

Leadership Styles in Nigerian Organizations

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Introduction

AN organization as a social set-up, with a boundary that separates it from its environment, pursues its own collective goals, and controls its own performance (Hicks and Gullet, 1975). In a formal organization, interactions are rationally coordinated and directed through time on a continuous basis. The person at the helm of affairs is usually the leader. Karines (2001) notes that the word 'leadership' has been used by most disciplines: political science, business executives, social workers and educationists. However, there is considerable disagreement regarding its exact meaning. This view is also supported by Taffmder (2006), who offers different definitions of leadership such as "getting people to do things they have never thought of doing, do not believe are possible or that they do not want to do". With reference to an organization, Taffmder defines leadership as "the action of committing employees to contribute their best to the purpose of the organization". While in a complex and more accurate view, he explains that you only know leadership by its consequence – from the fact that individuals or a group of people start to behave in a particular way as a result of the actions of someone else.

It is important to distinguish between leadership as an organization function and as a personal quality. According to Bowery (2004), the latter entails a special combination of personal characteristics, which brings to light qualities and abilities of individuals. The former refers to the distribution of power throughout an organization and it brings into focus the pattern of power and authority in the organization. Defining leadership in its various reflections is very important. However, it is necessary to buttress what our focus is when any of its definitions is referred to and under what conditions. Previous views about leadership show that it is seen as a personal ability. However, Messick and Kramer (2004) are of the opinion that the degree to which individuals exhibit leadership depends not only on their characteristics and personal abilities, but also on the characteristics of the situation and environment in which they find themselves.

Messick and Kramer (2004) further explains that since human beings become members of an organization in order to achieve certain personal objectives, the extent to which they are active members depends on how much

they are convinced that their membership will enable them to achieve their predetermined objectives. Therefore, an individual will support an organization if he believes that through it, his personal objectives and goals could be met; if not, the person's interest in the organization will decline.

The extent (degree) to which all members of an organization use their abilities and influences in the effective utilization of resources depends on how well the managers (leaders) of the organization understand and perform their jobs. Leadership and other processes of the organization must be such that can ensure maximum probability of all interactions and relationships within the organization. Each member will, in the light of his background, values and expectations, view the organization as being able to build and maintain his sense of personal worth and importance (Ogundele & Akewushola, 2006).

In recent times, leadership has increasingly been associated not with command and control but with the concept of inspiration of getting along with other people and creating a vision with which others can identify. Thus, effective leaders are those who can inspire their people to realize their personal and collective potential and are often the deciding factor between a company being good at what it does and achieving greatness.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of leadership is well established in management literature. Although various definitions of this concept have been proposed by different scholars, the definitions revolve around and are based on similar ideas and principles. According to Hicks and Gullet (1975), leadership is "getting others to follow or getting people to do things willingly". Interpreted more specially, it is the use of authority in decision – making. That is, it may be exercised as an attribute of position or because of personal knowledge or wisdom. Leadership might be based on a function of personality or it can be seen as a behavioural category. It may also be viewed in terms of the role of the leaders and their ability to achieve effective performance from others.

Robbins (1999) argues that leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals, and the source of this influence may be formal, such as that provided by the possession of management rank in an organization or it could be non-sanctioned leadership. A succinct, different but interesting description was made by Katz and Kahn (1978) when they posit that leadership is "the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directive of the organization." This definition depicts that leadership is not part of the job but a quality that can be brought to a job, when leaders systematically move people and organizations forward by increasing the competency of staff and the cooperation of teams in order to improve the organization.

Leadership as a managerial function also entails guiding, conducting and directing people towards achieving a set goal. Akpoymore (1991) states that leadership is one form of dominance in which the followers, more or less,

willingly accept direction and control from another person. In the Views of Mullins (2007), leadership is a matter of making a difference. It entails changing an organization and making active choices among plausible alternatives, and depends on the development of others and mobilizing them to get the job done. By implication, leadership is at its best when the vision is strategic, the voice persuasive and the results tangible. In the study of leadership, an exact definition is not essential but guiding concepts are needed. The concepts should be general enough to apply to many situations, but specific enough to have tangible implications for what we do. Thus, essentially, leadership is a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour or actions of other people.

