

Archbishop Akinola's Leadership Strategy: A Transformational Leadership Perspective

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Abstract

Effective leadership is critical to the success of any organization, including religious institutions. In the context of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, Archbishop Peter Jasper Akinola's leadership was instrumental in promoting church growth and development. Therefore, our efforts in this research have been geared towards Peter Jasper Akinola's leadership acumen during his tenure as the bishop, Diocese of Abuja, Archbishop of Abuja province and primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). This paper examines the leadership style of Archbishop Peter Jasper Akinola, a prominent Nigerian Anglican cleric, through the lens of transformational functional leadership. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this study analyzes Akinola's leadership strategies, emphasizing his role in shaping the Anglican Communion in Nigeria and globally. The research explores how Akinola's leadership style, characterized by a strong emphasis on theological conviction, pastoral care, and social justice, influenced the growth and development of the Anglican Church in Nigeria. The study also investigates the impact of his leadership on the global Anglican Communion, particularly in the context of theological debates and ecclesiastical conflicts. By examining Akinola's transformational leadership style, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of effective leadership in religious organizations and its implications for spiritual growth, community development, and social transformation.

Keywords: *Leadership, Style, and Transformational*

Introduction

Leadership is the linchpin of every organization, society, and institution, with its significance dating back to the dawn of human civilization. As an inherent feature of human society, leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining order, direction, and purpose. The absence of effective leadership would plunge any organization or society into chaos, rendering it lawless and directionless. In the context of religious organizations like the Anglican Church of Nigeria, leadership is not only essential but also divinely ordained. According to Hebrews 5:4, Christian leaders are called by God to serve as instruments of transformation, wielding both formal and informal authority to influence their followers.

Archbishop Peter Akinola, a prominent figure in the Anglican Communion, exemplifies this leadership paradigm. His tenure was marked by strategic decision-making, theological conviction, and pastoral care, which had a profound impact on the growth and development of the Church in Nigeria and beyond. Despite the extensive research on transformational leadership, a gap exists in the study of Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy through the lens of transformational functional leadership theory. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining Akinola's leadership approach, exploring how his transformational leadership style contributed to the Church's growth, and identifying the lessons that can be applied to other religious and organizational contexts. This study will employ a qualitative approach, utilizing case study and content analysis to examine Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy. Primary

data will be collected from Akinola's writings, sermons, and interviews. The objective is to investigate the impact of Akinola's leadership strategy on the Anglican Church in Nigeria and identify lessons for other religious and organizational contexts.

Archbishop Peter Jasper Akinola was born in 1944 to the family of Mr. Titus Adeniregun Akinola and Mrs. Janet Amoke Akinola in Abeokuta, a city in the state of Ogun in southwestern Nigeria. He is a member of the Yoruba ethnic group, one of the three main groups in Nigeria, and was raised by an uncle following the early death of his father. Peter Akinola started his primary education at the tender age of ten and was able to finish at sixteen. He wanted to continue his education, but instead, his family urged him to move to Lagos, the capital city at that time, to learn a trade, because there was no money to train him in a college. There he stayed with a family member and began to learn carpentry and cabinetmaking. In 1967, he was settled by his master having served him for five years 1963-1967. Peter Jasper Akinola spent much of the late 1960s working as a carpenter, a particularly symbolic line of work, given the fact that it was also Jesus' profession before he began preaching and became increasingly active in the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

Archbishop Peter Jasper Akinola was selected for catechist training at the Diocesan Training Center Zaria in 1969. As a catechist that is, someone who instructs others in the tenets of the faith in preparation for baptism and confirmation he was an exceptional personality, this necessitated and fast tracked his admission into the prestigious Theological College of Northern Nigeria for his ordination course in 1973 and earned his diploma in theology in 1978. He was made deacon in the Anglican Church that same year by the Bishop of Kaduna Diocese, The Rt. Rev. Titus Ogbonyomi. He was priested in 1979 by the same Bishop. In the same year 1979, Peter enrolled into Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, USA to pursue a master degree in theological studies.

On his return to Nigeria, he was made the vicar of St. James Church, Abuja, and he served there between the year 1978- 1982, not too long ago, Peter was preferred an honorary Canon missionary of Abuja in 1983 by the Rt. Rev. Titus Ogbonyomi. In the year 1989, Peter Jasper Akinola was elected and consecrated the pioneer Bishop of Abuja Diocese, and served in that capacity from 1989-1997. As the Anglican community in Nigeria continued to grow, a number of new Dioceses were created, and in 1997 Peter Akinola was elevated to the post of an Archbishop covering the whole Northern Nigeria. He headed Province III in Nigeria for three years 1997-2000 before he was elected and presented the third Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria in 2000. A position he held until 25th March, 2010. This study seeks to explore Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy through the lens of transformational functional leadership theory.

