

Column Corruption – A social disease • Part 143

What Namibian political leaders can learn from servant leadership

"Today, leadership behaviour has a greater impact than it did in the years past.

"As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, one person's actions can affect millions – even billions – of lives" (Blanchard). As the impact of leaders increases and society becomes increasingly regulated worldwide by governments, the need for servant leadership is increasing to protect individuals from abuse by governments.

Leadership is in essence "who you are". Who you are becomes clear in what you do and how you do it.

The concept "servant leadership" was coined by Greenleaf in a 1970 essay titled "The Servant as Leader" (Kent). The desire to serve comes first, "it is about identifying and meeting the needs of colleagues, customers, and communities".

Servant leadership emerged as a modern concept over four decades (Morgan). Blanchard said that when people are well served by their leaders, "they in turn serve their customers well". He indi-



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cated that a well-served customer is a customer that returns for another round of quality service. Servant leadership is good for customers and business and creates profit.

Servant leadership is not about reducing responsibility, it is also not about abdicating or reducing power – "they just recognize that it passes through them, not from them" (Blanchard). To be a leader, "it is absolutely essential to listen to people and understand their needs" (Morgan).

LISTENING AND RELATING

Abraham Lincoln was an exceptional leader in terms of listening skills. He would listen

with his full attention to the views of his cabinet members before he would respond. The ability to "listen intently and observe closely", and to get to know the "worldview of each one of their employees" are mentioned by Economy. Servant leaders relate to people and people can identify with them. Servant leaders act as selfless mentors (Economy).

Such leaders focus on helping their employees to learn critical skills that can improve their performance and improve them as people in and outside the work situation.

For example, if an employee treated a customer badly, instead of focusing on penalising such employee, the servant leader will explain to the employee the impact of his or her behaviour on the customer, potential customers and business.

The leader will do his utmost to make the employee understand that his behaviour is not aligned with the values and standards of the institution.

The leader will try his best to ensure that the

employee understands and gains insight in his or her behaviour. The employee feels compelled to comply because it is in his or her own interest.

HIGH STANDARDS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND MENTORING

Servant leaders "push for high standards of performance, service quality, and alignment of values" (Economy).

They hold themselves and other accountable for their performance. This type of accountability focuses on mentoring instead of instructions. It is a rewarding type of leadership that improves the lives of employees and leaders' own lives. Servant leaders believe that "people can accomplish much when inspired by a purpose" bigger than themselves, and "every person has value and deserves civility, trust and respect" (Economy).

Kent said, based on the views of a number of scholars, elements that are most unique to servant leadership include: Morality, meaning personal values and integrity and understanding values and

standards.

To form long term relationships with employees and develop them to reaching their fullest potential. The betterment of stakeholders, e.g. employees, customers and society as a whole. It is clear why a leader that serves the people reduces corruption.

IN NAMIBIA

As part of the Afrobarometer Survey of 2017, Shejvali indicated that five % of people contact their MP when they have a problem, six percent contact their National Council Member and 16 percent contact their political party official. In contrast, 38 percent and 32 percent respectively contact their religious and traditional leader. In the Land of the Brave, it seems that political leaders are not serving the people.

If such leaders served the community, substantially more people would have consulted elected leaders and political party officials. Servant leaders put such an emphasis on serving, that their own interests come second. Political leaders in Namibia do not comply with

the characteristics of servant leadership. If Namibian leaders serve the people, corruption will reduce automatically.

References

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Though a leader in gender representation, Namibia still has work to ensure full equality.

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