Like Awojobi, Like Adesanmi: Tale of Two Nigerian Ivory Tower Campaigners for Effective Management in Government Business

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ABSTRACT
In this paper, the author pays tributes to intellectuals from the Nigerian academia who have been in the vanguard for promoting effective management in government business. The specific focus is on Ayodele Awojobi (1937 - 1984) and Pius Adesanmi (1972 - 2019), who were professors of mechanical engineering and literary studies (French) respectively. The author compared the lives of these two scholars, identifying the similarities and differences. Among others, both scholars obtained first class degrees in their respective fields, one from the University of London, United Kingdom and the other from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Furthermore, both became university professors in their 30s, one in Nigeria and the other in Canada. Both died at the age of 47. While one scholar operated in the past, the other operated in contemporary times. That is, many of the present youth would not have been alive during the life of Professor Awojobi. The paper is thus a link to the past, remembering the great work done by Nigerian intellectuals and connecting it to the present. It is hoped that the paper will stimulate a renascence of campaign and action on the need for effective management, as the present societal scenario does not appear to have radically departed from the past. The paper is on management history.

Keywords: Management, Nigerian Government Business, Ayodele Awojobi, Pius Adesanmi, Nigerian Academia

Reference Format:


1. INTRODUCTION
Volume 1, Issue 2 of the African Journal of Management Information System falls within the short period in which Nigeria, indeed Africa lost one of her relatively young frontline campaigners for effective management, leadership and governance in the affairs of nations. His name is Pius Adesanmi (1972 - 2019), a professor at Carleton University, Canada. The author finds an interesting similarity between this great scholar and a Nigerian scholar who lived earlier, Ayodele Awojobi (1937-1984), a professor of mechanical engineering. It is thus the aim of this short paper to share the similarities and differences between these two scholars. Among others, the surnames of both authors start with the alphabet ‘A’!

First, it is worth saying that this author did not know much about Pius Adesanmi until his death. That is, he never met him in person, and curiously, he did not seem to have critically read his works during his lifetime. But certainly, he heard about his name occasionally in the media. How the author’s attention could not be drawn to the writings of this prolific and articulate scholar during his lifetime still remains baffling! The reason might have been due to some societal distraction during the period.
The author only had the opportunity to read Adesanmi’s biodata and literary works, shared in the social media, after his demise. Some of his published articles include:

(i) An Open Letter to a Citizen Trapped in the Port-Harcourt Rubble.
(ii) ASUU: A Personal Voyage around a Strike.
(iii) Shortage of Oxygen: Is Nigeria Still Human?
(iv) Before It Is Too Late for Her.
(v) Education in Nigeria: An Unimportant Detail.
(vi) The Tragedy of Lagos.
(vii) Nigeria’s Future Twenty Years Ago.

Apart from reading Professor Awojobi’s articles in newspapers, this writer physically met him once during his lifetime. According to records, that was 37 years ago, precisely on Thursday, 11th May, 1982 when he visited the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) Ile-Ife, in the present Osun State of Nigeria, to deliver a public lecture. This author was then a Year 1 student of the institution. The lecture, entitled ‘Where Our Oil Money Has Gone’, was delivered based on invitation by campus groups. It was really a very captivating, incisive and thought-provoking lecture. An account of this lecture and biodata of the distinguished professor can be found in an earlier article by the present author (Oluwade, 1997).

Furthermore, this writer also had the privilege of participating in the funeral ceremonies organized for Professor Awojobi by the University of Lagos. This writer participated fully in all the ceremonies, including the lying-in-state at the Faculty of Education auditorium and the burial programme proper in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria. The writer joined other admirers of the departed professor in making the trip from the University of Lagos main campus in Akoka-Yaba, Lagos to Ikorodu, courtesy of the free bus services provided by the Management of the institution.

