

Original Research Article

The Influence of Decision Making Process in the Nigerian Leadership and Management Operations

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Nigeria, which is the giant of Africa and most populated country in Africa, has been impacted by ineffectiveness and poor decision making in the area of leadership and management operations. The purpose of this study was focused on identifying the factors influencing success in decision making among Nigerian leaders and policy makers in their current leadership situations. The qualitative critical ethnographic approach was used in order to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges impacting effectiveness, and success among leaders in their decision making activities. The author being committed and determined to discovering a pattern of meaning through experience, systemic thinking, assessment, and creative analysis used the Northouse's leadership approach to understand the leadership decision making in the current Nigerian leadership situation. Approximately, 800 past and current leaders in the government operations of Nigeria participated in the study. Data was collected through structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys (which was used solely to support the study). The results that emerged from the data indicated that there is a great need for change and improvement in decision making process among their leaders.

Key Words: Leadership, Management, Decision-making, Culture, Growth, Political influence.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, which is richly blessed and endowed with human and material resources critical for national growth and development; is located in the Western African Region, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon. It is a country believed by many to be the giant of Africa and most populated nation in Africa with approximately 172 million people. It has a total area of

about 923,768 sq. km as well as 4,047km in land boundaries (Udogu, 2001). Nigeria is a multi-tribal system with more than 300 different tribal groups – all of which belong to the political definition of “Nigerian” but are distinct from one another in terms of cultural practices and ethnicity. Added to this are economic disparities among the various groups, as well as potential for conflict on religious grounds, especially between the long-established Muslim population and the rapidly-

growing Christians. It is made of three major ethnic tribes, the Hausas (occupying the north), the Yoruba (occupying the west), and the Ibos (occupying the east) but unfortunately it has been impacted by ineffectiveness and poor decision making in the area of leadership and management operations (Ejimabo, 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative critical ethnographic study was focused on identifying the factors influencing success in decision making among Nigerian leaders and policy makers in their current leadership situations. While mismanagement, corruptions, government instability, development, technology, leadership styles, ethnic diversity, decision making, and fraud are some of the major challenges affecting progress and success in Nigeria; this study was basically centered

on examining the influence of decision making process in the Nigerian leadership and management operations. Nigeria as a country is undoubtedly a systemic network that is complex, challenging, and dynamic in nature with multiple cultural diversity and tribal differences.

The history of Nigeria is tainted with the absence of effective leadership, decision making process, instability, good moral and ethical values in the conduct of the ruling leaders and politicians. Historically, Nigeria as a country gained its independence on October 1st, 1960. Prior to her independency, Nigeria came under the colonial rule of the British during the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, making English its common language.

Table 1. The Names of Nigerian States and Capitals

No.	State	Capital	No.	State	Capital
1	Abia	Umuahia	20	Katsina	Katsina
2	Adamawa	Yola	21	Kebbi	Birnin Kebbi
3	Akwa Ibom	Uyo	22	Kogi	Lokoja
4	Anambra	Awka	23	Kwara	Ilorin
5	Bauchi	Bauchi	24	Lagos	Ikeja
6	Bayelsa	Yenogoa	25	Nassarawa	Lafia
7	Benue	Makurdi	26	Niger	Minna
8	Borno	Maiduguri	27	Ogun	Abeokuta
9	Cross River	Calabar	28	Ondo	Akure
10	Delta	Asaba	29	Osun	Oshogbo
11	Ebonyi	Abakaliki	30	Oyo	Ibadan
12	Edo	Benin City	31	Plateau	Jos
13	Ekiti	Ado Ekiti	32	Rivers	Port Harcourt
14	Enugu	Enugu	33	Sokoto	Sokoto
15	Gombe	Gombe	34	Taraba	Jalingo
16	Imo	Owerri	35	Yobe	Damaturu
17	Jigawa	Dutse	36	Zamfara	Gusau
18	Kaduna	Kaduna	37	Abuja	Federal Capital
19	Kano	Kano			

The Republic of Nigeria is a democratic nation with 36 states excluding "Abuja" the federal capital of Nigeria as shown in **Table 1** above. The Nigerian leaders and policy makers must know that tough quality and sound decision making are the major element and essence of leadership.

They should work hard to design, create, and implement good decisions in the entire operation of the country. The goal of this work is to discover a scientific break-through which is based on the experience, knowledge, and the skills of the selected participants of this study with the aim of improving quality decision making in Nigeria.

Table 2. Definition of Core Concepts

Core Concepts	Definition
Leadership	-is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives (Yukl, 2010).
Diversity	-is an approach that allows or attracts a wide array of people that come from different backgrounds, lifestyles, culture, social experiences, origin, races, and religions in the organization for work purposes and goal accomplishments (Ejimabo, 2015).
Management	- is the process of getting things done efficiently and effectively with and through people and other resources in a particular organization or other environment. It is practically associated with planning, organizing, budgeting, recruitment, coordinating, controlling, and directing.
Decision making	- is a commitment to action, a discrete and concrete phenomenon driven by rationality (Langley 1995). It the act of choosing the best from the many alternatives or options.
Culture	- is a pattern of a shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems Edgar Schien (1993).

While the term “leadership” is associated with influence and the ability to empower, encourage, support, and help others by a person or group of persons to accomplish a goal; decision making as a dynamic process is focused exclusively on choice making and the ability of a leader to select the best alternative from the many options (Glaholt, Wu, & Reingold, 2010). DM has been a serious educational and organizational issue for many years and had continued to baffle many researchers as they look for creative and effective solution for this profound societal and organizational challenge. Therefore, to understanding leadership decision making process (LDMP) in Nigeria, its leaders and government must be able to define what the future should look like, aligns with that vision, and inspire them to make it happen despite the challenges and obstacles involved. For in a nation or culture that stresses participation and autonomy, the function of top leadership is not to control but to support, encourage, and provide hands-on coaching and consultation to help citizens, and employees avoid unnecessary frustration, and waste of effort, to increase task-relevant knowledge and skills, and to formulate uniquely appropriate performance strategies that result in process improvements (Tsang, 2002). According to Eicher and Liedholm (1999), the pressing problems of everyday survival remain the highest immediate priority.

