

MANAGEMENT SKILLS – TOOLS FOR LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES IN DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

In attaining the mission and vision of organizations, the employment of management skills are essential tools for leadership. The imperatives of such skills in dynamic organizations suggest effectiveness and efficiency. Democratic societies and organizations are expected to possess hybrid skills in the management of their affairs. It is no longer good for any organization to have the ‘right’ leadership in the right place without the right management skills. In other words, it brings serious injuries to organizations when individuals are contracted without the corresponding expected performance. Performance, based on management skills, constitutes the vital hyphen for leadership in coordinating strategy and target in order to deliver services. Corporate governance therefore entails strategy, management and efficient output of products. All these require management techniques of planning, organising, leading, controlling etc. of all resources. This Paper attempts to generally x-ray management skills that provide essential tools for leadership in democracy. Since high performance organizations are identified with leaders that give them great virtues, they are thus characterized by ‘charismatic’ and ‘transformational’ leaders based on the vision and strategy employed. A few Nigerian situations were exhibited in order to show leadership qualities and styles as well as the essence of leadership imperatives in democracy. However, the feasibility of democracy in Nigeria and its desirability in organizational leadership have continued to raise crucial questions on management skills.

Keywords: Leadership, management skills, democracy

Introduction

The ideals needed to sustain the culture of excellence in management practices are to imbibe the ethical standards and technical know-how required for character, learning and professionalism in management. *Management Skills – Tools for Leadership Imperatives in Democracy* is both challenging and relevant in what is today generally regarded as corporate governance. Corporate governance refers to the underpinning transformation of leadership effectiveness evolved under the influence of democratic ethos. Both the private sector and the ongoing reforms in the public sector stress the imperatives of corporate governance to include the processes of evolving and maintaining technical know-how and competencies and professional norms required to manage human and capital resources in a democratic culture.

Management skills are all encompassing. They are essentially necessary for all managers to enable them accomplish the vision and mission of organisations. As they are obligatory ingredients for efficiency and effectiveness in management, they invariably involve the management of human resources, managing the changing nature of organisation, managing for the future human resource requirements; particularly in selection and appointment of managers as well as continuous training and development, Management of organisation policies, management of effectiveness of goods and services provided by the organisation, management of the appraisal and renewal systems, coaching and mentoring.

A leader is multifaceted in skills. In other words, a leader is an amalgam of specialist activities. Thus, the cameos of leadership, particularly in a democratic dispensation, are directly in consonance with the tools and skills which managers must possess in order to cope with the dynamics of the political praxis. Management development is a neglected theme in leadership imperatives in democracy, as no much attention has been paid to this area in Nigeria largely due to long period of military rule, lack of precision and unpredictability associated to the field.

Tasks of Managers and Management Skills

The basic task of all Managers at all levels and in all kinds of enterprises is to design and maintain an environment which can accomplish organisational goals and objectives, as well as provide satisfactory services to the customer. Traditionally, Management is concerned with four main functions:

- (i) Planning all activities.
- (ii) Organizing tasks and works are distributed among staff and others.

- (iii) Leading people in (planning, organizing, controlling, communicating and team working) and
- (iv) Controlling (standards of performance).

Management theory helps to provide a means of classifying significant and pertinent management knowledge. It also provides principles for tackling managerial problems such as guidelines for delegating authority: delegating by results expected; the coincidence of authority and responsibility and the unity of command. In order to make the task of managerial planning comprehensive, theory will disclose that decision making must be related to objectives sought, must be made in the light of the expected environment in which the decision will operate, and must involve proper analysis of alternatives.

Managerial skills or techniques develop out of theory and practice. Even though relatively few managerial techniques have been invented, managerial practice, research and scholarly activities will continue to add value to existing techniques. Some notable managerial techniques are budgeting, networking, planning and control as in Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) or the Critical Path Method (CPM), rate-of-return on investment, management by objectives, Total Quality Management (TQM), Knowledge Management (KM) etc. According to J.S. Ninomiya (1991), the skills of effective managers could be summed up in seven roles as follows: Listener, Teacher, Peacemaker, Visionary, Self Critic, Team Captain, Leader.