Definition of terms

According to Mirkamali, Shateri, and Uzbashi (2013), transformational leadership refers to leaders who seek to create ideas and new perspectives, to create a new path of growth and prosperity in front of the organization. By developing commitment, passion and loyalty among managers and staff, they mobilize organization's members to make fundamental changes which forms the basis of the organization in order to be prepared and to gain necessary capabilities for moving in new directions and reaching higher ideal performance peaks.

The transformational leader constantly looks for potential motives in followers and aims to draw followers' attention to superior needs and conversion of individual interests into collective interests. Bass and Avolio (1993) posited that transformational leadership is a conscious, moral and Spiritual process that provides development patterns for organization through a reliable equal power leadership.¹⁰⁴ According to Mortazavi and Nikkar (2014)

transformational leaders explain organization's future prospects and provide the model consistent with the prospects, improve acceptance of group goals, provide a wide range of support for individuals in the organization and encourage them to pursue organization's goals. Transformational leadership actions enable organizations to improve their performance in a turbulent and unpredictable environment. When transformational leadership components complement other leadership actions, it can become a source of competitive advantage for organizations. Use of this competitive advantage can be a significant help in strategic competition and earning higher returns in short-term and long-term. Moradi and Shahbazi (2016) holds that without an effective transformational leadership, the probability that organization be able to face global economic challenges, in order to achieve superior and satisfactory performance will be reduced.

The term transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that has the power to transform individuals and entire communities. In its ideal form, it aims to transform followers into leaders by encouraging them to make good changes in their lives. Quiet leaders are a term used to describe transformational leaders. They set an example for others to follow. Relationship, inspiration, or empathy are some of the tools they employ to captivate their audience. When it comes to sacrificing yourself for the greater good, they're renowned for their daring and confidence.

To be considered a transformational leader, one must go beyond their own immediate self-interests to work with teams or followers in order to identify the changes that are needed. This involves developing a vision to guide the changes through influence and inspiration, and then putting those changes into action in conjunction with the group's committed members. The Full Range Leadership Model is incomplete without it. Transformative leadership occurs when a leader's actions influence and motivate others around him or her to go above and beyond what they think they can do. Transformative leadership motivates individuals to accomplish extraordinary outcomes. It empowers people to take charge of their own work, as well as to make their own choices after they've completed their training. This has a good effect on the organisation as a whole, as well as the attitudes of its adherents.

The Concept of Christian Authority and Leadership

Generally, the term authority is the main element that enables a leader to lead a group of individuals. In its simplest term, authority simply refers to the ability to issue orders to people. Eche (2018) further described it as an individual's ability to influence other people due to their position or knowledge. In other words, such position and knowledge naturally elicit respect from the people, who are members of the organization. At times, the power to influence other people could also be exercised by a group of people. These definitions indicated that authority is primarily responsible for determining leadership. Furthermore, Giddens (1997) argues that what really make an individual a leader is the level of authority such person controls or exercise. It is also important to note that authority is mainly derived from the subordinates. Hence, authority will not exist when there is no acceptance of subordinates. This is the major difference between power and authority. Unlike the former, authority is never forceful but rather earned. The level of authority one commands is primarily determined by the position occupied by such an individual. The Bible also recognized authority as being the heart of leadership. For instance, in Mark 10: 42-45, our Lord Jesus Christ stated that:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This implies that the Biblical teaching on legitimate leadership implies that the leaders' authority should mainly manifest in their ability to direct other people. This is because, authority originates from Almighty God and delegated to human leaders for the good of all people. There have also been various scholarly definitions of the term leadership from different perspectives and background. For instance, Yukr (1987) defined leadership as a process through an individual "exerts influence over other people and inspires, motivates and directs their activities to help achieve group or congregational goals" (p.27). Rue and Byars (1997) described leadership as "the ability to influence people to willingly follow one's decision" (p.28).

