

Leadership and Followership: Essential Factors for National Development and Achievement of Organizational Goals

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Abstract

Leadership and followership are very essential factors for national development and achievement of organizational goal. Leadership and followership is a major universal challenge to all nation States; while some countries have overcome the primitive or dictatorial stage to propel their economy and social welfare of her people to a comfortable level; other emerging developing economy are still reeling to grow above the challenges of impotent leadership and followership syndrome. This paper discussed Leadership from the Nigeria perspective and the relationship between Leadership and followership. The paper is aimed at enlightening political leaders and their followers of their responsibilities, and promoting good governance in Nigeria. This paper recommend that, leadership and followership relationship should always be harmonized as to enable the society or group to achieve her vision and set goal. Leadership and followership should adopt a new paradigm shift were values, and leadership traits, integrity and other discussed qualities herein will serve as the basis for consideration or conceding Leadership. Consensus selection of leaders should be avoided; Leaders should be elected through democratic and transparent process. Tribal sentiments should be set aside in electing and criticizing our leaders. Our target and criteria for assessment should be our vision and goal as a people.

Keywords: Leadership, Followership, National Development,. Problems and Nigeria

Introduction

Leadership and followership are mutual activities of great influence to national development in all parts of the world. In Nigeria, after her independence in 1960, Nigeria has moved from Parliamentary system of government to Presidential system of government, she has experienced both civilian and military regimes yet, her leaders have been unable to deliver to her citizens the quality of life commensurate with her numerous endowed resources. In Nigeria, government has failed to provide portable drinking water, electricity, good roads, effective service delivery, employment, housing scheme, quality health care, quality education, credible electoral system etc. According to Achebe (1983) in Ngwube (2010), the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is the inability of Nigerian leaders to rise to the challenge of personal example which according to Achebe, the hallmark of true leadership. In fairness to Achebe, our leaders have not led by example. Ngwube affirmed that, sycophancy; and mere oratories have not helped the situation but have rather compounded it.

The quality and ingenuity of a country's leadership can make or mar a country's development or growth. Leadership can decisively influence the quality of life of her people and her national

power vis-à-vis annihilating them through war and poor governance. The perception of the followers of their leaders in Nigeria is an issue of great importance. In most cases the followers hold the view that their leaders lack the skill required for governance, and that the leaders act not in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the people but in accord with their personal agenda or interests not unconnected with imperialistic forces.

Followership in Nigeria has not generated much debate. But there have been cases of resistance movements that have been spearheaded by followers. These resistance cases are protest against poor governance and ineptitude of Nigerian Leaders. Nigerian followers are very loyal and supportive to leadership and have participated actively in the achievement of the nation's goals. Though when a people are ravaged by poverty, it will weaken their ability to rise up to their challenges of checkmating the excesses of their leaders. This docility will have a great negative impact on Leader- followership relationship. Leaders that are checkmated by their followers will limit their excesses and realign themselves to public opinion. But in the midst of docility and sycophancy, leaders will be getting away with their misappropriations and ineptitude. But competition among elites seeking leadership status can be a major source of conflict and check on leadership.

Leadership can be conceived both from the macro and micro level. Macro level refers to societal governance; while micro refers to group or organizational governance. This paper will be discussing Leadership at the macro level which encapsulates the latter. It will look into the concept of leadership, types, qualities, functions and problems of leadership from the Nigerian perspective. The paper is aimed at enlightening political leaders and their followers of their responsibilities in promoting good governance in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership is defined in various ways. We shall examine some of the definitions and apply them to this study. Bryman (1992) in Ngwube (2010) define Leadership as a process of social influence whereby a Leader steers members of a group towards a goal. Leadership here involves influence. It is concerned with how the Leader affects followers and the leader is the focal point. Fafowora et al (1995) also see leadership as implying a purposeful direction of the affairs of the Led. Leadership is all about influence. Northouse (2001) defined leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Tannenbaum in Thom-Otuya(2007) define Leadership as interpersonal influence exercised in situation and directed through communication process, toward the attainment of goals. Utomi(2004) defined Leadership as the art of mobilizing in a least cost manner to achieve a clear goal. Stogdill in Irikana and Orisa(2007) define Leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal achievement. R.J House in Thom-Otuya(2007),described leadership as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization of which they are members. According to Newman (1997) leadership is the special and unique ability to influence people to move towards goals that are beneficial and meet the group's best interests.

