

## A philosophical analysis of character education as panacea to Nigeria's leadership crises

Okorie Ndukaku<sup>1</sup>

Department of Philosophy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife  
okoriendu@yahoo.co.uk

### Abstract

*A philosophical look through the history of ideas will reveal the importance of morals to leadership. As a matter of fact, morals and morality pervade every aspect of human life. Encompassing and successful leadership is not possible without a good sense of morals. One of the ways of cultivating moral values or virtues is through moral education, with special emphasis on 'character' (character education). This is because education without character is counter-productive. Nigeria as a nation, since its amalgamation in 1914 and subsequent independence in 1960, has witnessed a series of leadership crises at different levels. To many Nigerians, virtually all Nigeria's problems could be blamed on leadership crises or failures. This, in most, if not in all cases, could be anchored in a lack of appropriate moral sensibilities or moral character on the part of Nigerian leaders, as well as prevailing unjust or defective political systems. In view of the above, this paper argues that a part of the reasons why Nigeria has been facing leadership crises and challenges is because our leaders, both past and present, lack the correct, adequate, and required moral values and virtues. This is the result of a lack of moral education and orientation right from childhood. This consequently leads to unjust political structure. In this regard, this paper argues that good leadership and governance skills should be cultivated through moral education, right from our elementary schools, with special emphasis on 'character education'. With this, our leadership orientation would significantly change for the better. The paper concludes that as long as Nigerian society fails to cultivate its leadership skills on character education, it will continue to witness leadership problems, since leadership has to do with character traits of the key players and the political structure in which they operate. This is because both leadership and morality deal with the implications of an individual's action to other human beings.*

### Introduction

Going through the history of philosophy, there is abundant work right from the ancient period to the contemporary period regarding moral character of individuals. The questions 'what is virtuous character' and 'how is it to be acquired?', 'how should a just society be organized?', as well as; whether good character is the key to good actions were the major pre-occupation of ancient Greek philosophers; Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, etc. One of their arguments is that the key to getting individuals to act the way they should is to instil good character in them. In this regard, it follows that the teaching of moral (character education) is imperative to cultivating leadership skills, such that leadership and good governance can be cultivated through character education. There is a need for systematic moral education to be given a place in the school curriculum (Frank Chapman Sharp and Henry Neumann 1912: 228).

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section examines the nature of leadership. It is in this section that some of the features of leadership can be discussed. Also, some of the

1. Okorie Ndukaku PhD is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife-Ife, Nigeria.

attempts at defining leadership as a necessary component of good governance will be highlighted. The second section deals with the concept of moral (character) education. The concept of character education will be discussed under this section. The question of its effectiveness and how it is being organized and operated will be discussed. The features and roles it plays in leadership would also be highlighted. The third section deals with a brief discussion of virtue ethics. This will serve as a theoretical framework of justification for moral (character) education. From this section, the need for the proposed moral (character) education for effective leadership will be made clearer.

The fourth section discusses leadership and character education within the scope of Nigeria. Some of Nigeria's past leaders will be briefly examined alongside their leadership styles and qualities. Some arguments will be presented in this section, showing that although some of our past leaders, especially shortly before independence and after independence, did relatively better than the so-called Nigeria's present leaders and those occupying leadership positions in Nigeria presently. The argument will be that in terms of leadership, Nigeria as a nation has not got it right, and is not yet there. This is why Nigeria as a nation is still facing serious leadership crises. And our failure to teach and cultivate virtuous characters through moral education is largely responsible for such. Hence, the paper concludes that there is a need to emphasize moral education right from our elementary schools. This will prepare people for future leadership but failure to do so will continue to deprive Nigeria of opportunities for training and bringing up good leaders and just political structures.

