**LEADERS AS CHANGE AGENT**

Modern Leaders **function as change agent**, a reason why business organisations prefer to recruit leaders in the **place of managers**. This is possible since leaders possess soft skills i.e emotional intelligence, conceptual and human relations skills. To manage change means to remain competitive and attractive in the face of challenges (Zaccaro, 2007). However, possessing skills of managing change have been linked to organizational successes. More so, to perfectly implement change process without resistance, the change leader needs to develop following capabilities: superhuman determination to make the change happen; persistence; stamina; sufficient mandate that stems from personal change; and first-rate intelligence (Ajayi, 2002). Evidently, lack of understanding of change implementation techniques and the inability to modify one‘s management style or organizational functions are cited as barriers to success (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Gilley, 2005). However, leaders as agent of change must exhibit the following qualities:

**(1) Coaching**

Coaching is the process of improving performance by developing synergistic relationships with employees through training, counseling, confronting, and mentoring (Gilley & Boughton, 1996). It is designed to maximize employee strengths and minimize weaknesses (Hill, 2004), resulting in improved performance due to greater awareness (Whitmore, 1997). Coaching skills enable leaders to question the status quo, approach situations from new perspectives, and allow others to make and learn from mistakes (Hudson (1999).

**(2) Communication**

Informing subordinates about impending change is vital if the change process must be successful. Leaders are responsible for ‗‗communicating to the organization the risks in clinging to the status quo and the potential rewards of embracing a radically different future‘‘ (Denning, 2005: 12). Leadership ambivalence weakens claims of legitimacy for change and enables recipients to cling to reasons for resistance (Larson & Tompkins, 2005). Consequently, communications should be frequent and enthusiastic (Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, & Weir, 2006), while leaders simultaneously curb their bias toward unrealistic tendencies (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003). Leaders as change agents must provide employees with abundant, relevant information with regard to impending changes, justify the appropriateness and rationale for change, address employees‘ questions and concerns, and explore ways in which change might affect recipients in order to increase acceptance and participation (Green, 2004; Rousseau & Tijoriwala,1999). Appropriate communications provide employees with feedback and reinforcement during the change (Peterson & Hicks, 1996).

**(3) Involving Others**

Involving employees in change decision making is paramount if you are prepared for such change resistance. Employee involvement (EI) increases workers‘ input into decisions that affect their well-being and organizational performance (Glew, O‘Leary- Kelly, Griffin, & Van Fleet, 1995). Lawler, Mohrman, and Ledford‘s (1982) long-term study of Fortune 1000 firms revealed positive trends in use of employee involvement programmes within these firms, along with a growing number of employee participation in EI programs. Specifically, successful change implementation requires a facilitative management style that ensures that communication (including coaching, information sharing, and appropriate feedback) mechanisms are in place, worker involvement flourishes, and social networks (teams and collaboration) are supported (Denning, 2005; Drucker, 1999; Williams, 2001).

**(4) Motivation**

Motivation is the influence or drive that causes us to behave in a specific manner and has been described as consisting of energy, direction, and sustainability (Kroth, 2007). In an organizational context, a leader‘s ability to persuade and influence others to work in a common direction reflects his or her talent to motivate. A leader‘s ability to influence is based partly on his or her skill and partly on the motivation level of the individual employee. Motivation theories explore the multiple approaches to meeting individuals‘ needs, including expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), need theory (Maslow, 1954), reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1971), and the widely used goal theory (Karoly, 1993). Conversely, motivating others requires skilled managers who can organize and provide a motivating environment: communicate effectively, address employees‘ questions, generate creative ideas, prioritize ideas, direct personnel practices, plan employees‘ actions, commit employees to action, and provide follow-up to overcome motivational problems (Carlisle &Murphy, 1996).