The Significance of Culture in Nigeria

Culture is a phenomenon that surrounds the people of Nigeria’s daily lives as well as the nation’s heritage. Cultural values and beliefs affect the practice of leadership development and advancement which relate to hopes and fears of human existence. Leaders must include their people in their decision making process and show their followers that they are able to acknowledge when they are wrong and move forward to a better solution. Nigerian leaders need to understand the cultural diversity of their people with regard to tribes, tradition, customs, respect for elders, and languages of the different people in order to improve leadership style and effectiveness in governance of the people. Thus, each aspect of the above mentioned cultural elements can be seen as a vital environmental and social condition influencing the leadership and governance of the country (Ejimabo, 2013). For instance, Hsiung (2012) maintained that: “authentic leaders exemplify high moral standards, integrity, and honesty and authentic leaders acknowledge their personal limitations and shortcomings, and are therefore less likely to adopt a defensive attitude about organizational problems” (p.353).

It is important for Nigerian leaders and policy makers to know that functional leadership is not usually defined by a specific set of behaviors but instead by generic responses that is prescribed for and will vary by different problem, issues, challenges, circumstances, and different situations. Thus, individuals from different

cultures tend to have different views of the self, which affects individuals' cognition, goals in social interactions, and consequently influences their behavior and goals in decision making (Rau, 2011). There is a difference in the DM patterns between cultures with independent and interdependent social orientations in the situations when risk-taking is involved, namely the members of cultural groups with high independency show more risk-averse behavior (Weber, Elke, Hsee, & Sokolowska, 2006). Hackman and Walton, (1986) maintained that: the emphasis switches from "what leaders should do" to "what needs to be done for effective performance" (p. 77). For in every collectivistic cultural situation, leaders and policy makers have a moral responsibility to take care of their followers and help them develop their personal cares, to be a consultant for followers' personal problems (Bass, 1995). In like manner, Nigerian leaders and policy makers should be able to understand the cultural diversity of people in order to enhance a better leadership style and effectiveness in governance of the people.

The Theoretical Framework of Northouse

A "theory" according to Lincoln and Guba (2003, p. 15), is a systematic set of beliefs and assumptions with their accompanying methods. It allows investigators to have a clear and distinct understanding of realities as well as an ability to create a pattern of meaning in their work. Theories are vital to research design because they tend to be internally consistent and usually do not contradict

themselves. They act as a guide to researchers' thinking and ideas by enabling them to draw from the knowledge of findings that existed before the research study. Mertens (1998) maintains that in order to guide their thinking and practice, researchers should identify the worldview that most closely relates to their own. It assists the researcher in the entire research process regarding the ways of looking at things and clarifying one's ideas as well as providing the means to deal with complexities associated with the study. Investigators usually find it easier to make distinct predictions from a consistent theory due to the fact that theories are constructed by systematically collecting data and carefully analyzing the data for patterns that are real and meaningful. Theories do not ignore facts; instead, they provide the best means to deal with challenges and difficulties associated with the researcher's role, helping the researcher in data collection, analysis, and interpretations and writing the final report (Flinders & Mills, 1993).

In this study, the researcher draws on the Northouse's leadership process theory to understand the views and interpretations of the selected participants about leadership decision making process in the Nigeria system of governance and policy making. Northouse (2004) defined leadership as a process consisting of transactions between the leader and the followers.

