The Leadership Styles of Nelson Mandela as a Pattern for African Leaders

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Abstract: The paper discusses the leadership style of Nelson Mandela as a model for African leaders in a bid to addressing the challenge of leadership crisis in African. While secondary data was used to support the arguments in the paper, content analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings of the paper show that, Nelson Mandela was a selfless humanist anti-apartheid revolutionist who stood for equality, justice, peace and freedom. It was also found that Mandela was not power amok like other African leaders, Mandela’s insistence not to be in office for more than four years as the President of South Africa, his determination, spirit of forgiveness and willingness for reconciliation, were discovered to be responsible for Mandela’s exceptional leadership style in Africa. In the conclusion it is argued that the leadership style of Mandela was undoubted responsible for him being a leader par excellence in Africa. It is recommended that African leaders should be willing to immolate the leadership style of Mandela in order to resolve the leadership crises in Africa. If the African Union does not rise fast to promote the leadership style of Nelson Mandela among African leader, the continent will continue to experience the crisis of leadership that produces underdevelopment.

Key Words: Leadership Style, Nelson Mandela, Leadership Model, African Leaders

Introduction
Mandela was born in Mvezo on 18 July 1918 and died on 5 December 2013. During his lifetime, he struggled for the freedom, justice and equality of South Africans from white domination under the apartheid system. In the cause of the struggle,
he displayed a rare leadership style, which are not only revered in Africa alone but in the entire global community. The objective of the paper is to discuss some of the prominent leadership styles of Nelson Mandela, both as a revolutionary leader and as the President of South Africa; as a model for leadership in Africa. These are very crucial for overcoming undue craving for political power, bad leadership and poor development on the continent of Africa.

This study contributes to the extant literature on leadership challenge in contemporary African by arguing that African leaders, particularly the contemporary ones crave for political power insatiably and are ever willing to remain in authority power perpetually as if there are no others fellow citizens who are capable of leadership. It argues that, in the quest for attaining or retaining the political power, many African leaders have sought to alter or bastardize the laws of the state such as the constitution or electoral laws that brought them into power; or by causing divisions among the people, as well as social and political tensions and instabilities. Such leaders care more about their personal interest, which is self-enrichment rather that promoting the interest of the general population, which was why they were elected as leaders. The quest for power has made some leaders to become very corrupt as they immerse much wealth for themselves and use same to buy in their ways or retain political power positions. They use of wealth to manipulate the desperate poor, and those put in place to manage institution of the state. These consequently undermine African’s potentials for development.

The significance of the study is that, by exposing Mandela’s lifestyles, the present and future African political leaders may have reasons to learn to adopt and correct the ills of political leadership that has bedevilled the continent since her independence from colonialism, especially the problem of seat-tight leadership. The following parts of the paper discuss the conceptual definitions, theoretical framework, the historical background of Nelson Mandela, his lifestyles and the lessons for the contemporary African Leaders. Following these, it will provide relevant recommendations towards improving African leadership.

Theoretical framework
There are numerous theories that are often used to analyse leadership, including political leadership, prominent among which are the great man theory, trait theory, behavioural theory, contingency theory, situational theory etc. (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano and Dennison 2003; Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swammy 2014). In this paper however, the Leadership Style Theory is chosen because it is considered more appropriate in explaining Nelson Mandela leadership style as a model for African leaders.

The Leadership Style Theory, also referred to as behavioural theory opposes Trait theory of leadership, which assumes that leaders are born
rather than made, and that leaders are more likely to be effective when they possess certain traits (qualities) which are inherited rather than acquired. The Style theory argues that, it is not what qualities leaders inherit but what they do (i.e. their behaviours) that determines whether they are good and effective at leading or not.

