

The Role of a Counsellor in Engendering Quality and Exemplary Leadership

Rosemary O. Ogbodo Adoga, Ph.D

Faculty of Education

National Open University of Nigeria

Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

rosemaryogbodoadoga@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the issue of leadership in Nigeria and its implications on family values and national development. It is an indisputable fact that the quality or conduct of leadership in any society determines to a large extent its pace of progress and growth. It is against this background that debate on leadership is central to national discourse. The essence of this paper therefore is aimed at enriching this debate with particular interest in the role of a counsellor in the leadership process. The researcher achieves this through an in-depth examination of the qualities of a leader and the role of a counsellor. It concludes that a leader must first and foremost be a public servant, selfless and service oriented.

Keywords: Role, Counsellors, Engendering, Quality, Leadership.

Introduction

It is said that leadership is the live wire of any organization or state. This is so because effective leadership helps in the enthronement of orderly, effective and productive society. The world today is in desperate need for sound leadership to tackle global challenges. In particular, Nigeria desires a credible leadership that is willing to accept our current developmental challenges and face them headlong with integrity, character, sense of responsibility and commitment.

Quality leadership is the key to prosperity and peace in any nation. Our communities need good role models as leaders. Children need good fathers and good mothers at home. The world needs good direction. Leadership by example, according to Munroe (1994) and Denga (1986), is the ability to head others by influence. Influence here relates to the various activities taking place. A person who is being influenced acts according to the dictates of the influencer consciously or unconsciously. Parents influence their children to act in certain ways. A teacher can influence his/her students just as a spouse can influence the entire family to act in certain ways. In the office and in the political circles, it is common for the manager or the business executive and the political leader to influence the behaviour

or reactions of his subordinates or constituents. The situation is not different in the religious organizations, where an Imam or Pastor has very remarkable influence on the congregations.

Leadership can also be seen simply as responding to responsibility. This means that a great leader never desires to lead but to serve. Munroe (1994) states that “leadership is the ability to inspire others to become and fulfill themselves by you doing the same”. A simple and general definition of leadership then include “the capacity to influence, inspire, induce, move, mobilize and activate others to the pursuit of a common goal or purpose while maintaining commitment, confidence, courage and momentum” (Denga, 1986). Leadership is the management of managers towards a common goal. Therefore, leadership, by its very nature, incorporates a clear purpose and vision which provide the fuel for inspiration, motivation and mobilization (Ebonugwo, 2007).

Leadership by example is difficult without a guiding vision and a purpose that generate passion for accomplishment. Without a purpose or a vision, you are vulnerable to manipulation. Remember that, “without a vision the people perish” (Proverb 29:18). A leader who shows example is a role model, a pace setter, one who knows his or her destination and how to get there. Such a leader has the ability to inspire people to go along with him or her. The discovery of “self” is the birth of “leadership” by example.

What is leadership?

The concept of leadership is often associated with all forms of social relationship in formal and informal settings. This could be in friendship organizations, such as church, family meetings and extends to formal organization like the school and business enterprises of small and large scale capacities, all of which are social grouping. Leadership roles are implied for their effective functioning and sustainable growth. Leadership involves not only exercising the power formally delegated to the leader but requires the acceptance of the legitimacy of that power and the fact that it was delegated to a particular person or persons. To this end, Denga (1986) described leadership as a function of the personality of the leader. This is why any happening in a church normally attract question like who is the pastor or leader in the church is known, any observer can affirm or query the genuineness of what was reported about the church.

Koontz, Daniel and Weihruch (1984) defined leadership as the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals. So leadership is generally defined as influence. To lead is to guide,

conduct and precede. A leader helps a group to achieve its goals by placing himself/herself before the group; not standing behind the group to push. For a leader to be in front of a group, he has to have the right 'capacity and will' to facilitate progress and the right 'character', which inspires confidence in the group to accomplish organizational goals. Another important concept captured by this definition is that leadership is essentially about followership. In other words, it is the willingness of people to follow that makes a leader.