Ninomiya (1991) suggests that a manager has to combine the need to ensure survival with that of team-work and meeting staff expectations or rewarding and satisfying work. This view has considerable relevance in today's challenging and competitive global environment. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Professional Management (1995)*, a total of 11 approaches to the study of management science and theory may be identified as follows:

- (1) The empirical or case approach
- (2) The inter personal behaviour approach
- (3) The group behaviour approach
- (4) The cooperative social system approach
- (5) The sociotechnical systems approach
- (6) The decision theory approach
- (7) The system approach
- (8) The mathematical or "management science" approach

- (9) The contingency or situational approach
- (10) The managerial; roles approach
- (11) The operational theory approach

It is hoped that by studying the various outlined approaches, managers will appreciate management better and develop the needed skills for effective management. It must also be stressed that no one management theory or technique can be regarded as foolproof for solving a particular problem. More often than not, visionary executives do not rely solely on the traditional classification of managerial functions of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling. Instead, they engage in variety of other platforms which include, among others:

Planning and Prioritising: The activity of planning, no doubts, involves deciding what needs to be done, the specific skill of people needed to do it as well as how to structure the team and divide up the tasks with the expected outcomes. However, it should be emphasized that the main planning activities are: objectives setting, analyzing activities, forecasting, scheduling, resourcing, procedure planning, setting targets and standards and deciding on monitoring procedures. On the other hand, prioritising often means deciding on the importance of jobs and the order in which they should be done. This can however be done by making a list of projects to be executed. A decision must reach on whether the projects are significant to the operation of the organization, important and urgent. The Manager should therefore find out how much time is available for the job and fit the various tasks into the available time of the Organisation.

Organizing, Directing and Delegating: Organizing is analyzing what has to be done and then deciding who does what with acceptable standard, setting up the reporting relationship amongst people as well as methods of communication, coordination and control. Directing involves getting the team to understand objectives and targets to be accomplished because it also involves agreeing on objectives and targets, allocating and delegating work. In delegating, an effective management skill also involves giving other people the responsibility and authority to do something rather than doing it alone. It should be noted that the reason why managers delegate their authority is because they do not have time to do everything. In this regard, delegation helps people to develop their skills and competences. However, when delegating, specific items to be delegated must be decided and clearly stated and to who. Furthermore, the delegate must know what results are expected and all arrangements made for monitoring and reporting on performance.

Coordinating, Implementing, Controlling and Leading: involves making sure that efforts are currently sequenced and unified. It therefore needs planning and scheduling of activities. Implementation is about making things happen. In this regard and for effective implementation, what is exactly required must be in place with provision of guidance and leadership necessary to ensure that it is done appropriately. Controlling is essentially concerned with monitoring and measuring performance, comparing results with plans and taking corrective action if and when required. Invariably, control involves planning, monitoring, measuring, evaluating, comparing and taking action. Leading is an activity of management skills. In this activity, leadership skills are universally acknowledged as being a key factor in business success. However, a leader has the ability to persuade people to follow him/her and do the things that the leader wants to get done. In this manner therefore, leadership involves planning, organizing, controlling, communicating, and team working.

Motivating and Communicating: in the activity of management skills, motivating is central and therefore the processes by which people are made to act in a certain way. It is the manager's job to persuade people to act in ways that benefit the organization. A manager can motivate people by,

- (a) Being a good, sincere, exemplary and responsible leader.
- (b) Getting members of the organization to work as a team
- (c) Improving people's jobs so that they have more interesting work, more responsibility, more resources in developing them and therefore providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- (d) The easiest and cheapest way to motivate staff is to say "thank you" when they have done a good job. If the interests of staff are taken they will respond by working better because they feel part of the organization.

Communicating is a skill that constitutes an essential or a vital aspect of management. Many managers are poor communicators. Staff need to know what they are expected to do, what standards of performance are expected and how long they have to do a job. It should be realised that failure to communicate with staff will make them do what they feel should be done, which may not agree with the organizations priorities and expectations. Thus, communication is not achieved until both the sender and receiver of the message understand the same content or information.

