

## LEADERSHIP: CHANGE AND FORESIGHT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed at leaders, prospective leaders, managers, academics, lay readers, and educators as well as Christians as it examines leadership from a perspective of foresight, change and servanthood. As such, the purpose of the article is to provide invaluable insights on the leadership discourse by expanding the framework to include foresight and change as critical components for effective leadership. The reasons for the paper are to 1) provide a different viewpoint in the leadership discourse by coalescing foresight, change, and servanthood, 2) fill the void in the literature by widening the scope of the discourse from mere servanthood to everyday leaders, and 3) evaluate the value of foresight and change in leadership effectiveness. The rationale for this position is based on the fact that many people have been led astray by their leaders because of a lack of foresight and the unwillingness to change in spite of facts to support a modification of old perspectives and ideational. Foresight is simply not about servitude as is ultimately seen by Kim. He was limiting foresight to servanthood simply because of being a follower of Robert Greenleaf. What I concur with Kim about is that leader is intertwined with egoism and that this is driver of many leaders instead of service. It can be deduced from Kim's and Greenleaf's works that foresight is core of leadership and that foresight is more in keeping with self-fulfillment rather than of human service. For this paper, foresight is not constricted by Christian perspective; it is more of having a vision, believing in that vision, instituting plans to accomplish the vision, and inspiring (or motivating) other to buy into the vision. This means that the leader must first be internally motivated by his/her vision, self-determine to accomplish the vision and like Blanchard et al. opined "effective leadership starts on the inside" (p. 38), which was expressed by Daniel Kim, John Maxwell, Stephen Covey. In order for a leader to become great or immortalize into society's social consciousness, he/she must be willing to change his/her initial perspective in keeping with current realities, and foresight for the purpose of accomplishing the vision. Lee Kuan Yew and Nelson Mandela had a vision of making their nations great and they did so by their knowledge, intuition, past knowledge, and self-determination in keeping reality of their vision. Outside of being willing to change attitude, perspective, paradigm and actions, effective leaders are pioneers as it relates to being change agents, which was articulated by Bass and Bass (2008).

**KEYWORDS:** Change, Foresight, Leadership, Servant Leadership.

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## INTRODUCTION

Interestingly, leadership interfaces with all facet of human existence and it is the driving force behind all forms of social, psychological and physical development. Yet, there is no consensus on an accepted definition of the terminology. This paper is aimed at leaders, prospective leaders, managers, academics, lay readers, and educators as well as Christians as it examines leadership from a perspective of foresight, change and servanthood. As such, the purpose of the article is to provide invaluable insights on the leadership discourse by expanding the framework to include foresight and change as critical components for effective leadership. The reasons for the paper are to 1) provide a different viewpoint in the leadership discourse by coalescing foresight, change, and servanthood, 2) fill the void in the literature by widening the scope of the discourse from mere servanthood to everyday leaders, and 3) evaluate the value of foresight and change in leadership effectiveness. The rationale for this position is based on the fact that many people have been led astray by their leaders because of a lack of foresight and the unwillingness to change in spite of facts to support a modification of old perspectives and ideational. In keeping with those issues previously mentioned, the position of this paper (or the author) is simply to stimulate a discourse on the role, attributes and importance of foresight and change in the materialization of a vision, and how some leader have become immortalized by way of these competencies.

## MAIN POINTS

The focal points of this paper are expressed below and form the basis for the discussion:

1. Effective leadership starts from the inside before it is expressed and recognized for the other to see it;

2. All effective leaders, across different geopolitical space and culture, have two similar attributes, foresight and a willingness to change in order to accomplish their vision;
3. Paradigm shift is the pillows upon which great leaders become immortalized and their names are carved thereby into social history;
4. Foresight does not meanchange and as such answering the call of service is not synonymous with servant-leadership.

