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Toward a Functional Followers’ Model in the Organizational Leadership Process

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1.0 Introduction

There are many researchers and practitioners who have at various times and situations defined the term *leadership* to suit their whims and caprices. A popular scholar in the field of management and leadership opined that “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (Bass, 1981, p. 11). There is no gainsaying the fact that in organizations, leadership plays a vital role almost on a daily basis. It is perhaps based on this premise that makes many practitioners and scholars to focus more on leaders when discussing or writing about leadership. Hence, most literatures predating to the 1930s and even many decades after, are mostly leader-centric in their nature and contents (Rost, 1993 and Collinson, 2006). These literatures portend the traits or attributes of the “great person” theory of leadership, which is both outdated and outmoded (Kouzes & Posner, 2003 and Pierce & Newstrom, 2008). The “great person” theory tends to reflect the notion that leaders such as Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc, Napoleon, Mao Tsetung, Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, etc were born with unique attributes conferring leadership on them (Pierce & Newstrom, 2008, p. 7). However, in the modern day, many scholars are now of different opinions.

It is widely accepted that for a coin to be so called, it has two sides: head and tail. Similarly, for a marriage to occur between a man and a woman, it involves a process of a man coming together with a woman in a relationship. This process of relating together over a time will develop into marriage (Pierce & Newstrom, 2008, p. 6). It is the aim of this paper to take a stand that in the present day organizational set-up, leadership is neither residing in a person nor a position but rather a in process of a relationship involving participants who are leaders (superiors), and followers (subordinates) involved in a context and mutually expecting an outcome. It is noteworthy to point out that more have been said or written about leaders and leadership while perhaps a handful study has been done on the critical mass of followers, who invariably constitute the majority in most organizations today. This can be depicted vividly when one looks at leadership as a coin having two sides. The “leadership coin” can be said to be having the *leader(s)* on the frontal side *(head)* while the backside *(tail)* can be ascribed to the *follower(s)*; the latter being consigned to the background even as it is located on the backside of the “leadership coin.” It is like a coin whose frontal inscription is that of a Queen and the other ‘inconsequential’ side depicts miners working in harsh and unfavourable conditions underground. It is customary that people will stare more at Queen’s inscription on the frontal side while few will bother about the poor miners’ even though they bear the heat of the day to produce the nation’s wealth.

There are many monographs, articles, seminars, workshops and lectures on leaders and leadership; what they do and do not do, with perhaps little or no reference to the collaborators, *the followers*, in the leadership process. Collinson (2006, p. 179) argued that there are very many followers in the world than leaders; such that many leaders in organizations are even, to some extent, followers. Marion & Uhl-Bien (2001) alluded to Collinson (2006) by insisting “followers are integral to the leadership process.” Rodger Adair (2008, p. 137), referred to followers as the “enigmatic majority” in organization that are unfortunately not getting the attention they deserve. He also argued that leadership scholars
and researchers have long stared at one side of the coin while abandoning the other side.

1.1 Matter of Significance

One of emerging scholars in the sub-field of followership, Rodger Adair painted a gory picture of followers’ plight by stating that organizations globally are spending about 80% of their time and resources on leadership studies, research and consultancies while only a paltry 20% is reserved for followers who make up about 80% of the workforce. Adair (2008) pitifully referred to the followers as the “enigmatic majority” (p. 143). In discerning the way followers are treated with disdain and disrespect, one can read and ponder on this:

Young Alexander conquered India,

He alone?

Caesar beat the Gauls.

Was there not even a cook in his army?

Philip of Spain wept as his fleet

Was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?

-Bertolt Brecht (in Kellerman, 2008, xi)

Kellerman (2008) in quoting the above was magnifying in caricature manner the leadercentric nature of many of today’s scholars, researchers and practitioners in the field of leadership study. It is a fact that there is no leader without a follower, as certain as there is no husband without a wife in the phenomenon called marriage.

Consequently, having established the presence and importance of followers as active participants and players in the leadership theory and practice, this article is focuses on followers, followership typologies or models, and the way followers, rather than, leaders can be agents for progressive and proactive change(s) in organizations globally if they are properly engaged, enabled and empowered from the outset. Kelley (1992), Chaleff (1995), and Kellerman (2008) wrote extensively on followers and followership coming out with typologies or models. Robert Kelly’s “The Power of Followership” and Ira Chaleff’s “The Courageous Follower” were both written to encourage and empower followers in the workplace, be it private or public organizations, and in essence stand up for good leadership and denounce bad leadership.