Awojobi’s writings in Nigeria’s second republic (1979 – 1983) were particularly focused towards effective management and probity in government business. The titles of some of his writings include: ‘Nigerian Consumers and Inflation’, ‘Awojobi Replies FEDECO’, and ‘Honourable Minister of Steel, You Have Reversed Truth and Concealed Facts’. In particular, his guest speech entitled ‘Nigerian Consumers and Inflation’, delivered at an event of the Consumers Protection Council of Nigeria in 1981 is instructive and revealed courage and strength of his personality. Here was a person invited to ‘celebrate’ with a host for her ‘achievement’ now turning around to tell the truth straight to his host’s face. Hear him: ‘...and I regret most humbly to return the verdict that the Consumers’ Protection Council of Nigeria is impotent and will continue to be irrelevant to the Nigerian society until our socio-economic system is given direction by the overthrow of the present mixed or contractor-oriented economy and the replacement with an ‘equal pay
for equal work’ socialist system entrenched in our constitution (Awojobi, 1981A). Hear him again in another article: ‘...the only solution to the problem [Nigeria’s economic development problem] is for government to invest massively in technological education. This requires as a first step, free education at all levels in order to give opportunity to all possible geniuses who exist in the country irrespective of the status of their parents’ (Awojobi, 1981B).

This paper is a celebration of two Nigerian scholars who made their impact on the sands of time. An earlier paper celebrated two notable American scholars (Oluwade, 2018). From the macroscopic point of view, a basic lesson on the lives of the two main scholars discussed in the present paper is that it is not really how long a human being lives but how well (Onabamiro, 1980).

In Section 2 of this paper, a comparative discourse on Professors Awojobi and Adesanmi is presented. In Section 3, tribute is extended to other departed scholars from the Nigerian academia. Section 4 is on discussion where, among others, some quotable quotes relevant to the general theme of management, leadership and governance are presented. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. AYODELE AWOJOBI AND PIUS ADESANMI: A SHORT COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE

In this section, some similarities and differences in the personalities of Professors Ayodele Awojobi and Pius Adesanmi are highlighted.

First, while Professor Awojobi was a native of Ikorodu in Lagos State, South-western Nigeria, Professor Adesanmi was a native of Isanlu in Kogi State, North-central Nigeria. Both are however of the Yoruba lineage.

Both had first class bachelor’s degrees, one from (the Imperial College of Science and Technology) University of London, United Kingdom (in the field of mechanical engineering), and the other from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria (in French studies).

While Professor Awojobi received his bachelor’s and doctoral degrees from the University of London without obtaining any master’s degree, Professor Adesanmi received his bachelor’s, and master’s degrees in Nigeria, from University of Ilorin and University of Ibadan respectively. He however received his doctoral degree (Ph.D.) from University of British Columbia, Canada.

Both became full professors in universities in their 30s, one (Awojobi) at the University of Lagos at age 37, while the other at the University of Carleton, Canada at age 33.

While Awojobi rose to promotion to full professorship by climbing the ladder in the Nigerian University System, Adesanmi rose to full professorship by direct appointment in Canada, following an earlier teaching appointment in the USA.

Both Awojobi and Adesanmi held management/leadership positions in the academia. The former was at various times Head of Department of Mechanical Engineering as well as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. The latter, on the other hand, was Director of an academic institute.

It is worth noting that Adesanmi was born within the period (1971 – 1974) in which Awojobi was an Associate Professor. During this period, the latter was on leave of absence from the University of Lagos to University of London where he received Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degree in mechanical engineering by examination. This is a degree higher than the Ph.D. degree which only few universities in the world award. He was immediately promoted to full professorship on the completion of the leave.

Both Awojobi and Adesanmi were university professors at the time of their demise. The former was professor of mechanical engineering while the latter was a professor of literary studies. Interestingly, both died at the age of 47, in their prime, though with a lot of phenomenal achievements.

In ending this section, the following poem, due to Ben Jonson (1573 – 1637), an English poet and dramatist, is dedicated to the duo of Awojobi and Adesanmi as a tribute to their rather short but eventful lives:

“It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make men better be
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day,
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be”.

