Full Length Research Paper

Transformational leadership for excellent result: Challenges for women in management and executive positions in Nigeria

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The obvious problem that impedes growth in today's organizations and particularly government is not that of getting leadership but the transformational one that can make remarkable difference in the socio-economic lives of stakeholders. This nation has been ruled and governed by "men in their various capacities and yet we are far away from the median of growth and development. This paper tried to substantiate why women should be given greater opportunity to hold strategic executive positions as they possess the unique qualities of affiliation, attachment and cooperativeness required of a transformational leader. This study is mainly descriptive and both secondary and primary sources of data were employed. This study revealed a number of challenges which hamper the growth potential of women which include amongst other, the early educational system, industry unethical policy and government policy, lack of social support, culture and traditional values. A number of recommendations have been made, but however, most of them hinge on governmental support, gender equity-focused policy, purposeful, honest and realistic directives.

Key words: Transformational leadership, women executives, growth and development.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been a topic of interest, speculation and debate since the time of Plato. In organizations around the world, from massive conglomerates to small costume fabrication shops, national, state and local governments, churches, mosques and even families, the same lament emerges; where are the leaders? Who are the best leaders? What are the leaders doing? What attributes are required of the best leaders? Answers to these posers are measures that determine the degree of effectiveness of leading, that no one should ever be tired of surfing for, if excellent results were expected.

Most of the problems we encounter today: political, socio-cultural and economical are all hinged on the quality of leadership. This is so, because, leaders can make a difference in end results such as performance, goal attainment and individual growth and development. However, the specific behavior to use by leaders to make

this difference is the focus of this paper.

Leadership is not in position, but rather, one's disposition to be the head and be ahead. Many have failed, who are meant to be great leaders because they think position is just what will make it work. Position can only act as leverage for leadership, but it takes leadership qualities to really lead. It is leadership that makes a position and not the other way round (Ademu, 2009). Leaders are expected to use influence in an organizational setting or situation, producing effects that are meaningful and have a direct impact on accomplishing challenging goals. Thus means, you do not have to be in a formal leadership position in order to exert leadership behavior. The role of any officer for instance, can be every bit as important to a group's success as that of the Chief Executive Officer. Let us consider as follows, the submission of Invancevich (2005) of common characteristics of effective leaders:

1. They provide direction and meaning to the people they are leading.

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2. This means they remind people what is important and that what they are doing makes an important difference.

3. They generate and entrench trust.

4. They favor action and risk taking, that is, they are proactive and willing to risk failing in order to succeed.

5. They are purveyors of hope; in both tangible and symbolic ways they reinforce the notion that success will be attained.

Transformational leadership is a form of leadership that occurs when leaders "broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and the mission of the group and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group" (Bernard, 1990).

Leaders, both private and political are expected to have a clear collective vision and most importantly able to manage and communicate such effectively to all employees and citizenry. By acting as role models, they inspire employees to put the goal of the whole organization above self interest. They also stimulate employees to be more innovative, and they themselves take personal risks and are not afraid to use unconventional (but always ethical) methods in order to achieve the collective vision.

Leadership goes beyond traditional forms of exerting influence that just emphasized corrective action, mutual exchanges and rewards only when performance expectations were met. Such leadership relied mainly on centralized control. Managers controlled most activities, telling each person what, when and how to do each task.

Today, what do we see of other leaders, majority of whom are male? Most Nigerian leaders, especially in the political realm, are less developmental and constrictive. It becomes obvious, therefore, that the men should give women the trial. In an article "women as managers" Jan (1988) asserted that women have unique qualities that make them particularly well suited as managers. Instead of forcing women to fit the male model of managerial success, emphasizing such qualities as independence, competitiveness, forcefulness and analytical thinking, Grant argued that organizations should place greater emphasis on such female qualities as affiliation and attachment, cooperativeness, nurturance and emotionality and the eagerness to succeed.

Considering these unique qualities of women managers, they are actually in conformity with those required traits of transformational leaders that will be given in the later part of this study. We may be right then to conclude that woman managers could be more effective than their men counterparts. Historical antecedents in this country attest to this fact. The works and achievements of people like.

1. Prof. Dora Akunyili under NAFDAC
2. Prof. Grace Alele-Williams (as then, Vice Chancellor of University of Benin).
3. Prof. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (as then, Vice Chancellor of University of Abuja)
4. Dr. Ndi-Oyio Okereke (as chief Executive of Nigerian Stock Exchange).
5. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (as then, Minister of Finance)
6. Dr. Obi Ezekwesili (the initiator of Due Process Campaign).

These are just a few to mention, who have made tremendous landmark as managers in their respective positions.