Barbara Kellerman (2008), in her book titled: “FOLLOWERSHIP: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders,” made a departure from the leadercentric approach of many scholars and researchers in leadership to advocate that more attention need to be paid to followers, and followership studies, though not to be wholly separated from leadership, but to be more focussed on and studied as an arm of leadership (Kellerman, 2008, p. xix). She also argued that followers are not just appendages of leaders but co-participants in the journey and must be so treated by the leaders declaring that failure to do this may have negative tendencies both for the leaders, leadership and the organization. She cited some cases such as Merck, USA, and the Voice of The Faithful, Catholic
Church of USA, where followers ignited change to the chagrin of leaders. In addition, in the nation of Ukraine, there was the “Orange Revolution” that was orchestrated and organized by the common people (followers) in Ukraine to peacefully and passionately depose an unpopular government (Kellerman, 2008). Indeed, these days, more ordinary people, with no office(s) bestowing authority on them, are causing raves and ripples in organizations and even in government that in some cases, when their activities are tactfully and collaboratively coordinated, invariably and virtually lead to significant changes that can not be sidelined or ignored.

It can be said that all of these authors, scholars and practitioners did a lot of work on the impact and import of followers in organizations. Moreover, because of the leader-centric posture of many past and present literatures, they paid a lot of attention to followers/followership but not really harmonizing their thoughts on making followers functional in meeting the goals and aspirations as depicted by the organization’s values and mission purpose. In this regard, there are pertinent questions one may ask: Which way can followers be made to function to meet organizational goals while simultaneously operating in tandem with organizational core values and purpose? How does this bring out better organizational outcomes?

1.2 Objective of this paper

The main objective of this paper is to see how followers can be “equipped, engaged and enabled” to be functional and to complement their leaders, and so working in a synergy and symbiotic process capable of creating functional organizations with improved performance. It must be emphasized from the outset that organizational leaders must be willing to provide a level-playing field for the employees (followers) to be involved in the leadership process bearing in mind that their participation is “integral to the leadership process” (Collinson, 2006, p. 179). The import of this paper is that, provided organizational leaders are willing to make employees to be “equipped, engaged and enabled”, many of them may not be functional in supporting their leaders in optimizing and/or sustaining their outcomes. It has been often said that leaders are change agents as though they single-handedly carry out change without the followers’ participation in the organizational process. The postulation in this paper is that in the future, the leadership process can be enhanced in organizations if “functional followers” are initiated and inculcated into the leadership process from the outset. In essence, from the outset, organization leaders must advocate, hire, train, support, promote, protect and sustain functional followers for enhanced performance and sustaining competitive advantage even in unpredictably critical and chaotic times such as the world economy encountered between 2008 and 2009.

1.3 Leadership: Definition as per this paper

It has been stated earlier that there are many depictions, demonstrations and definitions of the leadership as there are many authors, commentators, practitioners, researchers, scholars, and even students. Ciulla (1998) argued that “leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.” In this article, there is an assumption that this ‘complex moral relationship’ is in fact a process involving relationship between the leader, follower(s), and the context with the expectation of an outcome (Pierce & Newstorm, 2008). In summary, we are considering leadership as neither positional nor personal but a process. In this view, there are two scholars of leadership that will be considered whose definitions aptly fit in at this stage:
“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” (Northouse, P. G., 2004)

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish efforts to accomplish shared objectives. (Gary Yukl, 2010, p. 34)

These definitions are evasive as far as who leads or who follows and the nature of dynamics in between them. It is made clearer in the definition of two other scholars, who after more than two decades of research in leadership came up with their definition: “Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 20). It was their opinion that for leadership to occur there must be a process involving the interplay of both leaders and followers. In addition, such process must not be coercive or compulsive but collaborative.

