Leaders and Leadership Roles in Relation to Effective Management of the Human Resources

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Academic Leadership Journal

INTRODUCTION

The Concepts of Leader and Leadership

The term leader is defined as a person initiating interaction with other members of a group, a person who moves the group towards group goal. The dictionary definition of a leader is ‘one who leads or goes first’. In other words one who first perceives the group’s needs far ahead of others and therefore plans and enlists the cooperation of others in its implementation. A person is a leader in any social situation in which his ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behaviours of others. The concept of a ‘leader’ therefore implies role-playing for some time. To be called a leader, one must be performing leading roles repeatedly under varying conditions (English Dictionary 1987; Gibb 1965).

Leadership has been defined as the process whereby an individual directs, guides, influences or controls the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of other human beings. Thus while the term ‘leader’ refers to a person or an actor, ‘leadership’ is a process. Leadership is essentially a group phenomenon and occurs in a situation calling for interaction between a group of people, the leader or leaders, the problem or task and its possible solution. It is a function of personality and there can be no leadership without followership as Haiman (1959) observed, that attempts at leadership must be responded to and be favourable by others before they can be described as acts of leadership. Leading therefore occurs in a group situation with the leader occupying a position within the group. Group leadership calls for readiness to accept responsibilities. Such responsibilities in turn, require knowledge of the group and its objectives, the alternative means by which the objectives may be attained, and the general knowledge of the area in which the group operates. Leadership may be relative, varying according to the nature and functions of the group led. However leadership is essentially a process of mutual stimulation which by successful interplay of relevant individual differences, controls human energy in pursuit of a common cause. (Ekong, 2003).

CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPES OF LEADERS

Leadership calls for certain qualities or characteristics firstly on the part of the individual who want to become a leader and secondly on the part of a group who want to respond favourably to the individual’s leading acts. In the first place, a leader must have the ability to influence others. This may be derived from his personal characteristics such as height, handsomeness or some general personal appeal, abilities to speak and win the crowd, the possession of specific skills known to and desired by the group, being wealthy and or generous, having known connections with external sources of power or occupying known official position(s), and so forth. Studies in Nigeria have also shown that among other characteristics, age, being married, honesty, humility and industry are highly valued in being accepted as a community leader (Adeogun, 1976).

Second, a leader must have the ability to identify with the group he leads. This entails the ability to place oneself in another’s position; consideration for others, emotional stability, readiness to delegate
tasks, love for and constant identification with the group, selflessness, loyalty to group ideas and goals, etc. A person may also assume leadership because of the innate conditioned need in him to lead and or dominate others. However, for his leadership to be accepted by the people he must have other desirable characteristics, which he would have to project to the group.

In certain instances, people have assumed leadership on the assumption that they have a divine call or revelation to lead others. A number of self appointed prophets and religious leaders in our community fall into this group. Apart from their claims to a divine call, such people still have to develop other personal qualities mentioned earlier, and or show extraordinary power (e.g. healing, fortune telling, making of very potent charms, etc.) to be accepted widely by others.

In all, several types of leaders can be identified according to the following criteria: (a) path of attaining leadership position (b) power, authority and scope of influence and (c) orientation. It must be noted before hand that these are not mutually exclusive categories. One leader can fall into all or most of these classifications.

1. Types of Leaders and Paths to Leadership (See Appendix)

Situational Leader: This refers to one who foresees a crisis or the needs of a group and takes initiative in either rectifying the situation or mobilizing others to meet such a situation. For example, if someone saw a bush fire on the outskirts of a village moving slowly towards the village and ran into the village to alert the inhabitants and mobilized them to put out the fire thereby averting catastrophe, that situation would make a 'situational leader' out of that individual. This is why some people have argued that leaders are not born but made by situations. Situational leaders however persist as long as the condition which brought them into the forefront lasts. They can last longer only if the condition becomes institutionalized or else, by imposing themselves as leaders on the group.

Dictatorial Leader: Generally when a situation brings up a leader, there is the tendency for this individual to either feel that he has the obligation to remain at the head to watch over the interest of that group perpetually irrespective of their wishes, or that the only befitting gratitude which the group he has helped could render him is to allow him rule over them. In the absence of such expectations being voluntarily fulfilled, the individual then uses his initial advantage to paralyze initiative amongst his followers and subdue all manner of opposition. He would want to control all phases of life in the community and takes no suggestion from his subordinates except when such suggestions are in his own favour. Generally, they succeed in antagonizing others to their disadvantage and so they never last for too long before being toppled. Military rulers who come in through coup d’ etat and do not want to return to the barracks are good examples of dictatorial leaders.