Theoretical Framework

Several researches have been conducted on leadership ability, performance and styles. This starts with the "great man" theory which states that leaders are born i.e. leadership is in the blood, just like in monarchies. This is a belief dated back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and researchers have identified physical, mental and personality traits of various leaders. The "great man" theory lost much of its acceptability with the rise of the behaviourist school of psychology, which emphasizes that people are not born with traits other than inherited physical characteristics and perhaps tendencies toward good health. These scholars argued that "leaders are made not born" and if others are exposed to the requisite opportunities and environment, people could understand others and the dynamics of interpersonal relations that are crucial for effective leadership.

Leadership may be described as dynamic because it varies with circumstances and individuals invoked. It is also said to be personal because of the interpersonal influences allowed. However, this does not necessarily mean direct contact between the leader and the subordinates. While some leaders are known to have direct contacts with their subordinates as evidenced in most small-scale industries in Nigeria, others are devoid of this process, possibly because of the larger number of subordinates involved.

In business, excellent leadership appears rare. This may be partly due to the fact that great ability is rare and employees could work without zeal, in addition to lack of alternatives for the employees (Budhwar and Yaw, 2001). In this situation, a manager does not need to use much leadership. Therefore, he may depend on negative motivation and authority to command (Budhwar and Yaw, 2001). This situation may, however, lead to defensive and unsupportive behaviour on the part of the subordinates. Personal charismatic features of the leader, his experience curve, educational background, social value system and the nature of environment in which interpersonal group relationship occurs also affect the quality of leadership. However, whatever the nature of the environment and the dynamics of interpersonal relationship among people, it is expected that leaders emerge to make decisions and achieve positive impact.

Donnelly (1999) also explains that in the 1930s, the British were pacifist-

minded; they choose political leadership that promised security and sharing of wealth. However, during a critical challenge, they chose preservation of their freedom above any other thing. Thus, a leader that could satisfy this need was chosen. For instance, Nigeria railroad employees' morale was high in the years of construction. But with the introduction of railroad unions and government regulations, the employee took solace in others aside from their managers for fulfillment of their needs.

Whatever the environment is, leaders emerge to make decisions and achieve positive impact. Leaders are expected to be highly proactive while making decisions. According to Dubrin (2007), the organizational audit of the industry which influences environmental variables is needed to assess past performance and present position of the organization. So as to make appropriate leadership decision and strategies to manipulate followers in order to harmonize and actualize collective goals. The study of leadership has gone through three major phases. The first phase focused on trait theory, the second was on behavioural theory while the third was on situational theory. Explained below are these theories.

Trait Theories: The early theories on leadership describe a leader on the basis of qualities such as intelligence, charisma, decisiveness, enthusiasm, strength, bravery, integrity, self-confidence and so on. Empirical findings reveal that possession of these qualities does not really make an individual an effective leader. This is so because the act of leadership entails taking the right actions. The "right actions" in one situation are not necessarily right for a different situation. However, below are a few traits identified with effective leadership:

- (i) Drive and ambition.
- (ii) The desire to lead and influence others.
- (iii) Honesty and integrity.
- (iv) Self-confidence.
- (v) Intelligence.
- (vi) In-depth technical knowledge related to their area of responsibility.

It should be noted, however, that possessing the appropriate traits only makes it more likely that an individual will be an effective leader, as leadership entails, in addition to the above qualities, the ability to take the right actions at the right time as situations arise.