2.0 Literature Review

“We are followers, followers are us. This does not, of course, mean that all of us follow all of the times-sometimes we lead. But all of us follow some of the time. It is the human condition.” (Kellerman, B., 2008, p. 93)

This statement of Kellerman is true to a large extent. There are sometimes we are leading and in another situation we are following. Imagine the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an organization attending a church as a member of the congregation. In his organization where he works, he is a leader, whereas in the church he is a follower. There is no way the term followers will be become irrelevant or outmoded as advocated by Rost (2006). In fact, more scholars are now appreciating the effect of followership in organizational set-up departing from the leader-centric posture of the literature of the past. Among these authors, researchers and practitioners are Robert Kelly, Ira Chaleff, Barbara Kellerman and Rodger Adair. One of them, Rodger Adair (2008) was fascinated by the definition of leadership by Rost (1993) who stated that “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes.” According to Rodger Adair, Joseph Rost provided the best definition of leadership which helps to explain the process of interplay or dynamics of the process involving the participants or players – leaders and followers. This leads Adair, to a parallel definition that is applicable to followership: “A follower shares in an influence relationship among leaders and other followers with the intent to support leaders who reflect their mutual purposes.” However, Rost, in his latest work, stated that he did not support the use of the term followership as it is misleading in a world where many want to lead and not just follow. Rost (2006) even went as far as discouraging scholars from using the term, followership; he was rather advocating for what he tagged: collaborative leadership. His opinion is that leaders and followers cannot be separated (Rodger Adair, 2008); thus, agreeing with Kellerman (2009). It is the stand of this paper that we are all followers as we begin our journey from the womb of our mothers as new born babies. Adair (2006) went on further to state that much as he agreed with Rost that followership and leadership are intertwined and interrelated, that some researchers such as Kellerman (2009), Rost, (2006), Kelley, (1992) and Chaleff, (2003), view both as a coin having two sides. He stated that scholars and practitioners have “stared so long and hard at the leadership side that most have no idea of what sits on the other side of the coin” (p. 139).

Even when the term follower is mentioned by Joseph Rost, it was not really justified but it was rather
explained away. In the book: “Leadership for the Twenty-first Century,” Rost insisted that although others might find it belittling, he had “no trouble with the word followers.” Thereafter, he went on to dissociate himself from the idea held in past decades that followers were “passive” while leaders were directive and active. Presently, it is Rost’s view that things are different as leaders are no more equated with being superior, followers also should not be equated with being subordinate thus agreeing with Kellerman (2008) that followers, otherwise referred to as subordinates in her writings, are neither second rated nor appendages of the leaders, whom she referred to as superiors. In fact, Kellerman (2008) defined followership in two succinct and distinctive ways:

“Followers can be defined by their rank; they are subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors.” (Kellerman, 2008, p. xix)

“Followers can be defined by their behaviour: they go along with what someone else wants and intends.” (Kellerman, 2008, p. xix)

In essence, Kellerman defined followers both in rank and behaviour. However, there are occasions where rank does not imply that one is a follower; it may depend on how much influence and power an individual possess with a group or an organization. Kellerman, from these two definitions of followers gave one of the best definitions of followership as follows:

“Followership implies a relationship (rank), between subordinates and superiors, and a response (behaviour), of the former to the latter.” (Kellerman, 2008, p. xx)

This is in effect stating that followers are not subjected to doing the leaders’ bidding as they are free to relate and respond appropriately in a process. Hence, it is no more a unidirectional or one-way top-down approach dictated and directed by the leaders. The consequence of this for private organizations and public corporations is that leaders should better pay more attention to followers, followership identities, followers’ training and indoctrination as means of obtaining and sustaining better performance and also in securing their positions. This is in tandem with the opinions of some scholars who advocate for more employees who are “exemplary”, “courageous”, “stars”, “good”, “disciple” as a prerequisite for organizational success (Chaleff, 2003; Kelly, 1992, 2004; Kellerman, 2008; Adair, 2008; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990; Potter, Rosenbach, & Pittman, 2001; Raelin, 2003; Rosenau, 2004, Seteroff, 2003). Virtually all these authors and practitioners agree that, in organizations today, employees (followers) are no more the stereotypically docile, passive, timid, sheep but in fact contemporary employees are emerging as people who are interconnected and “empowered, knowledge workers” possessing the skills associated with “distributed” and “shared leadership” (Collinson, 2006, p. 179). Collinson affirmed that in the workplace today, “good followership” skills are vital to success and sustenance. Kellerman was the first proponent of good followership (Kellerman, 2008).

