think positive and this positive approach should be visible through action and deeds. Stay calm under pressure and keep the motivational level high and inspiring. As John Quincy Adams puts it, "*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.*" *If you are successful in inspiring your subordinates, you can easily overcome any current and future challenge easily.*" Good leadership inspires and show direction to the led.

Commitment and Passion: In leadership, subjects look upon the leadership; if the leadership want the subject to give their all in productivity, allegiance, commitment, and resolve, they must ignite it by showing and upholding passion in thought and action first hand. When your subject sees you getting your hands dirty, tirelessly committing to action success, they will also give their best shot. This helps the leadership to gain respect, admiration, and need for association by the subject; it infuses new energy in the team, translating into unfathomable unity and performance. If the constituents feel that the

leadership is not fully committed or lacks passion, then it would be an uphill task for the leader to motivate and achieve the desirable goal.

Good and effective Communication prowess: Until the leadership clearly communicate the vision to their subject and tell them the strategy to achieve the goal, it will be very difficult for to cultivate the requisite intended results. Simply put, if the leadership is unable to communicate the message effectively to the subject, then good leadership is amiss. Good and effective communication ability is a prerequisite to good leadership. Words have the power to motivate people and make them to do the unthinkable. If you use them effectively, you can also achieve better results, change attitude and mindset.

Decision-Making Capabilities: Apart from having a futuristic vision, a leader should have the ability to take the right decision at the right time. Decisions taken by leaders have a profound impact on masses. A leader should think long, wide and hard before taking a decision; and once the decision is taken, he/she must stand by at all cost. Although, most leaders take decisions on their own, but it is highly recommended that consultations with key stakeholders before taking a decision be frequently executed. This is necessary because they are the ones who will benefit or suffer the consequences of the decision.

Accountability: Good leadership is accountable for the decisions they made. The wisdom of Arnold H Glasow who highlighted that: *“A good leader takes little more than his share of the blame and little less than his share of the credit”* underscores what accountability in leadership entail. In leadership it’s important to ensure that the constituents are each held accountable for what they do. If they do well, appreciation from the leadership is an incentive; if they struggle, but with commitment, inspire, redirect and encourage them towards improvement; and if they don’t make efforts at all then initiate discipline to consciencitize them to the worth of duty and responsibility. Accountability by the leadership is the gemstone to overall accountability by the subjects, which in turn translates into a sense of responsibility among the citizenry, boosting commitment, productivity and prosperity of the commonwealth.

Delegation and Empowerment: You cannot do everything, right. It is important for a leader to focus on key responsibilities while leaving the rest to others. By that, I mean empowering your followers and delegating tasks to them. If you continue to micromanage your subordinates, it will develop a lack of trust and more importantly, you will not be able to focus on important matters, as you should be. Delegate tasks to your subordinates and see how they perform. Provide them with all the resources and support they need to achieve the objective and give them a chance to bear the responsibility.

Courage: Having the knowledge of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs or viewpoints toward which we have strong negative emotions and to which we have not given a serious hearing. In leadership, this courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that

conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading. The leadership must guarantee freedom of expression, association, holding and sharing of opinions; it must recognize that a society that suffocates its people from these basic liberties is in danger of annihilating prosperity and posterity of the society; must have the courage to listen to dissenting voices, and embrace those with diverse views as a way of consolidating and harmonizing society.

Creativity and Innovation: What separates a leader from a follower is the ability to create, inspire, direct, innovate and create vision. Steve Jobs, the greatest visionary of our time once intimated that: *“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”* In order to get ahead in today’s fast-paced world, a leader must be creative and innovative at the same time. Creative thinking and constant innovation is what makes a leader and his brigade distinct. Leadership needs to think out of the box to come up with unique and pragmatic ideas that are easily convertible into goals into reality.

Empathy: Effective leadership requires the knowledge of the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them. Good Leadership empathizes with their followers, guide them and pacify their mind in times of need and emotional disorientation. Leadership that follow despotic style, neglecting empathy altogether fail the test of effective and shrewd leadership. Such leaders, if they are at all fail to make a closer connection with their followers and as a consequence, erode their grip on their subject. Understanding the problems of your subject and feeling their pain is the first step to become an effective leader.