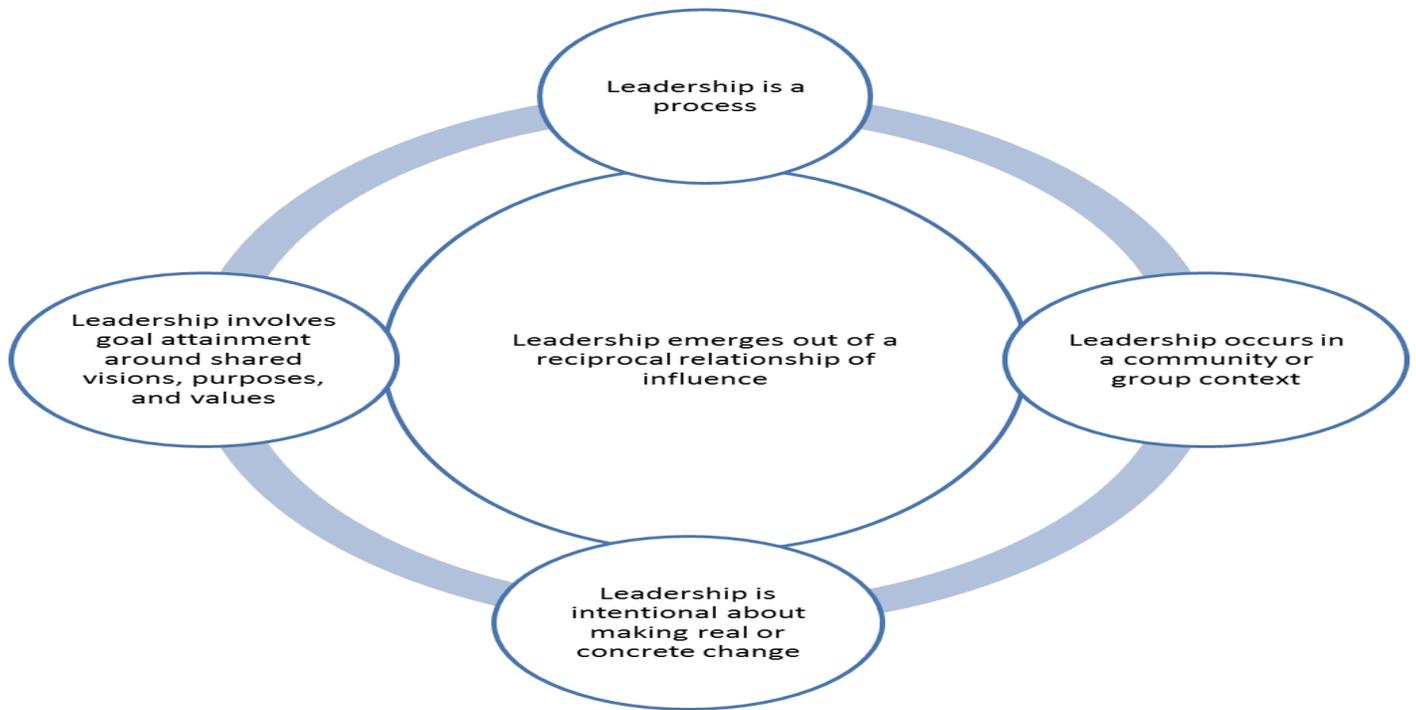


Figure 1.The five central components of Northouse’s concept of leadership

The approach of Northouse, which states that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2004) clearly focused on the leadership style needed in Nigeria. It conceptualizes and identifies the five basic elements common to the phenomenon of leadership (Ejimabo, 2013). The Five central components of Northouse’s concept of leadership shown above in Figure 1 can be identified as central to understanding of any leadership skills or process both in Nigeria and elsewhere. It suggests that leadership is a process that is ongoing and dynamic in understanding leaders and followers in any organization or institution. The process of using the above framework as a guiding principle enabled the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge from the experiences and views of the selected participants. When applied to Nigerian situation, this conceptualization rightly suits their leadership situation. Northouse (2004) claims that:

Although leaders and followers are closely linked, it is the leader who often initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship (p. 3).

Northouse’s (2004) theory of leadership process will enable the researcher to go beyond an aimless, unsystematic piling of accounts by providing different ways of looking at things and clarifying ideas (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Leaders, policy makers, and followers must be involved in LDMP for clarity, effectiveness, and goal accomplishment in the entire country. Leaders need followers and followers need leaders in order to accomplish desired goals and outcomes (Burns, 1978; Heller & Van Til, 1983; Hollander, 1992; Jago, 1982).

Challenges and Factors Influencing LDM in Nigeria

One cannot but agree that the people of Nigeria have been disadvantaged, deprived of good governance, and neglected by their leaders and policy makers with reference to poor LDMP. Many of their elected leaders with poor leadership skills and creativity have misrepresented and ignored the voice of the majority, dedication and honesty, peace and stability of the country, and have equally hindered most people from economic growth and opportunities due to their race, lack of skill, greed and power. They sometimes create obstacles to future growth and vision of the country (Ejimabo, 2013). Adejimi (2005) indicated that in Nigeria

most of the policy makers as well as those involved in decision-making are engaged in bribery, egoism, power, and trade liberalization. They are distracted to an extent that they forget the nation's policies aimed at improving the lives of people in the society.

Figure 2 below shows some of the major factors influencing creative LDM in the Nigerian situation and government operations.

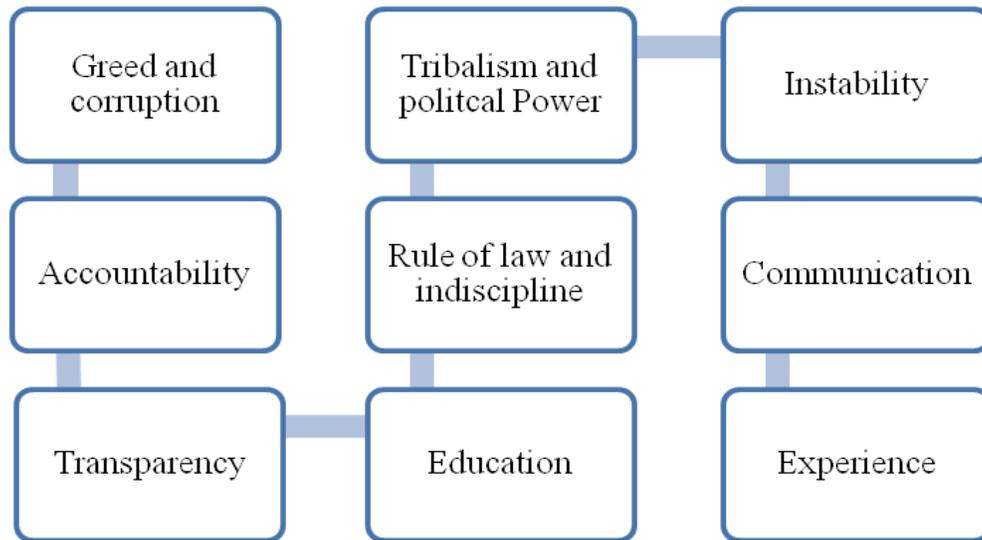


Figure 2. Factors influencing creative LDM in Nigeria

Many studies by different professions had shown that there are several important factors that may influence leadership decision making in organizations. These factors and challenges include all the concepts mentioned above in Figure 2. For instance, Dietrich (2010) is of the opinion that some choices are simple and seem straight forward, while others are complex and require a multi-step approach to making the decisions. Kirk-Greene and Rimmer (1981) maintained that the solution for addressing Nigeria's problems and consolidating democratic governance in the federal republic lies in having a leadership that works on the principles of good governance and is most importantly, accountable to the Nigerian people. Good governance in Nigeria is essential to its stability and growth and that of the economies of West African countries in the Sub-region (Ejimabo, 2013). Nigerian leaders should weigh all necessary options and the outcomes of their decisions while being aware that each of the decision made may either affect the country as a whole, individuals or some part of the nation.

One major way of understanding the current impact of LDMP in the Nigerian context, is being aware that leadership development is an on-going learning process throughout life that should involve leaders and

followers in the entire country. In understanding leadership as a lifelong learning process, some of the more noteworthy authors (Bar-On, 2000; Gardner, 1983, Goleman, 1995, Mayer & Salovey, 1997) have developed concepts of self-awareness, self-management, and social interactive skills to enhance relationships and communications among and between team members as positive influences toward achieving goals, mentoring, and effectiveness in leadership and good governance. These identified problems above are affecting the common people as well as increasing the wave of corruptions and mismanagement in the entire country. The people of Nigeria, like other developing countries in the globe have been disadvantaged and neglected by their leaders. Many of their leaders are faced with the dilemma of meeting the needs of its poor millions, who have to eke out their living from primary productive activities and maintain the integrity of natural resource and the environment.