It is especially disconcerting that, after a decade of aggressive efforts to create opportunities for women, and in spite of the aforementioned fact, inequity remains entrenched, inefficiency and ineffectiveness characterize most of public organizations.

Statement of problem

In spite of women transformational leadership qualities, improvement in education and training, real obstacles to growth potential remain. This insignificant participation of women at the helms of affair of the nations socio-economic activities has plunged the country into a mere bundle of reckless abandonment, indiscipline, lack of focus and purpose leadership, hence, gross inefficiency and effectiveness of the few remaining of so-tagged " public utilities" organizations.

Objectives of study

The main objectives of this study are;

1. To examine the major challenges that hinder women in management and executive positions from realizing their full potentials.
2. To make possible recommendations on socio-economic and political framework capable of removing the impediments to the growth potential of women.

Scope of study

The scope of this study shall be limited to female workers in senior management positions in some selected federal ministries, parastatals and department, financial institutions within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and the University of Abuja. The opinions of the selected few will be representative enough as it cuts across all segment of workings populace. However, the choice of federal capital territory is basically due to time limit and cost implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual view

The term transformational leadership was first coined by Downton (1973). Burns (1978) first introduced the

concept of transformational leadership in his book leadership, during his study of political leadership, but this term is now used in organizational psychology as well. He described it not as a set of specific behaviors, but rather an ongoing process by which "leaders and follower raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978: p. 20) (Figure 2). Transformational leaders offer a purpose that transcends short-term goals and focuses on higher order intrinsic needs.

Transformational leaders raise the bar appealing to higher ideals and values of followers. In doing so, they use charismatic methods to attract people to the values and to leader. Burns was influenced by Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs. This theory recognizes that people have a range of needs, and the extent to which they will perform effectively in the workplace will be affected by the extent to which these needs are satisfied. Transformational leadership fits into the higher levels, as it requires a high level of self esteem and self actualization to successfully be an authentic transformation leader.

It is about values, purpose and meaning: essentially, the leader's task is consciousness-raising on a wide plane… the leader's fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be moved to purposeful action."

Burns was one of the first scholars to assert that true leadership not only creates change and achieves goals within the environment, but changes the people involve in the necessary actions for the better as well: both followers and leaders are ennobled. Burns became famous among alternative leadership scholars, because his model of transformational leadership includes an ethical/moral dimension that, prior to 1978, had not been infused into leadership theory.

Bernard Bass, a disciple of Burns, defined transformational leadership in terms of how the leader affects followers, who are intended to trust, admire and respect the transformation leader. He identified three ways in which leaders transform followers:

1. Increasing their awareness of task importance and value.
2. Getting them to focus first on term or organizational goals, rather than their own interests.
3. Activating their higher-order needs.

In contrast to burns, who sees transformational leadership being inextricably linked with higher order values, bass sees it as amoral, and therefore questions the morality and ethical component of transformational leadership.

Components of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has evolved from and contains elements of preceding leadership types, such as trait and behavior theories, charismatic, situational and transactional leadership Robert and Angelo, 2000; Daniel, 2000). There are four components of transformational leadership, which are as follows:

Charisma or idealized influence

This is the degree to which the leader behaves in admirable ways that cause followers to identify with the leader. Charismatic leaders display convictions, take stands and appeal to followers on an emotional level. This is about the leader having a clear set of values and demonstrating them in every action, providing a role model for their followers. Genuine trust must be built between leaders and followers. Trust for both leader and follower is built on a solid moral and ethical foundation. Professor Dora Akunyili demonstrated this when she was Director General for National Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). With this quality, she impacted positively on the pharmaceutical industry by creating and instituting awareness in both producer and consumer, the need for safe consumption in Nigeria.

Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation is the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals and provide meaning for the task at hand. Follower need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act. It is also important that this visionary aspect of leadership be supported by communication skills that allow the leader to articulate his or her vision with precision and power in a compelling and persuasive way. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala served as a vision and purposeful leader with focus as then minister of finance under the Obasanjo administration, she influence greatly, the debt management process for the country which eventually led to some cancellation. As leading members of the economic team, her effort and that of Dr. Obi Ezekwezili culminated into the institution of the new financial regulation and procurement Act of 2007. This was aimed at sanitizing the process of procurement and project execution.

Intellectual stimulation

This is the degree, to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this trait stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. The leader's vision provides the framework for followers to see how they connect to the leader, the organization, each other and the goal. Once

they have this big picture view and are allowed freedom from convention, they can creatively overcome any obstacles in the way of mission. Popularly known as madam "Due process" Dr Obi Ezekwesili's assertive action supports this.