Resilience: The logic of an ancient adage that, “when the going gets tough, the tough gets going” is vivid, alive and relevant more today than ever before. The devastation of COVID-19; both on lifestyle and economies nations attest to the nude truth of the adage. You might have heard this adage many times, but possibly, least did you know that it’s a mental pillow-case to most great leaders. Effective leaders are resilient and have a sober and positive attitude towards unfolding occurrences. Irrespective of how difficult the circumstances might be, they will find a promising way of rallying their constituents towards pragmatic alleviation. While most people are busy in complaining about the problems, great leaders always focus on solutions, not the problems.

Emotional Intelligence: Good leaders’ higher influence on people is a product of the leadership’s ability to connect with people emotionally. This component of emotional intelligence, built in resilience, perseverance and empathy is an indomitable quality to effective leadership. The importance of emotional intelligence to leadership is the need to effectively manage emotions, have better and sound social awareness of the environment dynamics, not being quick to anger, ease of seamless communication, and ability to handle and resolve conflicts without favour.

With emotional intelligence, leaders can control their emotion, which prevents negative emotions from influencing their ability to address problems and make decision. As a result, they are less likely to make hasty or generalized

decisions. Additionally, emotionally intelligent leaders are prodigious at understanding the emotions and concerns, and they care about the feelings of others. Their ability to resolve conflicts, build confidence and create harmony among their constituents is admirable, and is a glue to harmony and social cohesion.

Humility: Thomas Merton once said: “*Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real.*” How would you feel if you were promoted to leadership status? You would feel proud. A good leader is always selfless and always thinks about his or her followers. That is why the leadership style of great leaders put emphasis on problem-solving, effective deliberations and sound decision making, and team dynamics instead of focusing on self-promotion. Humility also entails the leadership ability in recognizing and being sensitive to his/her own limits of knowledge, including sensitivity to circumstances in which his/her own native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively on her leadership style, and sensitivity to bias, prejudice and limitations of her viewpoint on issues of importance. It entails acceptance that one should not claim more than what they actually know; the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations in one's beliefs.

Transparency: One of the best ways to win the trust of followers is by being transparent. Instead of hiding information on issues that are likely to affect them, you should instead openly share it with them, clarify to them what seems complex and rationalize the need to execute what it proposes by giving visibility to followers, leadership allows constituents to buy into the vision and to support it with conviction. More importantly, it gives the followers clarity, autonomy and make them feel more empowered while keeping them engaged.

Vision and Purpose: Good leadership is always guided by an explicit vision and purpose. Good leaders do not only visualize the future, but they also share their vision with their followers. When followers are unable to see the big picture, the leadership will redirect and show them where to go, why and how. Great leadership goes far above and beyond, explaining why they are moving in the direction they are moving, and even share the strategy and action plan to achieving the intended goal. According to Jack Welch, “*Good leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.*”

Decisiveness: Good leadership is not only fixated to making decisions due to their position; they are also willing to take on the risk of decision making and the consequences that accrue therefrom. They make these decisions and take risks knowing that if things don't work out, they will need to hold themselves accountable first and foremost before thinking of alternative scenarios.

Further, any leadership that is not decisive is often ineffective and at most defective. Too much effort working on consensus building can have a negative effect. Rather than simply making a decision, many leaders allow debate to continue, and then create a piecemeal decision that cuts across individual and partisan satisfaction. Often, good and effective decisions brush individuals' wounds, but eventually unravel and contain situations.

Loyalty: Effective leaders understand that true loyalty is reciprocal and rewarding. Because of this, they express their loyalty in tangible and reasonable ways beneficial to member of their teams. True loyalty is ensuring that all constituent members have the advantage of visibility, recognition and equal opportunities. Loyalty implies resolute commitment and constant availability to firmly stand with your brigades in happiness, crisis and conflict.

Being in a position of service to the followers, effective leaders recognize the need of being loyal and trustworthy to their followers; and followers who believe in the loyalty of their leadership are much more likely to show their own loyalty when it's most required.

