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Session Overview

- This session discusses the theories and styles associated with political leadership.
- The session further discusses the rationale for effective leadership, politicians as leaders and founders and preservers.
- Leadership is a very topical issue in Africa, it is expected that we all fully appreciate its nuances.
Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One- The Concept of Political Leadership
- Topic Two- Theories of Leadership
- Topic Three- Styles of Leadership
- Topic Four- Leadership Functions
- Topic Five- The Rational for Effective Leadership
- Topic Six- Exceptional Leaders


Topic One
THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
Introduction

- The concept of political leadership is an extremely contested one and this stems from the fact that there are differing notions and definitions of leadership.
- The division of society into leaders and followers is deeply rooted in pre-democratic culture of deference and respect in which the leader was well informed and was believed to know it all.
- The leader was also believed to have the capacity to take far-reaching decisions that had the tendency of addressing most of the problems of society.
- It is contended that politics in essence is leadership or attempted leadership of whatever is the prevailing form of political community.
The well-being of nations often depends on the capacity of leaders to choose wisely and act prudently. For instance, after the World War II, President Harry Truman of USA made a series of very important decisions that changed the face of the world.

- For instance, he decided to build Europe by fashioning out the Marshall Plan
- He also sought to create new military alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to confront the Soviet Union’s perceived expansionism with a firm policy of containment

Every country is affected by the quality of its political leadership
Definitions of Leadership

- In spite of the existence of countless books and studies on leadership, no one has developed a comprehensive and widely accepted definition of what leadership is, nor what makes some leaders effective and others ineffectual.
- In the absence of a universally accepted definition of leadership, a series of common sense definitions have arisen.
R.C. Stephen’s Definition of Leadership

- According to Stephen, leadership is the ability to get others to do what you want.
- This definition equates leadership to power.
- The definition is deemed to be too broad because it includes coercion and the use of naked power, which to all intents and purposes is very much different from leadership.
- The definition is also too limited because it omits the art and poetry of leadership which include things like values and passion.
Andrew Heywood’s Definition of Leadership

• Heywood posits that leadership is understood to mean a pattern of behavior or as a personal quality

• As a pattern of behavior, leadership is a social process in which influence is exerted by an individual or group over a larger body to organize or direct its efforts towards the achievement of desired goals without the use of threat or violence

• It is expected that leaders will influence non-coercively and generate cooperative effort towards goals that transcend the leader’s narrow self-interest

• Leadership in this definition is a property of the relationship between the leader and the follower

• It is not simply some property of the individual leader
Andrew Heywood’s Definition of Leadership (cont’d)

- To understand leadership, we must understand compliance.
- We need to know why people are willing to let themselves be influenced by some individuals and not by others.
- To Heywood, the ability of an individual to function as a leader is thus in part dependent on the willingness of followers to be influenced.
- The difficulty with this view is that everyone exerts some amount of influence on everyone else.
Tom Peters and Nancy Austin’s Definition of Leadership

- Peters and Austin describe leadership in broad terms.
- To them, leadership means vision, cheerleading, enthusiasm, love, trust, verve, passion, obsession, consistency, the use of symbols, paying attention to details as illustrated by the content of one’s calendar, out-and-out drama (and the management thereof), creating heroes at all levels, coaching, effectively wandering around, and numerous other things.
- Leadership must be present at all levels of the organization or the state. It depends on a million little things done with obsession, consistency, and care, but all of those million things add up to nothing if the trust, vision and basic belief are not there.
- It can thus be inferred from this definition that leadership clearly entails more than wielding power or exercising political authority.
Michael Armstrong’s Definition of Leadership

- Armstrong defined leadership as the ability to persuade others willingly to behave differently.
- Leaders and their groups are interdependent. Leaders have two important roles:
  - First, they must achieve the task.
  - Secondly, they have to maintain effective relationship between themselves and the group and the individuals in it.
  - They must be effective in this harmonizing relationship in the sense that they are conducive to achieving the task.
Michael Aarmstrong’s Definition of Leadership (cont’d)

- In order to achieve their objectives, leaders must satisfy the following:

- **Task need**: The group exists to achieve a common purpose or task. The Leader’s role is to ensure that this purpose is fulfilled.

- **Group maintenance need**: To achieve this objective, the group needs to be held together. The leader’s job is to build up and maintain team spirit and morale.