On the other hand, Cole (1998) defined leadership as "a dynamic process in a group whereby one individual influences the other groups' task in a given situation" (p.9). One general feature of all these definitions is that they affirmed authority as an integral feature of leadership. These different definitions also indicated that leadership exist in different forms. In fact, its exact form is principally determined by the nature of the society. For instance, in the local church, the clergy are the leaders. But in the universities, that position is occupied by the lecturers. Consequently, teachers, judges, business executives, social workers, politicians, labour union officials all possess leadership responsibilities in their respective areas of disciplines.

From the discussion so far, one can easily deduce that leadership is the act that enables one that stand out within a particular organization. Such individuals show other people the way to follow. This implies that it is practically impossible to have a leader without followership. The two are always complementary to each other. Thus, an individual or group of individuals can only be call a leader if they have people that look up to them for guidance and direction. This explains why it is always essential and even mandatory for every leader to lead well. That is the only way to maintain order within the organization and for the benefit of all people. The leaders' disposition is also among the major determinants of the followers' response and attitude. This explains why it is important for very leader to demonstrate great leadership qualities and potentials.

According to the Biblical injunction, the Church consists of individuals from different wakes of life, who come together for the sole purpose of worshipping the true God. This definition is also affirmed by Okwueze (2003) who defined the Church as, "an organized body of followers of Jesus Christ, the people of God as such" (p.32). In their study, Uche and Obi (2011) described Church as "the sanctified body of believers, purchased with the precious blood of the Lamb, and called out for the purpose of worshipping God" (p.102). These definitions portrayed the Church as a gathering of people. However, the unique feature of such gathering is that it is inspired and triggered by God Himself. But nevertheless, like every other assembly, gathering and community, leadership remains an integral element of the Church. The leader is responsible for maintain orderliness and coherency.

Empirical Study

Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) investigated transformational leadership practices among five hundred and twenty staff nurses in a Singapore public hospital, finding that leaders' ability to inspire and empower followers significantly impacted organizational performance. Their study highlighted the importance of leaders' charisma and intellectual stimulation in fostering employee engagement. In contrast, this study focuses on Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy in a religious context, examining how his transformational leadership style influenced the growth and development of the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

Groves and LaRocca (2013) examined the relationship between leader ethical values and transformational leadership, finding that leaders' ethical values significantly influenced their

transformational leadership behaviors. While their study emphasized the role of ethics in leadership, this research explores Akinola's leadership approach, highlighting the impact of his strong theological convictions on his leadership decisions.

Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) explored transformational leadership among bank employees in US banking organizations, highlighting the importance of leaders' charisma and intellectual stimulation in fostering employee empowerment. Unlike their study, which focused on employee empowerment, this research investigates Akinola's leadership strategy and its implications for organizational growth and development in a religious context.

Bambale, Shamsudin and Subramaniam (2017) studied the link between employee performance and leadership styles, emphasizing the critical role of leadership in organizational success. Their study provided insights into the impact of leadership on employee performance, whereas this research examines Akinola's leadership strategy and its impact on the Anglican Church in Nigeria, providing lessons for other religious and organizational contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership theory, developed by Burns (1978) and refined by Bass (1985), emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to achieve organizational goals. This leadership style has four key components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

According to Schein (1985), transformational leaders shape organizational culture by generating new or reinforcing established sets of beliefs, shared values, practices, and norms. They influence organizational outcomes like organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, and commitment. For Organ (1990), organizational citizenship behavior is a crucial outcome of transformational leadership, characterized by voluntary behavior exceeding normal work duties. Bass, (1985) posited that transformational leaders stimulate followers to perform beyond expectations, enhancing quality and quantity of performance.

Tracey and Hinkin (1998) opines that transformational leaders also promote a shared vision, inspiring subordinates to pursue organizational goals. For Mink (1992), they help organizations adapt to changing environments and improve productivity and innovation. By fostering a sense of purpose and shared values, transformational leaders drive organizational success and growth. Their influence on organizational culture and outcomes makes them essential for achieving organizational goals.