Although some studies have provided significant insight into the factors, constraints, and obstacles influencing DM among Nigerian leadership and management in the entire country, there is still a need for more studies regarding effective LDMP, systemic thinking, creativity, managerial communication, research, and accountability to enable improvements and

leadership development on national leaders and policy makers. For instance, Sunstein and Thaler (2003) stated that a new general strategy for improving biased decision making has been proposed that leverages our automatic cognitive processes and turns them to our advantage. According to Moore and Loewenstein (2004), some research on joint-versus-separate decision making highlights the fact that our first impulses tend to be more emotional than logical. Shiv and Fedorkihn (1999) indicated that some additional suggestive results in this domain include the findings that willpower is weakened when people are placed under extreme cognitive load and when they are inexperienced in a choice domain (Milkman, Rogers, & Bazerman, 2000). Thus, in order to help our current leaders, educate, and train future leaders, the need has been recognized for integrative research which explicitly considers the impact of context on strategic processes (Bateman & Zeithami, 1989).

Support of Literature

The study was focused on identifying the factors influencing success in decision making among Nigerian leaders and policy makers in their current leadership situations. It was centered at understanding the views of some past and current elected government officials toward people in leadership, with regard to how decisions are made and implemented in the Nigerian leadership operations. Making decisions is what every country leaders and other elected government officials do every day in their individual, group, region, zone, or departmental workplace. Thus, apart from individual or group outcomes, LDMP is at the heart of virtually all management work and a key driver of organizational outcomes (Barnard, 1968; Donaldson, 1983; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996) and a shared vision makes it possible for members of the organization to understand the future its leaders want to create (Senge, 1990).

LDMP scholars have maintained that effective leaders and managers often provide an encouraging atmosphere to perk up the performance and efficiency of their followers (Leiter & Maslach, 2002). In his opinion, Yukl, (2006) identified good DM as one of the key components of leadership strategies in organizational management. All Leaders and other decision makers in companies should understand that a leader is one who can lead a group of people to accomplish common goals in the right direction, with cost efficiency, within the time frame, and achieving the desired outcomes (Nahavandi, 2004). The review of related literatures in this study reveals a great concern for understanding or identifying the major factors influencing success in DM among Nigerian leaders and policy makers in their current leadership operations. LDM process is always crucial and at the center of Nigerian leadership and every nation in

our world today. Barret, Balloud and Weinstein (2005) described leadership decision making in organizations as the process of “using critical thinking skills to optimize a decision” (p.214). The literature review consists of five main sections, namely: (1) *Decision making vs. Cultural and historical context in Nigeria*, (2) *Understanding decision-making process*, (3) *Decision-making and social reform among Nigerian leaders*, (4) *The importance of research in LDMP*, and (5) *The purpose of leadership decision making process in Nigeria*.

Basically, understanding the process by which leaders make decisions is important to understanding the decisions they make in the country. While some choices in decision making process may be seen as being simple and easy in thinking, most of the LDMP are complex, challenging, time consuming and often require a multi-step approach to making the right needed decisions by leaders. There is virtual agreement among observers that poor LDMP is a major factor responsible for derailing Nigeria’s growth, advancement, success, and primarily explain the suffering and poverty in the country. Leaders and decision makers in Nigeria should understand that a leader is one who can lead a group of people to accomplish common goals in the right direction, with cost efficiency, within the time frame, and achieving the desired outcomes (Nahavandi, 2004).

Decision making vs. Cultural and historical context in Nigeria

According to Schien (1993) culture is a pattern of a shared basic assumption that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct ways to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. For him culture requires the people, especially the leaders, to acknowledge the impact of their behavior on their environment. The beliefs and cultural values can affect and influence the practice of leadership in any country or region. Culture is the sharing of values and beliefs of a society established through the interaction of human thinking, feeling, and action. Leaders must understand their own values and ensure, through their consistent behavior, that they reflect their value and share their vision with their followers (Pielstick, 1998).

Decision making process is the key role of leadership and people always associate leadership and politics with making good decisions and a great emphasis on being the head of a group. In the view of Glanz (2002), the crux of good leadership is the ability to make thoughtful, reasoned decisions. In order to be the best

judge, a leader should have critical thinking skills. The understanding of the culture of the people of any group is an authentic way of knowing them as well as being able to work with them. In the Nigerian tribal-culture, leaders must be effective in their role as decision makers by pulling rather than pushing; by inspiring their subordinates rather than ordering them; by enabling people to use their own initiative and experiences rather than by denying their efforts or constraining their experiences and actions in the organization. According to Frake (1977), culture is not simply a cognitive map that people acquire, in whole or in part, more or less accurately, and then learn to read. People are not just map-readers; they are map-makers. People are cast out into imperfectly charted, continually seas of everyday life. Mapping them out is a constant process resulting not in an individual cognitive map, but in a whole chart case of rough, improvised, continually revised sketch maps. Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation. Different cultures are like different schools of navigation designed to cope with different terrains and seas (pp. 6-7).

In a culture that stresses participation and autonomy, the function of top leadership is not to control but to support, encourage and make available hands-on coaching and consultation to help citizens and employees avoid unnecessary frustration and waste of effort, to increase task-relevant knowledge and skills, and to formulate uniquely appropriate performance strategies that result in process improvements (Tsang, 2002). The understanding of the people's culture and history can enable any competent leader in any nation, institution or organization to exhibit courage: the courage to embrace complexity, to stop reducing racial relations as ineffective, and to increase the possibility of building bridges, managing conflict, and finding common ground in the nation (Ejimabo, 2013).

In Nigeria, cultural behavior and leadership decision making process are intertwined. Cultural – traditional values is a phenomenon that surrounds the Nigerian people as well as the nation's heritage – for many people in the nation believe in their customs and traditions as a guide to their way of life. Morgan (1997) describes culture as an active living phenomenon, through which people jointly create and recreate the world in which they live. Culture is comprised of the assumptions, values, norms, people, and their behavior. When compared to an organization, Nigerian leaders should be held to common standards, with rules and procedures that are clear, firm, fair, and consistent while treating all involved in the country with dignity, prudent, and respect irrespective of their differences in culture, ethnicity, and regional tribes.