Kellerman (2009) was of the view that things are changing now in comparison to the last two decades when leadership was a big business and few scholars wanted to have any romance with followers. Many scholars are now increasing aware that followership, under whatever guise is an integral part of leadership theory and practice. However, there is something good about Rost as we should not throw out the baby with the bath water. Going further on leaders and followers, Rost (1993) paid much attention to the ‘influential interplay’ between them. He is of the opinion that their coming together in the leadership process is because they have mutual intention to initiate a change resulting in a positive
outcome bonded together by a common purpose. This is very fundamental to the functional followership phenomenon as being postulated in this paper. Even though it was to Joseph Rost’s credit, this identification came about, the scholars aforementioned have done a lot of work on followership advocating for “exemplary followers” (Kelly, 1992), “courageous followers” (Chaleff, 2003) and “good followers” (Kellerman). Of equal important worthy of mention in this discourse is an up and coming voice, Rodger Adair who came up with a 4-D typology of followership styles preferring the “disciple follower” as the best in performance as well as low turn over declaring that these endure with organizations (Adair, 2006, p. 139).

3.0 Famous Followers’ Typologies:

3.1 Robert Kelly’s Followership Model:

Robert Kelly did a fantastic work on followership, and in his book identified five classes or types of followers in organizations as follow:

1. Alienated Followers: Think freely and critically; but they do not participate in the groups and organizations of which they are members. They score high in independent thinking and low in active engagement.

2. Exemplary Followers: Perform well in every aspect. They exercise “independent, critical thinking, separate from the leaders or the group,” and they also are actively engaged. They scored high across the board.

3. Conformist Followers: are content to take orders or defer to their leaders. They score high in active engagement and low in independent thinking.

4. Passive Followers: Let their leaders do the thinking for them, which means they require constant supervision. They score low in independent thinking and in level of engagement.

5. Pragmatist Followers: “hug the middle of the road.” They question their leader’s decisions, but not too critically. They score “middling” in independent thinking and “middling” in terms of engagement.

Robert Kelly’s crusade, according to Barbara Kellerman, was to turn followers in the workplace to “exemplary” followers (Kellerman, p. 82). His opinion was that the “exemplary or effective worker” (he refers to the term interchangeably) is both enthusiastic and intelligent whose focus is to contribute to the realization of the organization’s goal. Hence, they are needed in organizations as they are courageous, honest and credible. Kelly’s was more concerned on level of participation and independent thinking as followers in his design of his typology. Kelly’s conclusion according to Kellerman (2008, pp. 235-236) is that followers matters, not only leaders. Kelly’s secondary argument is that followers can matter more if they are “exemplary”, if they are actively engaged, while at the same time maintaining their independence, both from the leader and the rest of the group.

Figure 1: Kelly’s Followers’ Style

3.2 Ira Chaleff’s Followership Model:
Chaleff’s typology was based more on level of participation. His main aim was to let followers know that they can courageously stand up for their leaders, if they are good, and at the same time, they can courageously stand up to bad leaders to critically challenge them.

Chaleff, however, belittle the consequence of such action on the part of the follower neither did he advocate for ways in which such exemplary followers can be empowered, engaged and enabled in organizations. These are the four classes he postulated thus:

1. **Implementer**: These followers are the most common in workplace especially in large organizations where superiors want subordinates to get the work done.

2. **Partner**: These followers fully support their leaders; but they are also ready and willing to challenge, if necessary.

3. **Individualist**: These followers tell their leaders and, for that matter, everyone else just what they think and how they feel. But because they regularly withhold their support from people in position of authority, they are marginalised.

4. **Resource**: These followers “do an honest day’s work for a few days’ pay” but they do not go beyond that minimum expected of them.