## The nature of leadership

It is quite a difficult task arriving at a generally accepted definition of the concept of leadership, even despite numerous research and literature on it. This has created a number of different approaches of identifying how leadership could be characterized. In wide-ranging survey of the history of the literature on leadership studies, Joseph Rost (1991) found hundreds of different definitions of leadership. In fact, Bernard Bass acknowledges that "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (2007, p.16). To pursue this further, leadership is often defined contextually, as for instance, in contrast to management (Kotter 2007). The fact remains that everyone seems to have his or her own idea of what leadership refers. These accounts for the reason why definition of the concept of leadership varies as the individuals that attempt to give the definition vary. According to Palmer (2009):

While everyone seems to be able to intuitively recognize instances of leadership, arriving at a precise definition of leadership for the purposes of scholarly inquiry has not proved to be an easy task.

It has not proved to be an easy task because each scholar or author tends to define the concept from his or her own perspective and experience. This is why (Bass 2001:16) notes that "the meaning of leadership may depend on the kind of institution in which it is found".

However, it is important to point out that although it is a difficult task arriving at a universally accepted definition of leadership, there are still some elements that are common in those definitions, looking at literature concerning the definition. These common elements are what Palmer (2009: 527), describes as "core concepts of leadership".

According to him:

This core notion of leadership is essential to any complete notion of the concept, and can be seen as an element of any of the various definitions previously proposed. My own view is that the various competing definitions of leadership are arrived at by building on the core notion of leadership in different ways, or by accenting the elements of the core notion in different manners or in relation to different contexts. Thus ... I will maintain that any plausible notion of leadership will

include the core element discussed here. In this view, leadership, at its core, essentially involves influencing others to act in light of a vision of how best to achieve a shared mission (Palmer 2009: 527).

Following from this, one can notice that a close look at any attempt at defining leadership will reveal that leadership deals with the ability to guide, influence, or direct people. Leadership is the art of leading others to deliberately create a result that wouldn't have happened otherwise. It is pertinent to acknowledge that it is not just the creation of results that makes good leadership. Good leaders should be able to deliberately challenge results by enlisting the help of others. A good leader creates winning organizations, groups, associations etc. hence, good leadership is an essential key to corporate success through positive change. Hence, good leadership should possess qualities such as good followership, self-awareness, self-direction, social awareness, ability to motivate, trust, honesty, courage. A good leader must be serviceable, that is, a good leader must be effective or useful. He should be ready to have the spirit of rendering service to others as well as living by example. In line with this observation, Socrates (an ancient Greek philosopher) maintained that unexamined life is not worth living. To him, he who lives an unexamined life is not worthy to be a leader. He totally advocated for a virtuous life in his philosophy. In the same vein, John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* emphasized "that a society is well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice" (Rawls 1971: 3). This implies that the welfare and the interests of the members of the society is not just defined by the whims and caprice of the leader rather the collective needs of the members of the society does.

Moreover, a good leader must perform some functions in order to be a team-player. Leadership is not a lonely business. Chemers (2000) argued that leadership research can be reduced to focusing on the functions that leaders must perform to be successful. He stated that leaders must produce an image that arouses trust in followers, develops relationships with subordinates that enable subordinate to move toward individual and collective goal attainment, and uses their knowledge, skills and material resources to accomplish the group's mission. But in order for a leader to instill trust in followers and develop relationship that enables subordinates to move toward goal attainment, a leader requires character. In this vein, it has been widely acknowledged that character is the most essential attribute of good leadership. That is, a leader must be known to be of certain character, the question then is: what is character? How is it acquired? What is the relationship between character and leadership? In attempt to answer these questions, we turn to the next section.

## The concept of moral (character) education

Over the years, there has been a growing concern about the moral aspects of education. This is as a result of moral decadence in our societies. It has been widely acknowledged that it is not enough for teachers in formal schools to provide the youth with basic academic knowledge and skills, there should be a conscious attempt at promoting their character development. There is a need for moral education because academic achievement alone does not determine educational progress. It is important to note that moral education involves the guidance and teaching of good behaviour and values, among others. It is taught to young children in schools, providing them with a sense of orderliness, politeness and lawfulness. It also involves a conscious attempt of teaching, challenging and guiding young ones to reason appropriately in their moral perception and judgment. The goals of moral education are essentially the goals of raising good children: youth, who understand, care about, and act upon the core ethical values (such as diligence, compassion, integrity, and fairness) that make for a productive, just, and democratic society. As youths grow in character, they grow in their capacity and commitments to do their best work, do the right thing, and lead lives of purpose. Effective moral education involves creating the kinds of

classroom and school environments that enable all students, without exception, to realize their potential to achieve these vital goals.

