

**PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP: ALMOST A LOST ACT IN  
MODERN CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

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**Abstract**

*Leadership style has significant influence on the relationship between leaders and subordinates, the involvements of subordinates in decision-making process, and the health of the organisation, including the church. There has been a gradual departure from the inclusive or participative style of leadership exemplified in the New Testament, to the autocratic leadership style in the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This deviation has increased the discontent between leaders, associates and church members, resulting in fragmentation of churches, reduction in the effective growth of churches and impacts on the society. To ameliorate these negative trends, the new leadership team of Philadelphia Baptist Association, Plateau State, adopting the principles of participative leadership, involved other church leaders in the process of finding solution to a perceived problem. The qualitative research strategy was adopted, using the Delphi technique for consensus building as instrument for data collection. The result revealed that involving other church leaders in the process of finding solution to a common problem was very rewarding. It enabled the participants to develop suitable solutions that can be referred to as the six critical factors. These factors challenge the church leaders and members alike. Therefore, the practice of the principle of participative leadership could be the necessary panacea to the deficiencies and negative impacts of the current authoritarian leadership style, which is causing discontent, fragmentation and stunt growth.*

**Keywords:** Church leaders, Decision-making, Discontent, Fragmentation, Leadership style, Participative leadership

## **Introduction**

Participative leadership is a leadership style that encourages the active contribution of all relevant stakeholders in a team or organisation. It is in direct contrast to authoritative leadership, where all decisions depend on the leader. This style of leadership encourages innovation, commitment of team members, incorporates team Members in critical decision-making processes and enable them to 'own' the outcome of such decisions (Akpoviroro, et al., 2018). The characteristics of participative leadership include curiosity, effective communication skill, ability to empower sub-ordinates, broad-mindedness and good listening skills. Some of the advantages of this style of leadership are: it encourages collaborative and cooperation actions towards achieving set goals; encourages collective decision-making; allows for innovation and enhances the skills of team members (Rok, 2009). Similarly, some of the draw backs in the style of leadership include, the process of decision-making can be time-consuming; it could be difficult to adopt with unskilled or the workforce with low level of education, where there is no effective communication, the outcome could spell disaster and cause conflicts (Robbins, 2014).

The New Testament, especially Acts of the Apostles, to a large extent is full of examples of participative leadership. Shortly after the ascension of Jesus Christ, the apostles needed to fill the space left by Judah Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). The qualification of the prospective candidate was provided, the whole assembly of Jesus' followers accepted the proposal, prayed and participated in the selection process. When a candidate emerged, he was easily accepted by all, because they were active part of the selection process. Similarly, after Pentecost, when the young church was growing, there was observable neglect of the social needs of some sections of the congregation. The leadership of the new church acknowledged the problem, solicited the cooperation of the congregation for lasting solution to the problem. They provided the guidelines for the selection of potential actors to manage the project. The congregation participated actively in the choice of the first set of deacons, dedicated for the smooth distribution of resources for the social needs of the congregation. Responding to the news of the birth of a church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-24), the apostles sent a laity, without official designation – Barnabas- to mentor the young church. This was possible because Barnabas has been integrated into the operations of the church in

Jerusalem, and the leadership decisions. Being a product of participative leadership, when there was a prophecy or a call to service, extended to him and Saul, he did not rush to taking executive decision but subjected it to further prayers and collective decision of the leadership of the Antioch church. Furthermore, while resolving the doctrinal issues surrounding circumcision, the Jerusalem Council, of the New Testament Church deliberated extensively on the subject and produced a consensus agreement, which was communicated to the Jews and Gentile believers in the mission enterprise of Paul and Barnabas.