**Figure 2: Chaleff’s Followers’ Classification**

Ira Chaleff’s describes at the outset, how “since becoming aware as a child of the systematic destruction of 6 million European Jews,” he understood the importance of followers. So his original motivation goes all the way back to Hitler. “Never again,” he writes, “should followers follow a vicious leader to the logical conclusions of his psychosis (Chaleff, 2003, pp. 38–43).” However, in a good leadership set-up, Ira Chaleff does not sound revolutionary as he wants followers to support their leaders and to “contribute to leadership development.” It may be of interest to find out the determinants of good leadership in this case as what is a poison to someone may be food to another fellow; or how can one justify the case of the ardent or ‘diehard’ followers of Osama Bin Laden or the late Saddam Hussein or President Idi Amin of Uganda?
3.3 Barbara Kellerman’s Typology:

Kellerman (2008, pp. 85-92) settled for “a single, simple metric” in depicting her typology of followers in organizations classifying them into five types based on level of engagement. They are:

1. **Isolate**: These followers are completely detached from the process. They do not care about their leaders, or know anything about them, or respond to them in any way. By default, in knowing nothing and doing nothing, they empower their leaders to have their way whether for good or bad. It is like an eligible voter who neither cares to register nor participate in an election. In the workplace, isolates are “uninformed, uninterested, and unmotivated” (Kellerman, 2008, p. 91).

2. **Bystanders**: They observe but do not participate in the process of leadership thereby making a deliberate decision to stand aside. They disengage from their leaders as well as the group. This withdrawal is a tacit support for whoever and whatever constitutes the status quo.

3. **Participants**: These followers are in some way engaged; clearly favour their leaders and their group. They may be clearly opposed as well to either of the two. There is no mid-way in where the stand. In essence, they can be said to put their money where their mouth are.

4. **Activists**: These followers feel strongly for or against their leaders or group. They can work hard for their leaders or even undermine them going to even unseat them.

5. **Diehards**: these are prepared to die for what they stand for; whether an individual, idea, or both. Diehards can be deeply devoted to their leaders. View in another dimension, they are ready to remove them by any means necessary, if they do not meet their expectations. They are ready to risk ‘life and limb’ to project their cause.

3.4 Rodger Adair’s 4-D FOLLOWERSHIP MODEL:

This is a visual representation of how employees view themselves within the workforce. The assumption for this model or type of followers is that these employees or followers are single-minded who do not share minds with other quadrants. This we know is not true in real workplace environment where some can belong to informal groups, form alliance, networks, etc. Rodger Adair (2008, pp. 144-145).

There are four distinct employee characteristics as depicted below:

1. **Disgruntled**: Employees typically have been slighted (whether from an actual or perceived event). Hence, it is their conclusion that the organization is of little value to them and they are of little value to it as well.

2. **Disengaged**: Employees see the value of keeping their present jobs and will not mind doing the minimum to make sure they are within the workforce while not buying into the organization’s mission or purpose.

3. **Doer**: Employees feel motivated and therefore excited to participate in collaborating with others for maximum productivity. They are however not stable as their are wont to look for “greener grass” outside the organization necessitating a high turn-over for this category of employees.
Disciple: Employees feel engaged; and they exhibit high productivity and intend staying with the organization for a long time. They believe that they are in the “right position at the right time.”

It is the view of Adair, 2008 (p. 138), that in most cases, followership behaviour puts in motion tactical success, whereas “leadership talents and skills propel the engine for strategic accomplishments in organizations.” Hence, we need to pay more attention to followership development and training in today’s organization to maximize organizational outcomes in the employees. It was the conclusion of Adair (p. 153): “There is so much interplay and crossover between leadership and followership that the two can not be studied completely independent of each other.”

4.0 Initiating Functionality in Followership

Defining Functional Followers:

Before attempting to define functional followers, we need to look at the root word, function. One of the appropriate meanings that can be applied in this context is as found in Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary which defines function as “the action for which a person or thing is specially fitted or used or for which a thing exists.” Hence, in this paper, the definition of functional follower is as below:

“Functional follower is a subordinate, by rank or behaviour, who relates in a befitting manner and in synergy with similar participants within the leadership process to meet and sustain organizational goal(s).”

