

An Exposition of Qualities of Leadership

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Abstract: Leadership, an important universal polymorphic phenomenon found in all cultures of all ages, in all groups and based on certain sources of influence and power, exhibits certain qualities. These qualities of leadership will constitute the subject – matter of this article.

Keywords: leadership, polymorphic and universal phenomenon, certain sources of influence and power, and certain qualities.

I. Introduction

On the basis of careful comparative studies of leadership in public institutions, the most that can be said of this most important universal polymorphic concept of leadership is that:

- it occurs in groups,
- it is practiced by individuals in groups, and
- it determines the direction and manner of group action.

According to the traits theory, leadership is seen to consist in the possession of a combination of attributes that are either inborn or acquired. These are some of the well – known attributes that are usually singled out for special emphasis. These attributes are presented in the prescriptive styles in which they are often cited.

However, in opposing the traits approach to leadership, some renowned social scientists and researchers argue that the most urgent need in developing countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and Latin America is to move away from the traditional leadership and that young leaders must be trained to develop into true agents and instruments of meaningful social change and development with the requisite leadership qualities [S. B. M. Marume:1988].

II. Purpose of this article

The express purpose of this article is to articulate the leadership qualities that are commensurate with the contemporary demands of societies that are ever increasing in sophistication. The leadership qualities are either inborn or acquired, or partly inborn and partly acquired.

III. Qualities of leadership

3.1 Eminent thinkers' and writers views of this aspect include:

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|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Chester I. Banard | • S. B. M. Marume | • F.A. Nigro and L.G. Nigro |
| • Paul H. Appleby | • Max Weber | • S.P. Robbins |
| • John D. Millet | • Barry H. Passett | |
| • G. R. Terry | • E. N. Gladden | |

Brief appreciation of eminent thinker's views

In order to appreciate correctly the qualities of leadership in a general sense, [Source: S. B. M. Marume: Life – work skills: experiential learning: administrative leadership, 1988], one of the public administration scientists, who after many years of exhaustive, extensive advanced studies and administrative experiences in the Zimbabwe civil service, has had this to say

- a. Every institution must of necessity have a leader, who in turn has followers. A public institution [a government department], for example, the Ministry of Education, differs from many other institutions in that it has a number of leaders, that is political office bearers such as state president, prime minister, and cabinet ministers who give political leadership in the sense of having to make political policy decisions. The departmental permanent secretary, who is the chief executive officer/chief public administrative officer, supported by the heads of divisions, and heads of the various branches and sections within the same governmental department makes administrative policies – as well as ensuring their effective and efficient implementation. However, each official in charge of a unit is a leader but at different levels, and consequently the responsibilities and accountabilities of a leader tend to grow with the next higher rank that the official holds in the hierarchical structure of the institution.

- b. The questions are rightly asked: What is leadership? Is it some quality that can be captured, distilled and administered to an official in increasing doses with each promotion?; is leadership an inherent personal trait?; or is leadership something that those occupying positions of authority need to study?
- c. Once people believed that leaders were naturally made, and that great men arose whenever they were required. William Shakespeare wrote that:

Some men are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.
Source: Twelfth Night IIV

- d. Debate sometimes takes place on the techniques which leaders may use, but leadership is not only concerned with theories or techniques but also with personal qualities and attributed or the application of neither theories nor can a stupid or vicious or self – seeking person be made into a good leader by such means. A leader needs judgment, wisdom and a sense of justice, and while experience may develop these qualities, they cannot really be learnt from books: these qualities either exists in a person and can be developed or they do not.
- e. Another quality which a leader needs, particularly a leader in a public body, is courage – the courage to be fair and objective, and courage to stand up and reject unlawful and dishonest practices or orders.

Views

From these observations, attention can now be given to the views of some prominent writers and scientists.

Max Weber [1864 – 1920], a German social scientist: identifies three types of leader, namely,

- a. the patriarchal leader;
- b. the charismatic leaders and
- c. the bureaucratic leader.

