

**Anthropocentric Democracy and Good Governance:
Edeh's Superservant Leadership Peace Model (ESLPM)
as the African Hope for Peaceful Existence and Sustainable Development**

Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, PhD
Department of Philosophy
Madonna University, Nigeria
epury@rocketmail.com

Abstract

Democracy is a system of government founded on the major principles of justice and equality, while good or even bad governance depends on the way in which power is exercised with regard to the management and distribution of the common goods. As such, democracy and good governance are so intertwined. Democracy has long been considered one of the best forms of government that promises liberty, justice, equality and the like which promotes and sustains the right and dignity of man as well as progressive development of the individuals and the entire segments of the society as it ensures equitable, responsible and fair distribution of resources rooted in public accountability and transparency. That was the notion of the Ancient Greek philosophers for a good functioning of an ideal state when they defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people. In this recent time, it becomes notably obvious that the original understanding and practice of democracy for a good governance significantly and increasingly loses its foundational principles and praxis especially in African societies. This paper therefore examines Edeh's Superservant Leadership Peace Model (ESLPM) as the African hope for qualitative democracy that is man-centred which consolidates man's ontological status as the beauty of life and as "good that is", lived in full realization of his being which guarantees good governance and restores human dignity. Rooted in the philosophy of mmadi, the paper recommends that the leaders be equipped with adequate knowledge of the quiddity of man for proper leadership skills that serve the need of the people for peaceful existence and sustainable development.

Key Words: Anthropocentric democracy, Superservant leadership, good governance, peace model, African hope, peaceful existence, sustainable development.

Introduction

Africa! Which way? So far, how far? At this point in time, the era of socio-political quagmire, hijacked political status, economic hardship, heightened corruption, egocentric interests, survival of the fittest, oppression of the poor, this paper is a clarion call for the giant Africa to

regain its past glories especially in the sector of leadership. Good governance is a positive result of true democracy anchored in the observance of the rule of law which is the hallmark of any civilized society. Consequently, good governance sustains democracy and vice-versa. In Edeh's understanding, democracy can only assure good governance when the natural rule of law of man's ontological nature is first respected. By this, he meant that since man is at the fulcrum of every human activity, the leaders must have adequate knowledge of who man is and what exactly it means to exist authentically for the upliftment of human dignity. By implication, he advocates for an anthropocentric democracy which considers the core metaphysical and existential issues with regard to the profound origin, the ontological nature, the ultimate goal of existence and the destiny of the governed. Against this background, Edeh's response (Edeh, 2007 p.145) to the metaphysical and existential question: Who is man?, derived its explanation from his notion of being which in turn emanated from the Igbo-African concept of man drawn from the rationalization of the lived experience of the people and their notion of man as *mmadu (mma-di)*, which means "*the good that is*". This African notion of man (Egbekpalu, 2011, pp. 7-8) captures at the same time the intention of the founding fathers of African society that has at its base respect and care for life for it is sacred. The respect and the ontological duty of caring for one another manifests itself to a great extent in the communal existence of the Africans for at the root of African man's life is the spirit of brotherliness through which he remains conscious of his existence in the community with others (the *we - existence*), while as a communitarian being (Nze, 2011, pp. 14), he remains conscious of the fact that his freedom is not meant to infringe on another's so as not to bias the peaceful living of the members of his community.

Edeh's Superservant Leadership as Anthropocentric Democracy Rooted in the Philosophy of *mmadi*

Edeh's superservant leadership peace model is a form of anthropocentric democracy that rotates around man himself who is at the centre of every life's activity and which upholds man's good nature. It is therefore rooted in the philosophy of *mmadi*; the ontological goodness of man which expresses the supreme goodness of God himself. So understood, democracy becomes the government of the people by the people for the people *with the people and of the people*, whereby the leader sees to the need of the led in the spirit of brotherliness and care in consonance to man's ontological nature. By implication, every leader should be at the service

of the citizens as a servant-leader and not as an authoritarian leader. This is what our great mind and patriot consider as ‘Superservant Leadership’ style that inculcates and promotes peace and progress, hence, Edeh’s Superservant Leadership Peace Model.

