FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP AND LACK OF INTEGRITY: ANY CORRELATION? BEING A GUEST LECTURE DELIVERED ON 29 JULY, 2006 FOR THE OLD STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL AFON ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCHOOL BY YUSUF O. ALL ESQ; SAN

INTRODUCTION

What is leadership?

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs people or an Organization in a way that makes them cohesive and coherent. It is the means through which a person guides, leads or directs others for the accomplishment of certain goals or to make them more united.

The new Webster's Dictionary defines Leadership as "the position of a leader; the quality displayed by a leader"

It further defines a leader as "someone who acts as a guide; someone who; or something that leads; someone or something that holds first place".

A leader is therefore a person who leads i.e. a person who conducts, directs, escorts, guides, pilots, shepherds, steers, commands, controls, governs, manages, regulates or supervises. He may be a Captain, Chief, Chieftain, Commander, Conductor, Director, Guide, Head, Master, Principal, Ruler, Supervisor. Regulator or Vanguard.

ATTRIBUTES AND QUALITIES OF A GOOD LEADER.

The basis of good leadership is honorable character and selfless service. For there to be effective leadership the leader must have the trust of his followers. The leader's actions must be ethical and convey a strong vision for the future. A leader's action sets the

pace in any organization or community. His behaviour wins trust, loyalty and ensures the continued vitality of the organization or people of the community. Thus to build trust he must display a good sense of character composed of:

1) Beliefs:- Which are the things he holds dear and are rooted deeply within him. They could be assumptions or conclusions that he holds true, regarding people, concepts or things. They could be beliefs about life, death, religion, what is good or bad, what is fair and just, humane and more.
2) Values: which are attitudes about the worth of people, concept or things. Values are important as they influence a person's behaviour to weigh the importance of alternatives.
3) Skill:- These are the knowledge and abilities that a person acquires through life. A leader to attain good leadership must be skillful and knowledgeable.
4) Traits:-These are distinguishing qualities or characteristics of a person. Character on the other hand is the sum total of these traits. Character develops overtime and a person's observable behaviour is an indication of his character. The traits which a leader exhibits determines the inspiration of trust in him. Some of these traits are:

1. honesty

2. integrity

3. candor

4. commitment

5. competence

6. courage

7. loyalty

8. responsibility

9. selflessness

10. initiative

11. tact

12 decisiveness

13 dependability

14 good sense of judgment

15. endurance/perseverance

16. knowledge

17. imagination

18. faith

Amongst the above listed traits and numerous others, the most important one is INTEGRITY

LEADERSHIP AND INTEGRITY

Integrity is defined by the Webster's Dictionary as soundness, probity or the quality of being unimpaired"

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English defines it as, "the quality of being honest and morally upright According to Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition "Integrity as used in statutes prescribing the qualifications of public officers, trustees etc means soundness of moral principle and character, as shown by one person dealing with others in the making and performance of contracts, and tidelity and honesty in the discharge of trusts, it is synonymous with probity, honesty and uprightness".

Probity is defined as scrupulous honesty. Honesty simply put is the act or condition of being honest. To be honest means to never deceive, to be sincere or truthful. Uprightness is the condition of being upright which means to be morally honourable.

Integrity is synonymous with the following qualities-Candor, constancy, fairness, faithfulness, fidelity, frankness.. honesty honour, incorruptability justice, loyalty, morality openness, probity rectitude responsibility, righteousness, sincerity, trustworthiness, uprightness, virtue, entirety, completeness, soundness, value, wholeness, worthy.

Therefore it can be said that most of the virtues or qualities of a leader can be summed up in one word - INTEGRITY.

Integrity is thus the melting of ethics and values into action. Individuals who display the quality of integrity operate off a core set of beliefs that gain admiration from others. As a leader, integrity is critical for success. It is necessary if leaders wish to obtain wholehearted support from their followers.

Integrity in a leader is an essential element for the leader to gain his follower's trust. A person with integrity displays sincerity. honesty and candor in all his actions. He does not exhibit deceptive behaviour. He is a man of honour who keeps his word and his promises. He thus inspires trust in his followers. His first thought is for the collective gain of others and not his personal gai. He is emphatic and sensitive to the plight and feelings of others. He is straightforward, courageous and has the perseverance to accomplish goals, regardless of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

A leader with integrity is authentic that is he believes in what he says and he does what he says he will do.