In this papers, leadership will be seen as one who is in a position of integrity or trust, direct and conduct the affairs of a group or group of persons, influencing their behavior and decisions towards complying to the achievement of some desired goals. Leadership therefore involves the element or skills of: vision, motivation, integrity, initiative, courage and successfully mobilizing an organization or group of persons towards a goal.

Followership: can be described as adherence to a leader. But in this exposition, followership is the virtue of supporting leaders and helping them to lead well. For followers to help their leaders do well, they have a responsibility to actively participate in the achievement of a nation's goal. Jehn and Bezrukova (2003) contended that followership is a people oriented behavior, and this behavior builds relationships between leaders and followers, providing an environment that promotes all organizational members to focus on a common goal. Both authors suggested that good followers may be a catalyst for change in an organization as followership "inspires others to follow toward a common goal; creates enthusiasm and desire to excel; fully engages others, build confidence; moves the organization ahead as one entity rather than separate parts" (Jehn and Bezrukova, 2003 p.728).

Werlin (2002) contended that good followership relationships must build on motivation rather than control, and that instilling values into followers is essentially to develop a culture of trust and good relationship. He asserted that, the balance of power between leader and follower; however, must be maintained in order to provide a culture of openness that promotes self engagement.

National Development: Lawal and Oluwatoyin(2011) describe national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. However in this paper, it will be describe as the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, etc.

Leadership And Followership In Nigeria

Every society needs to be led by their leaders. Ever since the social contract between man and government, in which man surrendered some of his right to the centre called government, there was a social contract that as a result of the surrender of these rights, government should be able to use law to regulate the society and ensure the security and welfare of the people. It is this situation that gave rise to Leadership and followership in any human society. The relationship of leadership and followership is anchored on leadership because he is the driver of the relationship. It is incumbent on a leader to give direction and for the followers to comply. In Nigeria, ever since her independence, she has been facing leadership crises hence, she has moved from a Parliamentary system of government to a Presidential form; Nigeria has wobbled from one civilian regime to another military regime yet. Leadership in Nigeria has not been able to deliver the needed dividend of our God given resources to her people nor a satisfactory social welfare services, even social amenities; yet her followers have been very faithful.

There is great need to sustain the relationship between the leadership and her followers. A clarion call for new generational leaders is very necessary to take Nigeria to another great level of self sufficiency and effective leadership. The traits of a leader like intelligence, integrity, charisma, and dynamism, dominance, extroversion and level headed could project leadership in a better light in the eyes of his followers. These qualities will endear him to the followership.

Newman (1997) listed ten essential qualities which he referred to as Laws in which an effective leadership should possess to enhance followership. They are: a leader should have vision, discipline, wisdom, courage and humility. A Leader should be a decision maker, have executive ability, be tactful and diplomatic, able to develop friendships and exude enthusiasm. Leadership is put in place in other for her to achieve a certain goal. To do this, Irikana and Orisa(2007) affirmed the leader must be efficient, skillful, insightful, courageous and motivate members to work towards the goal.