The theory is a product of different studies conducted in Ohio State University, Michigan University and the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (Foster 2002; Woods, 2010). The proponents of the theory hold that leadership qualities can be acquired through learning and observation, and not necessarily inherited at birth. There are three main leadership styles identified by this theory, which are: Autocratic Style/ Authoritarian Style of Leadership; Democratic Style or participatory Style of Leadership; and Laissez faire Style or Delegative Style of Leadership. Autocratic leadership style is the style by which leaders are too conscious of their power and position. Autocratic leaders have less regards for the opinion of their subjects. They take most of the decisions without consulting their subjects and demonstrate less tolerance for opposition and they have suppressive tendency. Democratic leadership style is the style by which leaders put the interest of their followers above personal interest. Democratic leaders have less regards for the opinion of their subjects. They take most of the decisions without consulting their subjects and demonstrate less tolerance for opposition and they have suppressive tendency. Democratic leadership style is the style by which leaders put the interest of their followers above personal interest. Democratic leadership style is the style by which leaders put the interest of their followers above personal interest. This style of leadership also encourages participation of subjects in decision-making and the leading process. Choi (2007) identified Sacrifice, Courage, symbolism, Participation, and Vision as good democratic leadership styles. Laissez faire leadership style is a style in which leaders encourage their subjects to participate in decision-making and leadership process but without close supervision (Foster 2002; Robbins and Decenzo 2004; Woods, 2010; Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swammy 2014).

Most African leaders, even though democracies tend to display tendency for autocratic leadership instead of these democratic leadership styles because of their attitudes of craving for political power and unwillingness to relinquish it as at when due, lack of tolerance for opposition, public opinion, disregard for the interest of their subjects among others. These leaders reflect less democratic style; talk less of laissez fairs style. On the contrary however, Mandela’s leadership combines the democratic style, laissez faire styles except for autocratic style. He also demonstrated the mastery of situational and contingent leadership style. Mandela has demonstrated capacity to place the interest of his people above his personal interest in the fight against apartheid and has encouraged collective leadership through his philosophy of leading from behind by giving his followers the chance to participate in the leadership process. Thus, he was also able to promote trust, confidence and commitment of his population.

**Why Nelson Mandela’s Leadership Styles Should serve as a Model for Africa Leaders**

The leadership styles of Nelson Mandela which was manifest in
Selflessness, Vision and Determination, Politics without bitterness: Forgiveness and reconciliation, Participation: Leading from Behind, Symbolism and Willingness to Quit Political Power at the Right Time; are highly considered in this paper as model for African leaders because these styles are compatible with democratic practices, good governance and political stability, which most African leaders lack or fail to portray.

Most contemporary African leaders are democratic but lot of them have resorted to insatiable craving for power, and unwillingness to hand over political power as at when due, disregard for the good of followers, which have resulted to poor governance, lack of transparency, corruption, political instability, insecurity, among others. As a result, Africa has witnessed and still having some of the oldest and longest serving presidents or Heads of State, some of which have stayed in office for as long as 14 - 44 years and have been seeking re-elections which is unlike the philosophy of Mandela. For example, President Paul Biya of Cameroon (44 years), Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea (40 years), Dennis Sassou-Nguesso of Republic of Congo (35 years), Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (33 years), Idriss Derby of Chad (29 years), Paul Kagame of Rwanda (28 years), Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea (27 years), Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti (20 years), Hage Geingob of Namibia (19 Years) and Faure Gnassingbe of Togo (14 years), (Nyanchama 2020).

The leadership styles Mandela has left behind are great legacies that can serve as a model for other African leaders to apply. It is hoped that when they apply these leadership styles, there will be better leadership in the continent and good governance, peace and stability will improve greatly.

3. Brief Biography of Nelson Mandela

Both in his lifetime and after his death, Mandela has been recognized and described in different ways as a man of good virtues and high repute. He was an African Nationalist (Lodge, 2006), anti-apartheid revolutionary, Socialist (Smith, 2010), Liberal African Nationalist-decolonial humanist (Ndlovu-Gatshe, 2014), Freedom Fighter, the father of the nation, Icon of democracy and social justice, advocate of social justice, a politician, a lawyer, a peace lover, the architect of modern South Africa, the first democratically elected black South African President, a philanthropist and a hero not only to the black race but to the world at large. Mandela won hundreds of prices globally, key among which was the Nobel Peace Prize (BBC News, 2013).

