Leading Versus Dominating: Critical Issues in Developing 21st Century Institutional Managers

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Abstract

This article addresses the issue of how institutional managers can lead their subordinates effectively without dominating or infringing on their fundamental rights, with particular reference to educational institutions. Institutional managers of the previous century were instructional leaders exercising firm control by setting goals, maintaining discipline and evaluating results; today, there has been a paradigm shift. Managers are expected to be transformational by building teams, creating networks and paying attention to the concerns and developmental needs of individual followers. It is no longer new to observe that human society is dynamic and susceptible to changes. In recent times, human society has witnessed different changes in all spheres of life, which in turn have impacts on our educational, technological and socio-economic lives. Since human society is regulated by institutions and each institution is managed by people, it is obvious then that for human society to progress meaningfully, the managers of the various institutions must have significant and different leadership skills. These skills no doubt cannot be acquired by chance, they must be learned. There is the challenge of coping with the complex information technology that has rapidly compressed the whole world into a global village. Coupled with this is the challenge of managing the different maturity levels of subordinates in the various institutions. While some subordinates are able and willing to work, others are simply unable or unwilling to do so. Of serious concern is the issue of over-protection of subordinates with different constitutional rights, among which are international labour laws and fundamental human rights, among others. How then can 21st century institutional managers succeed in the context of these challenges? They must not only serve as role models for their
followers but also have clear visions and encourage creativity among them.

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### 1. Introduction

Until the early 1950s, military, engineering and research scientists had been the sole users of the electronic computers (Craiger, 1980). This was followed by a paradigm shift in business practices and work structures. The pyramids in Egypt were built with great intensity of manual labour, with managers or supervisors who directly told the labourers what to do, how to do it and when to do it. Anyone who failed the instructions would be dealt with accordingly. Taking account of the haphazard ways the managers treated the labourers, Fredrick Taylor developed the scientific management theory in the early decades of the twentieth century. This theory was based on the application of scientific principles to the management of organizations. Taylor’s theory was criticized on the grounds of its use in the potential exploitation of workers, the problem of unity of command, wrong assumptions and narrow applications. This then gave rise to other approaches to management and how to motivate people to work, such as Abraham Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs. This theory was in turn criticized on the ground of unrealistic assumptions about employees in general, that:

- all employees are alike;
- all situations are alike and that
- there is only one best way to meet needs.
In the 1970s and 1990s were Robert Greenleaf and Peter Block’s theories of “Servant Leadership” and “Stewardship” respectively. As powerful as those theories were considered to be at that time, they could not meet the needs of 21st century internet-driven organizations.

At the start of the 21st century, managing organizations became even more of a serious challenge. This was partly because of the peculiarities of the century. The 21st century is characterized by automation, high regard for human and labour rights and globalization brought about by information technology, to mention just a few factors. Heerwagen (2010) corroborated this shift and remarked that in today’s world, the structure, content and processes of work have changed. He further stressed that work is now (for many people) more cognitively complex, more team-based and collaborative, more dependent on social skills and technological competence, more time pressured, more mobile and less dependent on geography. Organizations in turn are more focused on identifying value from the customer perspective, less hierarchical in structure and decision authority, less likely to provide lifelong careers and job security and continually reorganizing to maintain competitive advantage. How then will an institution’s manager succeed in the midst of these complexities? To boss or to lead? This is a herculean decision for the manager of all institutions.

2. What Is Leadership and Who Is a Leader?

Leadership is the ability to influence a group of people towards the achievement of goals. Leadership could also be seen as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of the subordinates in an effort to reach organizational objectives. This means the ability to get someone else do something the manager wants done because the employee wants to do it. Stogdill (1950) views leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal setting and goal achievements.
These definitions show that leadership:

a. is a process, not a position or personality;
b. involves the behaviour of the leader toward followers or subordinates in a group or organization and
c. involves influence.

It can, therefore, be conclude that a person provides leadership for a group through helping:

- a group to define tasks, goals and purposes;
- a group to achieve its tasks, goals and purposes and
- to maintain the group by assisting in providing for individual needs.