Yalokwu (1999) defined leadership as an action that involves the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behavior of one or more other people. In other words, in leadership, the leader consciously tries to get the followers (subordinates) to do something that he or she wants them to do in order to achieve some predetermined goals. This is why leadership is a dynamic process that requires a strong and collaborative relationship between the leader and the followers.

Leader: A leader is an individual in the group given the responsibility of directing and coordinating tasks relevant to group activities and he is also someone who gets his followers (people) to do more than his foremost authority requires him to do. Thus, the leader of a church is a leader who is saddled with such responsibilities as mentioned above. Nwaokafor and Ighalo (2005) recorded definition of a leader, as a person who:

- i. Exercise influence over others.
- ii. Focuses his attention on the behavior of group members.
- iii. And as a person in a given office.

Ndu (1992) defined the concept, leader, as a person who is identified as holding the position of leadership for the group. This leader, according to Ndu, possesses the characteristics that make the members follow him; and that he performs those functions necessary for creating an effective change in group performance in such a way that members move towards achieving the group's goal.

Different styles of Leadership: According to Edem (1998), Nwankwo et al (2005), the different leadership styles are:

- i. **Autocratic/tyrannical/Coercive Style:** An authoritarian principal gives order and makes his people to comply forcefully. In this case, the leader has unlimited power and wants things to be done without considering the wishes of his people. The leaders obtain complete power by force. So the leader is called a coercive leader; example is military rule. Those who are led have very little or no say at all about the way things ought to be done.
- ii. **Democratic/Participative Style:** The leader using a democratic or participative style believes that his administration is that of the people, by the

- people and for the people. He considers people ideas in making decisions. Everybody takes part in decision making process in this style of leadership.
- iii. **Charismatic Leadership Style:** A German Sociologist, Max webber (1884-1920), gave the meaning after a Greek word charisma meaning divinely inspired power. He added that the leader using this style has a supernatural gift, which he may demonstrate to his followers by miracles, signs, proofs and wonders. It is based on people's faith and devotion to a certain person who has demonstrated unusual ability to lead through eloquent speeches and deed of heroism for the welfare of the group. The leadership is loved adored and the command unchallengeable. Whatever he says is accepted as dogmatic truth. This leadership style is operationally defined in the study as a style used by a leader who:
- a. Creates opportunity for this staff to become successful achievers in their job;
 - b. Makes the staff understands the institutional goals and objectives;
 - c. Encourage staff to attend in-service training, seminars and conferences that will promote their professional competence.

Trait theory as a leadership theory

This theory of leadership believes that leadership is determined primarily by personal traits or characteristics of the leaders. It rests on the assumption that the person is more important than the situation; and clue to resolving leadership problem is by identifying the distinguishing characteristic of successful leaders.

It is the oldest theory of leadership. It has long time assumption that leaders are born not made. Some of the traits that are said to characterize leaders include physical appearance, ability and personality.

- i. **Physical appearance:** This refers to the physical endowment of a leader, which goes a long way to account for the success of such a leader.
- ii. **Ability:** This includes intelligence, originality and verbal fluency. A leader must be above average member of the group. He should be able to solve complex problem to the admiration of the subordinates. His ability, capability and capacity should not in any way be in doubt.

Personality: This implies self-confidence ability to speak convincingly, high self rating on competence and innovative. A leader must be highly innovative and must be able to pull the subordinates along with adequate incentives, i.e the subordinates must be well motivated by the leader.

Who is a leader?

A leader simply means one who leads others to leadership positions. He leads himself or herself first. And by so doing, inspires others to follow him or her into leadership. A leader is one who influences others to follow after him to a common goal or purpose and possesses the character which inspires their confidence. At the same time he/she is a confident servant.

Munroe (1994) in Maismari (2012) sees a leader as “a person who shows, guides another person or group of persons to attain a goal or objectives.” As a leader, he gives directives on what is to be done. He or she serves as the head of the organization or group.