Nelson Mandela was born in 18 January 1918 in Mvezo, Umtata in present day South Africa. He was a descendent of the Thembu Royal family because Ngube ngcuka, his great-grand father was the King of Thembu. His father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa Mandela (1880 - 1928), served as a local Chief and a councillor to the King of Thembu. His father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa Mandela (1880-1928), served as a local Chief and a councillor to the King of Thembu from 1915 to 1926. Gadla had four
Nelson Mandela had three wives, namely Evelyn, Winnie and Graça (Meredith, 2010; Smith, 2010; Sampson, 2011). Nelson Mandela had three wives, namely Evelyn, Winnie and Graça (Meredith, 2010; Smith, 2010; Sampson, 2011).

Mandela was enrolled into Baptist Methodist school in 1933 by his mother. The school was mostly attended by student from Thembu. It was in that school that Mandela got the English name Nelson, from his teacher. In 1937, he also attended the Methodist College at Forte Beaufort, Healdton. Later, he attended University of Forte Hare, for a BA degree but towards the end of the first year, he was suspended along other students for participating in a boycott organized by the Students Representative Council (SRC) in protest hike poor quality of food served to the student. Mandela left without completing returning to
a. Early Upbringing
Although, Mandela did not spend much time with his father as a result of his early death, according to Mandela, he inherited from his father, his ‘proud rebelliousness’ and ‘stubborn sense of fairness’ (Mandela, 1994, p.20). He also learnt much about the strength of African leadership in his early stay at the royal family at Thembu.

b. Colonialism/ Apartheid in South Africa:
Apartheid was a system of minority white domination over the majority black in South Africa, characterized by racial discrimination and segregation in favour of the white coloured population against the black coloured population South Africans. Apartheid started with the introduction of a Land Act in 1913, some years after South African independence. The Act restricted black Africans access to certain land areas and confined them to specific reserved (Feinberg, 1993; Beinart, 2014). However, the apartheid system was institutionalized by the African National Party-led government (also known as the all-white government) which came into power in Republic of South Africa in 1948. During its campaign, the party used the slogan ‘Apartheid’ which meant separateness. The party meant to create separation between the white and the black. Upon coming to power, the government made some legislation that gave the apartheid system, not only a political basis but also a legal backing. Under apartheid, the black South African population suffered massive oppression and sharp inequality from the white population and in all social, political and economics spheres of life. The apartheid system was abolished when a new democratic government under President F. W. de Klerk assumed power in 1991 (Mandela, 1994; Meredith, 2010; Sampson, 2011; Smith, 2010).

Some prominent examples of the apartheid laws include the Population Registration Act of 1950- this Act classified South Africans population according to biological races i.e. white, coloured, Asian or mixed colour. Under this Act, South Africa population were registered based on their racial identities. Another one is the Separate development policy i.e. the ‘Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959) introduced by Dr. Hendrick Verwoerd, the then South Africa Prime Minister. With this policy, blacks Africans were forcefully relocated to separate settlements known as Bantu Homes (Balwin, 1978; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020).

Prominent examples of sharp inequalities suffered by the black South Africans included prohibition of the blacks from the utility of same social facilities such that public schools, toilets, residential areas, as they were categorized along white versus black zones; marriages were prohibited between the black and white, among others.

Marxist Socialism and Communism: Mandela was influenced by Marxist Socialist philosophy i.e. scientific socialism
and communism. In his revolutionary movement, he went against capitalism, private ownership of land. Instead, he advocated for the established a complete classless society. However, at different instances, he denied being a communist (The Economist, 2013), including during his trial for treason, in his interaction with the media and in his autobiography (Ellis, 2016).