Individualized consideration or individual attention

The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's need, act as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. This also encompasses the need to respect and celebrate the individual contribution that each follower can make to the team (it is the diversity of the team that gives it its true strength). This approach not only educates the next generation of leaders, but also fulfils the individuals need for self-fulfillment and self-worth. It also, naturally propels followers to further achievement and growth.

Most women in senior management positions have been identified with their receptive, humane, nurturance, affiliation and attachment which spur followers to greater commitment. The minster for petroleum Mrs. Dizeania Allison Madueke, has been described by some of her followers to have demonstrate a high sense of humility and accessibility to them. The current minister for women affairs, Mrs. Zainab Maina also demonstrates similar quality, she seeks time to attend occasion with her staff.

The essential of transformational leadership

No doubt any leader who can exhibit the foregoing qualities (component) of a transformational leader would:

1. Significantly enhance organization performance
2. Make positive link with long term market share and customer satisfaction
3. Generate higher commitment to organization from their employees
4. Mobilize employees trust in management and organizational citizen behaviors (that is extra-role work-related behaviors, such as conscientiousness, altruism and sportsmanship that are discretionary, not related to the formal reward system of the organization)
5. Enhance employee's satisfaction with job and the leader.

Theoretical framework

Burn's view in Invancevich et al., (2005) is that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership, where the appeal is to more selfish concerns (Figure 2). An appeal to social values thus encourages people to collaborate, rather than working as individuals (and potentially competitively with one another).

If you are familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, transformational leadership would fit into the higher levels, as it requires a high level of authenticity, self esteem and self actualization to successfully be a transformational leader. Ideals are higher in Maslow's hierarchy, which does imply that lower concerns, such as health and security must be reasonably safe before people will pay serious attention to the higher possibilities (Figure 1). Using social and spiritual values as a motivational lever is very powerful as they are both hard to deny and also give people an uplifting sense of being connected to a higher purpose, thus playing to the need for a sense of meaning and identity (Figure 2).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is strictly descriptive in nature. Secondary sources of data will mainly be employed to be complemented by interview as a primary source instrument. The data obtained will be analyzed qualitatively, and through intuitive reasoning conclusions shall be drawn.

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT AND EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women and increase participation in developmental activities through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. Despite this heightened international aware-ness of gender issues, it is a disturbing reality that no country has yet managed to eliminate the gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2006).

Those that have succeeded best in narrowing the gap are the NORDIC countries, with Sweden standing out as the most advanced in the world. These are followed by New Zealand (6), Canada (7), United Kingdom (8), Germany (9) and Australia (10), countries that have made considerable progress in recent decades in removing obstacles to fill participation of women in their respective societies.

Nigeria has not fared well in this direction. National policy statements have been made on gender equality and women participation, but they have turned out to be political gimmick. It is remarkable and significant to note that the entrenchment of obstacles to the potential of women growth and advancement to executive positions has been historical and deliberated by both private and public organizations in Nigeria as follows.

Educational system
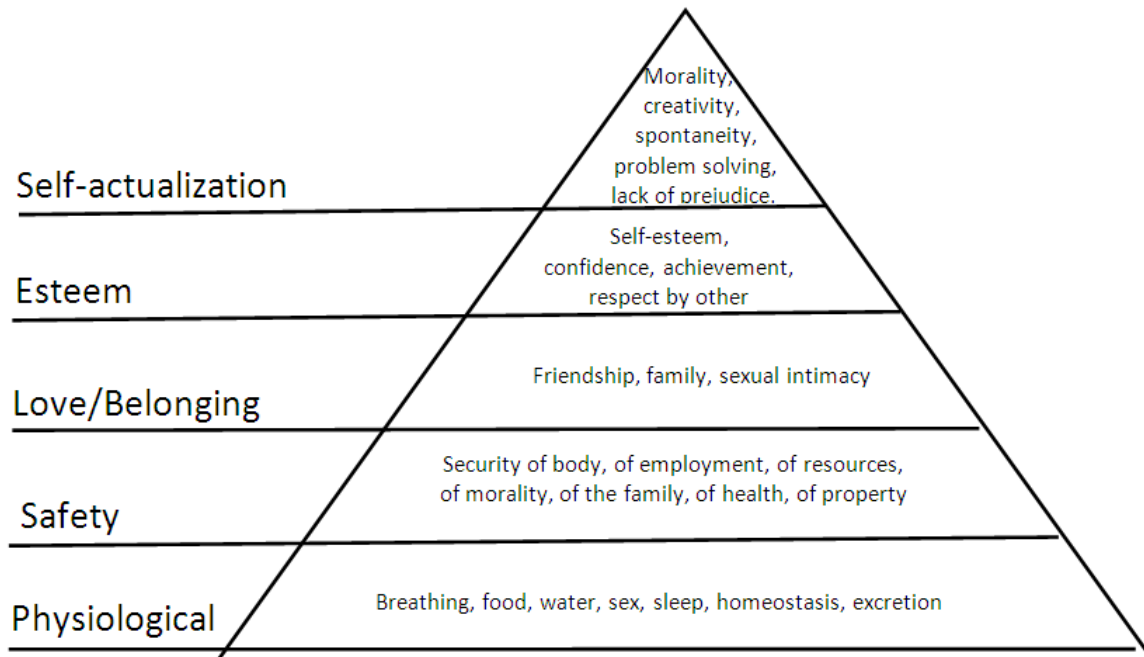
The early educational curriculum was designed to train