The growth in missionary activities in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have witnessed the expansion of churches, both in numerical quantity and size. This growth has equally witnessed the challenges in leadership styles, which has unwittingly drifted from congregational (democratic) or participative to autocracy and other forms of leadership styles. This drift in leadership style has negatively affected the decision-making process in the church, in many instances, resulting in the fragmentation of the church, ministries of church organisations. Nigeria has had its fair share of fragmentation, duplication and adulterations, largely due to lack of participative leadership styles in decision making. In a recent newspaper report, Odufowokan (2022), signalled that Pastor Kumuyi, of the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, “is unusually in the heat of controversy”. The paper reports several discontents that are brewing controversies in the actions of the leader of the church. One of such discontents is the unilateral decision of the leader, Pastor Kumuyi, to invite guest singers to the church functions, which was contrary to the doctrine and practices of the church, without consultation. “In furtherance of his new position, the Deeper Life founder had invited some music ministers, hitherto prohibited by the church to minister along with him to the amazement of many”. This action of the leader has led to peaceful protest at the headquarters of the Church, in Lagos. One of the activists “noted that Kumuyi, who is like a father to them, did not raise members of his church with such music. He insisted that the cleric’s invitation of local Christian musicians who are not advocates of modesty was unacceptable”. There are other areas of discontents being expressed by members but are being glossed over. The newspaper reported Pastor Kumuyi’s response to some of these discontents, “He said he could not continue behaving the way he used to do if he’s to fulfil the mandate of God upon his life”. It is imperative to note that the mandate of God upon a man is both personal and congregational; leadership style is an essential link in the actualization of this mandate.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association, in Plateau State of Nigeria had its fair share of the negative effects of the lack of participative leadership. Two critical concerns were the neglect of the holistic wellbeing of the churches in the rural communities and lack of probity in resource management. These attitudes negatively affected the participation in the activities of the association as well as financial contributions. To ameliorates these negative effects, the new leadership decided to create an atmosphere of collective participation in the decision-making process. The first attempt was to rouse the spiritual consciousness of the church leaders on the role of the church in their respective communities. In this regard, a one-day seminar was organised to address the question “how can the members of our churches be the light of Jesus Christ in our communities?” Twenty-five clergies and four lay leaders attended the seminar. The Delphi tool for consensus building was used. The leaders interacted with the question in groups, suggested possible solutions and through the consensus building process, six key factors were identified for action to address the seminar question. At the end of the seminar, many of the participants confirmed that they have learnt new technique of effective decision making, which will reduce strained relationships in their churches. This paper is an excerpt of an ongoing research. The paper discusses the literature review, discussion of the research method, presentation of findings, discussed in the light of best practices gleaned from literature, conclusion and recommendations.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Participative Leadership**

Participative leadership is a leadership style that encourages interaction across the different levels of the leadership structure of an organisation. This leadership style facilitates the active participation of superiors and sub-ordinates in the decision-making process of the organisation. It encourages innovation, motivation and unhindered contribution from all relevant stakeholders (Akpoviroro, et al., 2018). Participative leadership encourages loyalty, a sense of stakeholder ownership of policies, commitment to achieving organisational goals (Rok, 2009).

The effects of poor leadership, in the workplace, include employee stress, disenchantment, lack of creativity, cynicism high employee turnover, and low productivity. As it is in the industrial setting, public and private sectors, it is the same in faith-based organisation and the church itself. Poor leadership negatively impacts on the self-worth of the human capital in the organisation required to ensure work effectiveness (Robbins, 2014). Further to the improvements on the

self-worth of the sub-ordinates, being invited to participate in decision-making process, expose the sub-ordinates to the demands of leadership, increase their skill, translate them from the mindset of spectators to the mindset of partnership, belonging to the organisation and desire to improve the product quality of the organisation. It is equally an effective tool for progressive development of sub-ordinate and preparing them for higher leadership levels (Hartong & Koopman, 2011; Goodnight, 2011).

### **Consensus Building and Decision Making**

Consensus building is the hall mark of participative leadership. The term 'consensus' has been defined in several ways, to mean the full and unanimous agreement of all the relevant stakeholders regarding all the feasible alternative solutions (Aguarón et al., 2016; Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2016). Furthermore, consensus building is a process that helps decision-makers to achieve agreement on possible solution(s) to the problem confronting the organisation or an interest group. As group decision making process, it facilitates the harnessing of preferred set of alternatives, which are considered the best solution(s) to the problem being addressed (Wallenius et al., 2008; Greco et al., 2012). This process is useful when the leadership of an organisation makes the problem to be solved open, be willing to accept and implement the outcome (wholly or part of it) of the consensus opinion (Kozierkiewicz-Hetmańska, 2017).