In their “follower-centred perspective on leadership”, Lord and Brown (2001, 2004) argue that research needs to understand “the self-regulatory mechanisms” which are central to follower motivation and then work backwards to analyze how leaders might influence these processes (research and practice have typically worked in the opposite direction). Collinson shares the same view of Lord and Brown (2004) that if indeed leadership is defined as a social process through which the leader changes the way followers envision themselves, then consideration should be given to the followers’ identity and therefore be seen as ‘a highly important mechanism that can provide a flexible, integrating framework for the study of leadership’ (Collinson, 2006, p. 181). Collinson is also of the opinion that leaders in organizations can motivate followers (employees) and consequently help in shaping their identities in the workplace as this will lead to better understanding the leadership process. The main thrust of articulating this declaration is that the apex leaders responsible, in most cases, for the main decision making, the sustenance of organization core values and the operationalization of the vision of the organization need to initiate this novel process between leaders and followers, at all levels, that will in effect cause and create functional followership within and among the workforce. It will be recollected that as far back as 1959, Katz and Stotland, corroborated this stand of Collinson. The duo while collaboratively developed a theory of attitude and change, stated a dimension in the “functional view of attitudes” by declaring that an individual will develop a positive attitude towards objects that are instrumental to the satisfaction of his needs. In essence, if leaders (superiors), in the workplace, perceive followers (subordinates) as co-travellers in the journey to the same destination of meeting the organization’s goal, and by so doing provide an enabling environment where subordinates and superiors can independently engage with one another, then the leadership process can be enhanced to perform better. In addition, such workforce comprising these followers needs to be empowered through information dissemination, involvement in the decision making process, promotion of learning
in the workplace, unrestricted access to needed resources, and by induction training in form of workshops, conferences and seminars, not just in developing leadership skills (as it is common in today’s organizations), but in mainly inculcating followership skills as well. The main goal will be to multiply functional followers throughout the various level of the organizational structure which invariably may lead to a “leaderful” organization (Raelin, 2003), in which leadership is assumed to be distributed within the organization strata.

It can be inferred that from the work of many scholars (Rost, 2008; Kellerman, 2008; Collinson, 2008; Yukl, 2010; and Chaleff, 2003), that followership is part and parcel of the leadership process and practice. However, the “follower-centric theory”, as proposed by Meindl, 1995, wants students and scholars to concentrate on followers, more than on leaders. In addition, another scholar (Adair, 2008), who recently came up with a typology of followership, opined that followership is not part of leadership; rather leadership is part of followership. He argued that all of us in life started as followers in leading our lives and that even in building a house, one starts with the foundation, and subsequently builds on that foundation. The views of Meindl and Adair can be termed or tagged eccentric from the more dominant and prevalent leader-centric views in theory and practice.

In this paper, the initiating, inculcating and institutionalizing of functional followership in today’s organization can be a catalyst to produce high performing and dynamic workforce that can lead to and even sustain competitive advantage. However, the top leaders must be ready to allow for free, critical and independent influential interactions and interplay of the leader-follower dynamics that will truly lead to the emergent of functional followership.

5.0 Functional followers: Who are they?

There are certain attributes and attitudes that must be possessed by functional followers in the influential interactions and interplay of the leadership process involving such key components such as followers, leaders, context, and outcomes (Pierce & Newstrom, 2008). This is also in agreement with two other scholars’, (Kouzes & Posner, 2004), point of view, having been involved in leadership research for more than two decades. It was the latter’s view that: “Success in leadership, success in business, and success in life has been, is now, and will continue to be a function of how well people work and play together......Success in leading will be wholly dependent upon the capacity to build and sustain those human relationships that enable people to get extraordinary things done on a regular basis” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 21). It will be pertinent to note the phrase: “a function of how well people work and play together”. The degree of functionality of participants in the organizational leadership process, matters a lot to the enhancement of the organization leadership of the present and the future. The initiation, integration and institutionalization of functional followership can indeed lead to a new paradigm in organizational leadership that can enhance organizational performance now and in the future, if allowed to take root.

For followers to be functional in an organization, these are the attributes they must possess:

1. **Cultured**: They must adhere to the norms and values of the organization from the outset. This class of followers must be well conversant with the organization’s core values, vision and mission purpose. These type of followers are proud to align themselves with the core values of the organization willingly without any form of compliance demanded by the organization’s leaders.
2. **Committed**: In addition, these followers must be committed to the organizational goals from time to time. In essence, they must see the organization’s success as their own success maintaining an attitude of ‘sailing or sinking with the ship irrespective who the sailor is at all times.’

3. **Constructive**: They are not just the ‘yes’ or docile employees but they are innovative in their thinking as they relate with others followers and leaders in the leadership process. Even though they are organizational cultured, this does not mean that they can not think outside the box. If it happens that the culture will contain them from making further progress that can lead to organizational effectiveness, functional followers will use their initiative and innovatively come out with better ideas.