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy.

TO RECAP

From "Leadership" Burns (1978)

Transactional leadership

"… occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things." (page 19)

Transformational leadership

"… occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality." (page 20)

Figure 2. Burns view of leadership.

women as teachers, nurses, clerks and secretaries. They were not in medicine, politics, engineering law or environmental studies (Achume, 2004). This obviously resulted in shortage of qualified women for top level leadership posts. In the 60's and 70's for instance, women teachers colleges (WTCS), school of nursing and midwifery, women vocational centre were established in all divisions then and later states the federation as ways of encouraging female education. How many of the products of these institutions today are chief medical directors (CMD) of hospitals, vice-chancellors of universities, managing directors of banks, etc? Very few of course, as mentioned earlier, the country had had only two female vice-chancellors. Currently there is only one female registrar at the University of Ilorin.

Nigerian females are however, getting liberated from

this oppressive design as more and more get enrolled into the university system, though majority of them are vast in the management and social sciences. Hopefully in the near future, product of these disciplines shall take appropriate executive positions in banks investment management outfits, currently, the managing director of union bank of Nigeria plc, is a woman which is an indication, the women are working harder.

Industry unethical policy

The post banking reform in Nigeria was characterized by unwholesome and antisocial organizational climate in the industry. In a bid to aggressively mop up deposits, bank engaged young girls in unethical and immoral behaviors to directly reach out to money bags, particularly, shameful and corrupt politicians, used all means including sex to lure them to bring their deposits to banks. This automatically means only those girls who could play the game will be promoted to senior positions and have their jobs secured. In addition, they were not to be married within the first three years of entry, so they can fulfill their assignment as sex machinery in exchange for deposits. Under this dispensation, how many females will be in the executive positions of these banks in a few years to come?

Government policy

Government policy on recruitment, government policy at times negates women potential for advancement. For instance, until recently, any female recruit into the police or any force in Nigeria was not to get married until after five years. This was a deliberate abuse of the fundamental human rights of women. That explains why this country has never produced a female Inspector General of police or an Army Chief of staff.

Lack of government political will and support for women

Historically in this country, prior to election, the political leaders made promises upon promises on some percentage participation of women. Interestingly enough, observations showed that women trooped out more to vote than the men who wait only to reap the benefits. Obasanjo promised 30% women participation in his regime. He could not fulfill that in eight years! Now, president Goodluck has made a pledge of 35% women participation. "This cannot be confirmed as he is yet to constitute his cabinet"

   Lack of political support in this sense shows that the political class deliberately eliminates women of substance, integrity and honour by their actions. Politics has completely been monetized in Nigeria which educated women of integrity would not want to be part.

Meetings are held at nights and at awkward places where no pious man would want to see his wife.

Culture and traditional values

Culture and the traditional values have been major challenges to women potential for advancement. Women by nature and especially in the Nigerian culture, value the marriage institution even more than job fulfillment. For instance, while a man can be transferred from one end of the country to another, go for one short course or another and tie the wife down to battle with the responsibility of maintaining and caring for the family, the woman's maternal consideration would not allow her to do that. What you would hear the man say after one or two transfer "you have to choose between your job and the marriage". How many women especially the pious ones would like to loose her marriage for job? This has been a serious dilemma especially amongst young couple!

Interview report

Excerpts of interview conducted with a few senior managers of the following organizations.

1. University of Abuja
2. Federal Ministry of Works and Housing
3. Federal Inland Revenue Service
4. Federal Ministry of Finance
5. Union Bank Nigeria Plc.
6. First Bank Nigeria Plc.

The interviewees had similar submissions which are summarized as; many younger women interviewed, particularly well-represented in the financial institutions, reported that overt discrimination was a thing of the past. They believed that merit gained them jobs and one of them added "provided you can deliver". This corrobates an earlier submission in this paper of encouraging immorality in the banks in the name of "delivery".