Charisma: Usually, people are more likely to follow the lead of those they like. The best leaders are well and soft-spoken, approachable and friendly. They show sincere care for others. Often, people at all levels of an institution find it easy to relate to and follow the leadership of charismatic leaders.

Perseverance: The tasks bestowed on leadership are enormous, demanding and breath-taking. Effective leadership requires the zeal and knowledge of the need to use cerebral insights and truths in handling challenging assignments despite the difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations that are tagged along; it requires firm adherence to rational principles despite the irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time to achieve deeper understanding and insight.

Each of the qualities discussed above are absolutely essential to great leadership. Without them, leaders cannot live up to their full potential and their subjects' expectations. Without effective leadership performance of the subjects is dismal and confidence in the institution is worrying. Because of this, human society and its institutions must learn the best ways to identify and also to develop the necessary traits in existing and emerging leadership.

These traits in defining good and effective leadership are closely tied to the leaderships' unrivaled abilities in handling difficult situations, tackling challenges and intricate problems, and generating sound, and binding solutions. What then, are the effective problem solving and decision making processes for good and effective leadership?

III. PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING FOR LEADERSHIP

I made the point that essential to good leadership is the ability to solve problems and make decisions. We live in difficult times, and our world is today characterized by unprecedented challenges - ever increasing pressure, uncertainty, feuds, unending tension, suspicion, conflicting

ideas and opinions. Our minds are condemned to addressing and dealing with unending threats, both known and unknown. The leadership at all levels is continuously called upon to think and rethink, unthink, and think again. The ability to adeptly navigate these challenges by the leadership is therefore a core catalyst, and a means to lessening the world's most threatening and challenging elements. Understanding key methods and strategies for effective problem solving and decision making helps the leadership in addressing the right problems, identify risks and make decisive decisions.

Ordinarily problem-solving and decision-making is supposed to be a life-long thread in our daily life; be it in personal, in academics, professional engagement, and even in social interactions; it is a critical element of life. In leadership, problem solving and decision making is a key component to engagements and a buzzword with permanent imprints. How effective the leadership deals with and solve problems depends on various factors, major being preparedness, understanding of the problem and the right mechanism employed.

In ordinary situation, people tend to do three things when faced with a problem: they get afraid or uncomfortable and wish the problem would go away by itself, or, they feel that they have to come up with an answer and it has to be the right answer; and worse, they look for someone or something to blame. Normally, being faced with a problem is in itself a problem. And this is yet another problem because, in fact and quite often, there are always going to be problems. Problem is therefore part of our own existence.

There are two reasons why we tend to see a problem as problem: it has to be solved and we're not sure how to find the best solution, and secondly, due to fear that there will probably be conflicts about what the best solution is. Most of us tend to be "conflict-averse". We don't feel comfortable dealing with conflict, and we tend to always have the feeling that something bad is going to happen. The goal of a good problem-solving process should, first and foremost, make one more "conflict-friendly" and "conflict-competent". This is the quality that most leaders have, and which is least developed in the ordinary majority.

There are two important things to remember about problems and conflicts: they happen all the time and they are opportunities to improve ourselves, the system we serve and the relationships we forge. Problems provide us with information and opportunities that we can use to fix what needs fixing, improve our situations and do better than before. Problems prop our minds into thinking, and they are a positive enterprise in our lives. Looked at in this way, we can almost and comfortably begin to welcome and deal with problems; and that is what leaders do best and with precision.

While people are born problem solvers, their ability to effectively deal with problems is soon diminished at the time they reach school going age by native egocentric biases and prejudices. As a consequence, the biggest challenge to their effectiveness to problem solving is to overcome the tendency to immediately come up with biased and emotionally informed solution or decisions. In the long run, they commit one of the most common mistake in problem solving, which is trying to

find a solution right away without introspection, especially settling on one that is emotionally exciting. This is a terrible mistake in problem solving because by so doing, you are putting the solution to the problem at the beginning of the process. Effective leaders know the head and tail to a problem and they follow due process in dealing with and solving problems. So much about something so huge: what exactly is problem and why is it important to talk about it in leadership?

