

BLUNDERS IN HIGH OFFICE: WHEN LEADERSHIP IS LEFT TO LUCK

Across Ghana's political and administrative landscape, a disturbing pattern of missteps by individuals in high public office has emerged. These are not always the result of incompetence or ill will. Rather, they often stem from a far more systemic issue: the glaring lack of structured orientation and leadership training for those entrusted with governance.

Whether appointed, elected, or promoted, many public officials are expected to navigate the complex demands of leadership with little more than their judgment, prior experience, and instincts. Yet, public office demands more; it requires an informed understanding of governance, ethics, public communication, and protocol. When individuals are left to learn on the job without guidance, the results can be costly, not just to reputations, but to public trust and institutional credibility.

Leadership without a Roadmap

Public service is not simply about ambition or goodwill. It requires discipline, sensitivity, and a commitment to ethical standards. Unfortunately, Ghana continues to witness capable individuals falter in high office, not because they lack potential, but because they are unprepared for the complex responsibilities of their roles.

Many appointees come into office with impressive academic qualifications or successful private sector careers, but these do not automatically translate into effective public leadership. Without a clear roadmap or adequate preparation, even the most well-meaning officials risk making avoidable errors.

The Hidden Cost of Unprepared Leadership

Leadership without preparation is a national liability. Time and again, individuals are placed in sensitive positions with no prior training in public administration, legal frameworks, or diplomatic conduct. The result? Miscommunication, poor decision-making, and actions that erode public confidence.

Appointees who rely solely on intuition or unrelated experience often find themselves overwhelmed. They may inadvertently act in ways that appear tone-deaf or inappropriate, not out of malice but from a lack of orientation.

A Pattern, Not an Exception

This problem is neither new nor isolated. From district assemblies to ministerial offices, many public figures begin their tenures without any structured orientation. Some lack even the most

basic understanding of their legal responsibilities, the administrative protocols of their offices, or the political implications of their decisions.

This trend reflects what Laurence J. Peter once observed in his "Peter Principle": in hierarchies, individuals often rise to the level of their incompetence. Without training and capacity building, even the most promising leaders can fall victim to this principle.

A National Call for Institutionalized Leadership Orientation and Capacity Building

To address this pressing issue, Ghana must institutionalize a national leadership orientation programme for all public officers, appointed or elected. Governance is too important to be left to improvisation or chance. This programme should not be a symbolic event or a one-off seminar. It must be a rigorous and ongoing initiative that covers:

1. Public ethics and accountability.
2. Media and public communication.
3. Protocol and diplomatic conduct.
4. Service delivery and administrative procedures.
5. Roles and responsibilities of the office.
6. Ethical conduct and conflict of interest.
7. Public image and reputation management.
8. Legal frameworks and governance structures.

Training should not be seen as an optional extra. It is a necessary investment in the effectiveness and dignity of public service.

Why Orientation and Training Matter

The importance of orientation goes beyond preventing scandals, it is about building a competent and credible leadership class. How can we expect public officers to uphold standards if they are never trained in what those standards are?

How can we demand decorum or effective communication if no effort is made to instill these skills?

A national audit of public sector training would likely reveal a troubling gap. And yet, leadership affects every facet of national development. We cannot afford to treat it casually.

Conclusion

Leadership in Ghana must no longer be left to chance. If we are serious about building a nation of integrity, progress, and institutional trust, then we must begin by investing in the people we entrust with leadership.

Ghana deserves leaders who are not only passionate but also prepared. That preparation begins with structured, intentional training that equips our public officers with the knowledge and tools they need to lead effectively.

The time for reform is now. Leadership must be nurtured, not assumed. Let us build a culture of competence, integrity, and preparedness for the sake of our institutions, our democracy, and our future.

May God bless our homeland, Ghana, and make her great and strong!

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