Reticence

Somehow, some believe that women themselves often undervalued their own skills and were not as good at self-promotion as men. They only needed to be encouraged to even seek more senior positions. This is common particularly in academic. In most university today, there is quite a number of female professor rarely do they come forward to contest for the position of the vice-chancellor of university, however, intelligent they are academically.

General belief in qualifications and perfection

The biggest problem is even getting the women to apply.

For instance, some professors interviewed believed they might not get the vice-chancellor's job even if they applied. Women think they have to be perfect before they actually apply for positions rather than go the croocked ways as their men-counterpart.

Lack of career plans

It was generally gathered that most of the interviewed women had no serious career plan. Some started as bankers, teachers or nurse, and due to one challenge or opportunity, mostly business, deviated. Those who mostly sustain their careers are academia, medical doctors and legal practitioners. This is obvious as professionals in these latter ones start their career and grow in a particular location, no transfer.

Resistance to change

For fear of additional responsibilities and job enlargement that accompany promotion into executive positions which might compromise marital peace and stability, some women claim they are not eager to rise too high and too fast. Also, that when they are contented with their current position, they are less stressful and thereby enjoy good health.

Conclusion

With empirical evidence of women who had occupied executive positions in the past, this paper has justified the rationale behind the campaign for women active and significant participation in leadership. The paper went further to reveal a number of challenges that frustrate women in getting to executive positions. Based on these revelations, a number of recommendations were made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that despite the widespread acceptance of gender equity, organizations continue to monitor different forms of and appearance of gender inequity, so that discrimination does not become invisible or covert. For this purpose, the continued existence of agencies with the task of monitoring equity is very important. This is a challenge to the ministry of women affairs.
2. It is recommended that women should be encouraged to develop appropriate and clearly stated career goals through staff and professional development programs. This can be integrated into the university curriculum especially in the guidance and counseling units.
3. It is recommended that organizations should develop strategies for succession planning, exploring how they pass on knowledge and develop the leaders of the future in a tradition of equity. In order to combat reticence, organizations should be positive recruiters of women, identifying and targeting high potential women and actively preparing them to apply for senior positions. In particular, women should be encouraged to apply for higher-level jobs through direct intervention by senior staff. Organizations should also develop a policy on short-term vacancies in senior positions or undertaking higher duties. Developing workforce succession plans that specifically aim to increase the representation of equity groups, such as women in senior management is also a specific and visible commitment to encourage women.
4. Government is expected to actualize its policy pronouncement on the 35% women participation. It is also important to monitor if there is a differential gender impact, with all seriousness and honesty.
5. It is recommended that men and women in organizational leadership positions, particularly the CEO, should demonstrate publicly a commitment to gender equity, to the appointment of women to senior decision-making positions, and to the support of women in these positions. If government fulfills its own policy, it will have the moral justification to sanction erring organizations.
6. It is recommended that organizations should strive to ensure that women are not isolated in leadership positions, but that a significant number of women are appointed to ensure that they can have an impact on cultures and support other women.
7. It is recommended that organizations should provide encouragement and opportunities for informal networking for women and that energetic and committed organizer of informal networks receive support to enable them to fulfill this role.
8. It is recommended that organizations should ensure that flexible and family friendly working conditions are a critical component of their workforce planning and are available to both men and women.
9. It is recommended that organizations should provide and act upon clear statements of ethics and values, in order to attract senior executives with a commitment to social justice.
10. It recommended that organizations should provide opportunities for their senior management to discuss the deeply-held stereotypes of male and female management styles in order to encourage awareness of valued management styles and the constraints imposed by the imposition of gendered expectations.
11. It is recommended that organizations with an expressed commitment to collaboration should ensure that successful examples of collaboration be highlighted so that others can model them and that rewards be provided for individuals practicing collaboration.
12. It is recommended that competitive behavior, such as bullying should be explicitly discouraged by senior management.

13. It is recommended that opportunities for establishing collegial environments through work places be encouraged, through activities both in and outside working hours.

14. It recommended that developing staff to their full potential be supported and that appropriate care and concern for people be recognized among the crucial skill required by leaders, managers and organizations. There should also be opportunities to ensure that women do not undertake disproportionately higher loads of emotion work' and people support.

15. It is recommended that organizations should encourage special programs for women and develop mentoring and coaching schemes to assist senior leaders with major jobs that these be available equally for both men and women.

16. It is recommended that organizations should provide opportunities for both men and women to identify and consider ways of transforming the deep structures ion which gender differences are enacted in the workplace.

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