A problem is simply an issue that is out of alignment and requires to be attended to, fixed, or corrected to enable desired outcomes to be achieved. We say one has a problem when he is faced with a pressing or demand issue but has no immediate solution to it. Problem solving is therefore the process of finding solutions to difficult and complex issues that need solutions for the ease of a requisite need.

Closely linked to problem solving is the idea of decision making which basically refers to a mental or a cognitive process of analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing data, idea or information as received, gathered or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, which culminates in the selection of a course of action among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produces a definite solution that characterize an action, opinion and choice.

IV. PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING IN LEADERSHIP

It is important to be cautious while attempting to solve a problem. There could be a temptation to quickly jump into figuring out solutions or getting excited with quick-fix solutions that are emotionally appealing yet temporary in nature. If the problem is not well understood and thoroughly thought out, the solutions might not be effective, and valuable time and effort could have been wasted. Good leaders are cognizant of this fact.

Problem solving is an essential soft skill that demands reasonable patience. It is the ability to recognize difficulties or complications, navigate through the complexities, identify possible solutions and select the best option, implement the decision, and finally follow up to make sure it was successfully thought out and executed. Effective leaders are strong problem solvers, a factor that enables them to sail through difficulties and attain their goals. In our contemporary world, problem solving is the basis to all new inventions, social and cultural evolution, and the basis for market driven economies. It is the basis for continuous improvement, political transparency, communication, technology and learning; it anchors globalization and all its elements.

Besides the relevance of effective problem solving and decision making for leaders, the ability to deal with problems is equally important to individuals and organizations. This is because effective handling of problems enables us to exert control over our environment; fixing things that are disjointed or mangled up; and creating harmony and understanding among nations and between individuals. Given that human society is in constant state of flux, where things are ever changing, wearing-out, breaking over time, with others being flawed as new ones emerge, problem solving has become a

necessary condition for human existence. Personal, educational, political and business environments are full of zing; activities that teaches and demand incessant thinking, flexibility and creativity in order to contain them. Good leaders have perfected knowledge of this inevitable and naked reality.

To this end, our problem solving approach should entail a systematic method of planning that involves effective assessment, problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Once a problem has been figured out, dealt with or resolved, additional processes entailing monitoring of the progress of the solution and proactively taking action to prevent future problems to ensue is obligatory.

Effective leaders recognize the need, that at the end of problem solving one has to take in the lessons learned and help others who might be facing similar problems which they have managed to overcome. This generosity is motivated by the fact that the efforts they invested in developing competences necessary for handling problems must be beneficial to society; they include initiative, creativity, resourcefulness, strategies, analytical thinking, determination and, always being result-oriented. What then, is the process for problem solving and decision making for leaders?

Generally, problem solving is a process informed by various steps. To guarantee efficiency and effectiveness, these steps must be followed to the later. Any attempt to mangle up the process often leads to decision by indecision, stuck in a limbo, incessantly spinning in a vicious circle of unsolvable problems.

Fundamental to problem solving process is the ability to recognize and define the problem. Problem solvers habitually realize when something has gone wrong or when attention is required; they often anticipate complications before they even exist and take precautionary measures to guard against imminent destructive and heart-weakening results. Noticing that something is amiss requires a keen sense of what is going on around you. For example, only when you don't know the consequences of poor leadership can you be surprised when revolts suddenly erupt; and, without being aware of typical mechanisms deployed by corrupt and insensitive officers, you will be at pain to stamp out the vice. The sooner you realize there is a problem, the faster you should respond to it. This is yet another skill superbly perfected by good and effective leadership.

Accordingly then, the first phase to problem solving involves *recognition and definition of the issue at stake*. Generally speaking, a typical process of problem solving and decision-making begins with the recognition of a problem. It is commonly true, that many problems are never solved because they are not recognized soon enough or not recognized at all. For example, some freshmen fail in college life because they do not recognize soon enough that their study habits are inadequate or that they are in an unsuitable curriculum; and worse, some leaders fail to steer their constituents to prosperity, assuming that what led to their endorsement is sufficient to sustain the tempo of social dynamics only to realize too late when revolts erupt.