Understanding Decision-making Process

Decision making process (DMP) is a deliberative and decisive social action, concerned with choosing what to do in the face of a problem (Pomerol & Adam, 2002); is an integral part of any nation or organization. It involves a sequence of activities that involves leadership's courage, and evaluation, as well as "gathering, interpreting and exchanging information, creating and identifying alternative courses of action, choosing among alternatives by integrating the often differing perspectives and opinions of team members; and implementing a choice and monitoring its consequences" (Thompson, 2008, p.166). DMP is one of the vital functions of every leader and serves as an integral part of nation or organizational daily operations. It is both complex and challenging in nature. It demands creativity and effectiveness in all leadership roles and management. In that regard, a leader should have critical thinking skills. They must respond quickly to situations. They must also reflect and be able to point out areas that need improvement; for constant, clear, and quality leadership is necessary for success (Everett, 2002; Buch & River, 2002).

Nigerian leaders and decision makers should recognize that: a Leader is the one who embeds leadership rather than just supervising in making over the business values (Deming, 1986), assume and drive in leadership in gaining quality and quality control (Ishikawa, 1985), personal grip, commitment and involvement in managing the quality (Juran, 1993; kano,1993), who implants principles and ideas rather than controlling by swine forces (James, 1978), leadership can be learnt through experience and is learnable with a bulging outcome on quality (Crosby, 1997). They make decisions that involve everyone in the country and the fate of each person in the nation depends on the decision and policy they make. The significance of LDMP in Nigeria or any other country can never be neglected or over emphasized. However, when there is a good LDMP, zeal, capability, strength, courage, ability, and will power, with tenacity to execute strategic plan, purpose, and clear roadmap success and goal attainment can occur despite limited resources and other challenges. Most of the issues in the country can be linked to poor decisions and bad policies from the elected leaders and policy makers. Nigerian decision-makers must first decide on their values and set goals to ensure a fruitful decision-making process. Their decisions fashion the environment in which the people of the nation live. Therefore, before taking any course of action, leaders must discover or create a set of alternative courses of action and gather information about each decision (Ejimabo, 2013), and having gathered the information with which to make a decision, they must apply information for each course of action to predict the outcomes of each possible

alternative and make a decision for implementation (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000).

In his opinion, Ejimabo (2015) maintained that DMP is about facing a particular given issue, problem, concepts, context, matter, question, challenge, or situation in your organization that requires you to decide or make decision on: what to do or not to do, with regard to, people to involve in the decision making or avoid, the nature of the situation, the urgent need to make decision, and the importance of the matter in question. Simon (1987) argues that decision making can be conceived of as a continuum of styles with the rational and non-rational components being used in a complementary fashion in effective decision making. For Nigerians, effective leadership and good governance must be for the Nigerian leaders and decision makers the direct result of knowing their criteria for success, the scope of their choices and the inherent risk of each alternative (Nelson & Quick, 2003). Decision making – which is a process of selecting from the many different alternatives, calls and requires Nigerian elected officials and leaders to consider, analyze, and evaluate the best alternatives from which advantages and disadvantages are known. They should be influenced by collaborators while working together to achieve the common goal of the nation.

According to Mumford, Zaccaro, & Harding (2000), problem-solving skills refer to a leader's creative ability to solve new and unusual, ill-defined organizational problems. There is actually a great need for clarity in the development and establishment of proper decision making guideline, rule of law, and effective leadership styles among the country's leaders and decision-makers that will include a review of the existing policies, strategies and standards to ensure that Nigerian leaders and government officials will continue to achieve efficient and effective leadership roles in the country.

Decision making and Social Reforms among Nigerian Leaders

Leaders make decisions daily. These decisions, no matter how big or small, impact the people and country in a many serious and major ways. It's important for leaders to evaluate the need and situation before making decisions. Nigerian leaders need a comprehensive social reform in order to break the cycle of inefficiency in LDMP and the implementation of creative policies in the country. For instance, the problem in the Nigerian leadership style, decision making, embezzlement of public funds, and mismanagement culture of both government and private owned properties, nevertheless, still remain as the most difficult problems under the current government. Nigeria has been named as one of the most

corrupt nations in the world. It is also a place where bribery, fraud and embezzlement of the public fund have become the most common means for getting, fame, recognition and wealth in the society (Eti, Ogaji, & Probert, 2006).

The history of Nigeria is associated with the absence of effective leadership, instability, good moral values in the conduct of some of their leaders. Some elected leaders and officials work only on matters and things that benefit their individual and selfish interests. To the detriment of the people, this practice and other manipulations hinder the growth and development of the country. For a successful reform to take place in Nigeria, accountability, leadership transparency, and proper decision making process have to be guaranteed and equally, the people have to be involved in issues that affect their lives and immediate environment. In the views of Edward De Bono (1990), law and order are the basic part of the fabric of society, and the society needs to give priority to this aspect of life because poor quality here downgrades everything else in the systemic network of the place. According to Fabgadebo (2007), transparency and accountability in governance will increase the sense of national community as well as the level of system affect. For effectiveness, smooth running of the country, and in order to truly clean up the bad leadership decision making process and governance activities, Nigerians need creative and ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty, and community. The country need leaders who place fairness at the center of DM, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve (Northouse, 2004, p.326).

The Importance of Research in LDMP in Nigeria

In LDMP, data-based decision making refers to decisions that are based upon research, application, reflection, and adaptation; decision-making is about facing a particular given issue, problem, concepts, context, matter, question, challenge, or situation in your organization that requires you to decide or make decision on: what to do or not to do, with regard to, people to involve in the decision making or avoid, the nature of the situation, the urgent need to make decision, and the importance of the matter in question. It can be defined as the process of making a choice from possible different options based on the information gathered to help guide a leader through an issue or problem. In the Nigerian, their leaders must be aware that data based decision making involves a need assessment which is "... a systemic process of collecting and analyzing data in order to identify needs and problems to be addressed in program planning, development, and modification" (Nagle & Gagnon, 2008, p.2207).