Leadership: Qualities and Styles

There are many conceptions of leadership. Leadership can be conceived as a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour or actions of other people. It can also be conceived as the ability to persuade others to behave or act differently. Leadership is therefore a set of qualities which enables certain people to get others to follow them. According to Theodore Hesburgh, President, University of Notre Dame (1987), the very essence of leadership is that of a vision; a vision articulated clearly and forcefully on every occasion. Sir John Harvey-Jones (1989) states that, leadership is one of the rarest talents in industry and probably the most valuable. It may be noted that a good manager should, out of obscurity and necessity, have good leadership qualities. Leadership is closely related to; among others, motivation, interpersonal behaviour, communication, decision making, reducing employee dissatisfaction, delegation, team dynamics, change, work and people. The qualities of good leaders can be summarised as follows:

- * A guiding vision
 - A leader should know where he is going how and why so as to get there.
- * Passion
 - The leader loves what he does and loves doing it
- * Curiosity and Daring
 - The leader does not unnecessarily worry about failure, but embraces errors, knowing he will learn from them.
- * Enthusiasms
 - All leaders are enthusiastic and interested in what they are doing.
- * Integrity
 - This is what make people trust a leader. A leader should have professional and private integrity
- * Toughness
 - Leaders aim to be respected but not necessarily liked.
- * Fairness
 - Effective leaders should treat people differently but equally or equitably.

* Warmth

– Leadership involves heart as well as mind. Loving the job and caring for team are equally essential.

* Humility

- Humility is opposed to arrogance and no body wants to work with an arrogant leader.

* Confidence

- Developing self-confidence is always the preliminary stage of becoming a good leader. Leaders should however not become over confident as this may lead to arrogance.

There are simply no such things as ‘leadership traits’ or ‘leadership characteristics,’ of course, some people are better leaders than others. By and large, though, we are talking about skills that perhaps cannot be taught but can be learned by most of the potential leaders. True some people cannot learn the skills. They may not be important to them. But most of the people can learn them. The leaders, who work most effectively, never say ‘I’. Not because they have trained themselves not to say ‘I’. They don’t think “I”. They think ‘we’, they think ‘team’. They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept the responsibility and accountability, but ‘we’ gets the credit. There is identification (very often quite unconscious) with the task and with the group. This is what creates trust, enables to get the task done effectively and efficiently with team spirits. Nothing works except the team sprits and networking of activities. Organizations are as good as their leaders. According to Peter F. Drucker (1974).

Without good leadership, you cannot get good strategies because the guiding vision will not be in place. Without good strategies the organization will not develop. Without development the organization will not change. Without change, the organization will not be modern or fully efficient and will fall behind its competitors. If an organization is not efficient it will fail. If an organization falls behind its competitors it will go out of business (Drucker, 1974).

Leadership Imperatives In Democracy

Global political and legal forces result from the diverse and changing nature of various countries’ political and legal systems. The global range of political systems includes

components from representative democracies to totalitarian regimes. In representative democracies, citizens periodically elect individuals to represent their interests. The elected representatives form a government whose function is to make decisions on behalf of the electorate. To guarantee that, voters can hold elected representatives legally accountable for their actions. An ideal representative democracy incorporates a number of safeguards into the law. These include (1) individual's right to freedom of expression, opinion, and organization (2) free media (3) regular elections where eligible citizens are allowed to vote and be voted for. (4) Limited terms for elected representatives (5) a fair court system that is independent from the political system; (6) a non political police force and armed service; and (7) relatively free access to state information.

In essence, democracy suggests, inimically, its evolution from the ideals of effective power of decision making accompanied by popular power, decentralisation and sovereignty with the rule of law where citizens are protected with all the guaranteed rights. Good governance, through competition, responsibility and accountability as well as popular participation of the governed, constitute vital aspects of democratic practice and values.