## SUB-POINTS

1. A leader is driven by a vision;
2. There is a difference between foresight and change.

## DISCUSSION

It was during my reading of essays on the Servant Leadership by Robert Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1977) that my ego was squarely place on the table as it relates to how people interact with each other and what is sold as leadership is mostly egotism and public displays. It was an exercise in humility that emerges while examining the works, attitudes, principles and practices of Jesus of Nazareth, which Greenleaf entitled Servant Leadership. Another eye opening situation occurs when I read Daniel Kim's monograph that examines Greenleaf's work on servant leadership. Kim (2002) believed that central to the theme of servant leadership or leadership is the matter of foresight. Kim opined something that was striking from Greenleaf's work, which was:

The failure (or refusal) of a leader to foresee may be viewed as an ethical failure; because a serious ethical compromise today (when the usual judgement on ethical inadequacy is made) is sometimes the result of a failure to make the effort at an earlier date to foresee today's events and take the right actions when

there was freedom for initiative to act. The action which society labels “unethical” in the present moment is often really one of no choice. By this standard, a lot of guilty people are walking around with an air of innocence that they would not have if society were able always to pin a label “unethical” on the failure of foresee and the conscious failure to act constructively when there was freedom to act” (Greenleaf cited by Kim, 2002, p. 1)

On deconstructing Greenleaf’s perspective are some critical elements 1) foresee, 2) judgement, 3) examination of physical, social, psychological and environmental issues, 4) leader and 5) change. It can be deduced from Greenleaf’s comments that an effective leader will be able to place in the current reality into perspective and chart a vision based on foresight, which is pillow of change and role of a vision. Clearly, a leader like Jesus Christ was able to assess the situation, value a greater purpose, and with his foresight guide man along a new and different pathway to life. Kim said something that resonated with me, “If we are to exercise foresight, we need to continually expand our awareness and perception, to take in more than what we might if we kept the focus of our attention too narrow and strictly logical” (Kim, 2002, p.7). It can be forwarded that foresight is the hallmark of an effective leader, and that leadership is not solely parceled into customs and resistance to change. Leadership is, therefore, packaged in character, vision, multiple level of perspectives (i.e., generative; reflective; creative; adaptive, and reactive), power of choice, and stewardship, and not the least is the leader.

Whenever the issue of leadership is being discussed, the leader is usually the focal point of the discourse and this speaks to the underlining tenets of the field. It is undoubtedly clear that the pronoun leader is the prefix to the terminology leadership, making personality a central feature of the field of leadership. With

this said, two questions arise 1) What is leadership? and 2) Who is a leader? It follows, therefore, that a definition of the concept of leadership is pivotal to a discourse on leadership and this must predate the major questions in the field of leadership.

## **DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP AND LEADER**

DuBrin (2013) defined leadership “... as the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organization goals”, indicating that leadership (p. 2). Winston and Patterson (2006), instead of defining leadership, speak of a leader and that he/she inspire, train and influences followers into action in pursuit of organization objectives (see also, John Hopkins School of Education, 2016), indicating that leadership is intertwined with followership and that the definition changes with the scholar. On the other hand, Andrews University (2016) instead of looking at the broad concept of leadership narrowed it to Christian leadership and opined that “...[It] is a dynamic relational process in which people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal - it is serving others by leading and leading others by serving”, which is in keeping with interrelation of leadership and followers in a definition of leadership. While there are similarities among the definitions of leadership, again, there is no standardized conceptualization that is agree upon by all scholars.

Bass and Bass forward that:

Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and of the perceptions and expectations of the members. Leaders are agents of change, whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the

motivation or competencies of others in the group. Leadership can be conceived as directing the attention of other members to goals and the paths to achieve them. It should be clear that with this broad definition, any member of the group can exhibit some degree of leadership, and the members will vary in this regard (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 25)