Initially, Mandela was more inclined to an Africanist anti-colonialism and anti-apartheid approach, as against a united front or multi-racial approach, a position held by his ANC associate, Lembede with whom they co-founded the ANC Youth League. In March 1950, Africans, Communists activists and Indians organized a multi-racial convention titled ‘Defend Free Speech Convention’ in which they called for a May Day General Strike to protest racial discrimination under the apartheid system. However, Mandela kept away from the strike because he was not comfortable with the multi-racial or joint front approach. The strike resulted to the arrests of several participants as well as the formulation of the Suppression of Communist Act 1950 by the apartheid government. In December 1951, Mandela opposed the multi-racial approach at the ANC National Conference, but the majority voted against his stance (Mandela, 1944; Smith, 2010; Sampson, 2011).

Mandela’s position begun to change when he became exposed to the ideas of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Moa Zedong, among others through much readings; coupled with the influence of his friends like Moses Kotane, and his exposure to Communist support for national liberation wars etc. Theses exposures influenced Mandela to change his mind and embrace the Philosophy of Karl Marx (Mandela, 1994; Lodge, 2006; Meredith, 2010; The Economist, 2013). On this development, Mandela confessed that he ‘found (himself) drown into the idea of classless society, which to (his) mind was a similar to traditional African culture where life was shared and communal’ (Mandela, 1994, p.172).

d. Political Struggle against Colonialism and Apartheid:

Mandela started participating in anti-colonial and African nationalist politics when he worked as a layer in Johannesburg. There he became a member of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1943 whose name was Anton Lembede. Lembede was an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, who influenced Mandela profoundly. Together, they co-founded the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in 1944. Lembede became the President while Mandela served as an executive committee member. Later, Mandela became the President of the Transvaal branch of the ANC in 1951 (Mandela, 1944; Meredith 2010; Sampson, 2011).

In 1948, when the white-only government introduced the apartheid system, Mandela and ANC resolved to fight the government until they overthrew it and end the racial discrimination. Influenced by the ideas of Mahma Ghandi of India, Mandela embraced the idea of non-violent resistance. The ANC, the
Communist Groups and the Indians organized a joint non-violent resistance campaign against apartheid. Madela mobilized about 10,000 people on 22 June 1952, but he was arrested (Madela, 1994, p.183-188; Lodge, 2006, p.52-53). Due to the arrest, the number of participants increased from 20,000 to 100,000. In response, the government introduced the Public Safety Act of 1953 to allow for the application of Marshal Law. Also, the government banned the Transvaal ANC President from appearing in public, as a result Mandela was elected as the next president to replace him (Mandela, 1944; Meredith, 2010; Sampson, 2011).

Mandela joined the South African Communist Party, though secretly and engineered a sabotage campaign to bring down apartheid. For that purpose, he co-founded the militant organization called Unkhonto we Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation in 1961). The group was created as part of the effort to change strategy because a peaceful approach was no longer effective in influencing government action to end the racial discrimination.

In 1962, Mandela was arrested and tried in Rivonian for conspiracy to overthrow the state. The international community condemned his trial and called for his release, including the World Peace Council, the United Nations, among others. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, and he was detained in prison for 27 years. His prolonged detention created an atmosphere of serious tension and fear for racial civil war in South Africa which prompted his release by the F.W. de Klerk-led government. Mandela gained back his freedom from the prison in 1990. Klerk went into negotiations with Mandela on the need to end apartheid, the outcome of which was the agreement to hold a multiracial general election in 1994. Mandela contested in the election and won with decisive victory. He became the first black South African President of South Africa in 1994 and served until 1999. As President, Mandela focused on reconciling between racial groups, leading to the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Desmond Tutu. He also became committed to fighting racial segregation and social injustice in all forms; combating poverty, land reforms, improving health care services, among others (Mandela, 1994; Sampson, 2011).

**Nelson Mandela’s Leadership Styles as a Pattern for African leaders**

Mandela has left good legacies of good leadership styles which African leaders can learn from to correct the ills of bad leadership on the continent. A statement by the former Cuban former President, Fidel Castro, lays credence to this assertion where he says that;

If one wanted an example of an absolute upright man, that man, that example would be Mandela. If one wanted an example of an unshakable firm, courageous, heroic, calm, intelligent, and capable man, that man and that example would be Mandela. I did not just reach this conclusion
after having met him in person ... I have thought this for many years. I identify him as one of the most extraordinary symbols of this era (Boehmer, 2008, p.2).