If leadership involves all the above, who then is a leader? Guthrie and Reed (1991) define a leader as that individual who accepts the authoritative expectations of others’ responsibility to guide the activities and enhance the performance or an organization. Ejiogu (2010) views a leader as someone who by exemplary conduct draws or pulls others towards the leader so that they join hands to achieve common goals or objectives. He concludes this definition by saying that, although thousands of managers exist all over the place, not all of them are leaders. This position can be linked with the managerial grid of Blake and Mouton who maintain that managers perform best under a 9-9 style, a style that gives high concern for people rather than the task.

Implicitly, therefore, for a manager really to demonstrate leadership traits, the manager should not be bossy but must, instead, emphasize the interpersonal relationships among the subordinates, that is, the manager should have job relationships characterized by mutual trust, respect for subordinates’ ideas and regard for their feelings. These traits or qualities are rarely inborn, they are largely learned. Since not all leaders attained their leadership position by virtue of competencies (as in the case of appointed, situational or even elected leaders), the
tendency for a leader to be disillusioned, oppressive, autocratic, aggressive, high-handed or overwhelmed by the challenges of the organization is very common. Such leaders who spend so much precious time play–acting, pretending, manipulating and perpetuating anachronistic doctrines and behavioural patterns are described as ‘Losers’ (Ejiogu, 2010). These losers may be neurotic as they use their potential to manipulate others and, by so doing, become power drunk, insensitive, greedy and, ultimately, abysmally corrupt.

Leadership in the 21st century has progressed from the anachronistic classical school of thought to a more pragmatic transformational approach. Leadership in the 21st century should not be confused with status. This is due to the fact that a top–ranking person in a large corporation or government agency may simply be bureaucratic, one who may not be able to lead in even the most trivial situation. This does not mean that status is irrelevant to leadership but it must be understood that most positions of high status carry with them symbolic values and traditions that enhance the possibility of leadership. For instance, people expect the president, the governors, the local government chairperson and the like to lead, although the selection process does not guarantee automatic success. Fullan (2006) expands more on these distinctions, explaining that even through a leader has some measures of power rooted in the personal capacity to persuade, the leader may not have inherent leadership gifts since sources of power may be derived from money, capacity to inflict harm, from control of some piece of institutional machinery or from access to the media.

3. Leading or Dominating?

Of the key drivers for changing the nature of work and organizations as identified by Heerwagen (2010), two were rated as particularly important, which are:
increasing pressures on organizations to be more competitive, agile and customer focused and
communication and information technology breakthroughs.

The implication of this is that organizations may now define their values from the customer’s perspective. This has indirectly given customers more of a stake in the organization. The earlier a manager recognizes this, the greater the chances of success. Organizations today are looking for managers with team spirit, results orientation and managers that are information technology savvy. De Silva (1997) noted that globalization and communication technology have greatly led to democratization and pressures for more labour rights in countries where such rights have been restricted; more liberalization and deregulation and more focus on being customer-driven (and not product-driven) in both global and local markets. Today’s managers, therefore, must put in place workplace relations and policies that are conducive for better motivation and performance.

Although various authors (e.g. Ejiogu, 2010; Robbins, 2001, Olagboye, 2004) believe that no single leadership style is universally applicable in all situations, they are nonetheless of the opinions that there are some traits a good leader in a stakeholder society should possess. Some leaders find their strength in eloquence, some in judgement and others in courage. For example, Churchill was known as a splendidly eloquent old warrior, while Gandhi was a visionary and shrewd, while Gorge Marshall was a self-effacing, low-keyed man with superb judgment and a limitless capacity to inspire trust. All these people were great leaders with extraordinary diversity in their personal attributes. To account for this diversity, various leadership theories have been propounded by different schools of thought. Some of these are as follows:

- The trait theories: these are theories that sought to identify personality, social, physical or intellectual traits common to leaders that differentiate leaders from non-leaders;
• The behavioural theories: authors in this case maintained that specific behaviours rather than traits differentiate leaders. Examples of these theories are the Ohio State studies, the University of Michigan studies, the managerial grid and the Scandinavian studies;
• The contingency theories: proponents of these theories believe that leadership effectiveness depend on the ability to adopt the best or most suitable style in a particular situation. Examples of these theories include the Fiedler contingency model, Hersey and Blanchard’s situational theory, leader-member exchange theory, path–goal theory and the leader participation model;
• Neo-charismatic theories: these are leadership theories that emphasize symbolism, emotional appeal and extraordinary levels of follower commitment. Examples include charismatic leadership, transformational leadership and visionary leadership.