Democracy in leadership can be described in terms of the extent to which the leader adopts a participatory relationship with employees. This is in contrast with autocratic leadership. It is postulated that Decentralization (democracy) is the placing downward of authority and responsibility to lower levels in the organization to perform complete tasks; delegating authority into the hands of groups of people who will work together. Centralization (autocratic) leadership on the other hand provides that authority and responsibility are tightly held by officials in the upper levels of an organization and are not delegated. Therefore, democratic leadership, among other things;

- Allows use of outstanding talent in managers by the whole organization rather than a single unit.
- Makes uniform decisions by encouraging group functions.
- Helps develop more personnel in decision-making process.
- Shortens lines of communication.
- Places decision making close to situations affected by decisions.
- Allows more people to use skills and talents in group functions.

Scientific studies suggest that a democratic leader is one who encourages the involvement of people in the setting of work-related goals and objectives, empowering employees by delegating responsibility while providing support to achieve optimum quality levels of performance. A democratic leader also participates in problem solving without being prescriptive or being seen as personally controlling the situation.

Further studies however suggest another form of leadership, which is *laissez-faire*. The *laissez-faire* leader is the extreme version of the democratic leader and will often delegate complete responsibility for tasks to the group and with rather broad parameters allow the group to get on with the process of performing the functions. The problem here is that the group may often misinterpret the leader's action as meaning that the leader is disinterested in and detached from the group and the assigned tasks. In contrast, in totalitarian regimes, like military regimes, individuals or groups of individuals or a single political party holds absolute political power.

Totalitarian regimes neither recognize nor permit any form of opposition from individuals or groups. Most of the constitutional guarantees on which representative democracies are based are denied to the citizens of totalitarian states. It is therefore obvious that the pattern of leadership styles in representative democracies and totalitarian states differ. Usually, there is much demand in terms of managerial skills or techniques required of a leader in representative democracy. This is because most citizens know their rights and want to exercise them freely.

The demand is even higher on managers working in public enterprises. Sometimes in 2002, a High Court of Justice in Nigeria ruled that the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) could be sued by its customers, if the customers felt aggrieved. This was not the case in the past military regimes. However, in quick response to the growing public concern over its service delivery, the NEPA Management declared that it would soon come out with an instrument that would enable their customers relate to the Authority on the basis of its performance and that the Authority would be ready to compensate customers for its inability to perform.

How do we settle the crucial question of the desirability or necessity of democracy in organizational leadership? Is it feasible especially in Nigeria's democratic settings? In Nigeria, there is so much arbitrariness and confusion about democracy which has invariably been transformed into a monstrous phenomenon. All these have immensely contributed to the mismanagement of institutions or organisations. How do management skills impact positively on leadership and organisations as well as the enhancement of democracy?

It may be necessary at this juncture to distinguish between management and leadership in order to better appreciate our discourse. Management is concerned primarily with what social scientists refer to as the ‘hard Ss’, structure, and systems. Management focuses on planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling and problem solving and therefore managers are generally referred to as people who are responsible for directing and controlling staff, resources and information.

Leadership however concerns with the ‘soft Ss’ shared values, style, staff, skills. Emerging research suggests that leaders relate with group members to set goals and objectives and how they can be achieved. The research further suggests that once agreement on specific goals has been reached, leaders are willing, within reasonable parameters, to trust the group members to get on with the task of achieving the agreed goals. In summary therefore, leadership is considered as a process that inspires and motivates people to achieve superior results.

In today’s corporate management, especially in democratic setting, group or teamwork has been found to be more effective than individual sole performance. Work is essentially a group - based activity and it has been empirically proven that if an organization is to be effective, it needs effective team working at all levels. Team working is therefore generally viewed as an efficient and effective system to confront and solve many organizational problems. Teamwork is not however problem free. A group leader employing good management skills can make a difference in bringing about effectiveness in teamwork. Some management skills that serve as tools for effective leadership in groups include:

(a) Communication Skills: It should be stressed that communication is best achieved through simple planning and control especially at meetings, where conversations need particular care. To ensure an efficient and effective conversation, there are certain considerations that require leadership in organisations to constantly pay attention to. In the first place, leaders must make sure the intended message sent is received and understood. Secondly, they must exert some control over the flow of the communication. However, learning to listen patiently as well as to speak lucidly are effective communication skills for managers in democratic settings. Those who dismiss these as a mere platitude are already demonstrating an indisposition to listening: the phrase may be trite, but the message is hugely significant for the effectiveness as a manager. The skill of listening, must be explicitly developed to enable leaders hear the suggestion/information, which should launch them to fame and fortune.