Strengths of transformational leadership includes increased job satisfaction and commitment. In this area, transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers, leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment. Secondly, improved performance. This means that transformational leaders stimulate followers to perform beyond expectations, enhancing quality and quantity of performance. Thirdly positive organizational culture, which simply means that transformational leaders shape organizational culture by promoting shared values, practices, and norms. By analyzing Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy through the lens of transformational leadership, one can gain insights into how his leadership style contributes to the growth and success of the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

Analysis of Archbishop Peter Akinola's Leadership Strategy through the Lens of Transformational Leadership Theory

Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy can be analyzed through the lens of transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to achieve organizational goals. This theory, developed by Burns (1978) and refined by Bass (1985), has

four key components, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is one of the four components of transformational leadership identified as an independent variable for this study. Scholars examining this process assert that idealized influence refers to the idea that followers will trust and respect their leaders to provide support and resources. As a result of this belief, employees will be willing to accept the directives provided by the leader, regardless of their complexity or difficulty. Idealized influence, at its core, represents the highest levels of moral reasoning and perspective-taking capacity. Such leaders are willing to sacrifice their own gain for the good of their work group, organization, and community. They set high standards for work conduct and are role models for those standards. They build trust in people because those who work with them know they are committed to the common good, and their sacrifices along the way evidence the consistency of their actions with their values. Transformational leaders in applying idealized influence can see the good in others first and, when it is not obvious, they work to bring it out through continuous endeavour.

Barinua and Tamunonengiyeofori (2022) studying this process find that idealized influence refers to the idea that followers trust and respect leaders for support and resources. As a result of this belief, employees will be willing to accept the directives of managers, leader, regardless of its complexity or difficulty. Although the role of idealized influence and its impact on organizational performance is often conceptualized as part of transformative leadership, there is evidence that idealized influence can affect certain aspects of leadership. Commitment in particular, idealized influence can have an impact on employee commitment and satisfaction by promoting commitment and motivation at work.

Archbishop Akinola demonstrated idealized influence by being a role model for his followers. His vision for the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion and his ability to inspire and motivate others to work towards a common goal are evident in the transformation of the Abuja diocese during his Episcopacy. He invested in profitable businesses and companies, such as United Bank for Africa (UBA) and Ewekoro Cement Company, to create a stable economy for the diocese.

Inspirational Motivation

By definition, inspirational motivation involves two key components. First, a leader must be clear about his or her vision. Secondly, a leader needs to express his or her vision in a manner that excites and drives higher levels of performance. Archbishop Akinola's leadership style also demonstrates inspirational motivation. He had a clear vision for the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion and was able to inspire others to share his vision. As the chairman of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), he assisted the organization in securing loans from banks to execute projects with the potential of cost recovery and earning returns on investments.

Intellectual Stimulation

A transformational leader creates an environment where communication is open, new ideas are welcome, and different perspectives are heard. They can examine their own assumptions, come up with a variety of creative solutions to problems, and are open to taking risks. They don't fear failure, instead they view it as an opportunity to learn. They never criticize team members' thoughts or ideas, and they foster independent thinking. Archbishop Akinola encouraged critical thinking and problem-solving among his followers. He reorganized the management of Church and School Suppliers (CSS) Limited, appointing bishops and businessmen to the board,

and turned around the fortunes of the company. This demonstrates his ability to think outside the box and find innovative solutions to problems.

Individualized Consideration

According to Kirkbride (2006) Individualized consideration constitutes developing followers through coaching, mentoring and teaching, these are the central indicator of the factor. Individualized consideration is the first factor of transformational leadership style. The individualized consideration leader demonstrates high concern for their followers, treats them as individuals, and gets to know well about them and listens to both their concerns and ideas. Individualized consideration deals with fundamental transformational leadership behaviours of treating individuals as important contributors to the organization. Leaders who use this style of leadership give due consideration for their employee needs and coach them to bring sustainable development. In sum, a leader who gives personal attention to subordinates, reflect the behaviour of treating each employee as an individual and initiate an interest in the long-term development of each employee.

Archbishop Akinola demonstrated individualized consideration by providing personalized attention and support to his followers. He shared decision-making abilities with group members, such as the Episcopal synod and the house of bishops, and encouraged discussion and debate. This is evident in the creation of missionary dioceses and internal provinces, which were discussed and debated before implementation.

Conclusion

Archbishop Akinola's leadership strategy, analyzed through the lens of transformational leadership theory, demonstrates the effectiveness of this leadership style in achieving organizational goals. His ability to inspire and motivate others, think critically, and provide individualized consideration has had a lasting impact on the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion. One of the historic event of Peter Akinolas leadership, perhaps the world event that brought him the title the most influential Nigerian Archbishop was his leadership skills at the various national and international organizations he led, like the Global South Encounter, Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA) and Global African Future Conference (GAFCON) and so on. Archbishop Peter Jasper Akinola was a leader per excellent, whose leadership acumen brought great transformation and tremendous growth in the Anglican church in Nigeria, African and the world at large even among the Christian association of Nigeria (CAN) and other religious denominations across the globe.

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