There are different tools that can be used during consensus building process, which include brainstorming, nominal group, focus group session, and Delphi technique (McMurray, 1994; Geist, 2010; Xia and Chan, 2012; Brown, 2015). The Delphi technique can be described as "a method used to obtain the most reliable consensus opinion of a group of experts by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled feedbacks" (Hasson and Keeney, 2011, p. 1696). There are different types of Delphi designs, but the two commonly used types are the classic Delphi and modified classic Delphi (Hasson and Keeney, 2011). "The classical Delphi (Classic or modified classic) method functions as a forum for establishing facts about a specific situation or topic" (Franklin and Hart, 2007, p. 238). The simple difference between the 'classic and modified classic Delphi, is that, in classic Delphi, the participants provide the potential solutions to the research question in the first round of the exercise. While, in the modified classic Delphi, participants are provided with generic solutions in the first round of the exercise. However, subsequent rounds follow the same process, before consensus is reached.

The Delphi technique is useful where information can be obtained from a wide range of stakeholders (experts in the field or subject of the research) with relative ease, not minding the geographical locations and still guarantee the anonymity of participants (Geist, 2010; Hallowell and Gambatese, 2010). Or the “issue under investigation does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit greatly from subjective judgments on a collective basis” (Grisham, 2009, p. 114). The Delphi technique can be used as primary or secondary instrument for data collection in any field of research (Agumba et al., 2014; Alaloul et al., 2015; Kezar and Maxey, 2016; Kermanshachi et al., 2016).

The basic principles guiding the execution of a typical Delphi exercise include:

- a) The identification and use of suitable participants competent to address the research question and willing to follow through the repetitive process (Franklin and Hart, 2007; Grisham, 2009).
- b) The contribution of each member of the panel is treated in confidence and no participant will be traceable to his/her contribution (Kezar and Maxey, 2016).
- c) All participants interact with the subject of the research through a series of iterative processes, where the information from every iteration is communicated to all participants (Kezar and Maxey, 2016).
- d) The central coordinator or facilitator, serve as umpire, guides the process, ensuring that participants abide by the rules established at the beginning of the exercise and communicates the consensus results at each stage.

The size of a Delphi panel may be as small as three members and as large as 80 (Grisham, 2009; Hallowell and Gambatese, 2010; Xia and Chan, 2012). The participants can be homogenous or heterogeneous. The procedure of the Delphi technique, especially in the classic Delphi, participants are invited to generate the proposed ideas necessary for solving the research question in the first round. The coordinator collates the responses and circulate the feedback to the panel members. The process continues until consensus is achieved, which could be after few or many rounds of data collection, until the facilitator is satisfied with the level of consensus, convergence of opinion or the participants are no longer modifying their earlier decisions (Franklin and Hart, 2007; Grisham, 2009). Generally, between three and five rounds suffice, “but the number of rounds is largely dependent on the purposes of the study and how long it takes to cultivate consensus, surface more nuanced views, or identify opposing views” (Kezar and Maxey, 2016, p. 145). The coordinator should apply himself to constant communication using the soft skills of effective communication to sustain the

interest of the participants and reduce high attrition rates (Donohoe and Needham, 2009; Hasson and Keeney, 2011). The decision made using the Delphi technique, is the decisions reached through informed consensus rather than through the opinions of many uninformed participants, as in the case of a general survey (Grisham, 2009). The critical components of a typical consensus building process include the quality of participants, benchmark for accepting consensus, feedback adjustment mechanism, final agreement on the consensus opinion, and behaviours of senior management on the outcome of the exercise (Rok, 2009).

### Research Method

The case study strategy of qualitative research was adopted. Case study research explores and “investigate[s] contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships” (Zainal, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, a “case study is an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). Although there are no strict rules on the sample size in qualitative research, when using the Delphi technique for data collection the sample size can be as small as four and as large as possible, but an average of eight participants is an acceptable minimum (Hallowell and Gambatese, 2010). The participants in a Delphi exercise are referred to as experts or knowledgeable persons in the subject of the research, who are willing to participate in the exercise. They can be homogenous or heterogeneous. In this research, the classic Delphi variant was used. Before consensus is reached, the Delphi exercise can go through several rounds of data collection and iterations. The benchmark and process of iteration is communicated to the participants at the inception of the exercise. Table 1 provides the demography of participants.