To start with, it is pertinent to note that, there is no single written single book that contains all the lifestyles of Mandela per se. However, this paper made a great effort by reading through the insightful writings of Mandela, his various speeches, attitude and responses to the circumstances he found himself in the cause of his political struggles against colonialism and racial domination under the apartheid system in South Africa. In this paper, we considered the following leadership styles of Nelson Mandela as good models other African leaders can learn from i.e. Selflessness Vision and Determination, Politics without bitterness: Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Participation: Leading from Behind, Symbolism and Willingness to Quit Political Power at the Right Time.

a. Selflessness Vision and Determination
Mandela believes in uncompromising vision for the liberation of Black South African from racial discrimination under apartheid regime. In the words of Prof. Anders Hallengren of the Department of History of Literature and History of Ideas at University of Stockholm, ‘Mandela forged a vision of humanity that encompasses all peoples and that sets the hallmark for the rest of the world’ (Hallengren (1999). Also, while describing Mandela, Tony Blair, the former British Prime minister said that Mandela had:
a very clear vision before he left prison that his mission was to unite his country and not simply to dismiss apartheid. And that political skill that he had is what people don’t get about him. He was a masterful politician (BBC News, 2013).

However, his visionary leadership style, Mandela distinguished himself among African leaders through selfless services and sacrifice for his own people. In in his Nobel Award Ceremony Speech, he wrote that:
we devote what remains of our lives to the use of our country’s unique and painful experience to demonstrate in practice that the normal condition for human existence is democracy, justice, peace, non-racism, non-sexism, prosperity for everyone, a healthy environment and equality and solidarity among the people (Ali-Dinar, 1993).

From the above quotation, it is clear that Mandela had a clear vision for his struggle which shaped his determination and commitment. More so, he was never interested in achieving personal gains or taking credit for his actions but consistent focused on accomplishing the greater vision he had for his people. Even when situations offer such opportunities, he did not compromise his vision for South Africa for any personal benefit. For example, when he was charged in Rivonia in Pretoria Supreme Court, for conspiracy and sabotage to overthrow the South African apartheid government, Mandela said he was prepared to die

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if that would eliminate discrimination against the black Africans (Meredith, 2010; Sampson, 2011). He stated that that

During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal in which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die (Brink, 1998; Nelson Mandela, Foundation 2018).

Mandela did not allow his Nqubengcuka royal family membership status to drop his fight against discrimination against the black Africans.

While in prison, Mandela was elected as the prisoner’s representative and he used that position to fight for the improvement of the welfare of black African prisoners. As a result of his efforts, by 1967, the prisoners had their conditions improved, and were allowed to wear long trousers, participate in games and have better quality food to eat (Meredith, 2010; Sampson, 2011). Mandela was earlier granted permission to wear long trousers, but he refused to accept the preferential treatment because the other prisoners were not extended same privileges (The Economist, 2013).

Again, while still in prison, Mandela was offered a condition for release from the prison in 1985, he declined to accept the conditions and questioned the kind of freedom he was to be given. He asked, ‘what freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people [ANC] remains banned? Only free men can negotiate a prisoner cannot enter into contract’ (Lodge, 2006, p.157). Later, Mandela and other ANC prisoners were offered release from prison and legal recognition for the existence of the ANC, on the condition that they must not insist on majority rule, break away from communist party, and denounce violence. Yet, Mandela maintained his already known position and only guaranteed that they can only renounce violence if the government renounces same against the black South Africans (Lodge, 2006).

Mandela maintained determination and resoluteness in the pursuit of his vision but was dynamic in his approach and strategy. For example, he strongly believed in democracy and majority rule. He respected the idea of collective action and equality of people, justice and justice irrespective of racial differences. However, to make leadership effective, he also believes that there are times when a leader needs to take decisive decision or action even without having to consult with followers in order to achieve a desired objective for the general good (Suttner, 2007). During his anti-colonial struggle and after, Mandela changed strategies from non-violent resistance to violent resistance, negotiation, reconciliation and forgiveness.