Awojobi, 1981B
3. TRIBUTE TO OTHER DEPARTED SCHOLARS FROM THE NIGERIAN ACADEMIA

In this section, glowing tribute is paid to all members of the Nigerian academia/Intelligentsia, living or dead, for their technical contributions in their respective fields and in administration/management. These fields include pure sciences; social sciences and mass communication; engineering, technology and environmental design; education; humanities and liberal studies; law; as well as medical and paramedical sciences. Some of these scholars also are/were also active campaigners for effective management, especially in government business. There is no doubt that the work of an academic is remarkable, combining three distinct schedules/works in one. These well-known schedules are teaching, research and administration/community service.

The following departed academics are remembered, as representatives of scholars who have contributed significantly to the development of Nigeria, many of whom were unsung during their life times:

(a) Sciences (Pure and Applied):
Adetokunbo Sofoluwe (Computer Science), Chike Obi (Mathematics), Haroon Tejumola (Mathematics), J. O. C. Ezeilo (Mathematics), Olumuyiwa Awe (Physics), Adegbe Olubunno (Mathematics), Christopher Olutunde Imoru (Mathematics), R.F.A. Abiodun (Mathematics), Simeon Olatunde Fatunla (Computational Mathematics), Reuben O. Ayeni (Mathematics), C.O.S. Sowunmi (Mathematics), Gabriel Olaofe (Mathematics), Anthony Uyi Afuwape (Mathematics), Sanya Onabamiro (Biological Science/Zoology), Babatunde Fagbemi (Mathematics/Computer Science), Bola O. Balogun (Mathematics), Olusegun A. Olubuyide (Chemistry), Hezekiah Oluwasanmi (Agricultural Economics), Andrew Nok (Biochemistry), Samuel O. Awokoya (Chemistry), C. R. Nwozo (Mathematics), V. F. Payne (Mathematics), B. O. Adejo (Mathematics), M. A. Ibijebuja (Mathematics), Femi Agbalajobi (Computer Science), F. Akinbode (Computer Science), Tolu James (Computer Science), C. O. Sowunmi (Mathematics), J. O. Oyelese (Mathematics), A. R. Bestman (Mathematics), A. Ette (Physics), Awele Maduemezia (Physics), Eni Njoku (Botany), S. T. Bajah (Chemistry) and A. S. Ukpera (Mathematics).

(b) Social Sciences and Mass Communication:
Claude Ake (Political Economics), Samuel (Sam) Aluko (Economics), Kola Olufemi (Political Science), T. O. Odetola (Sociology), Bassey Anda (Anthropology), Frank Ugboajah (Mass Communication), Ojetunji Aboyade (Economics) and Adebayo Adedeji (Economics)

(c) Engineering, Technology and Environmental Design:
I. Ifedapo (Civil/Structural Engineering), V. A. Williams (Electronics/Electrical Engineering), Gabriel Olalere Ajayi (Communications Engineering), V.O.S. Olunloyo (VOS) (Mechanical/Systems Engineering), M. O. Ogedengbe (Civil Engineering), O. O. Adewoye (Metallurgical and Materials Engineering), O. O. Ohwovoriole (Mechanical Engineering) and L. O. Olajuyin (Urban and Regional Planning).

(d) Education:
Ayo Ogunsheyeye (Adult Education), Babatunde Fafunwa (Education) and Olubunkola Osibodu (Mathematics Education).

(e) Humanities and Liberal Studies:
I. A. Akinjogbin (History), J. F. A. Ade-Ajayi (History), Chinua Achebe (Literature), E. Bolaji Idowu (Religious Studies), Pius Okigbo (Literature), Kenneth Dike (History), Ola Rotimi (Theatre Arts), Abiola Irele (Linguistics) and Akinwunmi Isola (Theatre Arts).

(f) Law:
Taslim Olawale Elia (Law), Jelili Omotola (Law), Obarogie Ohonbamu (Law), Akinola Aguda (Law), Olakunle Orojo (Law), Ademola Yakubu (Law) and Muritila Okunola (Law).

(g) Medical and Paramedical Sciences:
Thomas Adeoye Lambo (Medicine/Psychiatry), Babatunde Odeku (Medicine/Neuro-surgery), Benjamin Olukayode Osuntokun (Medicine), F. O. Dosekun (Medicine), Oladele Ajose (Medicine/Public Health) and Olikoye Ransome-Kuti (Medicine/Pediatrics).