Once a problem has been recognized, it should be carefully defined. Failure to achieve a clear definition of a problem will always result in obtaining unsuccessful solutions or ending up solving "some" problem but not the one intended. In many situations, defining the problem will be the most difficult phase in problem solving and decision-making. But once you have correctly defined the problem, the rest will be relatively easy.

There are three rules that must be followed in defining the problem: First, *the definition should not be too general* - This is so because if the definition is too broad, the guidelines for a solution will also be too broad, and the investigation may flounder. Large problems can be very real, but their solution usually require breaking them down into smaller, clearly defined segments in order to solve them one at a time; second, *the definition should not be too specific* - a definition of a problem is said to be too specific when it unnecessarily restricts alternative solutions. When the definition of the problem is too specific, it will always lead to temporary solutions because it will have ignored other significant aspects that led to its emergence, and which might be critical to its solution; and third, *the definition should not in itself constitute a "solution" to the problem* - Suppose that in each election year in Kenya there is eruption and escalation of ethnic animosity and violence, and the President constitutes a Taskforce to establish the causal factors to the frequent occurrence under the Chairperson of National Cohesion and Integration Commission. But before any substantive survey is concluded, the taskforce chairperson concludes that the cause to ethnic antagonism each election year is likely caused by incitement from the political class; this definition of the problem entails a possible cause which, by some estimation might not necessarily be the major cause, his/her definition would have committed a fallacy to this cardinal rule, thereby locking out other possible causes such as marginalization, lack of transparency and accountability in electoral process among other reasons.

These rules are necessary to observe because quite often, there is temptation to quickly jump into figuring out solutions without understanding the nature and magnitude of the problem. If a problem is not well understood, the solution might not be effective and valuable time and effort would have been unnecessarily wasted.

The second phase to problem solving entails *finding out what caused the problem/gathering information or conducting research*. The leading question here is: what caused the problem? Once you have identified and clearly defined the current problem, the next step is to dig a little deeper to find out the root cause or background of the problem. Some questions to ask at this stage include the following: When and where did the difficulty, obstacle or complication occur? Why did the problem happen? How did it happen? What led to the problem? How real or practical is the problem? Was it caused by one thing or many things? Was it accidental or intentionally caused? What information is missing? Where can you find more information? What could have prevented the problem? What is known about similar problems? What solutions have been tried before? With these questions in

mind, you start gathering information that will be used in determining a solution to the problem. Different terminologies are used to refer to this information; for example: detective call it “clues”; doctors speak of “symptoms”; scientists, of “data”; laypersons or government officials talk of “facts.”

Phase three of problem solving and decision making involves *analyzing the impact of the problem*. The principle question at this stage is: who or what is affected by the problem? It is important that at this stage we make efforts to determine how widespread the problem is and its devastating effects. Major guiding questions at this stage include: is it affecting one person or many; and how is it affecting them? How long has the problem been going on? Are there any trends? Is this a re-occurring problem or a completely new one? What would happen if the problem is not resolved?

If the problem cuts across social divide or is affecting a multiple of government segments or an institution, one may need to talk to different people to get first-hand accounts of the impact of the problem, its possible source and their views on how best to mitigate it. Establishing if the problem is severe, mild or manageable at this point is vital to the attainment of a feasible solution.

The fourth phase to problem solving is *brainstorming and formation of possible solutions*. The guide question to this phase is: What are the potential solutions? This phase requires reasonable and bias-free multifaceted critical approach. Identify as many possible solutions to the problem through brainstorming as requisite.

In a case where the problem affects many people who are also involved in your search for a solution, state the problem in agreeable terms then request everyone involved to independently write down their own individual possible solution which will, together with others be used to inform and form a solution. Thereafter, list down all the answers proposed and invite others to further build upon and refine the suggested solutions, or you go further to propose and share other additional solutions that might not have been captured by your respondents, then share them out before reaching a definite solution.