The patriarchal leaders are a natural leader of the daily routine of the group. Leadership in matters going beyond everyday routine has a charismatic foundation; charismatic leaders in times of stress have been holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit that is of gifts which were believed to have been supernatural and not accessible to everybody. Charismatic structure knows nothing of form or ordered procedures or of prominent or dismissal: it knows only inner determination and inner restraint. The charismatic leader seizes the task that is adequate for him and demands obedience and a following by virtue of his mission. As long as he is recognized as the leader he is the master and it is the duty of those to whom he addresses his mission to recognize him as their charismatic qualified leader.

Bureaucracy is fashioned to meet calculable and recurrent needs by means of normal routine, and bureaucratic organisation is rational with appointed staff and appointed leaders who are paid to lead. The bureaucratic leader is subject to functional jurisdictions.

Barry H. Passett, (pp. 9 – 11): states that there are two views of leadership concept, the first being that a leader must have some political independence to act, so as to openly acknowledge interdependence with his subordinates, involving them in realistic goal – setting and moving them to integrate the productive requirement of the organisation with the more immediate needs of the people who man it. The second view is that there are four interacting schools of thought on leadership, namely;

- traits: leaders have a different psychological make – up from other people;
- situations: the situation determines which mix of traits and capabilities work;
- functions: leaders plan and initiate, provide information and advice, make decisions and provide symbolic (kingship) imagery; and
- birth or fate leaders are great men who are born that way and make history.

Professor E. N. Gladden (1972:109): states that leadership is the first problem encountered in every organisation, and that one of the functions of a leader is to provide inspiration and to be concerned about morale. Leadership is more than giving orders, it is also enthusiasm.

According to F. A. Nigro and L. G. Nigro was quoted by M. Laxmikanth in his book public administration [2006:175]: the essence of leadership is influencing the actions of others; the essential quality of the leader is that they are convinced something must be done, and they persuade others to help them to get done.

Professor S. P. Robbins [1980:320], defines a leader as someone who has the ability to influence others and administrative authority. Leadership, then, is concerned with personal qualities and attributes as well as acquired skills and involves both the behaviour of the leader, and the situation, the latter being the organisation itself and the group or the society it serves.

3.2 Elaborate qualities according to quoted individual thinkers and writers

3.2.1 Chester Barnard: he says that a leader should have the following four qualities (in that order of importance):

- a. vitality and endurance
- b. decisiveness
- c. persuasiveness
- d. responsibility and intellectual capacity

Barnard kept intellectualism as the fourth leadership quality in the order of importance, because he believes that it hinders responsibility and decisiveness in the leader.

3.2.2 Paul H. Appleby according to him, a good administrator:

- a. has willingness to assume responsibilities;
- b. demonstrates continuing personal growth;
- c. is disposed towards action;
- d. is a good listener who asks pointed questions;
- e. works well with all sorts of people;
- f. seeks institutional resources – does not try to do it all and know it all himself;
- g. cares for power only as it contributes to effectiveness – chiefly as a reserve asset;
- h. has self – confidence and so is ready to see his limitations and errors;
- i. is hospitable to bad news as well as good;
- j. respects subordinates as much as superiors;
- k. constantly seeks to improve institutional performance, and
- l. respects political processes and responsibilities in democratic governments

Further, an administrator (leader) must have a governmental sense and a political sense

3.2.3 J. D. Millet: the leadership qualities include; good health, a sense of mission, interest in other people, intelligence, integrity, persuasiveness, judgment and loyalty.

3.2.4 G. R. Terry; the leadership qualities include; energy, emotional stability, knowledge of human relations personal motivation, communicative skills, teaching ability, social skill, technical competence

IV. Summary and conclusion

4.1 Summary of the article

Various leaders from various disciplines provide various qualities of leadership. The lists of leadership qualities are infinite. But what is noticeable about the leaders and their views is that their contributions to the qualities of leadership are complementary.

4.2 Conclusion

A critical view of all the contributions by the writers and researchers indicates that no one particular scientist from any discipline at our disposal has been sufficiently comprehensive so as to include in one textbook the qualities of leadership in one chapter. The best that can be learnt is that each particular scientist brings to the debate a special contribution. So the study of the qualities of leadership has not been exhausted as yet. It is still an open field of study. So the study goes on from various angles or various disciplines each discipline making its contributions from its own perspectives.

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