1.0 INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to address this subject by speaking to daily activities in our lives that illuminate how our daily life styles and activities reflect the concepts of responsible citizenship and accountable leadership. My decision is premised on the objective of the concept paper I was given. Its final paragraph states, “It is hoped that this lecture will provoke a national conversation on the issue of leadership failures at the many levels of our national life, as well as the need for a change of mind-set and a collective national re-awakening and re-orientation in order to march forward.” I have also made references to the 1992 Constitution because again, my concept paper requires me to review our societal and political challenges within the context of the need to deepen political and constitutional accountability. This should be presented in a practical-everyday format with the aim of ensuring that the listening public can appreciate the conversation and meaningfully participate.

I will attempt to address the ideals expressed in our Constitution in the context of our everyday lives.

Before I delve into the definitions that I have chosen to adopt, perhaps, a short recount of our political history post-independence. A detailed reflection on Ghana’s political history provides a basis for regularly interrogating the subject of ‘accountable leadership and the role that ‘responsible citizenship’ plays in discussing this narrative. Here are a few illustrations:

* Perceived poor leadership and governance led to the chequered political history of coup d’états interspersed with relatively short spells of democratic governance. As a nation we witnessed the overthrow of previous republics under. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1966), Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia (1972) and Dr. Hilla Liman (1981).
* As a nation, again we witnessed the execution of former Heads of States because of alleged poor management of the nation and its resources.
* In all these instances, citizens’ involvement and clamour for change was significant.

It is in this regard that the framers of the 1992 Republican Constitution when confronted with what preventive mechanisms to adopt in the 1992 Constitution against coup d’états and its resultant overthrow of the Constitution made it a cardinal provision that empowered citizens to resist all forms of violence and unlawful means to overthrow the Constitution. Please see Article 3 and its sub paragraphs of the 1992 Constitution.

In fact to ensure that this provision was well embedded in the psyche of Ghanaians, Article 231 created the National Commission for Civic Education with a key mandate for inculcating in Ghanaians the need to defend the Constitution at all times against all forms of abuse and violation.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

If the sovereignty of government at all levels resides in the people and Government derives ALL its power from the people, then I posit that by extension, the citizenry are indeed the leaders and in fact failed leadership is failed citizenship. I also posit that every leader (and here I mean leadership by election, appointment or natural progression ) is first and foremost a citizen. In this regard, I will refer to all of us whether as ‘leaders’ or ‘ordinary citizens’ as citizen leaders.

I also hold the considered view that the successful implementation of the directive principles of state policy and the duties of a citizen as enshrined in our Constitution (Articles 34 - 41) should be driven by the participation, commitment and engagement of the citizenry who hold themselves and are held accountable for their actions.

Civic Responsibility is what the Constitution defines in Article 41(a-k) of the 1992 Republican Constitution defines citizen’s responsibilities as follows:

1. Promoting the prestige and good name of Ghana and respect the symbols of the nation;
2. Upholding and defending Ghana’s Constitution and the law;
3. FOSTERING NATIONAL UNITY AND LIVING IN HARMONY WITH OTHERS;
4. RESPECTING THE RIGHTS, FREEDOMS AND LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF OTHERS, AND GENERALLY REFRAINING FROM DOING ACTS DETRIMENTAL TO THE WELFARE OF OTHER PERSONS;
5. WORKING CONSCIENTIOUSLY IN HIS/HER LAWFULLY CHOSEN OCCUPATION;
6. PROTECTING AND PRESERVING PUBLIC PROPERTY AND EXPOSE AND COMBAT MISUSE AND WASTE OF PUBLIC FUNDS AND PROPERTY;
7. CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE THAT CITIZEN LIVES;
8. Defending Ghana and rendering national service when necessary;
9. Co-operating with lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order;

j. Declaring his/her income honestly to the appropriate and lawful agencies and satisfying all tax obligations; and

k. PROTECTING AND SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT.

In my understanding, the citizen leader’s responsibility must use their best skill at all times to serve the best interest of all citizens in order to expand the benefits that every citizen of Ghana enjoys and indeed should enjoy.

Accountability is being willing to subject yourself to scrutiny at all times within a set framework.

The choice of this concept or definition is premised on the posit of the concept paper alluding to the failure of leadership at all levels in Ghana.

So what are we doing as citizens leaders that is failing? I turn to our daily actions, ethics, habits and traits that characterise us as a people in the easiest place that illuminates the intersection of the two concept of responsible and accountable citizen leaders – the streets of Ghana. It reveals what we have become.