For a brainstorming session to be successful, the problem needs to be clearly defined, enough time needs to be scheduled, participants should take time to think through the problem and generate solutions, and solutions should not be judged during the brainstorming session. If the problem is collective and impacting on many people or an institution, it is advisable to use a good facilitator to listen attentively to participants, encourage input by all and drive the discussion before you subject their opinions to the scrutiny of analytical reason. Employing this analytic approach, effective leaders are able to address and solve problems before they escalate.

Phase five entails *evaluation of alternatives or of possible solutions*. The key question to this phase is: How do you select the best alternative/solution? Once a good number of options have been generated, the next step is to go through the alternatives and narrow down to the ones that are most viable. It is possible that at this stage, the top choices would be a merger between one or more other alternative choices. In the process of synchronizing alternatives it's important to identify

the advantages and disadvantages of each of the top choices. In addition, also write down the desired results, when they should be achieved as well as how the results will be measured i.e. what is expected after the problem has been eliminated or handled - imagine how it would be like when the problem is solved; then finally, analyze how best the top choices would lead to the desired result for the affected population. You also need to be privy to the possible consequences that the desired alternative is likely to generate. This is necessary because each decision made comes with certain consequences, desirable, undesirable and at times, both.

The sixth phase in problem solving and decision making is deciding the best solution among the selected top alternatives, call it *choosing the best option or making the decision*. The crucial question here is: will this solution solve the problem? In problem solving and decision making, this is one of the most difficult and overwhelming steps, and could easily trigger hesitation because of fear of making the wrong decision. As a result of such fear, there is always a tendency for people to want to continue digging further in order to come up with more information or more alternatives. As a consequence, this leads to continued suffering as the problem will continue to hurt its victims.

Additionally, choosing an alternative could also entail making compromises, forcing some parties to make concessions for the benefit of all; there is a possibility that not everyone would be happy with the final solution. This is so because in one way or the other, the decision making process has to come to an end at some point. At times, following rational gut instinct and seeking advice from others can help in making decision agreeable across board. And if the heat generated by the problem is overwhelming, expectations are high, and anxiety and tempers are at their pick, it's advisable to take a break away from the scene of the problem, clear the head, relax and then make the decision with a clear mind; and then have the confidence to easily explain to the rest of the group why the decision is the best of all the alternatives. And where consensus is unforeseeable, taking a poll would similarly be a simple way to determining the solution to the problem.

The above account of problem solving and decision making process is relevant to everyone. This is because life, by definition is problematic and often, our minds are more occupied with solving problems than doing all the other things; real or imagined problems occupy more than 80% of our time. The difference between effective leaders and the ordinary human beings is that, whereas the ordinary find solving a problem a problem the leader treats a problem as an opportunity to bettering oneself and improving the status of being. Leaders welcome, condone and entertain problem, the ordinary dread, freak and run away from problem; the leader has the commitment, tolerance, zeal and patience to pursue the problem till a solution is found, the ordinary pass blames, breaks down and condemn others for the problem; leaders translate problems into creative opportunities while the ordinary treat problems as problem, burden and misfortune.

V. LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR EXECUTING THE SOLUTION

Once a solution is arrived at and the decision is made, it's important to develop a strategy for executing the solution. This is necessary because the implementation of some solutions can be demanding, tagging along financial, human and other cost implications. How well one prepares to act on the solution is of great value to the process of problem solving and decision making. It is therefore important that you write down the final solution and come up with a plan of action for implementing it. This is called an Action Plan to problem solving.

This process requires that you break down the solution into smaller manageable steps. The number of steps would typically vary in proportion to the complexity of the problem; the more complex the problem the more steps would be required to address it and vice versa. Then outline the actions that need to be done; determine who needs to do what, the cost implication, how much time is available; establish timelines, deadlines and ways to show if the results are being achieved. Finally, think about possible unexpected emergencies and risks and other intervening variables, then highlight a plan for addressing them.

Next is taking action or implementing the solution based on the action plan. This is the stage where the actual work gets done. The process of problem solving will bear no significance when its result does not translate into a real action that can transform and improve the situation it intended to address. At this level, the desired results must be kept vividly alive, and the projected end-goal firmly in the mind as the implementation process proceeds, one step at a time.