Behavioural Theories: These theories are based on the belief that what makes a good leader depend on some specified behavioural patterns that identify leaders. As such, if we are to go by these theories, we could teach leadership that is, design programmes that can impact these behavioural patterns in individuals who desired to be effective leaders. However, only two major behavioural style studies are reviewed below.

- (i) *Ohio State Studies:* This study identified two dimensions of leader's behaviour by subordinates. The two dimensions are initiating structure and

consideration. Initiating structure refers to the extent to which a leader is likely to define and structure his or her role and those of subordinates in the search for goal attainment. It includes behaviour that attempts to organize work, work relationship and goals. A leader characterized as high in initiating structure could be described in terms such as “assigning group members to particular task,” expect workers to “maintain definite standards of performance and emphasizes the “meeting of deadline”. Consideration is described as the extent to which a person is likely to have a job relationship characterized by mutual trust and respect for subordinates’ ideas, and regard for their feelings. This type of leader shows concern for his followers’ comfort, well-being, status and satisfaction. A leader, who is high in consideration, could be described as one who helps subordinates with personal problems. Such a leader is friendly, approachable and treats all subordinates as equals. In conclusion, the Ohio State studies suggested that the high-high style generally resulted in positive outcomes.

(ii) *University of Michigan studies:* These Studies attempted to locate behavioural characteristics of leaders that appeared to be related to measures of performance effectiveness. The studies identified two dimensions of leadership behaviour, namely employee-oriented and production-oriented leadership behaviour. Leaders who are employee-oriented were described as emphasizing interpersonal relations; they took a personal interest in the needs of their subordinates and accepted individual differences among members. The production-oriented leaders, in contrast, tended to emphasize the technical or task aspects of the job – their main concern was in accomplishing their group’s task and the group members were perceived as a means to that end. In conclusion, the study strongly favoured, leaders who were employee-oriented in their behaviour. Employee-oriented leaders were associated with higher group productivity and higher job satisfaction. Production-oriented leaders on the other hand tended to be associated with low group productivity and low worker satisfaction.

Managerial Grid: This is a two-dimensional view of leadership styles developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton. They proposed a managerial grid based on the styles of “concern for people” and concern for production”. In between these two extreme positions of managerial grid depicted below are eight other possible positions along each axis.

Managerial Grid Styles: This model is composed of four extreme squadrons (representing different styles) except from the one at the midpoint. These are explained below.

The 1.1 squadron, often referred to as “impoverished management; is characterized by very little concern for neither people’s welfare nor productivity on the job. Objectively speaking, leaders with this style merely perform the role

of passing across information from their superior to their subordinates without really having any serious concern about their compliance with such directives and the welfare of the subordinates. Another squadron, at the extreme, is the 9.9 *managers*, who by all actions, intents and purposes, will want to ensure the highest possible productivity rate while simultaneously ensuring optimum subordinates' welfare. They strategically harmonize the production needs of the enterprise with the needs of individuals.

1.9. *Squadron* depicts a managerial leadership style that is often referred to as "country club management." This set of leaders has a domineering concern for their subordinate's welfare with little or no concern for production. They promote a relaxed, friendly and unstructured environment where no one sees the need for coordinated efforts towards attaining exact organizational goals. The axiomatic impression of most scholars and of management practitioners is that this style of managerial leadership often flourishes in government-owned enterprises where there is lack of functional evaluation and control mechanism.

Conversely, 9.1 *managers*, sometimes called "autocratic task managers," are mainly concerned with ensuring maximum productivity at work with little or no concern for people. This is a purely task-oriented style that has almost zero tolerance for indulgence at work. This style is more appropriate in a high-risk, dynamic and turbulent organizational environment where the leaders need to continuously scan their environment in order to take proactive decisions.