If a public service leader must achieve the goals of the organization, Robbins (2001) is of the opinion that such leader must be one who guides or motivates followers in the direction of established goals by clarifying role and task requirements. Such a leader is referred to as a transactional leader. A transactional leader motivates followers through reward and punishment systems; that is, if the followers do something good, they are rewarded and if they do something wrong, they are punished. Put in another way, a relationship between two people is based on the level of exchange they have. Exchange in this case need not be money or material item, it can be anything. The more exchange they have, the stronger their relationship. For example, a manager expects more productivity from workers, if something is done to anyone based on the returns, then that relationship is called the ‘transactional’ type. In politics, leaders announce benefits in their agenda in exchange for receiving vote from the citizens. In business, leaders announce rewards in exchange for workers’ productivity. All these relationships are about requirements, conditions and rewards (or
punishment). Leaders who show these kinds of relationship are called ‘transactional leaders.’

In a public service setting that is characterized by high bureaucratic principles, accountability, transparency, due process and the like, a leader must be more than transactional. For a public service leader really to deliver the goals of the organization, as well as create a better life for all, it is necessary in addition to recognizing the transactional needs of followers to seek to arouse and satisfy their higher needs and engage the full persons of the followers by providing individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation in them. This leader is otherwise known as a ‘transformational leader.’

This type of leadership style leads to positive changes in those who follow. These leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process, they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well. According to Robbins (2001), transformational leaders pay attention to the concerns and developmental needs of individual followers, they change followers’ awareness of issues by helping them to look at old problems in new ways and they are able to excite, arouse and inspire followers to expend extra effort to achieve group goals.

Wiley (2007), suggested four components of transformational leadership, namely:

- Intellectual stimulation: this characteristic involves not only changing the status quo but, also, encouraging creativity among followers. The leader encourages followers to explore new ways of doing things and provides new opportunities to learn;
- Individual consideration: this characteristic involves offering support and encouragement to individual followers. This requires keeping lines of communication open so that
followers feel free to share ideas and for leaders to offer direct recognition of each follower’s unique contributions;

- Inspirational motivation: this involves clear visions that leaders are able to articulate to followers. These leaders are also able to help followers experience the same passion and motivation to fulfill these goals;

- Idealized influence: in this case, the transformational leaders serve as role models for the followers. Since followers trust and respect the leader, they emulate the leader and internalize ideas espoused.

At this juncture, it is not appropriate to infer that transformational and transactional leadership are opposing approaches to getting things done, rather that transformational leadership is built on top of transactional leadership. That is, it produces levels of follower effort and performance that go beyond what would occur with a transactional approach alone. For a public service leader, who will implement public policy, to succeed the leader must equally understand the peculiarities of human nature in the organization. Onyene (2000) asserts that unless leaders understand the complex nature of individuals, they may not be able to motivate, communicate and of course lead the group to excellence. It follows, therefore, that before a public service leader will succeed, she or he must, in addition to being transformative, understand the typology of the individuals in the organization. In this context, two types of groupings are relevant, namely:

- The follower’s maturity level (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974);
- The AEIOU model (Boshe & Albrecht, 1997).

3.1. The Follower’s Maturity Level

Hersey and Blanchard (1974) classified the maturity levels of followers into four categories, namely:
• Maturity Level 1 (M1): this group includes followers with low skill and low will. This group of followers does not have enough requisite skills needed for the success of the organization and neither do they have the willingness to be trained or go for further training;
• Maturity Level 2 (M2): this level includes those followers who have low skill but high will. These followers do not have the requisite skills but are ready to take corrective action for their personal development and organizational growth;
• Maturity Level 3 (M3): followers in this category have high skills but low will. Although these followers although possess the skills needed by the organization implicitly, they are not willing to give their best;
• Maturity Level 4 (M4): this group includes followers who have both high skills and high will. They have the necessary skills needed for the improvement of the organization as well as the willingness to give their best.