Table 1: Demography of participants

Classification	Clergy			Laity		
	Deacon - Lay church leader	Men’s fellowship leader	Women fellowship leader	Association secretary	Financial secretary	
Number of participants	23	2	1	1	1	1

To qualify as participants, the pastors must have provided leadership for their local assembly for three years and more. Similarly, the laity should be members of good standing in their local churches for decades. These people are considered knowledgeable about the life of their local churches.

### **Data Collection Process**

The research data were collected in five rounds of Delphi exercise. In the first round, the participants were divided into five groups. Each group was to develop a list of possible solutions on how the members of our local churches can become the light of Jesus in their respective communities. The synthesis of the submissions from each group was compiled into one list of fourteen items. The list of the fourteen items was circulated back to the groups, who were requested to rate each item on the list, in order of priority, on a scale of 1-5. With 1 as the lowest rating and 5 as the highest. The exercise went through another four rounds of data collection and iteration. The benchmark of 4.0 was set as a measure of consensus, thus, any item that did not attain the benchmark were not escalated to the next round. At the end of the exercise, the initial fourteen items were reduced to six. The details of the process are presented in the result and discussion section.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The reliability and validity of the Delphi process as a research tool, hinges on three components, namely, the quality of the participants, the coordinator and the method of achieving consensus. In this research, the participants were pastors and lay leaders of the local churches, the laity were members of good standing in the local churches and officials of the association. These people are considered credible to provide useful information on the research subject. The coordinators of the research were not a member of any of the local church in the association, but Christian committed to church growth, facilitated the seminar. The arithmetic mean of participant submission was used for the analysis of response and the benchmark of 4.0 was agreed on by participants and used throughout the research exercise.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results of the Delphi process and the discussion of the findings.



### **The Delphi Process**

The participants in the seminar were divided into five groups. The first round of the Delphi exercise was the collection of qualitative response to the research question, “What can we do so that members of our local churches can represent Jesus Christ as light in their communities”? Each group was encouraged to provide as many suggestions as possible. Table 2 is the synthesis of the response from the participants.

Table 2: Response from participants in round 1

Items	Description of factors
1	Leaders should serve as light
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible
3	Live a life of integrity
4	Listen to others
5	Practice forgiveness
6	Encourages fellowship
7	Be patient
8	Do not live in fear
9	Be bold to do what is right
10	Assist one another
11	Practice visitation
12	Show love to unbelievers
13	Endure hardship
14	Obey God completely

Although each item on the list were considered useful but hinging on the principle of ‘few is better’, the above list was circulated back to the five groups for rating. As shown in Table 3, participants were encouraged to rate each item on a scale of 1-5.

Table 3: Response to round 2

Items	Description of factors	Groups					Total	Avrg.
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Leaders should serve as light	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
3	Live a life of integrity	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
4	<b>Listen to others</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.4</b>
5	Practice forgiveness	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
6	Encourages fellowship	4	4	5	4	4	21	4.2
7	Be patient	4	5	4	4	3	20	4.0
8	<b>Do not live in fear</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.4</b>
9	Be bold to do what is right	4	4	4	4	3	19	3.8
10	Assist one another	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
11	Practice visitation	5	5	4	4	5	23	4.6
12	Show love to unbelievers	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8
13	Endure hardship	5	4	4	4	4	21	4.2
14	Obey God completely	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

After analysis, two items did not meet the benchmark of 4.0, marked in bold highlights. They were discarded and not escalated to the next round. Similarly, Table 4 presents the results of round 3. At the end of the analysis, three more items did not make the benchmark (as shown in bold mark), they were deleted; the nine successful items were escalated to the next round.