It is important to note that moral education and character education are not exactly synonymous. Moral education is the mother term. It is the tree, while character education is one of the branches. According to Joseph and Efron (2005), the seven worlds of moral education are character education, cultural heritage, caring community, peace education, social action, just community and ethical inquiry. Each of them is an approach to moral education. They maintain further:

... moral education is a coherent endeavour created with purpose and deliberation. Educators in moral worlds believe that they must create a process through which young people can learn to recognize values that represent prosocial behaviours, engage in actions that bring about a better life for others, and appreciate ethical and compassionate conduct (Joseph and Efron 2005:525).

Character education therefore aims at cultivating and promoting the moral virtues/values that a society holds to be beneficial. It seeks to develop virtue-human excellence- as the foundation of a purposeful, productive, and fulfilling life and a just, compassionate, and flourishing society.

### What is character anyway?

Character as a concept can be defined in various ways. It is a philosophical as well as a psychological term. Having acknowledged the goal of character education as the development of character in students or youths, character is also a useful taxonomy in discussions of leadership. The root of the word “character” is the Greek word for engraving. In this vein, Barlow, B. *et al.* take character to mean “the enduring marks left by life that sets one apart from others. Typically, enduring marks are set early in life by our religious beliefs, parental influences, and a child’s early interactions. Character is also marked throughout our lives as we partake in great divides in our nation’s history or solve moral dilemmas throughout our lives (Barlow, Jordan, Hendrix 2003: 564). Many authors acknowledged the importance of character as an essential leadership attribute. According to Berkowitz and Bier

Character is the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent. In other words, character is multifaceted. It is psychological. It relates to moral functioning. (Berkowitz and Bier 2004:73).

From the above, we can deduce that for a moral agent to function well or otherwise, depends on his or her moral character. This is why according to Sarros and Cooper “without character, our actions are routing and often meaningless. “Character helps identify who we are” (Sarros and Cooper: 2006:4). Character is an identifying factor of who an individual is and what he/she is capable of doing. An individual’s character defines him/her. According to Lickona (1991), character development is tri-phasic. The first phase is moral knowing, which includes moral awareness and moral reasoning, and deciding the right course of action. The second phase is moral feeling, which is a concern about doing the right thing. Moral feeling consists of conscience, self-esteem, empathy, and humility. The third phase is moral action, which means acting with competence and will. This is why he sees character as “doing the right thing despite outside pressure to the contrary (Lickona 1991).

### Character and leadership

The interplay between character and leadership is often taken for granted. We do expect good leaders to be strong and firm in character, that is, to have a moral imperative to their actions. Leaders with character have been identified as authentic leaders (Fairholm 1991, 1998; Gardner and Avolio 1998; Luthans and Avolio 2003; May, Chan, Hodges, and Avolio 2003; Price 2002). Authentic leaders know who they are and what they believe in; show consistency between their values, ethical reasoning and actions; develop positive psychological states such as confidence,

optimism, hope, and resilience in themselves and their associates; and are widely known and respected for their integrity (UNL Gallup Leadership Institute 2004). This tremendously reinforces the importance of character to effective leadership. This is because personal values lie at the core of character as well as leadership (Rousseau 1990; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer 1998; Schein 1985).

Furthermore, in reinforcing the interplay between character and effective leadership, Patrick and Locke (1991) argued for the importance of character as a leadership trait. They conducted a qualitative synthesis of earlier research postulating that leaders differ from followers on six traits: drive, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. According to them, leaders can be born with these traits; can learn them, or both. They stated that it is these six traits that make up the “right stuff” for leaders. They mentioned that these traits make leaders different and should be recognized as part of the entire leadership process. That is, a good and successful leader must possess these qualities stated above.

