
Book Review

Reviewed by Jonathan Marks

Email: marksj@gibs.co.za

LEAD: Leadership Effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora
by: Terri R. Lituchy, Bella L. Galperin and Betty Jane Punnett
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LEAD: Leadership Effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora is a very timely book. Apart from its contribution to leadership theory and practice, the volume serves to illustrate the broad and deep cultural diversity that exists on the African continent. The uninformed so often speak of 'Africa' as if the continent is a single country, forgetting that Africa comprises 54 nations covering a landmass of over 30 million square kilometres; an area that could fit North, Central and most of South America. This geographical vastness is reflected in the continent's substantively different models of leadership and its myriad root causes of current styles of leadership in political, social and economic life.

The authors embark on a formalised program of research and examine leadership in eight African countries, which effectively spans the continent (North to South and East to West). Alongside country vignettes, they offer insight into leadership in the African diaspora, in particular, North America and the Caribbean, plus an insightful critique of women in leadership in Africa. While the book covers some well-trodden territory, namely the role that colonialism has played in shaping aspects of modern-day African leadership, there are also many valuable insights as to the blending together of traditionalism and indigenous culture and heritage within contemporary socio-political contexts.

What becomes patently clear is that the developmental challenges that are faced by most African countries are complex. The authors provide insight into these challenges through the lens of leadership and offer the reader a cogent backdrop to understanding the multifaceted nature of Africa's pressing problems – and great opportunities. It is these opportunities that are frequently absent from popular narratives of Africa, often seen and unfairly described as the 'dark continent'. To be fair, Africa has, what seems at times, to be a disproportionate share of the world's problems, however, it is home to the fastest growing economy in the world (Ethiopia) and has had (one still in office) two female heads of state, something the USA is yet to enjoy. As each chapter unfolds, a growing case for Africa as 'Open for Business' (the title of the opening chapter) emerges. The many examples of growth in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial leaders, social innovation, action and engagement and the steady resistance to old modes of corrupt

political leadership stand as an important marker of Africa's progress. Many African countries still continue with their struggle for economic freedom, having in some cases won their colonial freedom more than fifty years ago. The time seems endless, but as one of the authors reminds us, Britain took 703 years to go from the Magna Carta to women having the vote, so time may be what African needs most.

A particularly promising part of the book and an area that has not previously been fully developed or discussed is the state of leadership in the African diaspora. With hominoid remains dating back 100,000 years found in Africa, we are essentially all of African descent and as such, the diaspora includes everyone. The authors provide some insights into the movement of Africans off the continent from those who have fallen prey to slave traders, to the current migrants seeing better socio-economic opportunities and rewards for their skills and knowledge. People remain Africa's greatest export and the authors rightly state that this has and continues to lead to a 'brain drain'. However, current thinking regarding migration and diaspora networks argue that a 'brain circulation' is occurring, as Africans travel and return to Africa or settle elsewhere but retain their links to their home countries and the continent. In order to bolster the examples given of the adaptive culture of Caribbean migrants, the authors might have further explored the relative influence of African philosophy and indigenous knowledge on Western models of leadership.

Those interested in gender studies will derive value from the chapter focused on women in leadership in Africa. Against the backdrop of a profoundly patriarchal society, where the 'great man' theory of leadership is more often the 'big man' theory representing an oppressive tribal hegemony, the examples of strong women leaders are a strikingly positive role model for Africa's youth. In a continent marred by, for example, instances of child marriage and large-scale youth unemployment, the importance of the emergence of a strong matriarchy is all that more necessary. This chapter especially could have been easily followed by one focused on values-based leadership, a construct common in the West but yet to be fully researched and articulated in Africa.

This volume will be a valuable addition to the collection of leadership scholars and a useful text to inform student research and classroom discussion on Africa, leadership and the complexity associated with this beautiful, volatile and hopeful continent.