**(5) Rewarding**

LeBoeuf (1985) suggested that leaders secure desired results through a compensation and reward philosophy that recognizes employees for the right performance. Rewarding change efforts demonstrates the importance of and need for change, along with leaders‘ understanding that "the things that get rewarded get done". Conversely, unsatisfactory outcomes are the result of rewarding recipients for doing what [organizations] don‘t want them to do‘‘ (Buford & Jelinek, 2006: 450). Recipients of change react positively to rewards for incremental change, celebrations of milestones and leaders who create win-win situations related to change (Lussier, 2006). Reward programmes that help organizations achieve specific change goals such as greater creativity, innovative products, competitiveness, collaboration and teamwork, employee commitment and loyalty, long-term plans, and continual learning and application of new skills are positively related to organizational goal achievement (Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 1999).

**(6) Promoting Teamwork**

The synergistic benefits of teamwork enable members working cooperatively with one another to achieve more than by working independently (Trent, 2004). Recent studies have reported an ever-increasing number of Firms using teams to accomplish organizational tasks in response to serious challenges posed by a dynamic global economy (Oh, Chung, & Labiance, 2004; Towry, 2003). Effectively managing teams and structuring work groups in ways that support collaboration are two leadership abilities necessary for achieving organizational goals. Studies suggest that work groups can be designed to enable members with diverse skills and backgrounds to communicate and interact in ways that constructively challenge each other‘s ideas (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, it has been evidenced that social networks have important effects on team performance and viability (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006).

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, not all leaders are change agents. Only leaders who exhibit the aforementioned qualities are refer to as change agent or agent of change. This is because what differentiates an agent of change from a leader who is not is the ability or inability to successful implement organisational changes that in turns brings about success for the organisation.

**SUMMARY**

Change could be defined as everything from re-engineering, right sizing, restructuring to cultural change (Kotter, 1995). Therefore leaders as visionary, pathfinders, shepherds, thinkers and philosophers are required to be more self-discovery, skilful and motivated towards its implementation. However, Leaders as agent of change have the following characteristics: promoting teamwork, involving others, reward performer, motivate, and coaching their followers (Zaccaro, 2007).

**LEADERSHIP PROBLEM IN NIGERIA**

More than sixty years of her independence, the most critical challenge confronting the giant of Africa – Nigeria, appears to be credible and accountable leadership. Many researchers have find it incredibly difficult to understand why Nigeria still struggles with the menace of poor or bad leadership since independence even with abundance of human and material resources, which are second to none in Africa. The Largest African economy as at 2015, surprisingly, finds it difficult to feeds her citizens as at November, 2016. Then, ―why has the country not been able to produce a nationally accepted leadership (Esu, 2001: 111). While, some have argued that leadership challenge of the country could be traced from the emergence of colonial era in Nigeria, others dismissed such argument on the basis that corruption and lack of vision among past and present leaders of Nigeria culminate to hamper any meaningful effort in the quest for good governance in the country. Can we say size or the over 500 languages? Nonetheless, argument of size or over 500 languages can‘t answer the question of why Nigeria still battles with leadership problem. Since countries like China and India have successfully moved from the third world nations to a developing one in the space of 6o years.

However, leadership has been said to be difficult to define. Be that as it may, leadership is therefore the **capacity to set goals for the organization.** According to Ihejiamaizu (1996: 102), ―leadership involves some sharing of power or influence; but the leader is the one who is able to unite people in pursuit of the organization's goals‖. Similarly, ―leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose (Jacobs & Jacques, 1990: 281).‖ However, this second definition is what is lacking in Nigeria. Nigeria‘s leaders lack the ability to give meaningful direction for collective efforts. In addition, according to Graig (2005:132) leadership is defined as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. More so, leadership is the **ability to influence the behaviour of others in a group** or organization, set goals, for the group, formulate paths to the goal and create some social norms in the group (Uveges, 2003).While Robert et al (2004) affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among the leader, the followers, and the situation.