Superservant Leadership Style Explained

The term servant leader was first articulated in the modern time by Greenleaf Robert (1970) with the publication of his seminal work, *The servant as a leader* where he established that good leaders were primarily servants who possess the key leadership elements of empathy, persuasion, good language use, foresight and pragmatic sense. Greenleaf’s leadership ideal which obviously bends in the direction of service also portrays the *Super-servant* leadership sense of Emmanuel Edeh (Amah, 2013) who chiefly conceives leadership as a humble service to people with deep sense of care as God’s beautiful creatures- *mmadi*. Edeh’s *mmadi* reveals his metaphysical position with regard to man’s ontology as the ‘good that is.’

Generally, super-servant leadership is a form of leadership style that emphasizes the notion that a good and functional leader is more committed to the service of his people for their attainment of greater good. In this sense, he prioritizes the affairs of his leadership to the satisfaction of the needs of the masses other than just concentrating on his own personal needs. This is why Plato (1997) considers philosophers as kings and as individuals with good leadership traits. Consequently, his tripartite division of human soul corresponds to divisions of labour, namely; philosophers (for their administrative wisdom), guardians (for their courageousness), businessmen (for their temperance). Against this background, Platonian understanding of justice is chiefly embedded in this concept of human soul and man’s activities in the society for the actualization of common good.

Practical Democracy and Good Governance: Edeh’s Superservant Leadership Peace Model as an Optimal Hope for Peaceful Existence and Sustainable Development in Africa

Good governance is an enormous issue and a teething problem that confronts humanity but especially the Africans. We live in a world of rapid change that from time to time, the education of the mind and the continuous re-enactment of the nation’s philosophy on the fundamental principles upon which the governance of the nation is constituted and transmitted down the

generation is essential for proper attitude and behaviour. This helps greatly to investigate into the problems of the people and to find new and appropriate ways to regulate human conducts in our changing society. The re-ordering of the national values, priorities, beliefs and principles in the building of a new society of freedom, equality, sustainable development, peace and unity necessitates a new direction of thought and action.

To the existential question, what hope has democracy and consequent social changes in this 21st century for Africa, Edeh's superservant leadership peace model seems to have a suiting practical response. Emphasizing on why Servant-Leadership is the answer, Amah (2013, p.177) delineates that "leadership is not all about popularity, or power, or glamour but about wisdom, farsightedness, enthusiasm, empathy and collaboration." This elucidates Edeh's idea of democracy as being anthropocentric in nature based on his conviction that man is fundamentally good. This is a great challenge to the conventional leadership pyramid that is currently practiced especially in Africa which has greatly lost the trust of the citizens. The situation in Nigeria is a practical case at hand that has widened religious, ethnic and cultural divisions with consequent effects of heightened violence, hostility, anger, protests, etc. all over the nation at various levels. As cited in Lopez (1995),

People who do not trust one another do not help one another; moreover, they fear one another. And this our predicament now. Because of a general distrust and suspicion, we do not only lose one another's help and companionship, but we are now living in jeopardy.

Edeh's Superservant Leadership Peace Model (ESLPM)

By Superservant leadership, Edeh's peace model proffers a paradigm shift by which leaders serve instead of lording it over the ordinary people. Within this context, leaders are understood as humane and humble citizens that have the good of the masses at heart. Hence, they reasonably pilot the affairs of the nations within their jurisdictions and direct the people towards better goals in life for more qualitative living and promotion of human dignity. According to Amah (2013, p.173) "a servant-leadership approach is best done through honesty...one that emphasizes persuasion over coercion." The leader tries to know the peoples' problems and solve them for the peaceful development and progress of the individuals and the society at large.

A new dawn has come! The course of a novel pyramid structure has been charted. A Superservant leadership style of Emmanuel Edeh is a new way; an anthropocentric democracy and an imperative for good governance where leadership is a collective response. It rotates around man himself whom every life's activity surrounds. Such a leadership model demands genuine and sustained attitudinal transformations of both the leaders and the led as well as general social positive changes. When this is adopted, African can heave a sigh of relieve that gives way to new hope of effective and true democracy. In his words (Amah, 2013 p.130),

There is hope for us in Africa. I am not going to pretend to know the solution to all the problems facing my continent. What I am pretty sure of is the need for more servant-leaders...effective peace is maintained when every human respects the dignity of others as *mma-di*. In a state of chaos, peace is essentially re-established when conflicting parties respond in solidarity. This usually takes a process of reaching out to the other's needs; discovering the good that was lost, diminished or battered and offering a solution that leads to lasting peace.

