

The Role of Unity and Effective Leadership in Community Development

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Publishing Date: 7th October 2015

Abstract

Unity and effective leadership are perquisite to sustainable community development. The paper argued that, no society either small or large can develop without unity and good leadership. Leadership commitment is essential to the survival and progress of any society. The subjects on their own part have an important role to play too. But the people's commitment would be difficult to secure if the leaders who are calling on them for sacrifice do not themselves make any sacrifices. This paper discussed the concept of leadership, Types, qualities, functions and the concept of Unity i.e. cooperation among subjects and relationship between Leadership and followership. The paper is aimed at enlightening Community leaders and their followers of their responsibilities, and promoting good leadership in our communities and Nigeria as a whole. The paper recommends that, unemployment issue should be addressed and leaders should be patriotic, transparent and dedicated and that leadership and followership relationship should always be harmonized as to enable the society or group to achieve her vision and set goal.

Keywords: *Unity, Leadership, Community Development.*

Introduction

Unity and effective Leadership are mutual activities of great influence to both community and national developments in all parts of the world. In Nigeria, after her independence in 1960, Nigeria has moved from Parliamentary system of government to Presidential system of government, she has experienced both civilian and military regimes yet, her leaders have been unable to deliver to her citizens the quality of life commensurate with her numerous endowed resources. In Nigeria, government has failed to provide portable drinking water, electricity, good roads, effective service delivery, employment, housing scheme, quality health care, quality

education, credible electoral system etc. Blessing, E (2012).

According to Achebe (1983) in Ngwube (2010), the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is the inability of Nigerian leaders to rise to the challenge of personal example which according to Achebe, the hallmark of true leadership. In fairness to Achebe, our leaders have not led by example. Ngwube affirmed that, sycophancy; and mere oratories have not helped the situation but have rather compounded it. The quality and ingenuity of a country's leadership can make or mar a country's development or growth. Leadership can decisively influence the quality of life of her people and her national power.

Unity or national integration on the other hand, has to do with coming together of people regardless of ethnic, cultural, religious and other differences to fight for development but what we see today is that Nigerians rather, than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of national identity and destiny, citizens of Nigeria are returning more and more to primordial affiliations for identify, loyalty and security. Instead of forging a united front and presenting a concerted effort to face the challenges of development in an increasingly competitive and globalize world, Nigeria's are busy waging ethnic and religious wars, struggling for control over resources, resisting marginalization by dominant ethnic groups, and contending with diverse problems of basic survival. (Ekanota 2006).

It is on the basis of this back drop that this paper is designed to find out the role of unity and effective leadership in bringing about community development. To do this the paper is divided into four

parts, including the introduction, part two deals with the conceptual frame work, part three discusses unity leadership and community development and part four concludes the paper.

Conceptual Frame Work

Unity

The concept of unity have been define by various writers among them are; Duverger (1966) coleman and Rosberg (1966) as cited by Islaq (2008), Unity is defined as a progressive removal of antagonisms and reduction of cultural and regional political division and differences in process of creating a homogenous political unit. In the same Vein, Sona K. (2010), views Unity as the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country, it means that, though we belong to different castes, religious and regions and speaks different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one. This kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous Community and Nation at large.

Unity can also be viewed as incorporation of disparate ethnic or religious elements of the population into a unified society, providing equality of opportunity for all members of that society. In such a society, an individual's attainment of an education, access to any public or private facility, opportunity for employment and ownership of property are neither denied nor limited by reason of race religious or national origin (Encanta 2009).

David (1969) describes Unity as the development of identification with the national community that supersedes in certain situations more parochial loyalties. Coleman (1986) says Unity is progressive lessening of ethnic, cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community. Amitai (1965) believes that a community is united when it has:

- An effective control over the means of violence.
- A center of decision –making that significantly affected the allocation of resources and rewards, and
- A dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of national citizens who are politically aware.

These definitions suggest that, for Unity to occur in a community and the nation, a significant number of citizens must develop identification with the nation that supersedes identification with ethnic, cultural or religious groups. Acquire political awareness, share common norms and values and develop attitudes favorable to the display of integrative behavior among peoples of different groups (Isah. et al 2012).