Distinctive Characteristics of a Good Leader

Leaders are not born but made; this is because everyone has the capacity and potentials to become a leader at birth. Distinctive characteristics of leadership by example, according to some authorities such as Munroe (1994), Denga (1986), Maismari (2012), include:

- i. **Purpose:** A true leader must have a purpose, just like a vision. Your followers will want to know your aims and goals and where you are taking them to.
- ii. **Passion:** A deeply controlling quality that makes good leadership is commitment to the guiding purpose. A clear vision will drive a leader to have passion for his or her people. Out of passion for his people, a leader denies himself of comfort but seeks first to comfort others; as the price of good leadership is sacrifice.
- iii. **Integrity:** This involves self-knowledge. A leader should know himself, including his strengths and weakness, what he wants to do and why he wants to do it. Integrity implies cultivating an unquestionable character in life, in his environment and in everything he does. It is soundness of character for soundness of life. It is to be honest in all things. As a leader, his “Yes” should be “Yes” and “No” should be “No”. He must build up his character to command the respect of others.
- iv. **Trust:** Trust is the basis of integrity. It is one quality that cannot be acquired. It is earned. It is given by workers and followers and without it, a leader cannot function well. A good leader must be trustworthy, and he or she should display transparency and honesty if he or she wants his or her followers to do the same thing. He must be able to keep a proper account of funds and properties at his or her disposal.

- v. **Curious and Daring:** Leadership by example sees life as an adventure. Enquiries are initiated through curiosity. Leaders ask positive questions, such as “How?” and “Why”, expecting to find solution. Leadership by example is willingness to experiment with ideas and explore alternatives. It is willingness to take risks, step out in faith try new things and challenge conventions. Being curious and daring implies not worrying about failure, knowing that something can be learnt from it.
- vi. **Hard –work:** A good leader needs to show good example by working hard and being dedicated to duty. The strength and weakness of the followers is commonly attributed to the leadership. Hence, there is need for a leader to work hard so that he can render proper account of stewardship.

Qualities of Leadership

We are all born with God-given unique personality traits but the common characteristics that must be present in a leadership according to authorities such as Munroe (1994), Maismari (2012) and Ogbodo (2013) include the following:

- i. **Vision**
There is a popular saying that without vision, the people perish. The leader must be a man or a woman of vision, somebody who could see beyond others. That is to say, he or she must have foresight. The foundational key of leadership is the ability to see into the future what needs to be done to move the group forward.
- ii. **Discipline**
This is the heart of leadership. Discipline requires decision. Discipline means obedience, and imposing strict guidelines on oneself. The highest form of discipline is self discipline, and it is only those who excel in this quality that will rise to the top in life and command the respect of others. As a leader, one must display a behaviour that commands respect; one must have a mind of one’s own. He must be calm in crisis period and resilient in adversity.
- iii. **Wisdom**
Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge effectively. We need leaders who are wise, not smart alecks. Smart-alecks are people who do not know, but make people believe they do. “Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with it” Proverb: 8:11. Wisdom will make the leader relevant in his organization and in the society.

- iv. **Independent Decision**
In every good leader, there is an independent thinker. A good leader may solicit opinions of his or her subordinates, but does not depend on people's opinion. He or she should be able to think independently and take a reasonable decision.
- v. **Gentle and Meek**
To be gentle means to be able to control power and be wise in its application. Some people think that meekness is weakness. The Greek word for meekness is translated "Controlled power", power without abuse. This is important because many leaders are tempted to abuse power. But a leader is the one who portrays good character and positively impact on others.
- vi. **Quality of Maturity**
Maturity is the ability to accept the differences in characters, positions and status of others without feeling that one's personal security is threatened. Maturity does not borrow strength from external circumstances nor use them to influence or manipulate others. A mature leader is teachable, correctable and open to innovation and as he or she does these, he or she will be used more and more, and have good reputation with outsiders.
- vii. **Intellectual Quality**
If one desires to become a leader, one must give oneself to study, reading and never graduating from the University of Life. Such person must be a student all his life, be open to knowledge, do not be too busy and have all kinds of excuses against studying. He must learn from people who have gone ahead of him, buy books/magazines, listen to the television and radio, attend seminars, workshops and conferences, listen to his Pastors or Imams to fatten his soul, train and retrain himself on different subjects. Leaders who show example read, they seek knowledge, take classes, listen to others, and actively use ears and eyes. They are curious, always asking questions.
- viii. **Quality of Family Management**
A leader who leads by example must be able to manage his family and domestic issues very well, and see that his or her children obey him or her properly. A good leader will fall in love with his family, not money. Ebonugwo (2007) has this to say about a leader's family: The home is the test of true leadership. If a man has not succeeded in exercising a happy discipline in his own home and family, is there reason to expect that he will do better with an organization or church family? The clear implication is, while caring for the interest of the organization or ministry, a true leader will not neglect the family that is his personal and primary