Table 4: Response to round 3

Items	Description of factors	Groups					Total	Avrg.
		1	2	3	4	5		

1	Leaders should serve as light	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
3	Live a life of integrity	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
4	Practice forgiveness	5	5	4	5	5	24	4.8
5	<b>Encourages fellowship</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3.8</b>
6	<b>Be patient</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.4</b>
7	<b>Be bold to do what is right</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3.8</b>
8	Assist one another	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
9	Practice visitation	5	4	4	4	5	2	4.6
10	Show love to unbelievers	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8
11	Endure hardship	4	4	4	4	4	20	4.0
12	Obeys God completely	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

The nine items in Table 5, went through the same process. After analysis, two of the items did not meet the benchmark, as shown in bold mark and were discarded, leaving seven successful factors.

Table 5: Response to round 4

Items	Description of factors	Groups					Total	Avrg.
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Leaders should serve as light	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
3	Live a life of integrity	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
4	Practice forgiveness	5	5	4	5	5	24	4.8
5	Assist one another	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
6	<b>Practice visitation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3.8</b>
7	Show love to unbelievers	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

8	<b>Endure hardship</b>	4	4	3	4	3	18	3.6
9	Obey God completely	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

There was the temptation to halt the process at this point, considering that the seven items that are above the benchmark, could be considered good characteristics that can positively influence the lives of our church members, enabling them to serve as light in their community. However, the process went through another round of data collection. Table 6 presents the information on the participants' response. After analysis, one item did not meet the benchmark, as shown in bold mark.

Table 6: Response to round 5

Items	Description of factors	Groups					Total	Avrg.
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Leaders should serve as light	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
3	Live a life of integrity	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
4	Practice forgiveness	5	5	4	4	5	23	4.6
5	<b>Assist one another</b>	4	3	4	4	4	19	3.8
6	Show love to unbelievers	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
7	Obey God completely	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

During the presentation of this results, many of the participants were hesitant that item 5 "Assist one another" should be removed from the list. The proponents based their arguments on the scriptures that enjoined believers to help one another, which is a sign that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ. However, listening to the response from many pastors, in the meeting, who observed that, extending benevolence and helping hands to needy members have made some to be lazy, parasites, and repeatedly coming to the church for help. Whenever such assistance is not granted, the affected individuals go about spreading false information about the leaders of the church, thereby sowing seeds of discord.

Consequently, the item was removed from the list. The remaining list of six items were agreed on as critical to the solutions of the research question, and the exercise was terminated. Therefore, Table 7 presents the final list of factors considered suitable for addressing the research question. These items will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

Table 7: Results of the Delphi exercise

Items	Description of factors	Groups					Total	Avrg.
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Leaders should serve as light	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
2	Provide detailed teachings from the Bible	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
3	Live a life of integrity	5	5	5	5	5	25	5
4	Practice forgiveness	5	5	4	4	5	23	4.6
5	Show love to unbelievers	5	5	4	5	4	23	4.6
6	Obey God completely	5	5	5	5	4	24	4.8

At the end of the exercise, the pastors in the meeting observed that the seminar has equipped them with tools to manage relationship and decision-making process in their churches. The outcome of the exercise has placed the burden of growing their churches to reflect the light of Jesus Christ on the pastors.

### **Discussion of Results**

The discussions on the results from the exercise is a synthesis of the contribution of the participants to each item of the results complemented with information from relevant literature. The six items identified as useful factors that could help address the research question can be sub-divided into two clusters, namely ‘pastor’ and ‘congregation’ related. The first two items, Leaders should serve as light and provide detailed teachings from the Bible, are pastors related. It suggests that, as the pastors do these two items, they progressively educate, train and develop the congregation to know and do the other four [Live a life of integrity, practice forgiveness, show love to unbelievers and obey God completely] effectively.