Our roads depict an absolute disregard for traffic regulations. We jump red lights with impunity, drive on pavements and road aprons, we refuse to stop at pedestrian crossings, and we chase Presidential and Ministerial Convoy and exhibit a total disregard for the well being of others.

We put pedestrians in danger and abuse the rights of road users who by traffic regulations have right of way. Indiscipline on our roads in terms of welfare leads to accidents, loss of life and property. Economically, much productivity is lost to traffic jams. Instead of police officers being available to perform their primary function of protecting citizenry, they must rather focus on being traffic wardens. Translating this indiscipline on our roads into homes, school, church, work places, home, business community and other public spaces, the detrimental effect on tproductivity and national development is staggeringly clear.

Of course, the roads have been identified as the number one place where Ghanaians witness corruption. (See NCCE Research: Public Opinion on Corruption, Accountability and Environmental Governance 2017). A third of the reported corruption incidents take place on our roads between the road user and the public officer. And this corruption benefits only the individual taking it and adds up to robbing Ghana of about 3 billion dollars annually. Money that could wean us off donor dependency … the dream of a Ghana Beyond Aid. When we fail to speak up against the conduct of the policeman and trotro driver, we have condoned corruption. If one citizen leads by condemning or reporting any act of corruption, it emboldens a new anti corruption movement. Sadly we have collectively failed to minimize corruption. Corruption festers poverty, it breaks down social justice and cripples the essence of democratic governance.

Of course, our streets, roads, and drains reflect the poor sanitary conditions we live in. It also reflects the absence of responsible and accountable citizen leaders. The rains expose the careless disposal of plastics and other waste, potholes filled with coconut husks by coconut sellers who do not want to pay for the disposal of waste from their profits. Yet we as citizens are responsible for safeguarding the environment. What happened to our National Sanitation Exercise on the first Saturday of every month? How many of us by our daily lives, fully aware of the menace of plastics have conscientiously reduced, reused or recycled plastics? How have we live our duty per Article 41(k)?

Ghanaians see the use of motorcades by institutional heads and public servants as a display of an ill conceived entitlement to our roads over and above everyone else whilst putting ordinary road users in needless danger. Responsible citizen leaders as heads of institution will set off early or help solve the traffic menace so we all get to our destinations on time. On the same streets, we see engines and ACs left running for big men as they attend their functions lest they melt like butter if they should return to warm vehicles.

All these demonstrate a failure to protect and preserve public property and ensure the prudent use of public resources as we are enjoined to do by Article 41(f). This phenomenon depicts the total sense of entitlement and abuse of office, which has come to characterize high public service.

What about gender inequality? Half of citizen leaders are women who are as capable as the other half. Women suffer hostility even on the roads of Ghana. Women drivers are perceived to be inferior and driving expensive cars connotes shady morals. It begs the question why we impute incompetence and gains through ill means to women drivers. We must recognise that our constitution guarantees women equal rights in Article 27 to realise their full potential. Therefore hostility, exploitation, abuse or anything that frustrates this right represents a failure to demonstrate responsible and accountable citizen leadership. Our failure to pass into law the Affirmative Action Bill and the the abysmal number of women representatives in parliament and governance and leadership generally are clear indicators of our failure to close the gap on gender inequality. How do we expect to be productive when over 50% of our citizenry cannot realise their full potential? How can we realise the full potential of women, when our girls are often abused and raped in educational institutions by teachers? Ironically, the provision on realising the full potential of women refers to equal rights to TRAINING and promotion and training more often than not occurs in educational facilities. It is pertinent to note that teenage pregnancy is on the rise in most regions where it is prevalent resulting in high drop out rates for young girls. How then can women effectively contribute to national development.

And our roads also tell us the story that we are failing our youth. It is commonplace to see children begging on the streets, offering windscreen cleaning services and our young girls engaged in prostitution at night. Research by Dr. Georgina Oduro at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Cape Coast reveals a high prevalence of child prostitution in Ghana by girls as young as 11 years. According to the report, the driving factors of this trend include poverty, poor parenting and peer pressure. Poverty may not be a choice, but poor parenting is. Therefore responsible citizen leaders in the home acting as parents can make real the provisions of Article 28(1) (e) of the Constitution and ensure the promotion of the best interest of children.