- **Individual needs**: Individuals have their own needs, which they expect to be satisfied at work. The leader’s task is to be aware of these needs so that where necessary they can take steps to harmonize them with the needs of the task and the group.
Topic Two
Theories of Leadership
Introduction

• The question of leadership as we have noted above is surrounded by controversy
  - To what extent is leadership compatible with freedom and democracy?
  - Does leadership inspire and motivate, or does it subdue and repress?
  - Are strong leaders to be admired or feared?
• At the heart of these disagreements lie the differing views about the nature of leadership
Four Theories

• Four contrasting theories of leadership can be identified

• These are:
  - leadership as a personal gift
  - leadership as a sociological phenomenon
  - leadership as an organizational necessity
  - leadership as a political skill
Leadership as a Personal Gift

• “Men are marked out from the moment of birth to rule or be ruled”—Aristotle
• From this point of view, leadership is strictly an individual quality, manifest in the personality of what was traditionally thought of as “men of destiny”
• The most extreme form of this theory is found in the fascist “leader principle”
• This is based on the idea of a single, supreme leader (always male), who alone is capable of leading the masses to their destiny
• Such an idea was in part derived from Friedrich Nietzsche’s “Urbemensch” (superman), who rises above the “herd instinct” of conventional morality and so achieves self-mastery
Leadership as a Psychological and Sociological Phenomenon

- Modern political psychology adopts a similar view of leadership, in that it analyses it in terms of human personality.
- One of the earliest attempts to do this was the collaboration in the late 1920s between Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and William Bullitt on a controversial psychological study of President Woodrow Wilson (Freud and Bullitt, 1932).
- Harold Lasswell’s ground-breaking *psychopathology* and *politics* (1930) suggested that leaders are motivated largely by private, almost pathological, conflicts, which are then rationalized in terms of actions taken in the public interest.
- A widely discussed modern analysis of political leadership has been advanced by James Barber (1988).
- Focusing on what he called “presidential character” Barber categorized US presidents according two key variables: first, whether they were ‘active’ or ‘passive’ in terms of the energy they put into their jobs, and second, whether they were ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ in terms of how they felt about political office.
Leadership as a Psychological and Sociological Phenomenon (cont’d)

- An alternate view of leadership sees it as a sociological, rather than psychological phenomenon.
- From this perspective, leaders are created by particular socio-historical forces.
- They do not so much impose their will on the world as act as a vehicle through which historical forces are exerted.
- This is certainly the approach adopted by Marxists, who believe that historical development is structured largely by economic factors, reflected in a process of class struggle.
- The personalities of individual leaders are thus less important than the broader class interests they articulate and defend.
Leadership as an Organizational Necessity

- This theory of leadership sees it in largely technical terms as a rational or bureaucratic device.
- In this view, leadership is essentially an organizational necessity that arises from the need for coherence, unity and direction within any complex institution.
- Leadership therefore goes hand in hand with bureaucracy.
- Modern large-scale organizations require specialization and a division of labour, which, in turn, give rise to a hierarchy of offices and responsibilities.
- This bureaucratic leadership conforms to what Marx Weber called legal-rational authority, in that it is essentially impersonal and based on formal, and calculable rules.
Leadership as a Political Skill

- The final theory of leadership portrays it very much as an artifact, that is, as a political skill that can be learned and practiced.
- Political leadership in this sense is akin to the art of manipulation, perhaps inevitable feature of democratic politics in an age of mass communications.
- This can be seen most graphically in the cults of personalities that have been constructed to support the dictatorial leaderships of figures such as Mao Zedong, Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein.
Leadership as a Political Skill (cont’d)

• Indeed, many of the classic examples of charismatic leadership can in practice be seen as forms of manufactured leadership.
  - Stalin, for example, bolstered his own popularity by building up an elaborate cult of Lenin in the 1920s
    - he erected statues
    - renamed streets and towns
    - placed Lenin’s embalmed body in a mausoleum in Red Square
• During the 1930s, having carefully linked himself to Lenin’s heritage, Stalin transferred this cult to himself
Topic Three
Styles of Leadership
Factors that Influence the Style of Leadership

• A style of leadership refers to the strategies and behavioral patterns through which a leader seeks to achieve his or her goals.
• Leaders are not all alike: leadership can be exercised in a number of different ways.
• The factors that shape the adoption of a particular leadership strategy or style are many.
• Among them are:
  - the personality and goals of the leader
  - the institutional framework within which he or she operates
  - the political mechanisms by which power is won and retained
  - the means of mass communication available
  - the nature of the broader political culture of the country
Here, we discuss three main leadership styles namely:

- laissez-faire leadership
- transactional leadership
- transformational leadership
Laissez-faire Leadership

- The chief feature of laissez-faire leadership is the reluctance of the leader to interfere in matters outside his or her personal responsibilities.
- It emphasizes a decentralized approach to leadership.
- Laissez-faire leaders have a “hands-off” approach to cabinet and departmental management.
- They participate to the least extent possible both in planning or work activity.
- They give no feedback.
- A laissez-faire style is not irreconcilable with ideological leadership, but it certainly requires that ideological goals constitute only a broadly-stated strategic vision.
The strengths of this approach to leadership are that, because subordinates are given greater responsibility, it can foster harmony and teamwork, and it can allow leaders to concentrate on political and electoral matters by relieving them of their managerial burdens.