*Leaders should serve as light:* The participants agreed that the life and ministry of the pastor have significant impacts on the life, light, growth and relationship of the local church to its community. Thus, the attitude of the pastor reflects his understanding of the call of God to serve His purpose in the local church and by extension, the mission field as the community. Interestingly, the pastoral call is both divine and human. Divine because, the individual perceives, accept and respond to the leading of God to serve His purpose in time and places of His choice. The places of service can be divinely appointed or in response to invitation from interest group; a local church, mission, educational or other related agencies. The call is human, because, the pastor is required to execute the mandate of his divine calling, in the specific location or office, with all seriousness, combining the Spiritual, training and ethical considerations in the execution of his functions. These understanding will enable him to prepare a church suitable for the building of relationship and reconciling the people to God, in a changing world (Aghawenu, 2003; Haggai, 2006). Unless a pastor sees his call to serve in a church as an assignment from God, he will execute his pastoral function based on the remuneration and the attendant benefits of the office. Therefore, it is important for each pastor to realise that the purpose of the local church is to build relationship with the community, which could foster the latter's reconciliation to God. The pastor requires major changes in his attitude to be effective tool for building the church who will serve as a bridge between God and their respective communities. In this regard, Foth, (1997, p. 48), observed that "relationship building begins in one place alone: attitude". This should challenge each pastor to know that each person, in the local church and the community, he is deployed to serve, is absolutely and equally valuable to God (Foth, 1997).

One of the approaches of Apostle Paul's in building a functional church-community relationship was to challenge the church leaders to encourage their followers to be useful and responsible members of the communities, diligently executing their everyday engagements. This is against the backdrop that "Christianity was never intended to change the society, but to change people. When people are changed, society changes" (Draper Jr, 1978, p.67). Paul encouraged Titus to "Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not slander and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone." (Tit.3:1&2) NLT. In performing his function, as the pastor of a local church, he should systematically grow the congregation, both in words

and actions, to know and cultivate the lifestyle of the Kingdom of God (Akani, 2000). His tool for service should be the Bible, the manual of his engagement, through contextual, systematic and detailed teachings.

The importance of “detailed teachings from the Bible” cannot be over emphasized, if members of a local church are to effectively represent Jesus Christ (reflect His light) in the community, anywhere and everywhere. The Apostles identified this function as critical to the pastor and health of the church, while trying to resolve the social concern that was creating disaffection within the young Jerusalem church, in the Acts. 6:1- 4. “But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent ... saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food ... And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. *Then we apostles* can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word”. In this episode, the apostles applied the principles of participative leadership. Incorporating members of the congregation into the process of providing solution to the existing problem, enabled the apostles to focus on critical areas of the ministry. The participants, during the seminar, underscored the importance of detailed Biblical teaching, in view of how the prevalence of adulterated teachings is influencing the negative behaviour of many church members, resulting in the ridicule of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and His church. To enable members of the local churches reflect the light of Jesus Christ, wherever they are found, they need to be well informed about the Tenment’s of their faith, possess adequate knowledge and skills to practice the faith. This can be achieved through the systematic teaching, practice of the leadership principle of delegation, as well as the art of discipleship and growing of leadership team (Longenecker, 1995; Schwarz, 1996)

Discipleship is the fulcrum around which church growth revolves. Effective discipleship facilitates growth into maturity of Christians, enable them to identify their Spiritual potentials, gift(s) and areas of service, within the Church. Further nurturing of the disciples, in their areas of gifting enables the pastor to build leadership teams in the different sphere of the life of a local church (Longenecker, 1995). These emerging leadership team members, through participation in the life and ministries of the church are equally integrated into the decision-making processes of the church. They are thus equipped to share in alleviating the pastor’s burdens, stress, and reduce the risks of being ‘burnt out’. Through the practice of effective delegation, the emerging leaders are integrated into leadership structure and decision-making organ of the church (Schwarz, 1996; Hartong & Koopman,

2011; Goodnight, 2011). The quality life of these disciple significantly influences the harmonious relationships in their respective homes, performance of their church function and life within the larger community. Thus, becoming contagious and enlarging the circle of people of integrity.