(b) **Ambiguity Avoidance:** A manager in a democratic environment must avoid being ambiguous. In other words, the manager should be pragmatic rather than philosophical. Thus, words mean not what the dictionary says but rather what the speaker intended. Suppose a manager gives an instruction, which contains an ambiguity, which no one notices and which results in producing entirely the wrong product? Who is at fault? The answer must be: who cares? Time has been wasted, the needed product is delayed (or dead); attributing blame may be a satisfying (or defensive) exercise but it does not address the problem. In everything said or heard, leaders must look out for possible misunderstanding and clarify the ambiguity. The greatest source of difficulty is that words often have different meanings depending upon context and/or culture. If there is a potential misunderstanding, managers must stop the conversation and ask for the valid interpretation.

A second problem is that some people simply make mistakes. Manager's job is not simply to spot ambiguities but also to counter inconsistencies. Finally, of course, to simply mishear is a common place phenomenon in organisations. The omission of a simple word could be devastating. For instance, how long would an employee survive in an organisation if he failed to adhere to a simple instruction in communication? To overcome such communication defects, certain rules must be observed and ascertained. First, is to ask for confirmation. In other words, clear understanding must be correctly verified and confirmed. This ensures greater degree of confidence in the understanding of the issue being sought.

Secondly, confidence must be created to save time and efforts by writing everything down and sending it to everyone involved in the group or team as a double check. This has several advantages; especially in furthering clarification on what was received, understood and agreed. It also checks consistency whereby; the act of writing may highlight defects/ omissions. Finally a statement of the accepted position provides a spring board from which to proceed to the next stage. Thirdly, When speaking, managers can often counter for possible problems by adding information, and so providing a broader context in which words can be understood. When others are speaking, managers should deliberately ask themselves rhetorical questions in order to establish the context in which they are thinking.

(c) **Maintaining Communication** in a democratic setting is a leadership imperative in a dynamic organisation. Therefore, the important tools that need to be continuously used are clarification of all issues. In this regard, there is the need to always clarify, for example, the purpose of the meeting, the time allowed, and the rules to be observed (if agreed) by everyone. However, there is the need at each stage of the proceedings, summarize the current position and progress: that is what has been achieved/agreed; where issues have reached.

Finally there is also the need to focus on stated goals - at each divergence or pause, re-focus the proceedings on the original goals.

(d) **Skills Presentation:** Presentations are one of the first managerial skills, which a team leader must acquire. A Presentation is a fast and potentially effective method of getting things done through other members of the team. In managing any group task, presentations are used as a formal method for galvanizing team members to plan, monitor and review the work progress. A presentation therefore puts things on display. Team members need to see evidence of decisive planning and leadership so that they are confident in their leader. They need to be motivated and inspired to undertake the tasks, being presented. Senior Management should also be impressed by such skill and ability so that they can be willing to provide the resources that the team needs to get the job done.

Secondly, it allows for questions and to initiate discussion. It may not be suitable within the presentation formats of the organisation to hold a discussion during the presentation itself but it does allow issues to be raised, to present the problems and at least establish who amongst the audience could provide valuable input to decision-making. An important observation is that the objective of communication is not the transmission but the reception. The whole preparation, presentation and content of a speech must therefore be geared not to the speaker but to the audience. The presentation of a perfect project plan is a failure if the team members do not understand or are not persuaded of its merits.

(e) **Time Management Skills:** Time management skill is one of the most important tools for an effective manager. Good time management is essential for the success of an organisation. Tasks and targets must be set and achieved within a time frame. Only good time manager can accomplish targets on schedule –indeed, keeping good time management is a sign of how disciplined a manager is. Self discipline in time management is something subordinates readily emulate for the overall success of the organisation.