LDM as a process is a major tool in the country, and is particularly important for our elected leaders to become effective leaders in the Nigerian systemic network and government operations. The ability of any leader to conduct research with the sole aim of making decision is very important because using a data base approach is more culturally responsive and equitable with reference to giving specific information on a particular situation. Nigerian leaders must be creative and well advanced in research process and systemic data collection with the aim of making positive decisions in the country. It is the general assumption by many leadership scholars that: a good research study will always enable any organizational or national leader to identify a resemblance, what has been done and what needs to be investigated with regard to a particular. Effective leaders and managers often provide an encouraging atmosphere to perk up the performance and efficiency of their followers (Leiter & Maslach, 2002). For clarity, we need to acknowledge that data based decision making process is quite different from LDMP. Thus, while LDM is the process of choosing among many alternatives, data based decision making involves using quantitative or qualitative information sources to inform choices (Picciano, 2006).

Krantz and Kunreuther (2007) posited that a goal and plan based DM model is an effective and sound approach to take in DM; in this model, the individual is encouraged to focus on goals, not happiness or usefulness. It is useful for Nigerian leaders and decision makers to seek information from research which may include: *past record of events, organization previous decisions stored in the archive, recent publications on the subject matter, and team consultations* as well as *interviews* which is the most efficient means of gathering information. This process enables a leader to weigh his information, check and balance his options before making the final decision on the situation. In the views of Hixson, Christ, & Bradley-Johnson, (2008), they maintained that: “student whose teachers use data based decision rules learn more than students whose teachers base decisions on their own judgment of student performance” (p.2142). It is very important and useful to use data driven method in decision making process due to the fact that the data based approach allows for more efficient and effective use of resources (RTI Action Network, 2009).

The Purpose of LDMP in Nigeria

It is of vital importance that Nigerian Leaders understand that decision making process is complex, full of challenges and choices at every moment of the time. Nigeria is a big country with a population of approximately 172 million people. Based on the nature of the country and tribal-multicultural characteristics, it is difficult to make sound

and quality decisions. We can rightly assume that DMP among leaders in such kind of nations is one of the toughest tasks ever, because a leader makes decisions for all his subordinates to follow in the entire country. The purpose of LDMP is always to make matters, issues, or challenges in the country right, efficient, goal oriented, justifiable, clear, transparent, trustworthy, credible, and accommodating for all that are involved in the organization to accept and be comfortable with in their place of work.

According to Kotter (1990), leaders must know how to lead as well as manage. Otherwise, without leading as well as managing effectively, today's organizations face the threat of extinction. In reality, Nigerian leaders and policy makers must be aware that the people's success, common goals, and task accomplishment hinge upon to which extent they are recognized and involved in the country's DMP. This true because, the fate of all citizens in every nation depend on the decisions and policies that their leaders make for them. Employee involvement results in superior quality decisions which produce encouraging organizational and personal outcomes (Parnell et al., 1992). It is of vital importance to understand that employee involvement in decision making focuses on fairness of authority in the workplace (Locke & Schweiger, 1979) and the perceptions of employees regarding fairness are enhanced by involvement in decision making (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995), especially when the employees prefer to participate in decision making process (Tjosvold, 1985) when the decisions mainly have an impact on their respective positions (Gardell, 1977). This process of recognizing the expertise and opinion of some creative employees to participate or be involved in the organizational LDM would encourage growth and success in the firm. For Employee involvement depicts the belief of an employee considering his individuality or value in the work assembly (Bandura, 1982, 1986; Stryker, 1986).

In their perception of a good leader, Abbasi, Aqeel, & Awan (2012) maintained that effective leadership requires five major characteristics described by Oakland (2000), *mission statement, effective strategies, critical success factors, and apposite management structure and employee involvement*. Therefore, it is imperative for Nigeria as a country to maintain a visionary leadership to motivate its whole task force, promote and protect the country's standards, and reinforce the citizenry to attain the collective vision and goals. Thus, DMP and problem solving strategies include, but are not limited to brain storming, cost benefit analysis, written remediation plans, and an examination of possible choices (Wester, Christianson, Fouad, & Santiago-Rivera, 2008).

Research Questions

Based on the knowledge and experience of the selected past and present leaders and policy makers as well as upon the review of theories and empirical literatures on organizational leadership, institutional leadership, and LDMP, the following research questions were designed: The research questions were:

1. *What are the factors that make LDMP challenging among elected leaders in Nigeria?*
2. *How does the DM process operate for leaders in the entire country of Nigeria?*
3. *What do you think would be the best approach for improving LDM in the country?*

The author strongly believed that the answers generated from the above and other related questions that have emerged in the course of this study may provide meaningful and useful insights to Nigerian leaders and decision makers in understanding the best approach towards decision making processes as well as knowing the most important factors and concepts contributing to the successful development and making good decisions as leaders in the country.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was focused on identifying the factors influencing success in decision making among Nigerian leaders and policy makers in their current leadership situations. In this work, the author used the qualitative critical ethnographic (QCE) approach to understand the major factors that influence LDMP in Nigeria. The QCE approach places emphasis on understanding through observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of people's words, actions, and records (Creswell, 2004). This methodology was based on the views, perception, and experiences of the researcher and the 800 selected participants which focused on identifying the leadership decision making practices of the past and present leaders involved in the operation of the Nigerian government. The QCE design was selected in this study because it is seen by many scholars as one of the most effective means of doing comprehensive, systemic, and authentic research. It is also a research method that is located in the practice of both sociologists and anthropologists, and which should be regarded as the product of a cocktail of methodologies that share the assumption that personal engagement with the subject is the key to understanding a particular culture or social setting. Participants' observation is the most common component of this cocktail, but interviews, conversational and discourse analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography, life histories all have their place in the ethnographer's

repertoire. Description resides at the core of ethnography, and however that description is constructed it is the intense meaning of social life from the everyday perspective of groups members that is sought (Hobbs, 2006).

The principal concern in all aspects of this study was to reach some relevant understanding of the major factors that influence LDM process among Nigerian leadership and policy makers as well as to discover an avenue of better solutions to the challenges associated with LDM in the country. In this regard, a nationwide data was randomly collected from 800 past and current elected officials and leaders in the 36 states of Nigeria excluding Abuja the federal capital. This study was confined to past and present elected leaders and policy makers that have at least ten years' experience in Nigerian government and LDM activities in the country. With this process, the author was able to gather, not only useful, relevant, and meaningful information, but more importantly, the ability to employ a distinct and analytical techniques in his effort of discovering the major factors that LDM in Nigeria. These made interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon in its context and even beyond, more viable (Mertens, 1998).