3.2. The AEIOU Model

Boshear and Albrecht (1977) maintain that there are four types of followers in every organization. The acronym AEIOU is what they used to represent these different groups. The interpretations are as follows:

• A stands for action people: these people are action-oriented, exhibiting little or no patience for delays. They may not be good when it comes to initiating an idea but whenever ideas are initiated, they do not procrastinate in putting them into action;
• E stands for energizers: these people are motivators who inspire others willingly to contribute their best with a view to achieving the goals of the organization;
• I stands for ideas person: these people are thinkers and philosophers who are mostly concerned with initiating ideas;
stands for organizers: followers in this group believe in pulling people and resources together to achieve desired organizational goals;
- U stands for uncommitted people: the uncommitted follower is indifferent to the happenings and events of the organization.

4. Managing Institutions in the Past: Lessons from the Old School

The old styles of managing institutions were broadly successful in the past. Managers previously adopted the following strategies to accomplish their goals:

- Telling people what to do: heads of institutions would give blind orders to their subordinates without explaining what the task was all about or providing adequate preparation or explanation of the requisite skills needed to do the task. They would not believe that the subordinates themselves had sufficient skills and potential to be able to help in accomplishing the goals of the organization. In their role as the boss, they simply lorded it over their subordinates;
- Demanding total obedience from teachers and students: just like the pyramid construction managers of Egypt and the commanders of the civil war in the 1960s in Nigeria, managers of the past would give orders and expect people to obey them without question. The principle was: “Do it because I am the boss.” Teachers or stakeholders in education did not have the right to ask questions or suggest alternative ideas. The heads would not consider it possible that the subordinates could have a better idea. This approach worked in the past when workplace relations and social relations generally were not so complex and discussed as much as now;
- The heads of institutions motivated their teachers by fear: there was the fear of losing a job without due process. The
message was: “Do what I ask you to do or I will fire you.” Fear was such a successful motivator in the past that many workers came to work every day driven by the goal of making their boss happy or at least avoiding displeasure. The best way to avoid incurring the wrath of the boss and the full punishment of fear-based management was to spend efforts to please the boss and avoiding committing (or being seen to commit) any kind of mistake. So the focus was on pleasing the boss rather than doing the job. If the boss and the customer needed something at the same time, the boss received attention first. Indirectly, the principle was: “Keep the doctor happy, let the patient wait” or keep the principal happy and do not worry so much about students’ safety.

5. From Dominating to Leading: A Paradigm Shift

It is conspicuously obvious that any style of leadership that does not take into account the welfare of the subordinates will not be successful these days. This is due to the fact that contemporary followers are protected by both local and international labour laws (although these are not ratified or enforced everywhere). They also want justification for any action the leader wants them to take. A leader who cannot inspire these followers into action but only dictate what they are to do is indirectly calling for industrial action. Consequently, an institutional leader who aspires to succeed should possess the following qualities:

- A clear mission and vision: while a mission defines what the organization wants to achieve in the present, a vision defines what it wants to achieve in the future. For the vision and mission to be effective, they must be clear and unambiguous, realistic and achievable, in alignment with the values and culture of the organization and, also, time-aspected. An institutional leader with a clear vision and mission would not only know the direction of travel but the means by which the
journey will be completed. Such a leader would have a sense of direction and a clear focus and be able to think about the future and make plans for it with precision. Having the ability to forecast change will help the leader succeed. It is important to note that having clear vision and mission is in itself insufficient and it is necessary to communicate these with complete understanding and comprehension to followers;

- The ability to articulate changes successfully without interrupting the smooth operation of the institution: the 21st century seems to have witnessed more changes than any previous one and, therefore, a leader who wants to succeed in this century must not only prepare for changes but also be able to bring about the incorporation of those changes into existing procedures. A leader should understand that most people tend to resist change, partly because of the fear of the unknown and partly because of the long history of workplace change and loss or change of jobs. However, it is obvious that change is inevitable, especially in this volatile era, because of the impact of new technologies and knowledge on workplace practices. As the changes occur, a good leader must be able to influence subordinates into accepting the changes without resistance, while also being able to communicate the benefits of the changes to them if it is necessary for them to embrace change without resistance;