The perception of the followers of their leadership can distance or endear them to leadership. In midst of a very corrupt environment like Nigeria, it takes a leader of high integrity to be able to command genuine followership. Integrity is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness, and leaders who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions are exhibiting integrity (Northouse, 2001). Northouse further noted that leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do. Cunningham (2002) in Ngwube (2010) stated that of all the qualities a leader must possess, integrity may be the most important one of them. He added that integrity involve the three Rs: Respect for self; Respect for others; and Respect for all your actions. Integrity is one of the greatest challenges facing Nigerian leaders. Overtime, Nigerians have been good followers but her leaders lack integrity. Corruption is very massive; it deters the progress of the people, dwarf government concrete achievements, deters foreign investments due to lack of trust at the international level, and reduces the confidence of the people on her Leadership. Integrity is therefore a platform for effectiveness in leadership. A chief executive with integrity will have positive impact on his subordinates/followers and the organization will subsequently experience strong followership, performance and high productivity. Nigeria needs paradigm shift – a positive change in attitudes and value system in order for her to achieve her set goal of national unity and economic growth, including warding off poverty; and further military incursion into governance.

Improve the wellbeing and security of the people; this is a primary task of leadership. If followership is to be cultivated the morale of the people must be activated to be very high. According to Morgenthau (1978: p.140):

“National morale is the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or in war. It permeates all activities of a nation, its agricultural and industrial production as well as its military establishment and diplomatic service. In the form of public opinion, it provide an intangible factor without whose support no government, democratic or autocratic, is able to pursue them at all. Its presence or absence and its qualities reveal themselves particularly in times of national crisis, when either the existence of the nation is at stake or else a decision of fundamental importance must be taken upon which the survival of the nation might well depend”

National morale is a very essential ingredient for an enhanced Leadership and followership relationship; and for leadership to enjoy high compliance, influence the behavior of her followers and sustain followership. There is need for her to be sensitive to the needs and opinion of her followers.

Followership needs to have a strong public opinion pool of the activities of her leaders or else leadership can unconsciously turn to be dictatorial. A strong public opinion pool will serve as a check on leadership. Where followership tends to be docile in the activities and actions of leadership, she has contributed to the detriment of her welfare and growth. People should stop seating at the fence believing that change to a new paradigm shift of strong trait of integrity will be actualized through miracle; change is created through human effort hence Nigerians should leave up to their civic responsibilities in other to create a good and sustainable leadership and followership relationship.

Types of Leadership

There are various classification (or types) of Leadership. This paper classified the types of Leadership according to Thom-Otuya (2007:pp.58-59) they are:

1. **Autocratic (boss centered) Leadership:** is a type of Leadership where the leader makes decisions on his own without consulting others. This type of leadership is also called 'dictatorial'. In this context, the leader assumes monopoly of knowledge. He is personal in his praises and criticisms of individuals but remains aloof from the group. The leader decrees what will be done and the followers have no choice but to accept it. All the military regimes in Nigeria are good examples of a dictatorial leadership.
2. **Democratic (subordinate centered) Leadership:** is one in which the leader invites the participation of subordinates or followers in decisions that affect them. This type of leader is characterized by his concern for the achievement of set goals with the group. He is sensitive and understands the need of the individual, groups within the organization and helps them to fulfill their needs as well as the functions of the group. In his relationship with his members, the leaders offer both praises and criticisms. He tries to influence without dominating the thinking and behavior of the group. Nigeria's present democratic dispensation projects this type of Leadership by structure/form, not by substance.
3. **Laissez-Faire (free-reign) Leadership:** is a leader that leaves many of the decisions up to the subordinates or followers to make. He gives his subordinates a "free reign" over their activities; has little or no attempt to evacuate or regulate the members of the group of their progress towards achieving their goals and objectives. In most cases, the laissez-faire leaders can be said to be enjoying leadership of position and not that of functions. In other words, he is a leader in the real sense. Such leaders are not prepared to shoulder blames for their failures but prefer to share praises for any achievement.