Based on the investigator's judgment and the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997) and in looking for those who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger, 1988, p. 150), the key participants were limited to 800 past and current elected government officials, policy makers and leaders who served in any part of Nigeria leadership role for at least ten years. They consist of 270 women and 530 men.

Other information about the participants was clearly shown under demographic data in Table 3. The informed consent agreement form and the purpose of the research study were explained to the participants at the beginning of each interview.

For clarity and to achieve distinct objectives, this study was based on a QCE design, duplicating the self-designed survey questionnaire developed from the research questions and discussions from the focus group interviews. The survey data were collected only as a response to the questionnaire and used only to support the qualitative data in the study. It took about 36 months of intensive fieldwork to be designed and executed and can be characterized as a multi-method, in-depth research (Snow & Thomas, 1994). The data collection include: (1) *individual and semi-structured interview with the selected participants forming twelve groups of different individual leaders*, (2) *selected leaders and managers useful responses to the research questions*, (3) *survey data which was collected as a response to the questionnaire and*

used to support the qualitative data, (4) examining the leadership literatures over the past 12 years, (5) supplementary information from archives with reference to internal documents and reports. All selected individuals and each group participated in two separate interviews to avoid responses being filtered only in the single ideas of a particular interviewee. Here, the investigator chose the researcher's role as an active listener and collaborator "to tell the story from the participants' view rather than as 'expert' who passes judgment on the participants" (Creswell, 1998, p. 18). All interview sessions were tape recorded with participant's permission and used as a check to the field notes of the researcher. This method is encouraged in conducting critical ethnographic research – because ethnographic analytical procedures vary by researchers' schools of thought, quantitative as well as qualitative procedures and instruments may be incorporated if appropriate (Bernard, 2002).

In his view, Creswell (2003) maintained that data analysis employed a concurrent nested model. The study followed a sequence of distinct steps in order to secure the reliability of the data based on participant's recall. The qualitative data analysis, which is primarily inductive and recursive process, were analyzed and organized into categories in order to identify themes or patterns as these facilitated a deeper knowledge and understanding of the major factors that influence LDM process in the Nigerian context. The questionnaire and final survey revisions were made to support and improve the content and process of the data collections, both incorporated qualitative and survey (quantitative) items. Thus, the survey data was systematically organized, analyzed, and given a basic descriptive statistical treatment in the study. The questionnaire and final survey revisions were made to support and improve the content and process of the data collections. A follow-up research was conducted by implementing focused interviews of both the selected past and present of the Nigerian leaders to corroborate the data from the final survey and identify additional variables. The author allowed the selected participants to serve as a check to the study to ensure immediate validation as to the accuracy and credibility of the narratives in the data. The constant communication between the researcher and the selected participants added to the confidence and validity of the interview transcripts (Ejimabo. 2013).

Findings

The findings are based upon the purpose, objectives, and research questions of this study as well as examined in multiple levels (Creswell, 2003) that include three major sources: (a) open-ended questions posed through interviews, (b) demographics and observation, (c) the survey questionnaire. Based on the research questions, the *interview questions* were developed thematically and they equally helped to provide the structure for data gathering and also served as a means for recording information that was used in this study. For instance, below are some of the interview questions:

1. *How long did you work in the government operations and leadership activities?*
2. *What is your understanding of LDM process in Nigeria?*
3. *Discuss your perception of LDM process and effectiveness in the country.*
4. *What do you think can be done to ensure that creative LDM is preserved?*
5. *What would you do differently if you had sole control of the public trust?*
6. *What are the factors that make LDMP challenging for you?*
7. *How does the DMP work in your experience and knowledge?*
8. *What do you think would be the best approach for improving LDMP?*

Demographics

The key participants were limited to the perceptions, experiences and views of 800 hundred past and current elected government officials, leaders, and policy makers in all the 36 states of Nigeria that have either served or are still serving in Nigeria leadership role for at least ten years. The general descriptions of the participants show that they consist of 270 women and 530 men, with an average age of 35. Their minimum education levels include: 23 % of high school degree; 15% of associate degree; 35% of bachelor degree; 15 % of master's degree; and 12% of Ph.D. in their profession. There was no data on either race or ethnicity collected. More information on the demographic of the selected participants is shown below in Table 3. More information about the participants' education, age, experience and others are clearly stated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The Demographics of the Participants in the Study

	Number	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	530	66.25%
Female	270	33.75%
<i>Age</i>		
25 – 35	154	19.25%
36 – 45	220	27.5%
46 – 55	130	16.25%
56 – 65	120	15%
66 – 75	96	12.%
76 – 80	80	10%
<i>Level of Education</i>		
High School	184	23%
Associate degree	280	35%
Bachelor degree	120	15%
Master’s degree	120	15%
Doctoral degree	96	12%
<i>Years of Experience</i>		
5 – 10	85	10.62%
11 – 15	91	11.35%
16 – 20	100	12.5%
21 – 25	109	13.63%
26 – 30	135	16.88%
31 – 36	230	28.75%

The participants were selected from different cities and states of the country, and they all had political leadership and administrative experience in the government operation of the country for a minimum of 10 years and maximum of 35 years, although 15 of the participants indicated during the interview process that they had over

36 years of experience in the Nigerian leadership activities.

Survey

The 800 key participants selected for this study gladly completed the 100 questionnaires that was designed from the research questions and the elements of good leadership skill process with zeal and optimism to improve DM standards in Nigeria.