At the midpoint of the model is the 5.5 *squadron*, which depicts managers that have a moderate and almost equal concern for production and people. They ensure adequate, but not outstanding, morale and production. The leaders display a rather benevolently autocratic attitude towards people at work. Critics of the model have argued that though the managerial grid looks simplistic, it does not depict why a manager falls in one part or another of the grid. However, one could focus on the personality of the leader or those of the followers, the ability and training of managers, the enterprise environment and other situational factors that influence how both leaders and followers act as the causal factors for why managers behave the way they do and thus fall into any part of the grid. Blake and Mouton conclude that managers perform best under a 9.9 style, which ensures a maximum output welfare or satisfaction.

Situational/Contingency Theories

The failure of isolated traits or preferable behaviours expected of leaders in order to obtain consistent results led to a new focus on situational influences. The relationship between leadership style and leadership effectiveness suggests that style X would be appropriate under condition a, whereas style Y would be more suitable for condition b, and style Z for condition c. It needs, be noted, however, that it was one thing to say that leadership effectiveness was

dependent on the situation and another to be able to isolate those situational conditions. In an attempt to address these situational factors that affect leadership effectiveness, three major contingency theories shall be examined. The theories are fielder, path-goal and leader-participation theories.

(i) The Fred Fiedler Model: This model proposes that effective group performance depends on the proper match between the leader's style of interacting with his or her subordinates and the degree to which the situation gives room for control and influence to the leader. While he identifies task-oriented or relationship-oriented leadership styles, he also reiterates that if a situation requires a task-oriented leader and the person in that leadership position is relationship-oriented, the solution is either the situation has to be modified or the leader replaced if optimum effectiveness is to be achieved. Fiedler argues that leadership style is innate to a person; one cannot change one's style to fit changing situations.

He also isolates three situational criteria – leader-member relations, task structure, and position power – that can be manipulated so as to create the proper match with the behavioural orientation of the leader.

(ii) Path-goal Theory: In contract to Fiedler's view of a leader's behaviour, the path-goal theory by Robert House assumes that leaders are flexible. The path-goal theory implies that the same leader can display any or all of the four behaviours below depending on the situation:

- (a) The directive leader educates his subordinates on what is expected of them, schedules work to be done and gives specific guidance on how to accomplish tasks.
- (b) Supportive leader is friendly and shows concern for the needs of subordinates.
- (c) The participative leader consults with subordinates and uses their suggestions in making decisions.
- (d) The achievement-oriented leader sets challenging goals and expects subordinates to perform at their highest level.

According to the path-goal theory, a leader's behaviour is acceptable to subordinates when such behaviour is viewed by them as an immediate source of satisfaction or as a means of future satisfaction. A leader's behaviour is motivational to the extent that it meets subordinates' needs and satisfaction contingent on effective performance and provides the coaching, guidance, support and reward that are necessary for effective performance. In conclusion, the essence of the theory is that, it is the leader's job to assist his or her followers in attaining their goals and to provide the direction or support, or both, needed to ensure that their goals are compatible with the overall objectives of the group or organization.

(iii) Leader-participation Model: This model was developed by Victor

Vroom and Philip Yetton. It relates leadership behaviour and participation in decision making as essential basics for effective performance. They argue that leader behaviour must adjust to reflect the task structure. It provides a sequential set of rules that should be followed in determining the form and amount of participation in decision making, as determined by different types of situations.

A Prescription for Effective Leadership in Nigerian Organizations

The influence of cultural, environmental and social diversity in organizations largely influences followers – leader relationship and leadership style. For instance, it is anathema for a younger Yoruba man to openly condemn and criticize the opinion of his elder, presumably his leader. Whereas, it is expected that organization's leaders should create a genuinely open environment where opinions are respected, ideas are vigorously debated and judgment is never passed prematurely or inappropriately. This means genuinely caring about employees' thoughts and feelings, not because it is a nice thing to do, but because it creates a vital system of checks and balances for business decisions. Once an employee has been spurned, misjudged or penalized for raising a concern, he or she will not easily trust the organization or its leaders again. Yes, a second chance may come, but the employee will be more cautious the second time around because of the cultural orientation.