Traditional or Hereditary Leader: This is one who is born into a hereditary leadership position which custom and tradition recognize. His leadership status is therefore ascribed rather than achieved. In other words, he has authority by virtue of the tradition of the community. This tradition affords him an unlimited loyalty and unquestioned obedience from the community members. In some instances the individual may not have leadership qualities or may be too young to play any leading role (e.g. in the case of a child king like the 2 1/2 years old the 18th Obi of Agbor in Delta State of Nigeria who was crowned on October 31, 1979). In that case the leader becomes a mere figure head as other people are vested with the role of leading the community on his behalf (Moss 1970).
Charismatic leader: The term ‘charisma’ means a divine or spiritual power. It also means a personal character or quality that enable an individual to influence his fellow men. A charismatic leader is therefore a type of person who has such personal quality like good looks, high level of intelligent, ability to speak, fearlessness and commitment to a certain idea which when taken altogether make people follow him almost without questioning his authority. He has a more or less magical appeal to the people and they may in fact, come to regard him as their saviour. He himself may, as time goes on, begin to feel that he has been divinely inspired to lead. This type of leader tends to thrive most in crisis situation where he can display or exhibit his qualities. A number of political leaders can be look upon as charismatic leaders.

Professional Leader: This is one who earns his leadership position by virtue of his expertise or technical competence. His leadership is therefore not based purely on personal charm, although good personal characteristic can enhance his acceptability to the group he is leading. The Community Worker, the Agricultural Extension Officer, the Medical Officer, the Organization Executive are all professional leaders. At the local level, the Rain maker, witch doctor, Diviner, Pastor, are examples of professional leaders. In their interaction and leadership roles they control their actions and direct these to conform to the expectations of the organization they represent, the expectations of their peers within the profession, the expectation of the client population which they serve and to what they expect of themselves as individuals.

LEADERS’ BASES OF POWER, AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE

Weber (1961) defined power as the ability to effect one’s own will against resistance from others. Power may be exercised by using force, although we tend to think of power in relation to government, it is well to remember that it is exercised in many other contexts as well: in the family, schools, hospitals and businesses, wherever it is possible to manipulate conditions so that people must obey.

That leadership involves the ability to influence, direct or control others means that leadership involves the use of power. The leader must have a recognized power, the sources of which may be within or outside the group led. When his power is from the group, this is spontaneously accorded him by his followers, whereas where the sources of power is located externally there may be some elements of coercion. Power is the ability to exact compliance or the ability to execute one’s will irrespective of opposition. Cartwright and Zander (1960) have identified five bases of power of a group leader. These include

(a) Reward Power: Which derives from the belief on the part of the followers that they will be rewarded in some way for complying. In this instance, power is exercised effectively whenever one party can grant or withhold what another party needs but cannot get elsewhere;

(b) Coercive Power: Which arises from the belief that non-compliance will result in punishment;

(c) Expert Power: In this case when a person is evaluated to have needed knowledge, information or skill which cannot be obtained readily elsewhere, that person holds expert power over the group. The rain doctor, the diviner and other local experts claim this source of power.

(d) Referent Power: This is the power the leader has as a result of his having qualities which the group members like, admire and want to identify with. They submit to him because they identify with him.

(e) Legitimate Power: This derives from the office or official Position which the individual occupies and which gives him the right to control others and equally compels others to comply. The tax collector and the police all have legitimate powers to do their work.
Power is usually conceived in terms of authority and of influence. Authority and influence are not synonymous as an individual who has influence may not have any authority. For example an ex-policeman may have influence within the circle of his former colleagues and thereby cause an opponent to be arrested and locked up. However, he has no authority to arrest his opponent by himself. Authority derives from official position and is the power attached to that office whereas influence resides within the individual on the basis of his possession of certain characteristics or qualities which make other people want to submit to him. (Ekong, 2003).

The basis on which authority is used affects the nature of the organization and of the society of which the organization is a part. Weber (1961) distinguished three ideas types of authority: traditional, charismatic and bureaucratic. Obedience in traditional authority is based on the acceptance of custom; in charismatic authority it is given to the law and positions upheld by law rather than to the individual holding the position. A fourth type of authority, professional, has been observed recently; this involves acceptance of the competence (professional qualifications) of the person giving the orders. It might be considered as a special type of bureaucratic authority (Peil 1977).

**FUNCTIONS OF LEADERS**

The leader is a guide to his group members. He leads in so far as he is ahead of his group goals. The role of a leader as a guide connotes a person devoted to helping the group move effectively in the direction it chooses to move. The leader as a guide must assist the group to choose this direction judiciously based on his expert knowledge or other advantages.

The leader is the group’s spokesman. He is their mouthpiece as he is supposed to know the aspirations and vital concerns of the group and speaks on its behalf.