Other authors also list character as an essential leadership trait. Gergen (2001), suggested three traits we should look for in leaders; character, vision, and political capacity. Clowney (2001) suggested the ideal leader has changed over time with societal changes and paradigm shifts, and we are now living in the era of character ethic. Josephson (1991) emphasize that character is the foundation of effective leadership in that what leaders achieve when they lead will be shared more by the collection of dispositions, habits, attitudes that make up their character than by their education and skills. He admits that it is a character that determines whether they will effectively use their knowledge and skills. There are numerous literatures establishing the imperativeness of character to effective leadership. If we go on and on, the list can be as elongated as possible. We turn to the examination of the interplay between character and leadership in Nigeria. That is, how far has character gone in shaping Nigerian leaders?

## Virtue ethics as a theoretical framework or justification for moral (character) education

In ethical literature, the contemporary study of moral theories, virtue ethics is often taken as the third force. Consequentialist theories and agent-relative theories (Deontological theories) being the first and second forces respectively. The third force; virtue ethics is taken to bridge the apparent deadlock between consequentialism and agent-relative morality. Consequentialist and agent-relative moral theories focus on how to produce morally right actions over and above morally wrong actions. Both consequentialist theories (example, utilitarianism and egoism) and agent-relative theories (example, Kantian ethics) have this in common. But while consequentialist theories focus on consequences or outcomes of actions as the criterion for achieving a morally right action, agent relative theories (deontological theories) focuses on the nature or factors inherent to the nature of the action. Virtue ethics as the intervening third ethical theory differ significantly from the two theories above. On one hand, consequentialist theories and agent-relative theories focus on how to produce morally right actions, virtue ethics focuses on the moral agent. That is, how to produce a moral individual with good character. In advocating for moral (character) education in this paper for effective leadership and adequate moral orientation, virtue ethics serves as the justification for such argument. This is because virtue ethics focuses on the character of the moral agent as the actor. Virtue ethicists believe that something is missing in modern ethical theories (consequentialism and agent-relative theories) that focus on what we ought to do. They believe that we should be equally concerned, or even centrally concerned, with the question of what character traits we ought to develop in ourselves (Geirsson and Holmgren 2000 :209).

The introduction of a new moral structure like virtue ethics will enhance the understanding of the moral agent as the actor, rather than focusing on the moral rightness and wrongness of

actions. Virtue ethicists reject the conventional moral philosophy. To them, it is too oriented towards moral rules ...They believe that moral philosophy should concern itself less with the assessment of moral actions, and more with the character of the agent who performs them. In particular with the virtues that make a good person good (Shaw 1999: 252). Virtue ethicists see themselves as standing in the tradition of Aristotle (384-322 BC). Aristotle did not formulate a general account of right and wrong nor was he concerned to lay down specific moral rules and principles. He rather focused on moral education and the formation of virtue unlike modern philosophers that formulate ethical rules and principles for moral assessments and evaluations. For Aristotle, good life for human beings consists in the exercise of *arête* (virtue or excellence). This was typified in his *Nicomachean Ethics* where he provides his account of the principal virtues (both those of the intellect and those of character).

To achieve virtue or excellence, certain habits of action and emotion must be acquired. A virtue is a kind of disposition or character trait. And virtue is not acquired by memorizing certain rules or principles but by acting in certain ways which will become firm dispositions ( Shaw 1999: 252-3). The essence of virtue ethics is not rule-following but the development of dispositions, habits and character traits that improve human moral lives. These virtues include courage, integrity, bravery, honesty, among others. It is important to note that there is no universal acceptance of the characterization of these virtues. What each society cherishes as a virtue varies from one place to another. There is a need to emphasize the importance of moral character. The reason for using virtue ethics as a justification for moral (character education) is that it focuses on the moral cultivation of characters by moral agents.

## Character and leadership among Nigerian leaders

The historical genealogy of Nigeria's leadership experience could be divided into three epochs – the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the post-colonial period. It may appear disheartening that this discussion will neither follow such historical chronology nor mention all the actors in Nigeria's leadership project in some periods. This will then serve as a basis to extrapolate that (a) Nigerian leaders immediately after independence performed better than the present crop of our leaders (b) These earlier leaders (Nationalists) played politics along ethnic divide, hence could not establish needed and appropriate leadership style (c) Nigeria as a nation had faced and is still facing series of leadership crisis, hence the need for moral education anchored on character education to serve as a panacea. This is in view of the fact of having established that character is an essential element or trait to effective leadership. Through character education, effective leadership would be enhanced or facilitated.