On reading Blanchard's book (2007), I have summarized who is a leader. A leader, on the other hand, is the person who 1) ignites, 2) motivates, 3) empower, 4) plans, 5) comes with the foresight, 6) sets a roadmap for his/her followers, and 7) is willing to change his/her perspective in keeping with current conditions in order to obtain the required vision (or dream or outcome). He contends that "It becomes clearer to me all the time that leaders today have to start being cheerleaders, supporters, and encouragers, rather than judges, critics, and evaluators" (p. 123) because "Unfortunately, it's almost impossible for people to play these new roles if they don't feel good about themselves" (p. 123). With Blanchard's and Kim's perspective as well as Greenleaf, there are two critical tenets of leadership 1) foresight and 2) change, which are the bedrock for effective leadership. Like Kim (2002) and Greenleaf (1977), I support the perspective that a leader who lacks foresight and unwillingness to change, cannot be effective and will lead his/her people into abyss. Hence, this paper examines the matter of foresight and change simply because there can be no effective leadership without these two elements.

## **CHANGE AND FORESIGHT**

Ulrich (ud) opined that:

We've been on a journey for the last fifteen years to resolve leadership concept clutter by approaching leadership from a unique perspective. Most leadership authors of the last

fifty years draw on the discipline of psychology- the leader must understand what is inside oneself. From fish to cheese, from habits to conversations, from self-empowerment to servitude, most leadership thinkers have struggled to distill the essence of what makes an effective leader. We appreciate this psychological tradition but believe that other disciplines like marketing and finance may inform and synthesize how we think about leaders. In a simplistic way, these perspectives are more outside/in than inside/out because they are based on business logic (Ulrich, ud, p. 2) It can be deduced from Ulrich's perspective that effective leaders are servants, self-empowered, visionaries, insightful, and that they are different from mere managers or a leader. A critical issue that emerges from Ulrich's viewpoint was self-empowerment, which this paper will entitle it 'effective leadership commences from the inside'. He recognized servanthood was a critical component of effective leadership and that leaders who serve are always self-empowered, or simply put, they are firstly servants who are call to leader based on a self-serving vision and are not driven to lead. According to Blanchard, Hybels, and Hodges (1999) "Leaders who are servants first will assume leadership only if they see it as the best way they can serve. They're 'called' to lead, rather than driven because they naturally want to be helpful" (p. 42). Another way that this can be expressed is that when an individual has developed an inner passion for a vision, foresight will drive the person to serve others rather than be empowered by power of leadership or the materialism that can evolved from leadership.

Kim (2002) wrote something that summarizes the value of leadership, 'Answering the call to service', which is infrequently the capstone for some leaders. Many people who have answered the call of service such as politicians, entrepreneurs and scammers have not done so

from the perspective of servant-leadership. Kim (2002) opined:

As I said at the outset, answering the call of servant-leadership is a humbling experience. My hope is that each of us remembers who we are and that we will be ever vigilant in continually developing our foresight so that we stand ready and able to answer the call to be true stewards of our children's future. Answering the call will require us to ask to rediscover who we are as individuals and connecting with the highest aspirations in ourselves and in our organizations. Answering the call requires us to ask the deeper question "Who am I?" and answering it repeatedly until we have stripped the layers and layers of varnish we have applied over ourselves and revealed the beauty of the natural wood that is our true self (Kim, 2002, p. 20)

Kim's view of foresight was not that of vision or a mission that an individual is desirous of accomplishing in the future; but rather of 'answering the call of servitude'. He believed that merely wanting to provide a service, accomplish a vision, goal or aim based on the organizational requirement is not 'answering the call of service'. Hence, for Kim it is about true servitude in which the individual serves others in deed, action, thought, intent and this is accomplished by way of servant-leadership. Servant-leadership means that the individual follows the example of Jesus Christ, where there is not self; but developing a foresight of servitude to humanity.

Foresight is simply not about servitude as is ultimately seen by Kim. He was limiting foresight to servanthood simply because of being a follower of Robert Greenleaf. What I concur with Kim about is that leader is intertwined with egoism and that this is driver of many leaders instead of service. It can be deduced from Kim's and Greenleaf's works that foresight is core of leadership and that

foresight is more in keeping with self-fulfillment rather than of human service. For this paper, foresight is not constricted by Christian perspective; it is more of having a vision, believing in that vision, instituting plans to accomplish the vision, and inspiring (or motivating) other to buy into the vision. This means that the leader must first be internally motivated by his/her vision, self-determine to accomplish the vision and like Blanchard et al. opined "effective leadership starts on the inside" (p. 38), which was expressed by Daniel Kim, John Maxwell, Stephen Covey.