The leader is a group harmonize and an enabler. In other words, he is the one who keeps interpersonal relations pleasant, arbitrates disputes, provides encouragement, gives the minority a chance to be heard and increases interdependence among members. He focuses discontents and enables group members verbalize such discontents; encourages organization and emphasizes common objectives of the group. As an enabler he strives to make the group realize its potentialities and strength in co-operative work. He stimulates insight rather than provides all the answers and provides encouragement and support for others who may want to share in the responsibility of group organization and action.

The leader is a group educator or an expert. People submit to him because he is capable of bringing them to see the solution to their problems. As an expert he provides research data, technical experience, resource material, advises on methods and assists in evaluation. This may also imply expertise in knowing the traditions and customs of the people and being able to act as a resource person on traditions and cultural issues.

The leader is the symbol of group ideals and an agent of control. People submit to the control of a leader because he is able to discern their underlying and inarticulated aspirations and to give them expression. He has a passion for the cause he represents and can crystallize this within men’s hearts. He is loyal to the ideals and aspirations of the group so members look up to him for direction. The leader exercises control over his followers not necessarily by using sanctions but by exhibiting certain qualities which nourish and maintain favourable sentiments e.g courage, self-sacrifice, hatred of vice, contempt for folly, a sense of national or community destiny, and so forth (Ekong 2003).
In Nigerian communities of today, there are two categories of leaders. These are the traditional leaders, i.e., those whose leadership positions are either based on or defined by past traditions of the people, and the modern leaders i.e, those whose leadership positions are based on the present, cosmopolitan or non-traditional values.

These leaders derive their powers from a combination of sources. They may act in concert on major community issues or as linked cliques of individuals specializing in specific issues areas excepting in the case of the village Head who legitimizes most decisions affecting the entire community. The traditional leaders are usually indigenes of the local community concerned whereas a majority of the modern leaders in the community may not necessarily be natives of the community. Most of them belong to the modern governmental bureaucracies while a few are representatives of external voluntary formal organizations. They are often trained professionals whose first loyalty is to the organization they represent rather than the community in which they work. (Nzimiro 1964).

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The leaders selected for training must be group oriented, considerate, of good emotional stability, have sense of responsibility, be able to empathize, have a fair level of competence in the particular subject matter area dealt with, be of good integrity and must be willing to impart the knowledge or skills learned. They must understand where they need to change and must be ready to change. They must think of their problems in relation to that of the rest of the community or group which they represent. They must constantly practice what they learn in order to lay example for their followers.

Training by itself must aim developing the leaders' understanding of the group they serve and their aspirations in addition to the details of the subject matter or skills they are to bring to the group. The specific training needs of the leaders will depend upon the job they are expected to do and the level of competence they already possess. The amount of training will therefore depend upon the gap between the job and their present level of competence. For instance if an extension agent wants to introduce poultry keeping in a community, those lay leaders who already keep poultry would require less formal training than others who do not have any experience in this direction.

The use of local community leaders provides legitimacy on change programmes introduced into the community. The good standing of the leaders adds prestige to the change action and makes the projects more readily acceptable.

The development of community leaders through a single action programme can also spill over into other phases of community life.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES

It is a simple believe that an effective management of the human resources will have an effect on the task-side of the enterprise as well. After all, management is getting something done through people (Hodgetts, 1975). The human resource is the most important resource in any enterprise, since people make the decisions concerning all other organizational resources (Glueck, 1978). It follows, therefore, that the management of human resources should be a matter of great concern to corporate managers.
Effective human resource management should bring benefits not only to the employer but to the employees as well. In other words, an effective human resource management should help the organization to achieve its goals while at the same time helping the corporate employees to achieve their individual goals as well. Many managers and leaders seem to be mainly concerned with what the employees can do for the organization and not with what the organization can do for the employees. These types of managers are called task-oriented managers. One-side benefits amount to exploitation and many people are averse to exploitation.

Human exploitation can have disastrous consequences for the organization. Employees exploited may decide to withhold production or engage in destructive behaviour that will not be in the best interest of the organization. Employers and employees should operate and conduct themselves in such a way that their operation and conduct bring mutual benefits to the parties involved and help to facilitate the achievement of corporate as well as individual goals. (Udonkang 1997) Effective human resource management, therefore, should lead the organization as well as its employees to realize their respective goals, whether material or non-material goals. Where the goals of the organization are in conflict with those of the employees working for the organization, the manager should resolve the conflicts and harmonize the goals.

Managing in the way suggested above should assist the employer and the employees achieve their respective goals and receive mutual benefits. It therefore requires a new orientation, a new kind of mental attitude and a new way of doing things. Managers or leaders who are prepared and willing to embrace this new way of life and attitude are those most likely to succeed in establishing and maintaining a healthy and lasting relationship between their organizations and their employees. Modern managers must be willing to make a critical analysis of themselves in an effort to develop a personal philosophy which will provide a guide to their corporate behaviour. There should be a complete change in their attitudes towards their employees and towards their job also. Modern industrial and commercial institutions need new breed of leaders/managers who are creative and innovative, who are not afraid to try new ideas, and who are not slaves to custom and tradition. For this new breed of managers to succeed, certain requirements would have to be met. These requirements include, among other things, the following:

(a) Sensitivity to people

(b) Understanding of human behaviour

(c) High ethical standards

(d) A positive mental attitude

(e) Ability to communicate effectively

(f) Leadership style.

