

# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY AND IT'S APPLICATION TO AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORK: THE CASE OF PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVE ON NATURAL RUBBER IN SOUTHERN KADUNA, NIGERIA.

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper is a review of transformational leadership theory and it's application to agricultural extension work: The case of presidential initiative on natural rubber in Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State. Leadership can be termed as the most relevant aspect of all organizational aspects. Interest in leadership inspired the development of various leadership theories leading to the earlier focus on what qualities distinguished between leaders and followers. Subsequent theories looked at other variables such as situational factors and skill. Today, leadership is no longer viewed and treated as inborn trait or learned. The combination of these two basic ideas and the situation in which the leader functions, is perhaps the most appropriate orientation. In most of the roles of the agricultural extensionist, he/she performs leadership roles, carrying out the functions of a change agent, facilitating and influencing the change of attitude, behaviour, practice, and the development of the skills of the farmer, the farm family and farming groups. Transformational leadership theory as it applied to agricultural extension work, relating it to establishment of natural rubber plantation in Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State of Nigeria, under the presidential initiative on natural rubber programme was examined. It was concluded that transformational leadership theory, which is more of participative or democratic leadership style was very suitable for the project and for any meaningful development to take place, the people concerned must be involved, empowered and transformed in every aspect of their life.*

**Keywords:** Transformational, leadership theory, agricultural, extension work

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership can be termed as the most relevant aspect of all organizational aspects. Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviour, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships and occupation of an administrative position (Gary, 2006). It is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individuals and collectives efforts to accomplish the shared objectives. It is both specialized and shared process. According to Ejembi (2010), leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation and directed, through communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals.

In Nwachukwu (2004), a leader is the most influential person in an organization who provides direction, guides group activities and ensures that group objectives are obtained. In his own view, Cole (2006) sees leadership as a dynamic process whereby one individual in a group is not only responsible for group's results, but actively seeks the collaboration and commitment of all

the group members in achieving group goals in particular context and against the background of a particular national culture.

According to George (2000), in an organization, the leader's mood has some effects on his/her group. These effects can be described in three levels:

1. The mood of individual group members. Group members with leaders in a positive mood experience more positive mood than do group members with leaders in a negative mood. The leaders transmit their moods to other group members through the mechanism of emotional contagion.
2. The affective tone of the group. Group affective tone represents the consistent or homogeneous affective reactions within a group. Group affective tone is an aggregate of the moods of the individual members of the group and refers to mood at the group level of analysis. Groups with leaders in a positive mood have a more positive affective tone than do groups with leaders in a negative mood.
3. Group processes like coordination, effort expenditure, and task strategy. Public expressions of mood impact how group members think and act. When people experience and express mood, they send signals to others. Leaders signal their goals, intentions, and attitudes through their expressions of moods.

For example, expressions of positive moods by leaders signal that leaders deem progress toward goals to be good. In research about client service, it was found that expressions of positive mood by the leader improve the performance of the group. Emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in the self and others, contributes to effective leadership in organizations (George, 2000).

In most of the performance of the roles of the agricultural extension, he / she performs leadership roles, carrying out the functions of a change agent facilitating and influencing the change of attitude, behaviour, practice, and the development of the skills of the farmer, the farm family and farming groups. The function of agricultural extension involves the development and planning of extension programmes and the implementation of the actual extension activities. A crucial factor to be considered in sustainable development is the farmer and farm family. This is because they have a number of characteristics which when nurtured and utilized are valuable assets to sustainable development (Jibowo as cited by Adedoyin, 2005). This article is a review of transformational leadership theory and its implication in agricultural extension work: The case of presidential initiative on natural rubber.

### 1.1 Leadership Early History

The search for the characteristics or traits of leaders has been ongoing for centuries. History's greatest philosophical writings from Plato's Republic to Plutarch's Lives have explored the question of "What qualities distinguish an individual as a leader?" Underlying this search was the early recognition of the importance of leadership and the assumption that leadership is rooted in the characteristics that certain individuals possess. This idea that leadership is based on individual attributes is known as the "trait theory of leadership" (Lussier and Achua, 2010).

According to Lussier and Achua (2010), this view of leadership, the trait theory, was explored at length in a number of works in the previous century. In *Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841 as cited in Lussier and Achua, 2010), Carlyle identified the talents, skills, and physical characteristics



of men who rose to power. Galton's (1869 as cited in Lussier and Achua, 2010) ) in his work, Hereditary Genius, he examined leadership qualities in the families of powerful men. After showing that the numbers of eminent relatives dropped off when moving from first degree to second degree relatives, Galton concluded that leadership was inherited. In other words, leaders were born, not developed. For years, social scientists have pondered these questions. In the 1800's, leadership was seen as an inborn characteristic, but the idea that leadership is learned has been emphasized in the last 30 years.

Today, there is growing recognition that leadership cannot be treated as either inborn or learned. A combination of these two basic ideas plus a third dimension, the situation in which the leader functions, is perhaps the most appropriate orientation (Ejembi, 2010). Both of these notable works lent great initial support for the notion that leadership is rooted in characteristics of the leader. Using early research techniques, researchers conducted over a hundred studies proposing a number of characteristics that distinguished leaders from non leaders: intelligence, dominance, adaptability, persistence, integrity, socioeconomic status, and self-confidence just to name a few.