These developments amplify the importance of Article 39(1), which enjoin the State, you and I citizen leaders to encourage the integration of appropriate customary values into the the fabric of national life through formal and informal education and the conscious introduction of cultural dimensions to relevant aspects of national, planning. We have failed our young ones and we have failed ourselves. Most of us are guilty of looking the other way when we see someone’s child involved in any act detrimental to the child. By so doing we have set our future to failure mode.

I turn to the poor state of our roads and structures. We have poorly constructed roads because we have failed to WORK CONSCIENTIOUSLY IN our LAWFULLY CHOSEN OCCUPATION. Please see Article 41 (e). We are aware of contractors who connive with government officials to pass off shoddy jobs as acceptable standards of work whilst being paid huge sums of money. In this regard, we witness the collusion of public and private actors to the detriment of citizens. As citizen leaders, we fail to demand accountability for these wanton acts of corruption at our district assemblies. We have laws that empower us as citizens to participate in decision-making processes at decentralised government level. Article 35(6) (d) provides for the true realisation of democracy by affording all possible opportunities to people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government. We fail to participate at district level elections, we shirk our responsibilities to participate in decision making, in demanding information regarding infrastructural development in our communities, in demanding accountability at district level and complain of poor infrastructure.

Which also leads to our seeming penchant for mediocrity though excellence is not beyond us. And yet if one should inspect any road, drain or stretch of street light, the lack of excellence in the work done is glaring. Mediocrity in the production of goods and services whether by large companies or artisans leaves us at the mercy of foreign competition.

The challenges that test our responsibility and accountability as citizen leaders are many that must be overcome. Addressing the ideals of responsible and accountable citizen leaders, to my mind, is to focus on Our mission as a country which is expressed in our Constitution. Our vision is expressed in the guiding principle SDG 16 as well as our 40 year National Development plan.

The following are some suggested key strategies we must adopt but by no means are they exhaustive.

1. We must break the back of corruption. Enu-Kwesi, (2014), has confirmed that corruption undermines economic development and jeopardizes the allocation of resources to sectors crucial for development. The resulting adverse effect is under development seen in illiteracy, poverty, poor health, low income, food insecurity, and insanitary conditions.
2. Sanitise and Stabilise the Political space. When there is total acceptance of the political regime by citizens who find the processes of governance as legitimate political stability can be achieved. With this in place, we would have no portions of the citizenry undertaking any activities to undermine a regime or government. This leads to development when equality of opportunity and social justice encourages all to endeavour to contribute to national development. We should have a vibrant political space free of violence and political thuggery now referred to as vigilantism. Within the political space, the fact remains that, Ghana’s political stability and development is largely dependent on citizens’ appreciation of their civic rights and responsibilities. Civic education provides the society with information on actions and behaviours expected of a good citizen. Civic education gives people the knowledge and skills to understand, challenge, and engage with the main pillars of our democracy: politics, the economy, and law ([www.youngcitizens.org](http://www.youngcitizens.org)|)
3. End political interference in the work of public institutions. Proper political involvement includes engagements that provide regulators with important information regarding the impacts of regulatory decisions, hold regulators accountable for their decisions under the law, provide politicians with information that they may use for making policy decisions and informing constituents, and follow accepted procedures with sufficient transparency to ensure that the public is confident that regulation is legitimately implementing established laws and policies without stakeholder bias. Improper political interference violates procedures, seeks to bias regulatory decision making, or seeks regulatory decisions that violate the letter or spirit of laws and policies that regulation is designed to implement. Regulationbodyofkowledge.org
4. Use the media (including social media) to promote (a) productive debate and (b) as the watchdog of governance. The media is encumbered with the responsibility of dissemination of information… information that reinforces the values of the nation with the purpose of rigorous interrogation of actions and inactions of leadership at all levels for citizen leader accountability. Social media in our times plays a very significant role in moulding social consciousness and engendering active citizenship. It has provided an unfettered access for online personalities to share technical expertise to help improve the abilities of citizens to interrogate issues from an informed and engaged position.
5. Economic Transformation: Economic transformation should end hardships as a major barrier to the development of civic responsibility as it suppresses the avenues of socialization. The two basic avenues of socialization - family unit (nuclear and extended) and formal education seem to have lost its grip on the civic socialization of children as a consequence of the economic hardships and the general transformation of the economy from a simple agrarian one to a more complex, industrial and urbanized one. Parents are compelled to spend long hours pursuing their economic and status goals, thereby reducing the amount of time spent on the socialization of the child at home. We should strive for economic transformation that ensures a work / family life balance.
6. Education must reflect our national value system. Education at home and in schools must instill universal values including integrity, excellence, hard work, tolerance and punctuality. Some of the values we as Ghanaians aspire to include values of freedom and rights, fearless honesty and humility as contained in the first stanza of our national anthem.
7. Work with religious groups and leaders as co-builders of responsible and accountable citizen leaders. It is essential that religious platforms for moral instruction serve to buttress the two basic avenues of socialisation… the Family and the Education System.