Table 4. Behavioral styles of Nigerian leaders

Behavioral Skill	Average Likert – scale scores		
	Priorities for achievement	Frequently used	Level of concerns
Leaders that act and appear appropriately as a leader	4.7	4.4	4.9
Leaders that appropriately assign tasks and work-loads	4.6	4.3	4.5
Leaders that show tolerance for diverse opinion	4.5	4.2	4.3
Leaders that maintain a confident professional image	4.3	4.3	4.3
Leaders that make good decisions with the team members	4.3	4.2	4.1
Leaders with the aim to accomplish the group’s purposes	4.2	4.0	3.9
Leaders that cope with the new and changing priorities	3.9	3.8	3.6
Leaders that appreciates the groups confidence in DMP	3.9	3.8	3.6
Leaders that facilitate the team building process	3.8	3.6	3.2
Leaders that show tolerance for diverse opinion in DMP	3.7	3.4	2.8
Leaders that involve team members in DMP	3.7	3.4	2.8
Leaders that are am organized & I can organize others	3.7	3.4	2.6
Leaders that communicate with the group/s appropriately	3.7	3.4	2.6
Leaders that are authoritative in DMP	3.6	3.2	2.6
Leaders that explain things to the group/s in a clear way	3.5	3.2	2.6

*Note: The researcher used the Likert-scale values which were as follows:

1 = not important; 2 = less important; 3 = important; 4; very important; 5 = most important

DISCUSSIONS

This part of work presents the discussion of results and incorporates related literature in identifying a pattern of meaning in the study. There are four main themes that emerged in this research, namely: (1) *Effectiveness and decision guidelines*, (2) *Participation of the experts* (3) *Education and awareness*, (4) *Research of information*, and (5) *Good communication and dialogue*. The discussion of these themes was meant to enable the organizational leaders to better understand the process of decision making as it affects the employees in their organizations.

In the views of the participants, Nigeria would have been a very wonderful place, if not for the rigid, authoritative, incoherent ideas and poor decisions of the old and new politicians, retired government officials, and some current leaders. Most of these leaders and policy makers lack the effectiveness and guidelines in proper decision making principles. They sometimes create and implement unpopular rules and decisions that affect the country negatively (Participant 003, April, 2014). The stories of the focus group were the tools and elements used in this work in order to discover a pattern of meaning and achieve result. The roles of the participants could be seen in most of what the participants shared with the researcher. For instance, a Participant in the study stated that:

Leaders and policy makers should endeavor to involve all the experts in relevant areas to the nation’s DM process in order to come out with clear and comprehensive decisions that will benefit all in the country...(Participant 015, March, 2014).

In the present challenging world, the LDM process can be complicated and overwhelming in almost all businesses. As a result, it is valuable for organizational leaders to be educated in technology, cultural diversity, ethical standards to enable them learn the best model to follow, that may be applied to everyday decisions, as well as life changing choices in their individual businesses. Leadership needs to be looked at as an exercise rather than as a role. Many of the people interviewed in this work, reiterated the importance of education among leaders and policy makers in the country. According to Participant 024 (July, 2014) knowledge is power and education is always the key to success and reality, both of them are needed in the formulation of authentic DM process by any country or organization for clarity and effectiveness.

Many of the participants were happy to be involved in the study while being energetic, motivated, and eager to discover a result that may improve the standards of leadership decision making in Nigeria. In sharing their knowledge, stories, and experiences as leaders and policy makers in the government of the

country, they expressed their concerns, suggestions, and recommendations for the current leadership situation in Nigeria. Participant 244 in telling his stories indicated that: “in order for Nigerian leaders to be able to make good decisions for the country, they must possess some positive qualities like good moral, clear vision about what can be accomplished, self-directed, ... and treat them with respect” (March, 2014). In like manner and recognition that this work is designed to enable leaders and policy makers to make and implement good decisions for the country, Participant 310 postulates that:

...researching of data and sharing of valid information among leaders and policy makers is always a roadmap to success and goal attainment. I think that it is useful... to train, encourage, guide, and educate Nigerian leaders and policy makers to recognize the importance of data based research and the sharing of significant information ... while maintaining a solid working relationship and health environment (January, 2014).

Most of the participants agreed that Nigeria could have been a very wonderful place associated with a situation that is favorable to better living conditions, encourages growth and development, but that condition is unattainable under the present poor leadership DM process and conditions that make it challenging to live and work peaceful, happily, and safely in the country. The participants maintained that DM process under the current situation was not based on the analysis of the needs of the people. Instead, it is based on political advantages that exist to favor the rich and the interests group or tribe of those in authority in the entire country. For instance, one of the participants opined:

We talk of democracy, government of the people, by the people, for the people, that is in principle as far as leadership in Nigeria is concerned. But if leaders are to lead exactly according to that principle of democracy, things would be different in Nigeria. (Participant D, January 15, 2010).

Many of the Nigerian citizens are fed up and unhappy with the chaotic situation of the administration and leadership in the country. The laws and those who make them are not transparent and honest in doing what they were elected to do for the interest of the common good of the country. The decision making process somehow is believed to belong only to a special interest group of people. The process of decision making is in the hands of the powerful and influential leaders and politicians, who control and manipulate the justice system in the country to suit their special and individual interests (Ejimabo, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The major significant problem that encouraged this work was the lack of knowledge on how to design positive decision environment, healthy communication skills, and essential tools for LDM in the country. The findings from this investigation suggest that both leaders policy makers should incorporate research data and the experts to participate in the decision making process with the aim of achieving good and effective results the decisions they make. The study really showed that there is a great need for change in Nigerian policy making, creativity, and improvement in the leadership decision making process among Nigerian leaders. The overall conclusion that emerged from the research can be summarized in the views of Sally Hargreaves (2002) who claimed that Nigeria, once heralded as the beacon of Africa, has fallen somewhat short of this potential. Years of plutocratic repressive dictators and military rule, coupled with widespread corruption, have resulted in large-scale neglect and deterioration of public services.

The Nigerian government and leaders need to create awareness in peaceful integration of the people in the country as one nation, accommodate technology, diversity, globalization in its leadership activities and operations; while encouraging good relationship, team building, leadership effectiveness, motivation, education, accountability, transparency, and accomplishment of the country's strategic goals and objectives. Lastly, the author is of the opinion that, there is a vital need for more comprehensive research in the future on this concept: “*leadership decision making process*” in Nigeria to enable a solid solution to the challenges of the country. He thus, concludes this study with the views of Glanz (2002), who maintained that the crux of good leadership is the ability to make thoughtful, reasoned decisions. In order to be the best judge, a leader should have critical thinking skills. The answers generated from both the research and the interview questions really contributed, provided a meaningful and useful insights to this study. Leadership decisions must be made bearing one Nigeria in mind and be completely unbiased, filled with objectivity and free of sentiments which can be achieved by encouraging the understanding of the people's tribes, orientations, customs, values, traditions, multi-cultures, and history in the country.

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