### **Types of Leadership Theories**

1. Rise of alternative theories;
2. Reemergence of trait theory;
3. Behavioural and style theories;
4. Situational and contingency theory;
5. Functional theory;
6. Transactional theory;
7. Transformational theory

### **Transformational Theory**

A transformational leader (Chemers, 2002), motivates its team to be effective and efficient. Communication is the base for goal achievement focusing the group on the final desired outcome or goal attainment. This leader is highly visible and uses chain of command to get the job done. Transformational leaders focus on the big picture, needing to be surrounded by people who take care of the details.

A transformational leader is interested in helping to transform people from being followers into becoming leaders (van Linden and Fertman, 1998 as cited by Greiman *et al.*, 2007). Transformational leaders value the participation and contribution of others, share leadership in the form of group power, and are open to delegation. The transformational leader is process – oriented, and the focus is on being a leader. According to Northouse (2004) in Greiman *et al* (2007), transformational leadership is concerned with the performance of followers and also with developing followers to their fullest potential.

### **The Transformational Theory and it's Application to Agricultural Extension Work: The Case of Presidential Initiative on Natural Rubber Production in Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State of Nigeria**

The overall objective of the presidential initiative on rubber production, utilization and export is to increase both local production and utilization of rubber to the point where Nigeria can export

and have enough for domestic use, generate rural employment, increase farmers' income and standard of living as well as ensure food security.

The specific objectives of the initiative are as follows: Increase the production of rubber through rehabilitation, new planting in order to achieve expansion of effective hectares under cultivation; yield improvement using improved clones; addressing both technological and socio-economic constraints militating against increased productivity; diversifying the local use of rubber; expanding the market through provision of infrastructure and exploring of more local and overseas market, provision of more reliable data and information on rubber.

The strategies adopted for the implementation of the initiative are the development of estates and smallholders; rehabilitation of plantations under 20 years, total replanting of plantation above 30 years using high yielding and disease resistant clones recommended by Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN), Pamol and Michelin. Michelin and Pamol are organizations that are involved in natural rubber production in Nigeria; intensifying new planting in rubber producing states, expansion of rubber planting into marginal states (Ebonyi, Enugu, Osun, Ekiti, Southern Kaduna); provision of inputs to nucleus estates and smallholders at subsidized price. States/farmers are billed to adopt any of the four models for the smallholders/ out growers development schemes and encouraging intercropping with crops like cassava, pineapple, beans, maize, melon among others, before canopy closure and livestock production after canopy closure as a means of addressing long gestation problem (Giroh, 2009).

Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria's extension staff have major task to play in order to actualized the set objectives in Southern Kaduna. Extension Agents as leaders in this regard emback on sensitization of village heads, youth leaders and women leaders for the attainment of goals. The interested farmers were encouraged to form groups just as Ogunbameru (2001), recognized the importance of groups in agricultural development. These groups are mobilized, organized, strategized for agricultural development. Though, farming activities are individualistic in nature, formation of groups for effectiveness is always agitated. Extension normally deals with farmers in groups. Governments also advice farmers to form cooperative societies for smooth agricultural activities.

As way of motivating the interested farmers, seedlings are produced and given out to them at subsidized cost, the cost of transporting it from main station in Benin City, Edo State was free, training on how to plant, marking out of land, demonstrating the planting was rendered to them also free. They were so encouraged to put in their best. The farmers received various types of training on natural rubber production generally, on intercrops rubber with arable crops and mini-livestock (eg bee keeping, snailry, mushroom production and rabbitry) to address long time gestation problem and for additional income from rubber plantation which make them to be effective and very efficient in every aspect of natural rubber production and their standard of living was greatly improved (Giroh, 2009).

Effective communication was the bed rock upon which this achievement and the attainment of goals was hinged for each group of farmers. The Extension Agent (the overall leader) uses all strategies (local leaders) such as; village heads, women leaders, youth leaders and simple languages and participatory method to achieve the goal of establishing natural rubber plantation in the zone.



The Presidential Initiative on Rubber is jointly funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria (25%); State government (30%); Local Government (5%); private stakeholders and Donor agency (30 and 10%) respectively. The Socio- economic benefits of the initiative is the provision of jobs, feeder roads, water supply, improved living standard, usefully engaging youths and food security. It is anticipated to raise revenue through local sale: ₦1.056 billion in 2014 to ₦35.604 billion in 2025 while export revenue of ₦3.001 billion in 2014 to ₦101.304 billion in 2025. It is expected to be sustainable and will operate partly on cost recovery basis particularly with regards to proceeds from sales of seedlings (Giroh, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

Transformational theory was very suitable for the project and for any meaningful development to take place, the people concern must be involved, empowered and transformed in every aspect of their life.

Also transformational theory was very suitable for participative or democratic leadership style which favours decision-making by the group as shown above, such a leader gives instruction after consulting the group. They can win the co-operation of their group and can motivate them effectively and positively. The decisions of the democratic leader are not unilateral as with the autocrat because they arise from consultation with the group members and participation by them. So that Extension agent as a leader in this regard can disseminate agricultural innovation/information effectively that will lead to sustainable development in agriculture.

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