The author also seizes this opportunity to acknowledge the leaders and members of the association of Nigerian University teachers over the years, presently known as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), for their steadfastness and persistence in fighting for the creation of the right intellectual atmosphere for sustainable management of all the resources of Nigeria. The key is scientific management of the 5Ms of management, namely, men, materials, money, machine and methods (Covey, 2004; Drucker, 1955; Taylor, 1911; Turan, 2015; Spohn, 2018; Oluwade and Oluwade, 2015). The struggle continues in translating the research outputs of the nation’s several universities (federal, state and private) and research institutes into national wealth creation, in
synergy with the relevant governmental agencies and the industry! Such agencies include, among others, National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) etc.

4. DISCUSSION

In this section, quotable quotes from some public writers and opinion leaders are presented. These quotes were documented in the early 1980s by the present author in his unpublished books of memoirs. These opinions, at least to a large extent, synchronize with the thoughts and vision of Professors Awojobi and Adesanmi on effective management, leadership and governance.

But first, this author ponders on what is fundamentally wrong with Nigeria, the supposed Giant of Africa! This is a country that has been blessed with abundant natural resources and also blessed with human resources. This is a country which bagged her independence in 1960, some 59 years ago!

And prior to that time, the first primary school in the country was established in 1843, some 176 years ago! The school was set up in Badagry, Lagos State by a missionary, Rev. Henry Townsend (1815 – 1886). This (Nigeria) is a country in which the first secondary school was established in 1850, some 169 years ago! The school, C.M.S. Grammar School, Lagos was founded by the C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society) missionaries. The first teacher training institute, St Andrews Teachers College, Oyo, was founded in 1896, some 123 years ago, by the same C.M.S. The first technical school, Yaba College of Technology (formerly known as Yaba Higher College), was established in 1932, some 87 years ago! In addition, the first university in Nigeria, University of Ibadan (formerly known as University College Ibadan) was established in 1948, some 71 years ago! (Osokoya, 2010).

In the northern part of Nigeria which is generally believed to be educationally disadvantaged, the first school in the region was established in 1865, though opened in 1873, in Lokoja, the present Kogi State of Nigeria by the CMS mission. The school was opened by a Nigerian missionary, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1809 – 1891), the first African bishop. Some other schools were opened in Northern Nigeria later, such as the one opened in 1904 (some 115 years ago!) by the Roman Catholic Mission in the current Dekina Local Government area of Kogi State (Farragher, 2002; Adamu, 1969)

The quotable quotes are as follows:

(i) ‘...There should be a Voice. A society devoid of effective Voice can never survive. For throughout history, it has been inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most that has made it possible for evil to triumph...' (Adeniyi, 1976)

(ii) ‘Nigeria is not an ungovernable country. Neither is it a very difficult country to govern. That Nigeria is a country with diverse tribes, religions and cultures does not make governing the country an intractable task. The trouble with Nigeria is our failure to create the correct structural framework necessary for the building of a prosperous nation from the abundance of our human and natural resources and also the perennial failure of our leadership to rise above narrow tribal and religious interests...The only condition for the success of any leadership in the Nigerian situation is for it to interpret and translate its programme of action along the lines of dialectical materialism’. (Ukwuegbu, 1984)

(iii) ‘...African leaders should recognise the difference between luxury and necessity, between needs and want, between bread and cake. To mistake one for the other, or to play one up to the detriment of the other is to continue to invite troubles and upheavals’ (Tola Adeniyi, in the early 1980s)

(iv) ‘...in spite of all these, in spite of enormous evidences of history here and there, in spite of all the obvious fact that the will of the masses is as potent as a curse, in spite of the apparent illegitimacy of piracy, and in spite of the all too-known consequence of betrayal, some people still find pleasure in doing exactly what the generations before now did and earned them death’s wrath’ (Tola Adeniyi, in the early 1980s)

(v) ‘History has shown that it is the leader who lives an abstemious life that continues to lead. The leader who leaves the common man to
his penury whilst he lives in an ivory tower and in opulence does not last’  
(Tai Solarin (1922 – 1994), in the early 1980s)

(vi) ‘A nation that cannot face reality can never develop, instead it indulges in obsessional grandeur, it becomes artificial and superficial and engages in triviality when useful energy is expended on wrong things. Such a nation always puts its cart before the horse. Such a nation is Nigeria the sleeping giant of Africa’.