Usually, it takes several positive experiences to erase a single bad one. So why do organizations and their leaders have such a difficult time maintaining an environment where people feel free to raise concerns? Because raising concerns usually involves criticizing the status quo, pointing out flaws in the current system, or opposing a proposed course of action. To allow such expressions of concern requires a good skill for listening and a willingness to reconsider the decisions, two traits that many of today's Nigeria executives lack. Managers often overact to dissent, seeing it as a threat to morale or common purpose, instead of viewing it as a way to strengthen morale and common purpose by giving people the opportunity to disagree, probe and come to their own conclusions. The best cultures thrive on voluntary collaborations, not coercion. Once again, a command – and – control mind set often leads to more malpractice than does a coach-and-communicate approach.

Conclusion

A leaders' performance depend, as much as on the organization, on the leader's own attributes. Except perhaps for the usual case, it is simply not meaningful to speak of an effective leader; we can only speak of a leader who tends to be effective in one situation, and ineffective in another. If we wish to increase organizational and group effectiveness we must learn not only how to train leaders more effectively but also how to build an organizational environment in which the leader can perform well.

Multiple Choice Questions

- (1) Which of the following is not an attribute of an organization? (a) An organization is a social set up (b) It has a boundary that separates it from its environment (c) It is established to make profit (d) It controls its own performance
- (2) The extent (degree) to which all members of an organization use their abilities and influences in effective utilization of resources depends on one of the following: (a) How well the managers of the organization understand and perform their jobs (b) The action of committing employees to contribute their effort to the organization (c) The personal ability of the leader (d) The characteristics and personal abilities of the manager
- (3) In recent times, leadership is increasingly associated with one of the following: (a) command and control (b) communication (c) concept of inspiration of getting along with other people and creating a vision with which others can identify (d) all of the above
- (4) According to one of the following, leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals and the source of this influence may be formed, such as that provided by the possession of management rank in an organization or it could be non-sanctioned leadership. (a) Karines (2001) (b) Messick and Kramer (2004) (c) Robbins (1997) (d) Durbrin (2007)
- (5) Leadership could be said to be dynamic because _____ (a) the environment is also dynamic (b) it entails ability to inspire people (c) it varies with circumstances and individuals invoked (d) the environment in which its operates is complex
- (6) Leadership could be personal because _____ (a) of the interpersonal influences allowed (b) of the personal characteristics of the leader (c) of the tendencies toward the organization (d) all of the above
- (7) The easy theories on leadership describe a leader on the basis of qualities such as _____ (a) intelligence (b) charisma (c) decisiveness (d) all of the above
- (8) Which among the following is not a trait identified with effective leadership? (a) drive and ambition (b) honesty and integrity (c) self-confidence (d) entrepreneurship
- (9) In Ohio State studies, initiating structure refer to one of the following: (a) the desire to lead and influence others (b) in-depth technical knowledge related to the area of responsibility (c) extent to which a leader is likely to define and structure his or her role and those of subordinates in the search for goal attainment (d) all of the above
- (10) The leader is characterized as high in initiating structure in terms of the following except _____ (a) assign group member to particular task (b) motivate the worker (c) expect worker to maintain definite standards of performance (d) emphasizes the meeting of deadline
- (11) A leader is characterized as high in consideration if such a leader is described as _____ (a) one who helps subordinates with personal problems (b) is friendly and approachable (c) treats all subordinates as equals (d) jointly sets a goal for subordinates

- (12) Which of the following is not an attribute of an organization. (a) An organization is a social set-up (b) It has a boundary that separates it from its environment (c) It is established to make profit

Theory Question

- (1) Explain in detail the concept of managerial grid as developed by Robert Black and Jane Bolton.
- (2) Distinguish between the Fred Fiedler model and the path-goal theory.
- (3) As a management student, prescribe an effective leadership style to Nigerian organizations.

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