responsibility. To a leadership by example, the family will not be sacrificed for anything, because the family is the bedrock of everything.

ix. **Faithfulness in Stewardship**

A steward is someone who looks after somebody else's property. A leader does not own the people; they are just under his care. A steward must be service oriented. A leader leading should not be motivated by greed for money, but the eagerness to serve. As faithful steward, he should be willing and happy to do the job even without pay. He or she should be able to say, "I am eager, excited and enthused, regardless of what you pay me." A leader should be faithful over what is entrusted under his care.

Role of Counsellors in Leadership

Counsellors should provide good models for the Nigeria youths to imitate. Worthy of emulation are good leaders like the Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua who declared his assets before he was sworn in, and the present President Muhammadu Buhari who also declared his assets after being sworn in. Hence the role of counsellor, according to Ekpo (2007), Denga (1998) and Ogbodo (2017), includes:

- i. The counsellor should educate parents, school administrators, teachers and political leaders to lead by examples as youth are observing them or watching them so as to show the good example and lead them well by mentoring.
- ii. The counsellor should also disseminate good information to the youth such as how to manage their time, to have value for human beings, to have vision in life, to cultivate good study habit, i.e. reading culture because readers are leaders. They should counsel youth to obey the rules and regulations as the future leaders and encourage them to work hard as a team, to imbibe the spirit of responsibility and accountability and to be transparent in all their doing.
- iii. Counsellors in schools should ensure that all the prefects discharge their responsibilities faithfully according to the set standard of the institution.

Recommendations

The recommendations include the following:

- i. Guidance and counselling curriculum need to be enriched at the three tiers of education to incorporate skill that will teach children, youth and adult leadership style and mentoring.
- ii. Introduction of counselling as compulsory course or subject to inculcate leadership quality style against corruption in the society.

- iii. Counsellors should be employed and post to all walks of life (both school and non school setting) to improve or reduce the problems of leaders' corruption in Nigeria.
- iv. Counsellors should be given opportunities for capacity development to enhance their competences
- v. Counsellors should be encouraged to be involved in publications through provision of incentives and infrastructures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a leader who shows good example, is a role model and a pace-setter, who knows his or her destination and how to get there. He or she has the ability to inspire people and get their support. Parents are advised to build or train their children's personality from the home since, "charity begins at home". Families should wake up to their responsibilities. The way an individual is nurtured and the type of contact he or she makes are crucial to good leadership development. The home is the most important model, the first place of training for the growing child. Experiences gotten here determine whether the individual will eventually grow up as a trustworthy and a highly principled person, or slippery and unreliable, or dependent on others or relatively independent and self-assured.

As the head of an organization, a leader should reproduce himself; that is, succession plans must be put in place before a leader exhausts his or her term in office. Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua and President Buhari submitted themselves to public scrutiny by open declaration of their assets. This is leadership by example. Leaders should imitate this. Finally, it is imperative to draw from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 13 verse 13 with reference to King Solomon, who came to terms with reality despite his wealth with the following submission: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep His commands, for this is the whole duty of man".

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