

The Role of Philanthropic Organisations in Enhancing Leadership

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Abstract

Philanthropy is the love of mankind, a planned and structured giving of money, time, information, goods and services, voice and influence to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community. Every society and in deed the world is sustained by those who live by being the very reason why others live and continue to have hope/faith in living. Look at the human catastrophe coming from the earthquake/tsunami in Japan and Haiti, the flood in Pakistan, the thirst in India, the uprisings and killings in Libya, in Yemen, in Syria, in Jordan, Sudan, in Iraq, in Palestine, in Israel or the choking corruption in Nigeria. What would the world have done in the face of these devastating events without not only those with kind hearts and dispositions but particularly without Philanthropic Organisations given the magnitude of human suffering emanating from them? Although we have many responsible governments across the globe, it is philanthropic non-governmental organisations – the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders etc - that take the lead by either calling attention to or taking action when the world is faced with these unceasing catastrophes. Usually because of the magnitude, the United Nations and the like with many governments across the globe join hands.

By composition and focus, philanthropic organisations are designed to integrate the notions of social impact and responsibility across the domains of individual and general welfare usually in response to the hardships of groups without expectation of any ability on the part of the beneficiaries to return the favour. This means that generally, they have the broad aim of focusing on social issues. As a result, they develop programs that enable them serve as a positive change agent in the society. Consequently, philanthropic organisations leverage resources and skills in different sectors of the society to generate a more holistic solution to complex problems. They lead in developing models of how best to mobilise and organise resources effectively.

Philanthropic organisations have increasingly become important actors within the new governance environment. They are playing very significant roles “in building citizenship skills and attitudes crucial for motivating citizens to use these skills” and thereby acquire capacities which enhance their leadership skills in the public space.

Introduction

In this world, there are so many difficulties, frustrations, catastrophes (human & natural), hunger, sicknesses, wars and violence to the extent that without philanthropy and philanthropic individuals/organizations who bring balms of relief for the sufferings/pains arising from all these, human beings cannot survive the frustrations of our contemporary world which beseech humanity daily and from all sides.

Shall one talk about the earthquake/Tsunami in Japan, in Haiti, the flood in Pakistan, the thirst in India, the uprisings and killings in Libya, in Yemen, in Syria, in Jordan, Sudan, in Iraq, in Palestine/Israel or the choking corruption in Nigeria? Every society and in deed the world is sustained by those who live by being the very reason why others live and continue to have hope/faith in living.

The focus of this paper is to look at Philanthropic Organisations as important partners to state leadership. This partnership enhances leadership. It comes in diverse forms sometimes in cash, materials, free lectures or seminars and so on. In the developed countries like the UK, USA, Canada, and other western nations, where their form of leadership is friendly and welfare-oriented, there are a lot of Philanthropic Organisations. This helps to ensure the wellbeing of the people. If that happens in the developed nations with viable economies, how much more do we need such in Nigeria and of course in the African continent.

In an academic discourse of this nature, it is always necessary to make preliminary remarks about the meaning and understanding of the key words of the title viz: Philanthropy, Organisation and Leadership.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is the noun form of the word 'philanthropic'. The latter is used in an adjectival sense. Etymologically, philanthropy is derived from the Greek word *φιλανθρωπος* *philanthropos*. The word is made up of two words *φίλος* *Philos* and *άνθρωπος* *anthropos* meaning love or loving and man or human being respectively (McCully:2010) Therefore, philanthropy could be loosely defined as the love of mankind which in extension could be rendered as helping mankind through charity.

It is a planned and structured giving of money, time, information, goods and services, voice and influence to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community. Eikenberry (2005: 2) defines it as the act of giving money and other resources, including time (volunteering), to aid individuals, causes, and organisations. This definition also encompasses the various institutions, such as voluntary associations, non-profit and tax-exempt organisations and other funding mechanisms that enable individuals to give their resources for the welfare and in the interest of the larger society. In other words, this concept revolves around the activities of any group of individuals/organisations who develop systematized programmes and projects to both disseminate information and dispense other welfare packages with the aim of improving the standard of living of an individual and/or a society.

Various definitions of philanthropy have been advanced. In many regards, the concept could be said to mean “the effort or inclination to increase the well-being of humankind as by charitable aid or donations; love of humankind in general.... The practice of performing charitable or benevolent actions (www.en.wikipedia.org). In the same token, the Platonic Academy’s Philosophical Dictionary (2010) defined Philanthropy or philanthropic as used therein, as a state of well-educated habits stemming from love of humanity; a state of being productive or being of benefit to humans.

John Gardner and Robert Payton (2010), opined that it is a private initiative for the public good, and a voluntary action for public good. From the foregoing, one can rightly infer that philanthropy is a private initiative and scheme that is designed to lift and improve the quality of life of the public. It is important to note that the beneficiaries of such aid from philanthropy have no obligation whatsoever to pay for the aids or services.