NCCE’S MANDATE TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE CITIZEN LEADERS

Permit me to touch briefly on the NCCE’s mandate, and how our work contributes to raising civic-minded Ghanaians. Our work engenders and enlightens civic responsibility and actions which should lead the country to accountability in our governance processes and approaches. For the economy of time, please read Articles 231 to 239 of the Constitution and the National Commission for Civic Education Act, 1993 (Act 452) which can also be found on the NCCE website [www.nccegh.org](http://www.nccegh.org) NCCE provides education to all segments of the Ghanaian citizenry. Some of the programs are targeted at students, youth groups, identifiable groups (market women, professional associations, churches and mosques, organized labour and traditional rulers) These programs are carried out through the media (both traditional and social media), community engagements, docudramas, research, games, social auditing programs amongst others.

The lack of resources to the NCCE to carry out civic engagements and public education on the provisions of the constitution has also been a barrier to the inculcation of civic responsibility. The clamour of Ghanaians for NCCE to do more in terms of education must necessarily find expression in a clamour by the citizenry for NCCE to be properly resourced to execute its mandate effectively.

THE WAY FORWARDFOR COHESIVE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a country, the time has come for us to work consciously towards ensuring that our constitutional provisions on responsible citizenship, which largely influences our behaviours when we find ourselves in leadership positions, is adhered to adequately. As a nation, we will stay undeveloped and unchanged unless and until we as active citizens, finding expression in strong leadership, purposefully seek to transform. National change is active; it involves policy deliberation and planning for long term good. Whilst we continue to assume it is the responsibility of government or public servants, we must remember, that it is the citizen by his or her active involvement, who superintends this.

I challenge all of us to get involved in local community governance at district level by at least identifying who our unit committee members and engaging them to ascertain how our assemblies are fashioning out development agenda.

It is paramount in reiterating that the family, education, and religious sphere play a major role in this shift. It is the family values, educational values, and moral construct from religious platforms that mould individuals into political actors as citizen leaders in the social, business or government machinery. We cannot demand constructive change of the politician, the media, business community, the culture, arts, and sports when we have not paid attention to our family, education, and religious system.

A key step to achieving accountable and responsible citizen leaders is to accept and appreciate the pivotal role that comprehensive knowledge in civics plays in shaping the thoughts and attitudes of all of us as citizen leaders.

If people are adequately informed about their roles and responsibilities as citizens and positively exhibit the tenets of responsible citizenship in our various endeavours, then we can proudly have a society where,

* Parents guide their children by instilling in them positive values that embolden them to stand for truth and justice, cardinal to our national values, with a high sense of integrity. I must mention the crucial role of motherhood in nation building as nurturing and guiding the youth as useful citizens. It emphasizes the power women hold in charting the path of nation building especially in these times of near social deconstruction.
* Teachers with a calling and passion to teach, not to be negative role models. Teachers that teach to create wealth and not to breed a mind-set of riches and materialism. Our education system must help children to identify their skill set and where they fit in to develop skills that help build a nation.
* Religious bodies that understand their role of using their platforms to engender right thinking based on strong moral pillars, hard work devoid of any magic formula, potion, anointing oil, holy water, and stickers to the land of Utopia.
* Citizen leaders who are awake and alive to being vigilant in holding all public servants and officials accountable and understand that we are the unelected governance officers who must fulfil our civic responsibilities.
* Political leadership that speaks to the hearts and minds of all Ghanaians and not to the pockets of party financiers and foot soldiers.
* We must first build and then elect or appoint leaders with a mind-set that cultivates, nurtures, contemplates and innovates with the ability to process and convert ideas into products and services that benefit all of us citizen leaders.

Are we doomed? No! Is there hope? Yes

I see it on platforms like this, I see it in the entrepreneurial spirits of young citizen leaders like Fred Degbe. I see it in the resilience of citizen leaders like Farida Bedwei and I see it in the vigilant citizen leaders like Anas Aremeyaws who risk their lives to expose corruption.

Thank you very much for your attention!

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