Qualities of Leadership

An American business journal "fortunes"(Thom-Otuya,2007: pp 64-65) listed fifteen(15) executive qualities of Leadership. They are:

(1) Good sense of judgment (2) Dependability (3) Initiative (4) Integrity (5) Foresight (6) Energy (7) Drive (8) Human relation skill (9) Decisiveness (10) Emotional stability (11) Fairness (12) Ambition (13) Dedication (14) Objectivity and (15) Cooperation.

President Corazon Aquino of Philippines (Thom-Otuya, 2007:pp 67-68) qualified leadership with its alphabet related acronym. They are:

L – Leadership is love of and loyalty to God, Country and People.

E – It is enthusiasm energetic effort to help and serve others.

A – It is action, accomplishment.

D – It is dedication, discipline, dignity, decency, devotion to duty, decisiveness for the general welfare.

E – It is excellence, exemplary work for others to follow and emulate.

R – It is reliability, responsibility; respect for the law and the right of others, reconciliation for peace and unity.

S – It is sincerity, service, self-sacrifice, social justice to make life better for mankind.

H – It is humility, honesty, honor, helpfulness, hardwork for accomplishment and fulfillment.

I – It is integrity, interest, initiative, and idealism.

P – Finally leadership is patience, perseverance, beyond partisanship, religion or creed; it works for peace, progress and prosperity of mankind.

According to Irikana and Orisa(2007) some basic qualities expected of a good leader are:

(1) Intelligence (2) Self Control (3) Sociability (4) Integrity (5) Honesty (6) Patriotism (7) Courage (8) Foresight (9) Oratory ability (10) Alertness and (11) Empathy

A leader that possesses these qualities must enjoy, obedience, support and positive followership of his people, and will be attuned to high compliance in the achievement of his set goals, and effective in dispensation of justice and public welfare.

Qualities of Good Followership

- Irikana and Orisa (2007:p 111) listed the qualities of good followership as:
- Total obedience to the laws of the land or constituted authorities;
- Unalloyed loyalty or allegiance to the leadership that be;
- Eschew indiscipline in any form or shapes;
- Explore channels of grievance resolution;
- Commitment to goals and aspiration of the country;
- Demonstrate appreciable virtues and values;
- Avoid sycophancy but telling the leadership the truth;
- Show true patriotism and participativeness;
- To be well enlightened and responsive;
- Imbibe the principle of self reliance;
- Offering constructive criticism and providing solutions;
- Be prepared at all times to respond to call for national services;
- Be willing to accept responsibility for his actions; and
- Develop the attitude of co-operation with his leader for the accomplishment of group goals.

Functions of Leadership

Leadership functions are very numerous and articulated differently by various author, but all pointing to the ability of a Leader to mobilize his people to achieve a set goal. These functions of Leaders are:

- **Taking initiative:** constitutes the most fundamental function of Leadership. A leader must be creative and logical enough in other to take action for every situation that confronts him. Initiators of action in an organization or states become history's most important Leaders. Taking initiative in detecting and remediating problems distinguishes leaders in many modern organizations and nation-states.
- **Evaluating Followers Needs, Aspiration, and Capabilities:** for Leadership to command high followership there must be deliberate attempt by leadership to motivate their followers. Every person need hope to survive, and motivation has to do with the leader understanding the needs of his follower. Understanding the needs of your followers has to do with another leadership skill of patiently listening to your followers. It equally involves knowledge of their capabilities, including energy, endurance and commitment. Irikana and Orisa(2007) noted that, a purposeful and insightful leader creates new ideas, project discussion, etc and positively and invariably lead others in the group t o develop or carry out the tasks.
- **Fostering and maintaining Communication:** is one of the leading functions of a leader. Leaders initiate instrumental relationships when they assign people to work in teams and

task forces or appoint ministers, commissioners, advisers, etc. It is the task of a leader to prevent fragmentation and foster cooperation and team work amongst his subordinates and followers; this can be done through effective communication. Effective communication reduces doubt and suspicion among groups; sustain followers' interest and participation in group action or policy adoption and implementation.