Why symptoms of failing leadership in Nigeria include:

* Unemployment,
* prostitution,
* child abuse/ labour,
* insecurity,
* financial corruption,
* tribalism,
* budget paddling,
* mediocrity in high places,
* crude oil thefts,
* crisis in education,
* tribal rivalry,
* pipeline vandalisation,
* intellectual incapacity,
* indiscipline,
* dearth of infrastructures such as health services,
* incompetency,
* poor transport system,
* epileptic power supply, accommodation problem, medication/ health issue etc are all this define Nigeria as a failed leadership experiment. Could it be said that Nigerians that hitherto found themselves in positions of authority do not possess adequate leadership traits capable of addressing critical challenges facing the country? What are the factors responsible for poor leadership style among Nigerian leaders? (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012).

**MAJOR PROBLEMS OF LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA**

After a careful examination of the leadership history in Nigeria, Achebe (1983) opines that: The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to its responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership. This Nigeria leadership problem has the following elements that better describes it:

**(1) Incompetency and Mediocrity:** Since independence, Nigeria‘s presidency has been occupied by men who are grossly incompetent and lack political will to put things straight and right. No one can give what he didn‘t have. They are theoreticians than practitioners. They intentionally appoints mediocre to work with them just to loot the treasury without query. Repeatedly, many of Nigeria‘s leaders picks mediocre as successors just to have a clean track record after committing crimes that are above the laws. But this is grossly not sustainable, the Nigeria‘s economic soul cries for rescue. At times, one begins to wonder how did we get here? How can it be so difficult for a country richly endowed like Nigeria with both human and material resources in plethora to have a true leadership of hope like what was experienced in Singapore under Sir Lee Kwan Yew?

**(2) Ethnicity and Tribalism:** The three largest groups (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba) have virtually nothing in common politically, socially, or historically. The overwhelming majority of Nigerians only speak their "home" language, and if they learn another, it is invariably English and not one of the other indigenous tongues. History of ethnic bigotry in Nigeria can be traced back to 1946, during the colonial era when Sir Arthur Richard, Nigeria then Governor General introduced a Regional Government. He divided Nigeria into NEW. An acronym that stands for Northern, Eastern and Western Nigeria. With each region headed by a Premier. This was the origin of regional government (Oduguwa, 2012). Ever since, Nigerians have seen themselves in the light of these regional nations than as Nigerians. The major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbos) continually get hold of leadership, installing their kinsmen into delicate positions and improving the lives of their micro-nation (tribe) than the generality of the Nigerian people.

**(3) Mono-economy:** Since Oil was discovered on Sunday 15 January 1956 at Oloibiri Oilfield by Shell Darcy, Nigeria has depended on it solely by neglecting her previous foreign exchange brands i.e Cocoa, wool, Coal, groundnut, fish etc. At the discovery of all, everyone jubilated that the era of want should soon be over. But the opposite was the case. Some has argued that Oil killed the giant in Nigeria. Since its discovery, Nigeria has been plunged into a number of leadership related problem i.e greed, egocentrism, intolerance, fraud, misappropriation and diversion of national fund for personal use, oil theft and financial stealing etc. This mono dependent on Oil later creates a negative multiplier effects by increasing the rate of unemployment, insecurity as a result of idleness, prostitution, wants, and lackry.

**(4) Greed and Corruption:** Cases of corruption, misappropriation and greed has been well established in Africa‘s most populous nation-Nigeria. This has historical antecedents from the colonial masters, the defunct regional government, then military regime and the republics. According to Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye (2014), since gaining independence in 1960, most Nigerian leaders have not clearly demonstrated sense of genuine national development. They went further to argue that most African leaders plunder, defraud, embezzle and mismanage their countries human and natural resources with so much impunity. They are **possessive, egoistic, selfish, individualistic, callous, greedy and secretive that transparency and accountability** has no place in their administration and management of common and collective wealth (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye, 2014). Similarly, Adebanjo (2008) gave an insight that an estimated $380 billion of the country‘s collective wealth was stolen by its post-independence leaders: about two-thirds of all economic aids given to Africa during this period. Also, the regime of Ibrahim Babangida was unable to account for $12.4 billion of missing oil revenues that were part of a windfall from the 1991 Gulf War (Apter, 2005). Corruption is an evil wind that affects everyone and retard societal progress. That is what corruption is presently doing to Nigeria. See a country like Singapore, former third world nation becoming first world nation in few decades. Yet not as blessed and popular as Nigeria. Nigeria‘s leaders using poverty as bait to win political elections. Although corruption and fraud are universal problems for all government and all countries, the magnitude seems to be at its peak in the giant of Africa – Nigeria. This social ill takes the form of **kickbacks, payoffs, bribery scandal**, etc which endangers progress of any society ( Ikejiani & Clark, 2001). It is no longer doubtful that leadership characterized by non adherence to the constitution, corruption, poor educational background as well as political recycling of leaders with questionable character, adversely affects service delivery to the people (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye, 2016).