4. **Conscientious**: They can be particularly painstaking as well as meticulous to the point that things are done according to the core values of the establishment. In this way, functional followers may be on collision course with inept, dishonest or corrupt leaders. They are ready to ‘blow the whistle’ like a referee or umpire is wont to do in a game when a foul is committed. Kellerman (2008) classified these followers as “diehards”, and further put them under a sub-class she referred to as “whistle-blowers.”

5. **Competent**: These followers are empowered with such information and knowledge about their roles in the organization as well as what the roles of the other participants are. They have access to information about the organization’s workings and practice that enhance their power base within the leadership process. They value and treasure life long learning and development of new skills. It is irrelevant whether the organization they work for pays for the acquisition of these skills or not, they just want to be on the edge in the speciality.

6. **Courageous**: Functional followers are very bold and expressive to critique the leadership process when the need arises. They can be bold in supporting good leaders and also in exposing a bad or corrupt one. This was obvious in the way and manner the employees of the World Bank pulled “the rug off the feet” of its erstwhile president, Paul Wolfowitz (Kellerman, 2008, pp. 34-35).

7. **Cooperative**: This type of followers knows the power of team-building, networking and building alliance with employees of the same mind-set in the organization. In doing this, they can push their mutual interests into the agenda of the leaders and thus influence the leadership process that can lead to meaningful and positive change.

5.1 **The Three Levels of Followers’ Functionality**

There are three levels of followers’ functionality that can be present in an organization. The sequence is as depicted in Figure 1 (next page). It is seen in the figure that there is a gradual progression from low functionality-cultured and committed followers-to medium functionality, comprising of followers who also combined these two traits with the trio of being constructive, conscientious and competent. Finally, there are the highly functional followers who apart from these five attributes also exhibit the qualities of being courageous and cooperative. These last two traits are very vital in followers initiating changes in organizations. Leaders need to be very careful when most of their followers are very courageous and very coordinated in acting, moving and doing things together in group. This is easily discernable when in most cases they all ‘talk and think’ with one voice.
6.0 The Leaders’ Role and the Emergence of Functional Followers

It must be stated that functionality of followers can actually come into being in the leadership process as a result of willingness on the part of all the participants—leaders and followers. The former especially must provide a level-playing field for the emergence and sustenance of functional followership. What is expected of the leaders in the leadership process can be classified and summarised as follows:

1. **Empowerment**: The leaders must make adequate provision to hire competent workers for the various roles existing in the organization. In addition, the leadership process must allow for continual training for the followers to acquire skills—followership, as well leadership skills; more of the former than the latter. In most establishments today, the reverse is the case, as one reads or hears more of leadership seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. It must be stressed that more training should focus on how subordinates in the workplace should make functional followers rather than leading.

2. **Engagement**: There must be an atmosphere in the leadership where the participants and players especially the followers (subordinates) will be allowed to interact and interplay independently. The leaders must encourage subordinates to engage the process without the latter’s fear of the former taking punitive measure on them. In some organizations presently in USA, followers (subordinates) are now made to evaluate their leaders (superiors); a departure from the top-down approach of leaders always evaluating their subordinates (Kellerman, 2008).

3. **Enablement**: The leadership process must be so designed that the followers are given freedom to partake in the decision making process thus making them to know that they (the followers) have a stand and stake in the organization. This will afford the followers the necessary enablement to be part and parcel of the firm and so contribute constructively and innovatively to enhance organizational performance. There could a better way of doing things that the leaders may not see or know which in most cases resides in functional followers. Unless, the leaders enable the followership to come out to speak and bring out ideas to move the organization forward, some of these followers may find their way to competing organizations where they can be in better positions to actualize their dreams. The implication is that the organization that spend years to train him has not only lost a worker but lost all the man-hours of training put into him or her.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper has succinctly shown that leadership is a coin of two sides. However, while there has been lots of study on the ‘leadership’ phenomenon, little has been done on followers cum followership as a
sub-discipline. It has been established from recent literature that followers are no longer the passive, inconsequential lot in leadership study; in fact, they are themselves agents of change in today’s organisation. We therefore propose a model for ‘Functional Followers’; subordinates who when given a level playing field, can effectively contribute to better performance of the organisation. We concluded by highlighting the fact that top leaders have a role to play in creating functional followers by empowering, engaging and enabling their subordinates towards a better performance of the organisation.

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