- **Representing Members' Aspirations and Values:** one of the consistent noted function of leadership has been the expression and symbolization of their followers' aspiration and values. In developed societies, leadership role is assigned to people believed to reflect the values and aspirations of members. Some author will refer to this as implementation of group philosophy. To achieve this (Irikana & Orisa), rules and regulations are stated and implemented. This is to guide against conflict of interest among the group, and for the general good to prevail at all times.
- **Providing Resources:** command of resources both material and non material promotes the exercise of leadership and compels the loyalty of followership. The entrepreneur who provides capital to Start-up Company attains influence over its operators. Strategic plans formulated by executives also constitute resources, providing direction to the Management team that work under them. In war, strategy itself becomes a crucial resource. In politics, followership expects one reward or the other from their leaders. Leaders process or facilitate the passage of a budget so that, they have both material and non material resources to provide for their followers. Followers also become more loyal to leadership as soon as budget has been passed so that, they can be involved in the material gain of implementing the budget.

Functions of Followership

- **Surrender to leadership:** followers must be willing to obey the laws of the land, and to be directed and guided by a constituted authority.
- **Obey the command of a leader:** followers should be loyal to leadership.
- **Act as mirror of leadership:** follower must checkmate the activities or excesses of leadership; for this to be done, followership need to be articulate, vibrant and vocal, this will act as a check on the leadership, and this will assist to reduce the excesses of leadership to the barest minimum.

Problem of Leadership In Nigeria

There are different problems that leaders have which impact on their productivity and inability to neither deliver the common goal nor motivate her people. The problem is not universal rather peculiar to some variables such as: environment, cultural, historical experiences, etc. This study will discuss the problems as it affects Nigeria. The notable problems that affect leadership in Nigeria are:

- **Lack of legitimacy:** Legitimacy is the foundation of leadership. Most Nigerian leaders come into power through a questionable or spurious process. When a military dictatorship imposes himself on the people as their leader, he creates an atmosphere of fear which is very inimical to good governance. The people are only coarse to followership; they cannot criticize or dialogue with their leaders. In the same manner civilian leaders come to power through questionable electoral process. Most election results that brought our Presidents

into power have been widely contested in a tribunal or Supreme Court. This issue of legitimacy reduces the people confidence on their leaders because their votes do not count in the election of their leaders.

- **Lack of vision:** Nigerian Leaders are not voted to power due to their manifesto; hence they profess no ideological creed that governs their sense of judgment on general issues and issues of public welfare. Their dream for the larger society cannot be determined due to lack of robust debate before they ascend to leadership position. Newman (1997) wrote that, vision is the key to understanding leadership. That imagination is one of the most powerful things a leader must possess because; imagination is a leader dream machine. He further stated that, confusion on leadership of the vision will result in diminished accomplishments. The vision, along with the leadership, must be clear and concise.
- **Lack of integrity:** This is the quality that makes subordinate and followership to trust their leaders. Integrity and character is synonymous with honesty. This is a platform for effectiveness in leadership. A chief executive with integrity will have positive impact on his subordinates and the organization will subsequently experience performance and productivity improvement. Nigeria is a country that parades corruption as a value system; this can be attributed to lack of integrity on the part of her leadership. Corruption has ruined the economy of Nigeria, and it is putting her leadership into suspicion by her people and the International community. Nigerians lack trust for her leaders. If Nigeria is to develop and grow according to her potentials, her leadership must act with integrity at all times.
- **Ethnicity:** Nigeria parades over two hundred and fifty ethnic tribes. She was not a country until 1914 when her Colonial masters amalgamated the southern and northern protectorates of communities and tribes within the river Niger geographical zones into one Country. The amalgamation brought different perceptions, some saw it as a mistake, while others saw it as a necessity for the administrative convenience of the colonial masters. Since then till now, Nigerians including her leaders pay more allegiance to their tribe than to the country. Even in time of elections people vote according to their tribal interest, when leaders emerge too, they reciprocate these tribal gestures. Nigerian leaders should grow above tribal sentiments and look at the country as one indivisible nation that her cultural diversities could be used as strength rather than as a weakness. National interest should prevail over tribal or ethnic interest.