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The Economist (2013) explains that Mandela’s switch of strategy to guerrilla struggle was not motivated by any selfish desire to take power by force or to instigate needless violence. At first, he was more favourable with sabotage to avoid direct attack on people and casualties but reluctantly did so because it was apparent that the extent of repression by the government would not guarantee successful change if matched with peaceful struggle. It states that:

When he came to accept the principle of armed struggle, his strategy was not to seize power by force but rather to make the government negotiate. And when, in turn the government eventually yielded, Mr. Mandela showed neither bitterness nor vindictiveness, but an astonishing capacity for forgiveness and conciliation (The Economist, 2013).

Eventually, Mandela opted to negotiation with the apartheid government. This strategy, with the help of some other factors helped greatly in bringing an end to the apartheid regime in South Africa. Therefore, depending on the circumstance that avails itself, leadership should be dynamic as long as the strategy adopted will help in attaining the general good, and not selfish ambitions.

**b. Forgiveness and reconciliation**

Mandela understood that in politics, conflicts must occur but democratic politics should be without bitterness. However, he demonstrated that through forgiveness and reconciliation, peace and progress could be fostered in society. Hence, leaders must learn to forgive each other in order to achieve a common goal. After his release from the prison, and upon becoming the president, Mandela demonstrated this rare attitude. Although, he was oppressed, injured and humiliated but after the 27 years of imprisonment, he sought for reconciliation rather than the retaliation of the ill treatment perpetrated by apartheid against his black fellows or himself. He met with his former oppressors, offered his personal forgiveness, and reconciled with them, instead of taking vengeance. According to Mandela, ‘Courageous people do not fear forgiveness, for the sake of peace’ (Meredith, 2010, p.523-524). Mandela maintained that lack of forgiveness beclouds the mind and blocks vision for leaders. While responding to a media interview in 2007, he was asked how he was able to keep hatred in check. Mandela responded by saying the ‘Hatred beclouds the mind and it gets in the way of strategy. Leaders cannot afford to hate’. On this note, even the immediate past white president of South Africa, President, and FW de Klerk described Mandela as a ‘Unifier’ and a person with ‘remarkable lack of bitterness’ (BBC, 2013). After Mandela created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he says that the commission ‘had helped us move away from the past, to concentrate on the present and the future (Meredith, 2010, p.563; Sampson, 2011, p.532).

Mandela set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to
investigate the address human rights violation that occurred under the apartheid system. If this has helped to keep South Africa together, learning from Mandela can help contemporary African leaders in creating and preserving peace in contemporary among their people. Learning from Mandla, Koffi Anan the Chairman of Elders group left a strong message at the death of Mandela for African leaders, where he says that:

While I mourn the loss of Africa’s most distinguished leaders, Madiba’s legacy beckons us to follow his example to strive for human rights, reconciliation and justice for all (BBC, 2013).

c. Participation: Leading from Behind
Mandela demonstrates that leadership is like shepherding. He believes that leaders should act like shepherds who selects the smartest flocks and put them in the front to take the lead, while the sheered stays behind flocks. Through this style, leaders encourage participation of followers and team work, which is a vital practice in democratic leadership. A leader, Mandela says:

...stays behind the flock letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along that they are being directed from behind’ (Eckert and Rweyongoza, 2015, p.2).

Mandela further says that, as a leader:
It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. The people will appreciate your leadership (Lizza, 2011; CNN 2008).

The notion of leading from behind should not however be misunderstood as unwillingness to lead or shying away from responsibility by Mandela but imply at least two important facts that can potentially improve leadership in Africa. Firstly, it implies collective leadership whereby the leader gives stake or opportunity for others i.e. the nimble, otherwise the smartest people to take the lead as the leader provides the direction to follow. The nimble may be smart and able people, who can help in carrying out the vision of the leader. By so doing, the nimble can make their own contributions in moving of government in the desired directions. Secondly, it implies tutorship. This goes to say that, by leading from behind, the younger generation can be tested with the task of leading.

d. Symbolism
Mandela demonstrated that a leader should a symbol of what he wants the society to achieve. Mandela stood for equality and justice for all. Throughout Mandela’s struggles against apartheid and leadership of South Africa, he demonstrated that for fighting against both black and white domination.