If working with others, share the plan for solving the problem. Providing training if needed on how to accomplish the desired objectives, assembling and distributing needed resources and being available to answer questions and to clarify complex concepts that may arise is important. And as the solution is being worked out, periodic checks on the progress against the action plan to ensure that strides are being made in the right direction should also be put in place. This is necessary because when regularly work on the implementation of different solutions, there is a likelihood to discover better, simpler and efficient ways of solving problems than earlier anticipated. For example, if tackling a problem for the first time takes "X" hours, after handling the same problem many times you are likely to fine tune your methods, which is likely to result in less time in solving the problem and even more importantly, realizing improvement in efficiency and effectiveness.

Once a decision has been made and the implementation process is in progress, you have to devise a tracking mechanism to determine if the solution is working. You have to take a pulse check to get insight and feedback on the effect of the solution to addressing the problem. Under ideal circumstances, if the solution is the right one, the problem should be gradually dissipating more and more as the solution is implemented. In the process of implementation there would generally be need to make some tweaks here and there; either by addressing issues that arise or to ensure that the solution

has the best chance of succeeding. Success in the implementation requires regular checks on the progress in order to know what is going well and what isn't, and making adjustments in good time. If there are significant lapses and deviations from the anticipated, expected or projected outcome, find out what is causing this. This phase constitutes the monitoring of solution implementation process.

Essential questions to ask when monitoring the progress of problem solving could be: how much progress has so far been made? What amount of work is remaining? Does everyone know what they are supposed to be doing? Is the process on schedule? Is it still within the budget? Have the initial milestones or targets been met? What new challenges are being encountered? What new recommended changes are needed at this point? What are the next milestones?

VI. LEADERSHIP PROCESS FOR EVALUATING SOLUTION RESULTS

At the end of problem solving process, it is helpful to find out if the solution successfully fixed the problem, worsened it, or partially addressed it. In some instances, due to mental fatigue by those affected, and the fear of being pessimistic can barricade the vision and actual success of the solution, creating "success deceit", only the problem to boomerang back ten-fold. Some of the critical questions to ask when evaluating results include the following: was the problem resolved within the planned schedule, timeline or deadline? Was the problem eliminated within the budget? Is the problem fully resolved? Is there anything that has not been completed? Are there any lessons learned?

The process of problem solving process should be concluded by documenting the results. Some items to document include the date on when the problem was fixed, who ascertained that the problem was resolved, and how the problem was handled or resolved. These are the strides that leaders use in dealing with issues affection humanity on day to day basis; their capacity to persevere, tolerate, have faith in reason that things can be difficulty but not impossible, and the zeal to commit to finding solutions situates leadership at a higher level of comprehension far from the ordinary individuals.

VII. LEADERSHIP DECISION MAKING STYLES

The approach to problem solving and decision making vary from one leader to another. This variation helps us in understanding why some leaders are more effective than others. The styles include: i) *Charismatic decision maker* – they are enthusiastic, captivating, talkative, and dominant; ii) *Thinker decision maker* - cerebral, intelligent, logical, academic; iii) *Skeptic decision maker* - demanding, disruptive, disagreeable, and rebellious; iv) *Follower decision maker* - responsible, cautious, brand-driven, and bargain-conscious; and, v) *Controller decision maker* - logical, unemotional, sensible, detail oriented, accurate, analytical

In line to the above categories, leadership management styles can be categorized as follow:

Directive Style - have a low tolerance for ambiguity and are oriented toward task and the technical concerns. These

decision makers tend to be efficient, logical, pragmatic, and systematic in their approach to problem solving. Directive decision makers like to focus on facts and get things done quickly; they are action oriented, tend to have a very short-stint focus, like to exercise power, want to be in control, and, in general, display an autocratic leadership style.

Analytical Style - have a high tolerance for ambiguity and a strong task and technical orientation; they like to analyze situations; in fact, they often tend to overanalyze things; they evaluate more information and alternatives than do directive decision makers; they take long to make decisions, but they do respond well to new or uncertain situations. They also tend to have an autocratic leadership style.