Edeh further clarifies (Amah, 2013) that this leadership style is an exercise of the mutual gift of selves of both the leader and the led in the service of one another in the spirit of charity (love) and brotherliness for the collective development of individuals and the nations at large. It is an approach that emphasizes persuasion over coercion in mutual understanding. As a matter of fact, this leadership pattern is very insightful and revealing. It accentuates that although the citizens are dutifully unequal, they are all ontologically equal. This showers good sense of oneness, internal harmony, good relationship, love and justice that actually knows no bounds and which recognizes and respects human dignity and is in keeping with the biblical injunction of 'love thy neighbour'.

Genuine democracy cannot be achieved except through proper perception of man and his real nature as "the good that is" and be governed in accordance to it through relatedness and closeness to God his creator and one another in the humane human community, where everybody is surrounded with love and fraternal care as against the Hobbessian understanding that man is a wolf to his fellow man. The servant-leadership scheme (Edeh, 2008 p.154) is rooted in Love and charity which are the binding forces that hold the human community

together and have the characters of relinquishing the evil thoughts and acts from the hearts of men as everyone is his brother's true keeper.

As an ontologico-existential model, Edeh is convinced that man can achieve peace in so far as he lives according to his true nature. For this fact, he invites everyone to the practical upliftment of the good in man as the beauty of creation for a true peaceful living, arguing that peace is ontologically imbedded in the nature of man; the feature that spurs every man and every society to passionately crave for it in all their activities.

Conclusion

Edeh's superservant leadership peace model (ESLPM) is an anthropocentric democracy which considers the core metaphysical and existential realities of man. Such a leadership pattern seeks first of all to understand man's ontology upon which this metaphysical neologism of African thought is built. It is a suitable response and hopeful solution to the current political instability that keeps our cherished African continent at a snail-paced development. It demands a conscious change of attitude which directs towards the force of love that activates the innate good in human nature. Hopefully, the inculcation of practical charity will powerfully relinquish resentments and grievances as violence cannot be stopped without first extinguishing the ideas to it from the hearts of men which paves way to fraternal care.

Recommendations

Following the natural and peaceful-oriented thought and actions of Edeh's superservant leadership peace model (ESLPM), this paper recommends that philosophers should organize seminars and workshops where African leaders be given orientation for proper acquisition of adequate knowledge and skills regarding the profundity of man's origin, his ontological nature, the ultimate goal of his existence, his destiny and the existential issues surrounding the governed.

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About the Author

Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu is a bonafide member of the Sisters of Jesus the Saviour, Nigeria. She is a Senior Lecturer in the department of Philosophy in Madonna University, Nigeria and an adjunct staff in Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu in Nigeria. She holds her PhD in Philosophy and MSc in Psychology. Her passion to understand the meaning of life made her to venture into existential philosophy and developmental psychology. These vested interests in philosophy and human development motivate her always anew to search for and highlight the concrete meaning of human existence. These too prove her strong quest for logotherapy and engagement in concrete existential issues of life that led to her authorship of *The Reality of Human Existence: Coping with Existential Conditions, Sufferings and Pains of Life, Meaningful Living: Echoes from Existentialism and logotherapy, The Concept of Self in the Thoughts of Soeren Kierkegaard, Happiness: The Golden Lustre of Life, Authentic Existence: Igbo-African Perspective*. She has also contributed to many book chapters, proceedings and has many journal articles to her name. She has attended and presented various local and international conferences and has as well-organized workshops and seminars at various levels and edited some works. She belongs to professional bodies of Association of Professional Philosophers of Nigeria (APPON), International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (ISSBD), International Society of Research on Edeh's Philosophy and Theology (ISREPAT), Edeh's Philosophy of Thought and Action (EPTAISM), Kierkegaardian Scholars of Nigeria (SKIASON). She is a polyglot and has received many awards from various bodies especially for academic diligence and service to the community.