Organisation

The word organisation has its root linked to a ‘Greek word *organon*...it is a social arrangement which pursues collective goals, controls its own performance and has boundary separating it from its environment (wikipedia free Encyclopedia:2010). Although there are variant definitions of organization, it is appealing in this discourse to define organisation as an organized group of people; a system (Crowther: 1998). In this regard, an organization could be said to mean an established or duly registered group with a body of principles guiding it, and defined set of goals; aims and objectives. Their task may be to pursue a cause that would benefit only its members or extend such to non members and to the society.

A philanthropic organisation therefore refers to an established group or body whose central focus or major concern/objective is the pursuit of at least one aspect of public good without expectation of any form of reward except the acceptance of the good will it offers to humanity.

Most philanthropic organisations are not necessarily Government sponsored hence the reference to them in many contexts as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Sometimes they are community based and could be referred to as Community Based Organisations (CBOs). At other times they are religious/faith based and are referred to as Faith Based Organisations (FBOs). Such a body could mean an organized group that is set to impart on the life of the people by providing some necessities without charges. Philanthropic organisation such as Rockefeller Foundation, Rotary Club, the Red Cross Society, Doctors without Borders etc have contributed greatly to assisting people in need all around the world without being paid for their services.

Some of them including numerous others not mentioned here have awarded scholarships, built Libraries, bridges, hospitals, schools etc, organized functions and seminars; instill good moral behaviour; organised leadership training classes, given aids and relief materials for victims of natural disasters and other causes to mention but a few. Indeed, these organisations have as their major roles to raise the living standard of the masses through charity works and aids.

Leadership

Leadership as depicted in Wikipedia (the free Encyclopedia 2010), is the "process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." It is through this process that people are influenced to act in certain ways that may be in consonance with the mind and plan of a leader. In line with the aforesaid definition, Alan (2010) contends that, "leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen."

Philanthropy And Leadership

"Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds and in your teaching show integrity..." (Tit 2:7-8 [RSV])

Of all the three concepts, Philanthropy, Organization and Leadership, the later is unarguably the last (but certainly not the least) of the words in the focus of this topic. Consequently, we shall return fully to it in a short while.

Professor Osita Ogbu, in his paper on Leadership and Change, raised some salient questions which are very useful in the discourse here on leadership. The questions are as follows:

1. Who is a leader? Who's a real leader?
2. What are the Key attributes of a leader?
3. Can these attributes be learnt?
4. Why is developing leadership abilities important?
5. Are leaders born?

These questions further led him to make the following assertions viz:

To be a leader, a person has to be out in front;

He/She must have people intentionally coming behind him/her; following his/her lead; and acting on his/her vision

True Leadership cannot be awarded, appointed, or assigned. It comes only from influence and cannot be mandated. It must be EARNED

The true measure of Leadership is influence -the law of influence

A leader is one who sees more than others see; who sees further than others see; and who sees before others do

Leadership is the process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective. Leaders have vision which they share with others. It is the leader who binds the organisation with beliefs, values and knowledge. Leaders, by definition, set examples for others to follow. But before that happens, they will have to prove their worth. Leaders are constantly being observed by those who are expected to follow and whose respect they must earn.

For this reason, integrity and courage define leadership better than any pompous statement. Leadership is that important element which separates the extraordinary from the run of the mill.

If one seeks to become a strong leader, one will have to show drive, energy, determination, self-discipline, will-power and spirit. Only then will one be able to motivate others to overreach themselves.

Leaders (people in leadership positions) most possess:

- *strength of character
 - * steadfastness, resoluteness
 - * the ability of walking the talk and doing the promised
 - * authentic and straightforward character
 - * what's on the inside being displayed on the outside
 - * open, honest and direct dealings with others
 - * clear and uncompromised values
 - * clarity about what's right and wrong
 - * commitments with the courage of their convictions
 - * principles, fairness, accountability and responsibility
 - * the ability to balance and integrate the whole
 - * maturity and wisdom

In other words, Leaders must have more than the ordinary. Management, yes; manipulation and control, yes...but not true leadership which buys the loyalty of others at the cost of pain to oneself.

This, more than the ordinary, requires some factors. We may refer to such factors as enhancing agents. In all honesty, philanthropic organisations can and do play a very strong role here.

The act of philanthropy is not just about giving. It does two main things: it builds respect and stimulates integrity and sacrifice; and these are the key ingredients of true leaders. A true leader has respect for self; respect for others; and respect (or the boldness to accept the responsibility for) all his actions. This last respect is generally termed integrity which propels the sense of sacrifice. As a matter of fact, service and sacrifice constitute the Christian philosophy of leadership.

That perhaps explains why Jesus used the allegory of the relationship between a Good Shepherd and his flock as one major illustration of the character of a leader. A good shepherd is one who lays down (sacrifices) one's life for one's flock (Matt).

