

## Chapter 6

# Leadership and Followership in the Context of Trade Unionism

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### ABSTRACT

*Trade union leadership and followership are complimentary and symbiotic. Pragmatic followership serves to engender effective trade union leadership. Union leaders are expected to work with and stand by their members in order to attain union mandates. Union ethos demands that leaders must place the interest and welfare of workers as their most paramount goal and work assiduously towards satisfying them. Union members must consider the antecedents and pedigree of aspirants and ensure that only unionists with track records of tenaciously and selflessly championing the union's cause should be elected as leaders. Through leadership by example, trust, integrity, and candor, union leaders can bring about positive changes to both workers and their union. Finally, the authors called on union leaders to be alive to their responsibilities and demonstrate ethical and servant forms of leadership in order to cope with the challenges of giving vent to the aspirations of their members.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2807-5.ch006

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Most modern organizations comprise of two categories of people those who lead (leaders) and those who follow (followers). The success of any organization is predicated not only on the basis of how well the leaders lead (*Overbeck & Park, 2001; Schmid, Jonas, & Hall, 2009; Bourke & Dillion, 2016; Rihal, 2017*), but also greatly on how well their followers tag along. So much emphasis is placed on the role of a leader, yet leadership alone does not contribute to success. Followers also play major part. Followership is integral to leadership and vice versa. In a way, leadership to a certain extent is also hinged on the quality and orientation of its followers. Drucker (1986) in reinforcing this said a leader is someone who has followers. The relationship between both parties is symbiotic (*De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008*). Leaders and followers interact to form a dynamic and purposeful relationship, an essential ingredient in today's world. As stressed earlier, leadership is paramount to organizational success and sustainability leading to the great importance attached to the theme of leadership in modern enterprises. Likewise, Bendixen, Campbell, Criswel & Smith (2016) averred that *leadership is the major driver of organizational change.* What a leader does or his actions especially when championing change initiatives demonstrates the presence of effective leadership with great multiplier effects on organizational growth. More than ever, today's organizations need to squarely tackle changes in technological innovation, competitive strategy and internal organizational operations. Leadership is a crucial factor in confronting, addressing and designing actionable solutions to these issues and or changes that can improve organizational performance (*Morris & Seeman, 1950*). This can be attained by leading, showing the way or motivating others to channel efforts towards a new or desired direction. (*Bryson, 1989; Goleman, 2000; Josephson, 2002; Lindeman & Rono, 2011*)

The First Industrial revolution which brought about changes in the dynamics of work led to the emergence of a boss in the workplace whose major focus was to get the job done fast and the need for an association(Trade Union) to advance the interests of workers in the new milieu. For workers and their families, this was a good event given the centrality of work to individual flourishing and stability. In the last century, International Labour Organization (2017a) noted that work became not only a means of material fulfillment, but also a fundamental tool for personal development and community participation. Thus, the need for the existence of trade unions as highlighted by Bivens et al.,(2017) is that the freedom of workers to join together in unions is a widely recognized fundamental human right across the globe. Trade unions are all about raising human well-being through the creation of jobs with humane conditions of employment, the emergence of thriving workplaces and prosperous and inclusive economies. The growing determination by workers to end

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