Conceptual Style - have a high tolerance for ambiguity and for strong people and social concerns; they take a broad perspective in solving problems and like to consider many options and future possibilities; they like discussing things with as many people as possible in order to gather a great deal of information and then rely on intuition in making their decisions; are willing to take risks and tend to be good at discovering creative solutions to problems; at times they foster an idealistic and indecisive approach to decision making.

Behavioral Style – are characterized by a low tolerance for ambiguity and strong people and social concerns; they tend to work well with others and they like situations in which opinions are openly exchanged. They tend to be receptive to suggestions, are supportive and warm, and prefer verbal to written information. They tend to avoid conflicts and are overly concerned with keeping everyone happy. As a result, these decision makers often have difficult in saying no to people, and they do not like making tough decisions, especially when it will result in someone being upset with the outcome.

As we conclude, we also need to look at some of the factors that impact on problem solving and decision making. We stated earlier that problems are real and when not handled in a proper manner they can lead to desperation, suffering and even revolts. We also mentioned that fundamental to solving a problem and making a decision is the need to recognize and define the problem, understand its root cause, and determining whether it can be solved or not. As easy this may sound, the real processes of dealing with and solving problems has its roots therein. So why do we often fail to solve problems even when they seem solvable?

There are various factors that impact on problem solving and decision making process; they include but not limited to: attitudes about risk and uncertainty, personal habits of individuals, social and cultural influences and factors, past experiences of the agent to problem solving, cognitive biases, and individual differences. Escalation of commitments beyond what was anticipated and the very discouraging previous outcomes; and belief in personal relevance by redundant and outlived individuals.

Others include time pressure, programmed versus non-programmed decisions, information input, prejudices and biases, leader’s values and preferences, institutional policy, risks, uncertainty, certainty, limited resources political considerations, higher leadership attitude, procrastination

budget money and budgetary constraints, emotional factors and skeptical trust, reaction from constituents, and authorizing authority. These factors if not monitored and addressed can impede the smooth process of problem solving and muddle efforts to constructive and effective decision making.

VIII. CONCLUSION

I made effort at defining leadership, discussed basic traits, skills, dispositions and attitudes of good leadership, and the value of good leadership to human society. I demonstrated that, left on their own, human beings are propelled by the instinct of self-gratification, a factor that promote tension within human society leading to war and destruction. I showed the need to constitute a civil society with a powerful authority to regulate human appetites, passion, desires and greed, and create sanity and harmony for mutual synchronicity. I also demonstrated the need for a commonwealth where all members are accorded the right to decent existent and protection from threats occasioned by the ravenous and ego propelled individuals. My argument is that effective good leaders are those who nurse the interest of the community, are selfless, commit to serve and have the prowess to deal with, address and solve problems inflicting society. Leaders that set vision, role-model others and always pursue the greater good for the greatest number. I demonstrated the disparity between leaders and the ordinary individuals in terms of ability to deal with problems and seek for lasting solution.

And as a way to clarifying the effectiveness of leadership in handling and solving problems, I have analyzed and presented a step by step approach to problem solving and decision making, indicating why effective leaders deal with ease, and solve problems perceived to be beyond comprehension. In discussing the phases of problem solving and decision making, I made it clear that the colony of problems and decision making is not a preserve for leaders only, but each and every individual need to make efforts as to deal with and solve day to day problems. Some of the factors that impact on problem solving and decision making have also been addressed, putting emphasis on the need to first and foremost recognizing and defining a problem, and being sensitive to the environment in which such problem need to be addressed and solved. Bottom to this article is that many problems remain unsolved either because they are not recognized and defined well enough, or the other factors within the environment impedes the effective mechanism in addressing them, or the leadership style negates the free flow of ideas that could help in solving the problem. We need to ensure that serenity is enabled, tolerance embraced and freedom to holding opinion, expressing oneself, and sharing of ideas is encouraged between and with the leadership. It’s only then, that we will be able to authentically and authoritatively talk of a true liberal civil society.

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