Integrity is thus the most difficult and most important value a leader can demonstrate as it is tied to all other values. It is revealed slowly, day by day in word and deed. Actions that compromise a leader's integrity often have swift and profound repercussions. Every leader is in the spotlight of those they lead. As a result, shortcomings in integrity are readily apparent.

What then is the lack of integrity?

As described earlier, integrity is associated with honesty, openmindedness, transparency, accountability, honesty, justice, moral uprightness and many other values. Therefore where integrity is missing these values and more cannot be found.

Thus a leader who lacks integrity is a person who is dishonest, irresponsible, disloyal and does not have the interest of his followers at heart. A leader who lacks integrity does not inspire trust and loyalty from his followers. Without integrity in leadership, the people or followers lose hope and trust in the leadership. This in turn leads to failure.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP AND LACK OF INTEGRITY.

Excellence in leadership begins with leaders of good and strong character who engage in the entire process of leadership. The first step to being a good leader is being a person of honourable character and a person of honourable character is a person who has integrity.

Integrity is a like delicate jewel. Building integrity in leaders takes time and cannot be feigned. It must be felt deep within, in one's core beliefs that being honest and trustworthy is the right practice. Where integrity is seen to be only a route to financial success, one is doomed to failure and it cannot be termed in the real sense as "integrity".

The ability to lead is eroded when integrity is damaged. The ability to impose discipline and implement core values is put into question. Lack of integrity in leadership makes it to lose ability to set an example and lead. It loses the ability to correct itself therefore losing good followers either by resignation or conformity to the corrupt culture.

A lack of integrity leads to corruption, corruption arises as a result of lack of integrity or honesty. It may also be defined as the perversion or destruction of integrity. Thus the lack of integrity leads to corruption which in turn leads to the failure of leadership as a corrupt leader cannot lead effectively.

A leader without integrity is one who is selfish and dishonest, he does not have the interest of the populace at heart but does whatever he does to attain his selfish goal. A corrupt leader cannot lead effectively. A case in point is the state of the Nigerian Polity. According to eminent writer Chinua Achebe.

> *"The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else".*

Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian state has been besieged with instances of failed leadership due to the successive leaders' personal ambition to enrich his pockets for personal gain to the detriment of the country as a whole. Even the incursion of the Military into Politics on the pretext of bad leadership and corruption by the ousted government has left the country the

worse for wear. The military regime of General Sani Abacha was reported to have looted over 2-3 billion dollars from the public treasury.

In recent times there are too many allegations of bribery and corrupt practices in the executive and legislative arms of government despite the passing of the Anti-corruption Bill into Law by these same arms of Government. The leaders who are to set examples are the ones embroiled in dances of shame. For instance, consider the 3rd term saga and the allegations of millions of naira being offered as bribe to Senators and Legislators to enable them "sell their souls" to the detriment of Nigeria. This is a clear cut case of lack of integrity for why should the issue of 34 term arise in the first place from a government which has already spent 2 terms in office? From where did the money being offered as bribe come from and why could it not be used instead in pursuit of policies or programmes that would benefit the Nigerian masses?

Also there are allegations of indiscriminate withdrawals from the oil reserve fund which cannot be accounted for. The accusations and counter accusations are still festering.

Another example is the indiscriminate looting of public funds. Cases abound where political offices holders looted public funds for their personal enrichment and stored them in foreign accounts. The cases of some serving and impeached governors are a case in point. Integrity can be said to be the strength of character that enables a person to admit to failure regardless of what is at stake. Also public officials are said to take unnecessary trips abroad with large entourage all at the expense of the Tax payers.

The case of the former Senate President and some members of the National Assembly undergoing prosecution for demanding and receiving gratification to enhance and approve the budget of the Ministry of Education is another example.

Where the Government of the day sees itself as above the law and refuses to adhere to court orders what is the legacy being left behind for the masses? Refusal to obey court orders is a blatant display of lack of integrity as the government would have failed in its duty, responsibility and promise to uphold the law of the land.

The police is regarded as one of the most corrupt public institutions in Nigeria. The people no longer have faith in them and resort instead to self-help and can they be blamed? A Situation where the former IGP was removed for corrupt practices and money laundering and the police extort money from the populace on a regular basis. Is a case of failure of leadership.