Leadership

A leader is one who exerts unusual influence and considerable power. According to McFarland, a leader "is one who makes things happen that would not happen otherwise. If the leader causes changes that he intended, he has exercised power, but if the leader causes changes that he did not intend or want, he has exercised influence, but not power" (MacFarland, 1969, pp.167-178; Kofele-Kale, 1976, p.81). Sidney Hook shares a similar view as McFarland. In his work, *The Hero in History*, Hook depicted a heroic leader as one who makes things happen that ordinarily would not have happened. "The hero in history," he opined "is the individual to whom we can justifiably attribute preponderant influence in determining an issue or event whose consequences would have been profoundly different if he had not acted as he did." (Hook,1943,p.229).

Obviously, students of leadership would share the views of Hook and McFarland, that the pre-requisites of leadership are influence and power. Accordingly, a person who is endowed with these qualities in the context of a group, community or nation has the personality of a leader (Kofele-Kale, 1976, p.8). Henry Kissinger (US Secretary of State in Nixon Administration) pointed out in one of his famous speeches that a leader has the power to invoke the 'alchemy of great vision.' This, in other words, means that a leader should possess the power or influence of transforming something common into something precious.

Leaders have duties too. John Gardner has pointed out that the task of leaders is to help societies "understand the problems that all must face, to aid in the setting of goals and priorities, to work with others in finding paths to those goals chosen, maintaining public morale, and motivation and nurturing a workable level of public unity" (Gardner, 1978, pp.132-135) Leaders must activate existing

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institutions in pursuit of the society's goals or, when necessary, help redesign institutions to achieve that result. Leaders must also help people know how they can be at their best "...with malice toward none, with charity for all..." In a free society leaders perform these functions within a framework of constraints. This includes an uncorrupted electoral process, the rule of law, institutional checks and balances and a free press, (Ibid., 1978, pp.132-135).

Obviously, the checks on power must be in working condition, or the laws of the land would be circumvented. In this paper a "leader" refers to persons who occupy important positions in the formal polity such as Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Governors, Legislators, Party Officials, Local Government Chairmen, Council Members and of course, the local Chiefs (Victor D. 1999).

Irikana and Orisa (2007) have identified some of the basic qualities expected of a good leader which may include:

- (1) Intelligence
- (2) Self Control
- (3) Sociability
- (4) Integrity
- (5) Honesty
- (6) Patriotism
- (7) Courage
- (8) Foresight
- (9) Oratory ability
- (10) Alertness
- (11) Empathy

A leader that possesses these qualities must enjoy, obedience, support and positive followership of his people, and will be attuned to high compliance in the achievement of his set goals, and effective in dispensation of justice and public welfare.

Functions of Leadership

Blessing E. (2012) enumerated some of the functions a good leader is expected to perform. These functions are:

Taking Initiative:- A leader must be creative and logical enough in order to take action for every situation that confronts him. Taking initiative in detecting and remediating problems distinguishes leaders in many modern organizations and nation-states.

Evaluating Followers Needs:- Aspiration, and Capabilities: for Leadership to command high followership there must be deliberate attempt by leadership to motivate their followers. Every person need hope to survive, and motivation has to do with the leader understanding the needs of his follower.

Understanding the needs of your followers has to do with another leadership skill of patiently listening to your followers. It equally involves knowledge of their capabilities, including energy, endurance and commitment. Irikana and Orisa(2007) noted that, a purposeful and insightful leader creates new ideas, project discussion, etc and positively and invariably lead others in the group to develop or carry out the tasks.

Fostering and Maintaining Communication:- is one of the leading functions of a leader. Leaders initiate instrumental relationships when they assign people to work in teams and task forces or appoint ministers, commissioners, advisers, etc. It is the task of a leader to prevent fragmentation and foster cooperation and team work amongst his subordinates and followers; this can be done through effective communication. Effective communication reduces doubt and suspicion among groups; sustain followers' interest and participation in group action or policy adoption and implementation.