Historically, people who have risen to the level of effective and/or heroic leaders have a similar characteristic, foresight. From Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, Nanny of the Maroon, Michael Manley, Bustamante, Norman Manley, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama, Marcus Garvey, Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castrol, Ronald Reagan, Rex Nettleford, Margaret Thatcher, Lee Kuan Yew, Angela Merkel, Alan Mulally, Bill Clinton, Dalai Lama, Kim Jong-Eun, Adolf Hitler, Abraham Lincoln, Vladimir Putin, John F. Kennedy, Theodore D. Roosevelt, to Malcom X all have one thing in common, foresight or a vision. It is this vision that was embedded on their heart that frame their choices, decisions, and foresight of the future. They were self-determined (or internally motivated by a vision).

It should be noted that there is a difference between a vision that drives an effective leader like a cart to a carriage from his/her foresight. The foresight is previous knowledge, judgement, intuition or past experiences of future events that guides current knowledge or actions. Like Jesus of Nazareth with a vision (the saving of humans from sin), all effective leaders employ their previous knowledge, past experience, futuristic plan and an intuition to motivate others into accomplishing a stated vision. Hence, the vision is the destination and the foresight is the roadmap that gets you to that place. There is a consensus among

leadership scholars that foresight is the core attribute of effective leadership and this was extensively argued by Kim (2002), Covey (1990, 2004a, 2004b), Maxwell (2007), and Greenleaf (1977).

In order for a leader to become great or immortalize into society's social consciousness, he/she must be willing to change his/her initial perspective in keeping with current realities, and foresight for the purpose of accomplishing the vision. Lee Kuan Yew and Nelson Mandela had a vision of making their nations great and they did so by their knowledge, intuition, past knowledge, and self-determination in keeping reality of their vision. Outside of being willing to change attitude, perspective, paradigm and actions, effective leaders are pioneers as it relates to being change agents, which was articulated by Bass and Bass (2008). They are not followers like many other people; rather they are abstract conceptualizers who are 'outside of the box' people and as such their vision initially comes across as piped dreams.

Neither Robert Greenleaf nor Daniel Kim, whom are proponents of servant-leadership, brought up the issue of change agent or the willingness of effective leaders to change in keeping with current realities, while holding steadfast to the greater vision. On examination of the literature on leadership, historical great leaders, renowned leaders of all time, and characteristics of great leaders, the issue of inner vision, foresight, and change are always operating simultaneously. Hence, on examining Jesus Christ's behaviour, actions, and philosophy as well as other great leaders including Mother Theresa and the Dalai Lama as well as Marcus Garvey, they were change agents who were motivated by their inner vision. It should be noted that while foresight is a tool that they use to interpret and objectify their vision, it was the vision and their consistency to this that propel them to social immorality. They were change agents who

followed their vision, and service was their focus and not power, authority, fame or materialism.

All leaders who are edged in social history were never like their predecessors; they were solely motivated by a vision and they serve it with humility and a singular focus. It is not surprising, therefore, that Kim (2002) brought ethics into the discourse of servant-leadership. While ethics allow for the usage of a different paradigm in decision making and choice selection, effective leaders' can be unethical, immoral, and non-religious in thinking as is the case of Kim Jong-Eun, and Adolf Hitler. It is on this message that ethics should not be associated with foresight as was discussed by Daniel Kim. The issue is, it is easy to understand why ethic is brought into the discourse of leadership; the matter is more a social imposition than a central theme in leadership.