On the other hand, it can also lead to the weak coordination of government policy, with ministers and officials allowed too much scope to pursue their own interests and initiatives sometimes at the expense of the group interests.
Transactional Leadership

• Transactional leadership is a more “hands-on” style of leadership
• It emphasizes the implicit social exchange or transaction over time that exists between the leader and the followers, including reciprocal influence and interpersonal perception
• The leaders give benefits to followers, such as a definition of the situation and direction, which is reciprocated by followers in heightened esteem for and responsiveness to the leader
• This transactional approach fits other contemporary social science views emphasizing the significance of persuasive influence, rather than coercive power and compliance in organizational leadership
• Furthermore, a transactional approach to leadership gives special emphasis to the significance of followers’ perception of the leader
• Transactional leaders adopt a positive role in relation to policy-making and government management, but are motivated by essentially pragmatic goals and considerations
Transformational leadership

- In transformational leadership, the leader is not so much a coordinator or manager as an inspirer or visionary.
- Not only are such leaders motivated by strong ideological convictions, but they also have the personal resolution and political will to put them into practice.
- Instead of seeking compromise and consensus, transformational leaders attempt to mobilize support from within government, their parties and the general public for the realization of their personal vision.
- John Gardner (1990) has suggested that a leader is an “individual who creates a story”.


The effectiveness of such a leader hinges on the degree to which the leader in question embodies the story, and the extent to which the story resonates with the broader public.

Transformational leadership can be seen as an extension of transactional leadership, but with greater rewards in leader intensity and follower arousal.
Topic Four
LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS
Functions of a Leader

- According to F.W. Taylor, the functions of a leader are:
  - To set up and enforce performance criteria to meet organizational goals
  - To focus on the needs of the organization

- In the view of M.P. Follet, leaders perform the following three functions:
  - Coordination, i.e., “harmonious ordering of parts”
  - Definition of purpose
  - Anticipation
For Chester I. Barnard, a leader performs the following functions:

- Concerned with “the specialized work of maintaining the organization in operation”
- To establish and maintain the system of communication in the organization
- To secure essential services from the employees by motivating them towards the organization’s goals
- To formulate the goals and purposes of the organization in a clearly communicable way
Types of Leadership

- Scholars usually distinguish between two broad types of leadership
  - expressive leadership
  - instrumental leadership
Topic Five
The Rational for Effective Leadership
Importance of Political Leadership

- Leadership is important for a number of reasons
  - First, it mobilizes and inspires people who would otherwise be inert and directionless. Leadership plays an important role by organizing the people to pursue a specific course of action aimed at achieving set objectives
  - Leadership promotes unity and encourages members of a group to pull in the same direction
  - Leadership strengthens organizations by establishing a hierarchy of responsibilities and roles
• All organizations, groups or states need leadership to pave the way toward the achievement of organizational goals. Without good leadership, an organization or a state is only a confusion of people, machines and institutions
• Leaders determine the spirit of the nation, the morale and motivation of the people
• Leadership can make or mar an organization. Organizational performance is closely related to quality of leadership
Qualities of Leadership

Recent studies have shown that there are some qualities that are essential for effective leadership in a variety of situations. These qualities include:

- Intelligence
- Communication skills
- Empathy
- Energy
- Sound judgment
- Belief in the possibility of success
Qualities of Leadership (cont’d)

- Integrity
- Flexibility
- technical and professional competence
- social skills such as human relations attitudes cooperativeness,
- tact and diplomacy and
- ability to solve problems
Dangers of Leadership

- Leadership concentrates power, and can thus lead to corruption and tyranny.
- Leadership engenders subservience and deference, thereby discouraging people from taking responsibility for their own lives.
- Leadership narrows the debate and argument, because of its emphasis on ideas flowing down from the top, rather than from the bottom.
Modern societies have become very complex and enmeshed with global influences that politicians find very difficult or almost impossible to get things done.

Leaders suffer because old ideological and moral certainties are breaking down, and this makes it more difficult to construct compelling narratives that have wide popular resonance.
Challenges of Modern Leaders (cont’d)

• Modern societies are becoming more diverse and fragmented. Political leaders are therefore finding it increasingly difficult to construct a political appeal based on a common culture and a set of shared values.

• A cultural gap has developed between the political and the non-political worlds. Political leaders are increasingly becoming career politicians whose lifestyles, sensibilities and even language are remote from the concerns of the ordinary citizen.
Topic Six
Exceptional Leaders
Exceptional Public Leaders

- Exceptional leaders practice statecraft and exercise wise management of the affairs of the state. This idea of wise leadership, traditionally called statesmanship, has occupied a rich and enduring place in Western political history. Plato and Aristotle both examined the idea.

- Exceptional leaders are men and women of rare quality who display an overriding concern for the public good, possess a variety of political skills and exhibit practical wisdom. In addition, in times of crisis, these men and women provide crucial leadership that makes an important difference for the well-being of the state.
Exceptional Political Leaders (cont’d)

• Exceptional leaders may assume the role of founders of nations, without whose vision, wisdom, and inspirational leadership a particular nation or government might never have existed at all.

• The line between an ordinary politician and an exceptional leader is by no means clear.

• In a democracy, all leaders must sometimes act like politicians. Nonetheless, an exceptional political leader must act wisely.
Characteristics of Exceptional Political Leaders

- Exceptional leaders are characterized by:
  - Concern for the public good
  - Practical wisdom
  - Leadership skills
  - Extraordinary opportunities
  - Good fortune