Representing Members' Aspirations and Values:- one of the consistent noted function of leadership has been the expression and symbolization of their followers' aspiration and values. In developed societies, leadership role is assigned to people believed to reflect the values and aspirations of members. Some author will refer to this as implementation of group philosophy. To achieve this (Irikana & Orisa), rules and regulations are stated and implemented. This is to guide against conflict of interest among the group, and for the general good to prevail at all times.

Providing Resources:- command of resources both material and non-material promotes the exercise of leadership and compels the loyalty of followership. The entrepreneur who provides capital to Start-up Company attains influence over its operators. Strategic plans formulated by executives also constitute resources, providing direction to the Management team that work under them. In war, strategy itself becomes a crucial resource. In politics, followership expects one reward or the other from their leaders. Leaders process or facilitate the passage of a budget so that, they have both material and non-material resources to provide for their followers. Followers also become more loyal to leadership as soon as budget has been passed so that, they can be

involved in the material gain of implementing the budget.

Community Development

According to Christenson et. al. (1989) Community development describe a process in which people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action process to change their economic, social, cultural and environmental situation. (United Nations, from Biggs,1999) maintain that Community development is a process where people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and communities are integrated into the life of the nation enabling them to contribute fully to national progress. Community development is the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities (Aspen Institute, 2000).Community development is the capacity of the local socio-economic system to survive and persist in generating employment, income, and wealth and to maintain if not improve its relative economic position. Shaffer(1989). Kenyon 1994 sees Community development as the process of identifying and harnessing local community resources and opportunities and stimulating sustainable economic and employment activity. Sanders (1958) saw community development as a process moving from stage to stage; a method of working towards a goal; a program of procedures and as a movement sweeping people up in emotion and belief.

Role of Unity and Leadership in Community Development

As stated earlier in this paper good leadership and unity are essential for development in any society small or large. But in Nigeria certain factors hinders this to occur. These factors will be discussed below.

Lack of Commitment on the Part Leaders:- Leaders make things happen; they are wave makers. A society without talented and committed leaders will retrogress or at best remain stagnant. That has been the problem with our communities and Nigeria in general. Community leaders are in best position to enlighten motivate and mobilize their subjects

especially the youths to engage in formulation of self-help organizations that will go a long way in complementing government efforts towards achieving desired goal.

Unemployment: - This is another important area of concern to the community leaders. Unemployment is a condition where by people that are qualified for jobs but could not get any. Lack jobs in our communities are one of basic reasons why we have Rural-urban migration ie people living their local communities to the urban areas in sear for a greener pasture. This problem caused under population in the communities, ie famers that are expected to grow food have left the lands thereby creating the problem of food shortage.

Infrastructural Facilities: - This refers to the provision of facilities like roads health care facilities, pipe born water etc. Leaders in our communities should try their possible best to provide such facilities in the localities this will go in long way to prevent or minimize rural urban migration and in the long run help to development of the community.

Qualitative Education: - Education is the bed rock of any kind of development. Community leaders have a very vital role to play in this regard. History has shown that majority of the talented brains comes from the rural areas, so community leaders should not allow the talent to be wasted by providing quality education to their subjects.

Cooperation: - This is another crucial area that needs attention. An English adage has it that united we stand and divided we fall. Members of local community need to cooperate with each other in order to bring about the desired development. No matter how effective a leader may be if the subject did not cooperate with one another there will be no progress.

Conclusion

The paper has tried to examine the role effective leadership and unity in community development. It open that, unity and leadership are two important activities that can lead to any kind of development in any society, thus one could understand that the three terms (unity, leadership and community development) goes together in the sense that one could lead to the other i.e. with effective leadership

and unity, sustainable community development will be attained. For leaders to be effective, the followers are expected to unite and give maximum support to the leaders while leaders on their side should be dedicated and patriotic by so doing the set goal will be achieved (Community development).

The paper is of the belief that our communities can progress when leaders are patriot, committed, and dedicated to service of citizens, unemployment should be reduced, and followers should unite themselves and cooperate with the leaders.

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