Evidently, effective/great leaders do not subscribe to established templates, ethical standards and traditional paradigms as these are more restrictions than formula for greatness. As such, they are change agents as they depart from traditional culture, paradigms and ideologies. Although their foresight is guided by past experiences, knowledge, and cultural realities; they are more driven by a vision than established standards. Sometimes they depart from established ethical standards in order to create a platform for their vision. Jesus of Nazareth is a perfect example of someone who departed from traditional culture and established ethical standards in order to create a new platform for humans. It is upon this premise that I depart from Stephen Covey and Daniel Kim's inclusion of ethics in leadership. However, I concur with them that society must have some agree ethical standard for the protection of human from exploitation from unscrupulous people; but, that ethics is a fallacy that should not be used as a guideline or roadmap for behaviour.

The reality is those who are Christians normally want to configure behaviour around their ethic paradigm, and this was never the practice of Jesus of Nazareth. He framed behaviour in keeping with a deep vision of the actual standard from beginning of time that has been broken by humans. This means that change must be the central theme in effective leader and that while foresight plays a role in choices; it is foreplay to the vision, and only set the framework for the change agent.

Undoubtedly, highly effective people, leaders, are change agents in many respects from 1) how they see and interpret things-their paradigms; 2) their characters-they are of high integrity, humility, modesty, simplicity, justice oriented, patience, courageous, fidelity, temperate, 3) high image of self (personality), 4) how they change their social space by being steadfast to their inner-vision, and 5) how they see the problem in their social settings. These individuals, effective leaders, recognize that they cannot solve the current problems in the social system with the same thinking, paradigm, and that a change in paradigm holds the key to addressing social ills. This is aptly argued by Stephen Covey (2004) using a statement made by Albert Einstein, the renowned Theoretical Physicist, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them" (Covey, 2004, p. 42). This means that there must be a change in paradigm, thinking, before we can address social ills (or social problems) as the action that created it cannot be used to solve it. Such a reality, therefore, accounts of why all the effective leaders including Jesus of Nazareth, Marcus Garvey, Nelson Manley, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had the position that a new paradigm must be used to solve the social challenges that they see at the time.

The issue of foresight (or past knowledge or intuition) within the old paradigm cannot be used to solve the current social problems, and

so changing the old paradigm requires a change agent and not foresight. It is for this very reason why Thomas Kuhn (1997), in the book entitled *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, introduced the concept of a 'paradigm shift' that is needed to address any current social or physical problem. Although Kuhn was the first to introduce the concept of a 'paradigm shift' or fundamental change in thinking to address current problem, this was exactly what Einstein meant when he argued that a change of thinking is needed to solve current problem. The paradigm shift is exactly what all effective leaders take to the table, which is different from their counterparts. It is not foresight (i.e. past knowledge or intuition) that they take to the table it is a totally different thinking, knowledge set that they offer to solve either a social or physical problems. Such a fact means that foresight will not address the present problems, with the exception that it recognizes the need for change of the old paradigm.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is no denial that highly effective leaders have a different foresight, inner-drive, driven by a completely different vision, and their thinking is radical from their counterparts' perspective. Although effective people were social with the same foresight, the difference with them is their paradigm shift in ideology as well as the vision that drives them and how they insist on others needing a change in practices and principles to address current social or physical challenges. Irrespective of the geo-political space in which they reside, effective leaders are servants to their inner vision, slaves to their desire to see a change in the old paradigm, navigate others into seeing the need to change the old paradigm, interpret from a different foresight from their counterparts, and chart a path that has never been navigated before. The undeniable fact is, foresight is only one aspect of lenses of effective leader; but that they are not slaves to

the old paradigm. Their futuristic thinking is radical and they are change agents to their inner-vision.

Interestingly, it is not their foresight that make them highly effective leaders; but, it is their paradigm which is change from the traditional thinking. So, there can be no denial that foresight plays a role in understanding effective leaders wanting to change the old paradigm as it is not the way forward in solving the problem that existed or those we have created. Hence, I believe that all the other competencies in leadership are enveloped in change and to a lesser extent foresight, and that it is being a change agent that earmarks effective or immortalized leaders and not any other leadership competencies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Scholars in leadership, leadership practitioners, current and prospective leaders need to evaluate the stage in which effective leaders recognize the need for a new paradigm or whether they are born with this vision.

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