Historically, the years 1914, 1960 and 1963, among others are remarkable in Nigeria as a nation. 1914 being the year the Northern and Southern protectorate of Nigeria was amalgamated. 1960 was the year of independence for Nigeria with the status of a Republic in 1963. There is no doubt, series of political activities took place before the periods building up to the independence but we are not going to discuss that in this paper. But it is important to note that the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorate of 1914 is perceived as a 'forceful union' carried out by the British colonialists for administrative convenience. Nigerians were not carried along to reflect in the words of Rawls "on the social structures which govern their lives", whereas according to Rawls, citizens of every society have the right and responsibility to formulate principles for the structuring of a society which can be reflectively endorsed by all its citizens. Rawls acknowledged this because he recognizes that all human beings share a capacity for introspection, the ability to reflect upon their own thoughts and deeds in order to determine whether they ought to continue as before, comparing how things are actually done to standards of how they ought to be done (Rawls 1971: 40-46). In the amalgamation events of 1914 and the independence of 1960, Nigerians never reflected nor agreed on the principles that should govern them and their affairs. This is also one of the sources of the crisis of leadership in

Nigeria today. The problem is that Nigerians are in a union that they never negotiated and agreed upon the principles for the structuring of Nigeria as a nation. This artificial unity devoid of consensus also contributes to the ethnic division and nepotism that is at base of Nigerian crisis today. This goes back to the colonial era. It is only the citizens' reflection on the basic structure of their society that will reveal whether the system is just or unjust, as justice is one of the cardinal virtues a society should be built upon.

Some key figures in Nigeria's leadership project to be examined vis-à-vis their leadership style are: Dr Nnamdi Azikwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa. These were among the first agitators (Nationalists) for Nigeria's independence.

## Nnamdi Azikwe

He was popularly known as the Great Zik of Africa. He was born by Igbo parents. He became one of the most prominent nationalists that fought for Nigeria's independence in 1960. He was one of the pioneer founders of National council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, which was a conglomeration of different organizations in 1944. He had great opportunity of leadership before and after independence.

In Bola Ige's words:

After the death of Herbert Macaulay. There was no Nigerian who could claim to be more nationalistic than Zik. There was nobody who could say that he had laid out his resources for the anti-colonial struggle more than Zik. He was a very handsome and charming man. He spoke two of the three Main Nigerian languages – Ibo and Yoruba- well, and could use the fact of his birth in Zungeru in 1904 in the then Northern provinces to his own advantage. Partly because he knew how to use his newspapers skillfully to build his image up, and partly because he was a very good orator, his charisma shone more brightly than any other person's (Ige 1995:16)

Zik by all standards was a great leader. He advocated 'pragmatic socialism and welfarism'. He worked in collaboration with other leaders from other regions but was more popular in the then eastern region. At Nigeria's attainment of independence, Zik became the first indigenous Governor-general although a mere representative of the Queen of England, with ceremonial functions. That was the peak or the highest political positions ever attained by Zik in his political career. In summary of Zik's personality profile, Ige outlines this way:

Zik: charismatic, Easy-going. Dreamer. Visionary. Inspirer. Decidedly undeciding. A leader who follows his lieutenants. Eclectic. Jovial; man of the world. Urbane. Humane. Fun loving. Always looking for compromises. Warm. Likeable. Engaging. General rather than particular. No strong views. Would not mind other people do the work and he appends signature. Cunning. Always suspecting a catch. Always planning a loophole for escape. Not an administrator, or organizer, but schemer/tactician – a fabius maximums, the "Cunctator". Fantastic public relations man. Keeps political colleagues, friends or lieutenants – even if they go into parties different from his. No strong loyalty to anyone. Would reap where others and sow. One word: ADMIRE? (Ige 1995:310)