Problem of Followership In Nigeria

- **Poverty:** Followership in Nigeria has some problems that prevent her from playing certain roles that is identified with followership and, that can check the excesses of leadership. Poverty is one major factor that impairs the role of followership in Nigeria. In Nigeria those who are rich are very rich and wealthy; the poor are really poor; the middle class wobbles between self sufficiency and poverty. Followers that are poor are afraid to criticize or checkmate the excesses of their leadership because of fear of oppression from the leadership. A poor followership is a weak and fearful crowd that is constrained to be docile over the activities of her leadership.
- **Ethnicity:** the second problem that confronts followership in Nigeria is ethnicity. Followers pledge loyalty to their tribe first before the larger society Nigeria. Nigerians protects corrupt leaders without integrity and shield them from criticism and prosecution. When a

corrupt leader is prosecuted, his tribes' men will come to his defense and rescue. Even the way we vote or choose our leaders is influenced by ethnicity because it is believed that if the leader is there, he will empower his tribes men first before others and programme some projects to his tribe and empower his people with robust government and corporate contracts. Nigerian followership should exculpate themselves from tribalism and put the interest of Nigeria before their tribal interest or else the country will continue to wallow in poverty and insecurity.

- **Sycophancy:** Nigerian followers are fond of not telling their leaders the truth, they praise them, tell them lies; as soon as they leave their office, that is when followers turn against their leader to criticize his lapses.
- **Negativized quietude:** This is a situation where followers remain adamant and aloof of the excesses of leadership activities.
- **Susceptible to use by some leaders to fan trouble:** followers' sometime ally with leaders to create trouble in the society so that; they can divert the attention of the people, to execute their personal interest.
- **Powerlessness in influencing government decisions:** this is a major problem of followers in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria are highly manipulated. Leaders do not come to power through the peoples vote, they manipulate election and election results to the extent that vote casted do not make any meaning. Since peoples votes do not count, their opinion too is undermined. The case of fuel subsidy is a vivid example, despite peoples protest, government stood their ground.
- **Sitting on the fence and watching the reckless abuse of office by leaders:** Corruption and abuse of office would have reduced tremendously in Nigeria if followers have been bold enough to come out to criticize or challenge the excesses of their leaders.

Conclusion

The importance of leadership and followership in any society or organization is very essential if such society and organization is to succeed in achieving its set vision, goals and objectives. Over the years Nigerian leaders have not been able to satisfy the desire of her people; expenses have not been able to match productivity. The welfare and security of her people cannot be guaranteed. The vision, goal and the national morale of her people cannot be assured by her leaders. However, there is a call for a new paradigm shift were the values and traits of leadership has to change for the purpose of confidence building and a harmonious relationship between leadership and followership. The integrity and skills of Leadership will go a long way to rebuild confidence in leadership and followership relationship, rather than oratory and charisma. Their determination to fight corruption in the paradigm shift should be resolute. Followership too has some responsibilities to accomplish in order to sustain a harmonious leadership and followership relationship. They should cultivate good public opinion pool that will serve as a check on leadership since docility will plunder them into dictatorship and underdevelopment.

Recommendation

This paper will recommend that leadership and followership relationship should always be harmonized as to enable the society or group to achieve her vision and set goal. Leadership and followership should adopt a new paradigm shift were values, and leadership traits, integrity and

other discussed qualities herein will serve as the basis for consideration or conceding Leadership. Consensus selection of leaders should be avoided; Leaders should be elected through democratic and transparent process. Tribal sentiments should be set aside in electing and criticizing our leaders. Our target and criteria for assessment should be our vision and goal as a people.

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