**(5) Insincerity and hypocrisy:** One of the major problems identified under poor leadership in Nigeria is the insincerity of mind and action of its leaders. Nigeria for the past 56 years has been unlucky, very unlucky to have crop of opportunists than leaders whose only interest is their pocket. Nigeria leaders often prefer everything to go bad and wrong than to arrest the anticipated issue before it gets out of hand. They are never sincere since the sufferings of Nigerians means nothing to them. For instance, during former President Obasanjo‘s term in office, he established EFCC to fight corruption in the land. Many of the Nigeria‘s citizens saw this as a good step in the right direction. Few years after, it was disappointing top realized that this EFCC was not created with genuine intention. It was only a tool to fight enemies of the president not enemies of the Nigerian state. This is hypocrisy! The EFCC repeatedly has been involved in cases of selective justice, where the most corrupt of all men lives freely in the public eye just because they are Mr. President‘s friend. Successive governments after Obasanjo have followed suit. Presently, the Buhari regime has been grossly criticised for same selective justice. Fighting enemies and not friends, with hundreds of rogues in his cabinet. Those who must come to equity must come with clean hands. This worrisome situation demands urgent attention. The quintessential question to then ask is, why do Nigerians still vote for this recycled sets of people?

**(6) Lack of National Identity:** Every government for itself. A Judas in the last government is a saint in the new government. No sense of nationhood but cabalism. Go to America, England, China and even Ghana, you will see true sense of nationhood. Where a citizen will tell you ‗I am a Ghanaian… American… British etc‘ This is not so in Nigeria. Nigeria‘s presidents are often identified with their tribal and religion identities in dressing, appointments and deeds. Most of Nigeria‘s leaders are insensitive and or carefree. To then worsen the case, they prefer to even be identified with their political party and even inner caucus within the micro-segment of the party. Leadership anywhere in the world cannot work in isolation of delegation of authority and responsibility. This division of labour must be handled by experts who must have been selected or appointed on merit. The reverse is the case. The Nigeria‘s case is one that is so appalling where knowledge, experience, character, qualifications and definiteness of purpose perishes once you don‘t find yourself in the caucus of the privileged few. Nigeria‘s leaders are fools surrounded by idiots. They are so arrogant to stand meritocracy.

**CONCLUSION**

This unit discussed the dynamics of Nigeria‘s leadership problem, some antecedents, and brief highlights for solution. From this unit, it can be concluded that major problem facing Nigeria are corruption, lack of national identity, poor or weak leadership, mono-dependent on oil, tribalism and nepotism, greed and incompetency. However, solutions to these problems hang on both the Nigerian leaders and followers.

**SUMMARY** Leadership holds the key to unlocking the transformation question in Nigeria, but to sustain this drive, leaders must carry certain genes and attributes that are representative and promotive of this order. These include: existence of practical, purposeful, visionary and missionary initiative by the individual, reflecting the objectives of held ideas, values and aspirations; existence in an individual of a clear set of ideas, values, aspirations reflecting those of the majority who are the subject or followership, and ; existence of patriotic and nationalistic spirit, transparency and accountability, signs of concrete achievements involving the extent to which intended effects are produced by the leader. These are the core values of good governance (Anazodo & Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2015). Arguably, leader must **put God first in order to achieve results.** Putting God first means fearing God. When a man fears God, he loves everyone even his greatest enemy. The fear of God can also mean fairness to everyone irrespective of tribe, religion and political difference.