Our esteemed judiciary is not left out members of the Bar and Bench are being indicted for corruption and lack of integrity on a regular basis. Recently 2 Judges of the Federal High Court were sacked by the National Judicial Council for fraudulent practices on the bench. One of the judges tried to influence the judgment of an election tribunal in Akwa-Ibom through the offer of bribe Members of the Bar are not exempted. The Rules of Professional Conduct stipulate that a lawyer must act with all candor and fairness. However there are numerous petitions against lawyers who have violated ethics and standards of the profession. Many lawyers have betrayed the trust of their clients and society.

The happenings in our educational institutions where the hope for our future lies cannot be ignored It is commonplace to hear cases of sexual harassment stemming from lecturers to girls young enough to be their daughters or grand-daughters. There are terms such as "expo" and "sorting" as unscrupulous lecturers have been known to demand or accept monetary inducement to pass undeserving students or leak examination questions to them. The parents who are naturally expected to impact good morals and virtues on their wards are not left out of the melee as they pay money for others to write examinations for their children or wards thus encouraging them to cheat, lie and be dishonest. Also they go to different lengths to bribe and influence placements of their children or wards. These are morally corrupt practices which display a complete lack of integrity and are not good examples for the children who are the leaders of tomorrow.

Our religious bodies and places of worship are not exempted Indications of corruption and moral decadence are rife with allegations of embezzlement of funds and the commission of immoral acts. The religious leaders who are to set examples of moral uprightness, honesty and tairness go about displaying anything but these values. What can one say in a situation where a religious leader goes about in the most expensive cars with body guards, while parts of the congregation

wallow in abject poverty? Such religious leaders instead of being found to correct leaders who display their blatant lack of integrity are found to dine with them.

There are so many more instances of failure of leadership which could be shown to stem from a lack of integrity Organisations and corporate bodies have crumbled because of fraud committed by managers and executives without integrity Stepping out of the Nigerian shores a bit, the Enron episode in the United States that reverberated around the world is a pure case of an absence of integrity on the part of principal officers of the company.

Leaders set examples which soon become the rule and unlike knowledge, ethical behaviour is learned more by observing than by listening and in fast moving situations, examples become certainty. Leaders are the standard bearers who inspire trust and openness from their followers. Thus where the leadership is unethical and lacking integrity, distrust and a lack of confidence soon follows. There is less support in leadership which leads to civil strife and instability as people result to self-help in almost all disputes. The ongoing turbulence in the Niger-Delta is another example of failure of leadership as the people have lost all faith in the government that over the years have not kept their word thereby displaying a gross lack of integrity.

According to an eminent writer Sonnie Santos in his article Integrity, should it matter?"

> *"Integrity is a lot like being pregnant. There is no such thing as being a little bit pregnant. Either one is or isn't. It is the same with integrity. It's not a robe one puts on and takes off when it's convenient, at home, at work or play".*

Therefore a leader without integrity is deficient. He is lacking in the most basic of things and can only fail.

CONCLUSION.

Looking at the Nigerian landscape, it is quite apparent that the experience of failed leadership is largely due to an obvious lack of integrity on the part of our leaders. The resultant effect? A nation of people without integrity.

An indepth study of the Nigerian economy will reveal that most of our economic woes can be traced to the lack of integrity of our leaders. Despite being a large producer/exporter of petroleum products (which is the main stay of Nigerian economy) the inability of the leaders to apply the proceeds of the sale of petroleum to the development of the economy (while lining their pockets and those of their supporters with the proceeds) is distinctly a result of lack of integrity.

The failure of the ICPC and EFCC to positively curb the corruption virus that has pervaded a all the sectors of the Nigerian polity is further evidence, of the dismal non-existence of integrity in the dictionary of Nigerian leaders and officers of the State.

In conclusion therefore, it can be seen that the failure of leadership in almost every sector of our society can be linked to a lack of integrity on the part of individuals saddled with the reponsity of taking the society to greater heights, succinctly put, leadership without integrity is a rape of society.

The challenge to bodies like yours is to call attention to the inseparable symbiosis that exists between good leadership and sterling integrity. You should not just call attention to it, we must all strive to practice same. The future of this country lies with leaders that possess undoubted integrity.