From this, it can be inferred that Zik was a good team player as well as a flexible and charismatic leader. Ige's assessment may not be entirely correct but that is his own opinion and judgment. He displayed these qualities as outlined above as a result of his personality and character. I now turn to the next leader; Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

## Chief Obafemi Awolowo

He was popularly called Chief Awo. He was born by Yoruba parents in Ikenne in the present-day Ogun state. He was a lawyer by profession. He among other prominent Yoruba leaders formed Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1948, and subsequently Action Group (AG) in 1951. He was one of the

most prominent Nationalists. He was the leader of the party. He was the premier of western region during regional government. It was during that period that he introduced free and compulsory education. He was charged of treasonable felony and later sentenced to prison for fifteen years. He was the federal commissioner for finance during the Biafra civil war. He advocated democratic socialism. He was a frontline Nationalist and leader of the unity party of Nigeria during the Second Republic. Ige summarizes Awolowo's personality profile this way:

Awo: Charismatic. serious. Studious. Meticulous. Finicky. Fearless. Methodical. Discriminating. Determined. Purposeful. Strong belief in his personal destiny. Intellectually arrogant (?). Workaholic. Does not believe in compromises – probably suspects compromises. Holds very strong political views (but does not hold strong religious views, and sometimes indulgent about the morals of other people although himself morally un-impeachable or unbeatable). Charming and very friendly in private. Excites strong passions for/against. Care organizer (with eye for details) but no schemer/tactician, except within own party or government. Particularistic cares only for solution of Nigeria's problems and thinks other things would fall into place. For him, political differences lead to political barrier to personal relationships with former colleagues and lieutenants – unlike Zik, Loyal to colleagues and lieutenant on social matters and in public, but willing and ready to listen to stories. Pragmatic activist, doer of his own considered philosophical or visionary ideas. Propagandist. Easily arouses suspicion of other leaders. Elephantine memory. His blunt statements easily misunderstood. Would not reap where he did not sow. One word. FEARED (Ige 1995: 301-302)

From the above, we can infer that Chief Awolowo was a great leader. A man who loved and was ready to lay down his life for his people. But was more prominent and popular among his Yoruba tribal people. This is because he saw Yoruba people as his first constituents. That is, thinking about his Yoruba tribe first before thinking about Nigeria as a nation.

### Ahmadu Bello (The Sarduana of Sokoto)

He was popularly known as the Sarduana of Sokoto. He was born of the royal family of Sokoto from Usman Dan Fodio descent. He was the most prominent Northern leader before independence, after independence and till his death during the January 15<sup>th</sup> 1966 coup d'etat led by major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu. He was one of the pioneer founders and leader of Northern people's congress formed in 1951. This party became an avenue to which Sarduana played and dominated federal politics from the early fifties, even till his death. He was more or less the absolute leader of the northerners. He was well recognized, respected, admired and revered by the Northerners. In Ige's word:

**SARDUANA:** Charismatic. Aristocratic. Experienced. Jailed during colonial days. Leadership qualities – humble, friendly, hospitable and accommodating. But also rigorous that nobody exceeds bounds – visitors sitting on the floor in his house, no drinking of alcohol in his presence, etc. Bold. Fearless. Team leader. Used the myth surrounding birth and traditional office to command and keep religious and political respect and leadership. Accommodating with emirs, but could be firm –exile of emir of Kano. Relied much on British administrators, some of whom were very good, e.g. C. Rex Niven (who ghosted the autobiography of Sir Ahmadu). Made and encouraged young educated Northerners to look up: Suleiman Takuma, Waziri Ibrahim, Maitama Sule, Ishaya Audu, Mamman Nasir, Ali Akilu, Abdu-Kadir Ja, Adamu Ciroma, etc. Entrenched politician/traditional ruler relationship that is still strong in Northern Nigeria. Laid no claim to intellectual or academic brilliance, and



propounded no philosophies. But knew how to pick men and place them in vantage and advantageous positions. One word: RESPECTED? (Ige 1995; 302).

From the above, we can deduce that Sarduana was at home in the north and among the northerners. He was not popular among other tribes. But he did the best for his people, the northerners. He was even the premier of northern region during regional government.

## Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa

He was born in Northern Nigeria, a Hausa and son of a Muslim District Head. He was educated in Muslim and government schools and was trained as a teacher at Katsina College in Northern Nigeria. He taught in secondary schools and was a Native Authority Education officer. He began his political career in 1948 when he was appointed to the Northern Region House of Assembly and later elected by it to the Nigerian Legislative Council. He was a founding member of the Northern people's congress in 1951, of which he was its first vice president. In 1951, he was elected to the federal House of Representatives, and in 1959, he became the first Prime Minister of Nigeria. He was assassinated in January 1966, in the first coup d'état.

However, having examined the first set of leaders produced in Nigeria, it is pertinent to point out that they were not the only leaders as at that period. They were only the major and key leaders of different regions of Nigeria. Zik from eastern region, Awolowo from western region, while Ahmadu Bello and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa from northern region. Each and every one of them played party politics but along ethnic divide. This was why NPC was in control of the North, NCNC was in charge of the east while AG also covered the west. They never trusted each other, hence could not work together. According to Bola Ige commenting about Zik, Awo and Sarduana:

I wish all three had managed to work together, they would have established for us their political heirs a strong, dynamic and democratic Nigeria which could have become the envy of the whole world (Ige 1995: 301)

This was Ige's wish but it never happened. And since that period up till date, Nigerian leaders had never and are still not able to separate leadership from tribal loyalties and taints. But for effective leadership to take place, leadership must be imbued and backed with character education. Our first set of leaders had their mistakes but despite those flaws, they were able to manage Nigeria better than our so-called present day leaders. Ige, after acknowledging the mistakes of the first set of Nigerian leaders notes as follows:

In spite of that, I think that the Sarduana, Awo and Zik are the greatest political leaders Nigeria has produced so far, and who have stamped their images on Nigeria indelibly ... (Ige, 1995: 300)

This is true especially when we consider what has been happening in Nigeria since then. And how our subsequent leaders till date have piloted the affairs of Nigeria. Corruption, nepotism and ethnic (tribal) politics have grown uncontrollably. But these political anomalies could also be blamed on the political structure established by these first set of leaders. From the discussion above, there was a lack of trust among the leaders. Each of the leaders had more political support within his tribe. This accounts for the very unjust political system and structure that we have in Nigeria today. A structure that emanated from mistrust among the different leaders cannot but be ethnically inclined, nepotic, corrupt and hence unjust. Also, there is the issue of the ruling oligarchy that controls the way the control should be governed. The northern oligarchy collaborates with their southern counterparts to do so.

## Conclusion

Leadership as a skill or project has been identified as one of the greatest problems in Nigeria as a nation. This owes to the fact that Nigerian leaders fail to recognize the importance of morals to effective leadership on one hand, and the problem of defective (unjust) political structures

emanating from the colonial era. And in order to have effective leadership in Nigeria, there is the need for moral education with emphasis on character education. This is because character has been acknowledged and established as an essential element of effective leadership. Also, there is the need for Nigerian citizens to reflect and reformulate the principles upon which Nigeria is built upon right from the colonial era. Commenting on Rawls, Michael Frazer rightly noted along this line that John Rawls shares the enlightenment's commitment to finding moral and political principles which can be reflectively endorsed by all individuals autonomously (Frazer 2007, 756). This will go a long way to solve the leadership crisis in Nigeria if the citizens can reflect and agree on the moral and political principles that should govern them.

However, since great leaders are ethical stewards who generate high levels of commitment from followers and leadership rises to the level of ethical and political stewardship when leaders earn the trust and followership of those whom they serve by creating integrated organizational systems that demonstrate the leader's commitment to honouring the steward's duties (Caldwell, *et al.* 2002; Caldwell and Karri 2005; Pfeffer 1998). This paper argued that with the introduction of moral education (character education) in our schools, Nigeria would be able to produce leaders that will become ethical stewards. On the contrary, the paper concludes that as long as moral character and political restructuring as essential elements of leadership continues to be neglected, leadership crises would continue to loom large in Nigeria as we have it presently.

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