- The leader should be abreast of the current policies guiding relevant operations and the organization: while it is true that many things have changed in the educational system, it is not true that all practitioners in the educational system are acquainted with these changes. There are many heads of educational institutions who cannot correctly identify the websites of their own institutions, let alone know how to access them. Many do not know the latest best practices in their disciplines. Some of these heads are ridiculed by their subordinates who are aware of current policies guiding their operations. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (the
highest policy reference document in education) has been reviewed and changed. It is striking to hear that some heads of educational institutions in Nigeria do not have copies of this document, let alone having knowledge of the contents. Perhaps it is either because such leaders are obliged to rely on second hand information or they give wrong information to others, including their subordinates. If the subordinates discovered that their boss has been giving them wrong information and directives as a result of ignorance of the current policies, that manager would certainly lose their respect. Gone are the days when managers were able simply to assume superiority over their subordinates and the principle of power by fear of position no longer applies to the extent that it did. The leader must demonstrate understanding and knowledge in order to command respect;

- A shared purpose and direction: this calls for building a strong team. Since every organization is a system that is comprised of several sub-systems, a 21st century leader must know how to harmonize the various sub-systems together for the accomplishment of the goals of the organization. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a team spirit and to inculcate the same into the members of the organization. As a result of this, everyone on the team would become committed to the team’s purpose. They would know exactly what the goals of the organization are because the team leader keeps them focused constantly by communicating the goals at staff meetings with regular updates. The leader goes further to help each individual team member meet his or her own needs while serving the overall purpose of the team. They celebrate the success together and focus minds on areas that need improvement;

- The ability to sort followers into different levels of maturity: having understood the different levels of maturity of the followers, the leader should be able to sort followers into different categories of maturity and treat them according to
their levels. The leader should understand the various treatment therapies for each category. For example, a follower who is not willing and not able cannot be given any sensitive responsibility but might instead be sidelined or moved elsewhere. An M2 person (that is, a person with low skills but high will) should be given appropriate training so as to be able to fit into the system. Since this person is willing, a little training will assist the individual to become more relevant to the organization. A person with high skills but low will (M3) should be instructed in terms of taking responsibility. Since this person knows what to do but is not willing to do it, the individual should be given strict instruction and close supervision so as to become more relevant to the organization. A follower with high will and high skills should receive more responsibilities through delegation. That individual would be a good successor and should, therefore, be mentored. This is similar to the proposal of Onyene (2000), with respect to public service institutions. She insisted that the energizers in an organization need the action persons to have their goals or objectives actualized since the energizer motivates and inspires the set goals. Also, when an action and an idea person are working together, this might lead to impatience on the part of the action person who seeks ideas that can be transplanted. An organizer working with an energizer will result in setting of objectives, giving of guidance and encouraging others in order to achieve the organizational goals. An energizer might be able to arouse, motivate and stir an uncommitted person to be involved in role accomplishment. Organizers working with idea persons will lead to setting of ideas that will often succeed. Uncommitted person working with an organizer might result in passivity, resistance and grudging acceptance of responsibilities because the organizers will need to persuade, coerce and direct the uncommitted people to work. Invariably, an uncommitted person cannot work with an organizer in the same way that
two idea persons cannot serve on the same committee in
unless there is to be a risk of provoking argument which
might impede progress. This principle will guide the selection
of members of any committee or other group that might drive
the organization forward.

6. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the era of assumed superiority
over the subordinate is over. Workers, in many cases, are no longer
managed to comply with rules or orders; rather, they are managed to
be committed to organizational goals and mission. Managers then
become more like social supporters, coaches, facilitators and mentors
rather than commanders. Furthermore, managers in the 21st century
must understand the subordinates, their psychological and emotional
makeup, their weaknesses and strengths and all relevant aspects of
their consciousness. They should also be models who are worthy of
emulation. It is by so doing that they will embody the concept of
being managers who are leading and not dominating.

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