(a) SENSITIVITY TO PEOPLE

Human resource management is an activity that is well suited to people who have a natural liking and
interest for people. The human resource managers should constantly look for an opportunity to be of help and assistance to the employees. He should treat each person individually and should listen to their complaints and problems. He should be empathetic and friendly. To be able to operate well, the human resource manager has to have a good deal of inter-personal skills and unusual abilities to bring about attitudinal changes in those working under him. He should interact freely with people without feeling that they are inferior to him.

(b) UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

This is a very important quality of an effective manager. He has to have some understanding of human behaviour. Without this understanding, the manager will be handicapped in his ability to motivate the employees. Technically he/she cannot motivate an employee. Motivation is an intervening variable, a psychological process that cannot be seen or felt but whose operation can only be inferred from human behaviour. A manager can only cause the employees working under him to motivate themselves. To understand human beings is a very difficult and challenging experience. People are different and respond to situations differently. This implies that managers should treat employees in the workplace as individuals whose situations, needs, expectations, hopes and fears are unique and different from those of others. To really understand a person’s behaviour is a big achievement.

(c) HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ethics is the systematic study of moral conduct, duty and judgement (Neuner and Keeling, 1966). The human resources manager should be a person of high ethical standards which will provide a guide to his corporate behaviour and will help him to deal with many of the ethical issues and problems that daily confront him in his interaction with his subordinates. It will help him to be fair, firm and just in his administration of programmes that affect the lives of men and women working under him. It will help him to deal with such problems in the workplace as discrimination, nepotism, bribery and corruption, signing in the workplace, etc. The golden rule to follow is: do unto others as you would want others do unto you. If the human resource manager makes the golden rule his watch-word and practices it, he will soon find that he will be able to deal with his subordinates with a very high sense of fairness and impartiality.

(d) A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

As a human resource manager, you should cultivate and maintain a positive, hopeful attitude towards your employees. Always think and believe that you have the ability to help your subordinates to achieve corporate goals and at the same time realize self-fulfillment. “If you think you can, you will, but if you think you can’t, you won’t.” Words have a way of actualizing themselves. A hopeful, confident, courageous attitude must be built up until it becomes a habit, almost second nature. You must go into training, applying it to everything great and small, every day and all the day (Alexander, 1972).

(e) ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Communication is the life-blood of any organization. It is the process of sharing information, facts, emotions and feelings between and among people. It is a management tool that, if effectively used, can bind all the members of an establishment together. As a human resource manager you should use this powerful tool wisely to inform, persuade, inquire and gain goodwill for your organization. You should
depend upon feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of your communication. Here are some simple rules to follow when communicating with your employees.

(f) **LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Leadership style is concerned with the behaviour of the leader towards his followers. The three basis leadership styles are: authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire. An authoritarian leader makes most of the decisions in the organization. He remains aloof from the group and determines group policy and dictates activities and work companions for group members, using praise and criticism to control them. The democratic leader, on the other hand, guides the group to participate activity in all discussions affecting the welfare of the group. He cherishes and appreciates group inputs in all policy discussions. He does not impose his will on the group members. The laisse-faire leader gives complete freedom to the group and individual decisions and does not make any attempts to control the behaviour of the group members. He tends to relinquish his responsibility for most decisions in the organization to his subordinates. (Koehler, Anatol and Applbaum, 1976)

As a human resource manager, you should understand that the leadership style can affect group morale, group cohesiveness and the organizational climate. In your organization you should adopt the leadership style that facilitates group inputs and group participation in all major decisions affecting their well-being. It is important to remember, however, that no one leadership style will work in all situations. A good resource manager should adapt his leadership style to the requirements of the situation.

**CONCLUSION**

Managing the human resources in the way suggested above so that both the organization and the individuals working for the organization derive maximum benefits and achieve their respective goals requires a new orientation, a new mental attitude and a new way of doing things. Managers must be people-oriented. They must develop high ethical standards and sound personal philosophies that will provide a guide to their corporate behaviour. Above all, they must not be conservative in manners. They must be prepared to try new ideas and adopt new method and procedures in dealing with people. For them to succeed, there are some basic requirements that would have to be met. Some of these requirements are:

- Sensitivity to people, understanding of human behaviour, high ethical standards, ability to set and harmonize conflicting corporate and individual goals
- Effective communication, supportive organizational climate and a flexible leadership style are the basic requirement for success in this regard.

**REFERENCES**


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