Integrity, Honesty And Transparency Are Sacrosanct In Leadership

There is a common theme among experts who have studied or written about modern leadership. That all leaders must act with integrity at all times.

A story was told of a King in the medieval age who had the challenge of picking a successor because he had no male child of his own. He ordered that a thorough search be done throughout the Kingdom for a young lad to be adopted by him. The search produced 10 young, brilliant and physically fit boys, the best in the kingdom, from which the king was to pick one. The King was told that any of the 10 was very qualified to be his successor.

The king called the 10 young men and gave them what he termed an agrarian test. Each was given a grain of corn to go and plant and submit the outcome in 30 days. And indeed, they all submitted beautiful tender shrubbery on the agreed date before a large gathering of the prominent sons and daughters of the land. But, one of them, disappointingly, came empty handed. He told the king, in a trembling voice, how despite his effort of watering the grain every morning and evening his refused to germinate. He has failed the all important last test, the agrarian test.

However, to the surprise of everyone, the king rose to proclaim him as his adopted son and successor to the throne. He declared that the test was never an agrarian but a moral one, as the grain given to each was actually boiled. The question is where did the 9 get their tender plants from?

A leader is the role model by which the group that he or she commands is most influenced. Eventually this will lead to a moulding or modelling of the group's behaviour. This is why a leader must have and maintain the highest standard of character and integrity whether on or off duty. Integrity of one's character will consist of honour, virtue, allegiance, and subordination. Without integrity a leader can never garner the respect and confidence of the led.

Individual integrity is never easy, and is never suppose to be. At most it may be the most difficult of all personal qualities to hold intact because of its complicated nature and the multiplicity of it dimensions.

Having integrity is being God fearing which is a trait that every leader needs "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God..." (2 Cor. 1:12-13).

Integrity, Character & Leadership

- Character makes trust possible

- And Trust makes leadership possible. Because no leader can break trust and hope to continue to **influence** people. Ogbu quotes *Michael Josephson* as insisting that:

The way we treat people we think can't help or hurt us (like housekeepers, waiters, and secretaries), tells more about our character than how we treat people we think are important. People who are honest, kind, and fair only when there's something to gain shouldn't be confused with people of real character who demonstrate these qualities habitually, under all circumstances. Character is not a fancy coat we put on for show. It's who we really are.

By composition and focus, philanthropic organisations are designed to integrate the notions of social impact and responsibility across the domains of individual and general welfare usually in response to the hardships of groups without expectation of any ability on the part of the beneficiaries to return the favour. This means that generally, they have the broad aim of focusing on social issues. As a result, they develop programs that enable them serve as a positive change agent in the society. Consequently, philanthropic organisations leverage resources and skills in different sectors of the society to generate a more holistic solution to complex problems. For example, to address the big issues of education, poverty and health care they require the scale and reach of government organizations, the client orientation of non-profit organisations and models of how to mobilise and organise resources effectively.

Leadership in an enlightened society has one thing in common with Philanthropic Organisation. However, in Nigeria for instance, that common thing between leadership position and Philanthropic organisations, which is providing the wellbeing of one another is grossly lacking in our polity. Where it exists, it is below expectation. In that case, we find beaming the roles of Philanthropic Organisations.

Conclusion

Philanthropic organisations certainly make important contributions to creating and maintaining civil society and thus in enhancing democracy, god governance and sustainability in the nation. Thus, today, non-profit and voluntary associations are often seen as a vital link to enhancing political participation in the wider community (Almond & Verba, 1963; Barber, 1998; Evans & Boyte, 1986; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

In addition, these organisations also provide philanthropic donations and non-commercial sponsorship as further contributions to express a sense of commitment and responsibility towards society in a broader context. Such contributions are part of a tradition of sharing success with those sections of the society who are not in a position to benefit directly from the government. Commercial donations and sponsoring activities are part of the research and contributions towards social development through in-depth programmes and projects that emphasize innovation, collaboration, quality and sustainability. This is because these organisations possess enormous potential of expertise and human talent in various areas.

These organisations have increasingly become important actors within the new governance environment. They are playing very significant roles “in building citizenship skills and attitudes crucial for motivating citizens to use these skills” and thereby acquire capacities which enhance their leadership skills.

In view of this, it is recommended that philanthropic organizations would be more effective if they develop networks with the aim of sharing and transferring field ‘know-how’. Partnership (synergic efforts) in this way will eventually lead to more effective and sustainable impact in the society.

It is also recommended that the operational capacities and spheres be enhanced through the introduction and effective utilization of technology. In other words, both those new to the sector and those seeking the most up-to-date and exhaustive information will gain adequate information and resources. Thus, through this, *the role* of philanthropic organizations in developing leaders will be greatly enhanced.

This paper therefore further recommends that all existing Philanthropic Organisation should be encouraged to keep on in their good works and also admonish other well meaning Nigerians to join or form such organisations.

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