In an interview with Ophra Winfrey in 2001, Nelson Mandala says that:
If there is any significant role that I played, it was that of being a vessel through which the struggle was presented to the nation and to the world. The struggle had to have a symbol for it to be effective. The great men and women of the struggle chose that I
be that symbol. If this was a good thing, praise must go back to those who made the choice (Boehmer, 2008, p.173).

e. Willingness to Quit Political Power at the Right Time

Mandela left a powerful legacy that leaders must not seek to perpetuate themselves in power. When his five-year tenure finished in 1999, he quit the stage for others to carry on from where he stopped. Despite call from his fellow people to re-contest and lead them, Mandela declined.

In his political struggle, Nelson believes that leadership is a responsibility that cannot be finished at once. In the long walk to Freedom, where Mandela wrote an autobiography of himself, he says that;

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after dimpling a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare linger, for my long walk is not yet ended (Boehmer, 2008, p.176).

However, Mandela’s style suggests that there may not actually be unfillable leadership vacuum. This is because, when leaders put others (i.e. the younger generation in the front line) as they lead from behind, they would definitely have individuals that can provide credible leadership behind them, due to the experiences and wisdom they have unto their successors.

Finally, the end of Mandela was good, cherished and highly celebrated in Africa and the world at large. He was among world leaders who had a sense of true fulfilment (The Economist, 2013) supports this claim as follows:

Mr. Mandela lived long enough to see his work through. That gave him his great achievement and his story a happy ending. And the modern world loves a happy hero even more than a tragic one (The Economist, 2013).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper discusses the leadership styles of Nelson Mandela as a model for African leaders. Africa has been going through numerous leadership challenges which have persisted and there is no credible model that can guide the leaders to provide better leadership for the political stability and development of the continent. In this paper, we felt that the leadership style exemplified by the prominent African leader, Nelson Mandela is lying in waste, and should be revisited and recommend to African leaders to improve leadership on the continent.

Mandela’s leadership styles referred to in this paper were largely drawn from his actions and attitudes displayed in the cause of his struggle against colonialism and apartheid regime in South Africa and while as the President of the Republic of South Africa. Prominent among them are:
selfless vision, leadership from behind, forgiveness and reconciliation willingness to quit political power as at when due, among others are recommended as imperatives for good political leadership, stability, peace, and development in Africa.

The paper demonstrated that Mandela’s lifestyles have incredibly guided him to achieve the vision he had for the freedom of the black race against oppression in South Africa and to lay a good foundation for selfless leadership. Although, his struggle mainly centres on the freedom of the black South Africans, the lifestyles of Nelson Mandela are exemplary model for contemporary African leaders to learn and follow if the continent must do away with the problem of bad leadership and make progress. The paper therefore recommends as follows:

1. African leaders should endeavour to quit public office once they have exhausted their tenures, as constitutionally stipulated. Once they do that, they will not only allow the political process of their respective countries to go undistorted, stable, peaceful and progressive, but they will also earn good repute from their citizens and Africans like Nelson Mandela who until his deal, was highly revered even globally.

2. African leaders should always endeavour to train others while in office and prepare them for future leadership role. Once they do that, they can always lead from behind with the wealth of their experience and wisdom like Mandela did in South Africa.

3. African leaders should lead with vision, determination and selflessness. They should quit putting their personal interest above that of their fellow citizens. Nelson Mandela sacrifices his liberty for the freedom of South Africans, and with determination, he earned that freedom he desired for South African. By applying this kind of leadership styles, African leaders can overcome most of the problems bedevilling the continent.

4. African Union (AU) should immortalize Nelson Mandela with an annual leadership summit for African leaders as an avenue to expose them to the leadership virtue of Mandela.

5. The AU should come up with an award scheme in different aspects of leadership to be given to deserving African leaders during annual leadership summit on Nelson Mandela.

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