(Editorial, Nigerian Tribune, in the early 1980s)

(vii) ‘In a real bid for change, we have to take off our coats, be prepared to lose our comfort and security, our jobs and our positions of prestige, our families; for just as it is true that “leadership and security are basically incompatible”, it may well be true that a struggle without casualties is not worth its salt’

(Steve Bantu Biko (1946 – 1977), South African freedom fighter)

(viii) ‘It is only possible to move against corruption after bringing to an end the dependent capitalist economy and its whole ethos of subservience and parasitism’.

(Dr. Yusuf Bala Usman, a deceased University academic, in the early 1980s)

(ix) ‘I have been taught by European mentors. I am aware of a profound gratitude for what I have learned. I remain an African. I think as an African, I speak as an African, I act as an African, and as an African I worship the God whose children we all are. I do not see why it should be otherwise’.


(x) ‘I don’t feel humiliated in any way (about my impeachment). How many ex-this and ex-that do you have in this country? Why am I more important than any of them? I am not ashamed of it, and I am not proud of it. As far as I am concerned, it is just one of those experiences, and we are bound to meet more because our cause is a protracted struggle. In the course of it we’ll have a number of experiences, some favourable, some unfavourable’.

(Balarabe Musa, in the early 1980s; his response to his impeachment as Governor of Kaduna State of Nigeria in 1981, after just 2 years in the saddle, by the State House of Assembly).

(xi) ‘The government of modern time is planned and run scientifically. The idea of what to do with power for the benefit of the masses is preconceived, premeditated, preplanned, precalculated and the result predetermined. The implementation is usually carried out to the nearest accuracy. This is the modern concept of political power’

(Editorial, Nigerian Tribune (newspaper) in 1981)

(xii) ‘Nigeria is an underdeveloped country par excellence. It is of course fashionable these days to refer to underdeveloped countries as developing countries. But both in a semantic and an economic sense, all countries of the world, including Japan, U.S.A. U.S.S.R, the Common Market countries, Nigeria and India are in a continual process of developing. The division of the world into developed and developing economies is, therefore, false and illusive. And I prefer the more factual division into developed and underdeveloped’.

(Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1981), b. 1909, d. 1987)

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has showcased the lives and achievements of two distinguished Nigerian intellectuals who were campaigners for effective management, leadership and governance in the affairs of nations. By extension, the paper showcased the special contributions of intellectuals from the academia towards Nigerian growth and development.

As the paper draws to an end, it is pertinent to ponder on some fundamental questions: What actually went wrong with Nigeria? And, what is going wrong with Nigeria? That is, why is a country so blessed with rich natural and human resources be drifting aimlessly and directionlessly from time immemorial? Why are countries like Singapore, India, China, Malaysia recording substantial development why Nigeria is apparently not making any concrete progress? What warranted Nigeria to be classified as one of the countries that are 'shitholes' by the incumbent American President Donald Trump despite
the myriad of Nigerian professionals doing well in ‘God’s own Country’? Why? Why? Why?

The simple glaring answers to the above posers are lack of effective management, lack of visionary leaders and lack of capable leaders. Good leadership ought to stimulate good planning and then good results.

A few recommendations for effective management of Nigeria’s resources include effective (statistical) planning, pursuit of welfare for all which will minimize crime in the society and solution of the power generation, transmission and distribution challenges. In addition, a more favourable environment needs to be provided for academia-industry partnership, which would lead to massive industrialization and the conversion of research results to manufactured products. This is expected to stimulate an industrial revolution, as it happened in many advanced countries, for instance Great Britain from the year 1760 to about 1840.

Finally, and more importantly, there should be conscious, sincere and transparent elimination of the hydra-headed monster called ‘corruption’ in high and low places. This can be effectively, easily and effortlessly achieved via leadership by example.

It is hoped that this paper will provoke renewed thoughts on positive leadership and effective management in all strata of the society.

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