(f) **Interpersonal Skills:** In bringing a group of people together, it cannot be expected that the group will work together as an effective team. It takes time for individual members to learn to work together. To bring cohesiveness in the team, the leader and members need to develop interpersonal skills. These skills refer to the special ability to relate and understand other people. To achieve this, the leader may need to get the team to undergo freely what psychologists refer to as the four stages of group development. The four stages are:

- Forming: this is the stage of getting to know each other where individual members share information about themselves and about the purpose of their coming together.
- Storming: this is the period of challenging of ideas and group objectives, power struggles, conflicts and impatience dispositions by members. An effective leader must understand that such conflicts are healthy for growth process. It is the time to use interpersonal skills in bringing the group together to achieve a greater understanding and commitment to group's objectives.
- Norming: this is the stage where the group should establish clearly defined ways of working together. Shared expectations of behaviour acceptable to team members are communicated and agreed. In other words, the group agrees on the ground rules for what will and will not be tolerated in the group.
- Performing: this is the time for implementing set out tasks within specified target periods. This stage becomes more effective if the group has become cohesive.

(g) Administrative Skills: An effective team leader must learn the art of delegating authority. Delegation however is a skill of which we have all heard - but which few understand. It can be used either as an excuse for dumping failure onto the shoulders of subordinates, or as a dynamic tool for motivating and training team to realize full potentials. Delegation underpins a style of management, which allows team members to use and develop skills and knowledge to the full potential. Without delegation, there would be loss of the full value of team members. Delegation is primarily about entrusting authority to others so that they can act and initiate independently; and that they assume responsibility with certain tasks. If something goes wrong, the leader remains responsible. The strategy is to delegate in such a way that things get done but do not go wrong. All These depend upon communicating clearly the nature of the task, the extent of their discretion, and the sources of relevant information and knowledge.

There is a whole lot of skills which a leader must develop in order to be effective in a democracy. Management issues such as ethnical considerations in business, social responsibility, effective management of diversity etc, need to be tackled with adequate management skills. As a result of the complexity of organizations and the rising global

business competitiveness, a manager will need to employ strategic management skills in order to be effective and efficient in business. According to G.A. Cole (1994), strategic management is a process, directed by top management to determine the fundamental aims or goals of the organization and ensure a range of decisions, which will allow for the achievement of those aims or goals in the long-term, whilst providing for adaptive responses in the shorter term.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, that Management skills can serve as tool for leadership imperatives in democracy cannot be overemphasized. The most important factors, which have contributed to the importance of the strategic dimension of management, arise from changing external environment in which organizations operate and include the following;

- * Increased customer expectations especially in terms of the quality and range of customer's goods and personal services.
- * Increased competitions in domestic and world markets.
- * Greater concern worldwide for the protection of the environment, leading to government and international action against certain industries or products.
- * Greater emphasis on customer's right.
- * Vast improvements in worldwide communication systems, enabling faster flow of information between customers, suppliers, agents etc.
- * Increased supra-national laws and regulations affecting business as result of decisions made by groups such as the European Union, GATT (the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries).
- * Changing political situations in major markets especially the opening up of the former soviet Union, China etc.

We could go on endlessly to enumerate various management skills, which could be used effectively as tools for leadership imperatives in democracy. Democratization process must be built on legitimacy, competence, sincerity of purpose, justice, equity and fairness. All these, among others, bring about trust, loyalty and commitment on the part of the governed that sustain democracy, leadership, growth and development. Suffice to say that no one method is available to deal with a particular problem. In future, the management of organisations will only be effectively done by persuasion and consent rather than by

command. The styles, however, of management will no doubt be more and more democratic and open with sharing of information as a cardinal principle for power and decision making processes. In addition, people's capacity to handle problems will be developed by management concern in dealing with strategic issues. Furthermore, intense persuasions and continuous encouragement will be the strategic management style employed in order to enhance culture of consent among employees to provide effectiveness and efficiency in leadership style.

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