*Life of integrity:* Integrity can be referred to as the litmus test of the quality of a Christian; it involves the whole life. Several definitions or description abound on what integrity could mean. Some of the generic phrases used to describe integrity include unimpaired state of things, strength and firmness of character or principle. Being the same on the inside as he is on the outside. However, Liew (2002) citing Billy Graham, defined a person of integrity as “the person that can be trusted and he is the same person alone a thousand miles away from home as he is in his home or church”. This person can be described as one who ‘walk his talk’. Integrity is a character quality necessary for individual as well as leaders. Other perspectives of integrity include integrity of thinking, integrity of communication and integrity of action (Liew, 2002). As pastors, integrity, which used to be the cardinal credential, in earlier generations, has become a bye-word in our days (Peterson, 1987). Therefore, it may be necessary for the pastor and his leadership team to take simple integrity exercise periodically. Table 8 shows a typical integrity exercise.

Table 8: Answer either true (T) or false (F) in the following question (Liew, 2002)

S/No	Question	T or F
1	I behave differently when I am away from the public	
2	I do not always keep my word or promise	
3	I am not too particular when it comes to punctuality	
4	I find myself changing from stated intentions	
5	People seem to have difficulty to entrust me with confidential matters	
6	I often go for practical solutions rather than start from first principles	
7	There are things I do which I would not do if I know people are watching	
8	I forget to return borrowed items	



- 9 I do not consider it important to account for small amounts of money
- 10 I am concerned how I appear in public

Note: If 'T' is greater than 'F' answers, it suggests that you have integrity crisis.

An observable quality in a maturing or matured disciple and person of integrity, is the ability to forgive, ease of securing forgiveness and the compassion for unbelievers.

*Practice forgiveness and showing love to unbelievers:* The practice of forgiveness and showing love to unbelievers are two critical character qualities with significant effects on the relationship of members of the local church among themselves and those outside the church in the community. The participants expressed deep concern over the negative effects of unforgiveness to the individual, fellowship within the church and effectiveness of the church in the community. "An unforgiving heart is hard heart and a dangerous heart. It is a sin and it hinders prayers" (Akani, 2000, p. 105). It is impossible for the individual with unforgiving heart to receive answers to prayer, such constitute the weak link in the chain of corporate prayers, rendering it ineffective. If unforgiveness lingers in the church, it reduces the potentials of the church to agree and reap the benefits of the force of agreement (Oyebamiji, 1988). Jesus said:

Again I tell you, if two of you on earth agree (harmonize together, make symphony together) about whatever [anything and everything] they may ask, it will come to pass and be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:19) AMPC.

Similarly, unforgiveness blind folds an individual as well as the church from identifying the reasons and purpose of the church, displays indifference to the plight of the unbelievers, without compassion and not able to respond to their needs (Spiritual and physical) in love.

These twin deficiencies, and many more can be addressed by the pastor through consistent and systematic teaching of the Bible. Unfortunately, many pastors, in recent times, major in the 'how to do' sermon, topical, health and wealth, or situational ethics and many more. However, the approach that bears lasting fruit is the 'expository preaching' concept. "Expository preaching involves taking a block of Scriptures (a verse, a paragraph, a chapter, a book) and answering two

questions. (1) What *did* it say? And (2) What *does* it say?" (Wood, 1997, p. 83). Any attempt to answer the first question requires detailed exegesis and hermeneutics, to be able to provide correct understanding of the words and phrases used in the text under reference. Exegesis and hermeneutics are hard work, but very useful for providing detailed background knowledge of the Bible. Answering the second question enable the pastor to link the Biblical meaning to the first recipients and the contextual application of contemporary setting of his immediate congregation. In a nutshell, adopting the practice of expository preaching, from exegesis, the pastor explains what the Scripture *said*, while discussing application, he enlightens the congregation on what the Scripture *says* (Wood, 1997). Furthermore, the question of 'obeying God completely' will be easy to address when the congregation are taught correctly to know the mind, ways and expectations of God, through detailed Biblical teaching.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The authoritarian style of leadership that has crept into the church has helped many church leaders to build their empire, encouraged fragmentation and stunt the growth of churches. A panacea to these dilemmas includes contextual use of the principles of participative leadership style. Reflecting on the 'distant' relationship between the previous administrators of the Philadelphia Baptist association and the local churches, the new administrator decided to chat a new course of inclusive leadership. To achieve this purpose, they called a meeting of the leaders of all the local churches in the association to attend a seminar. In the seminar, the leaders were required to interact with challenges of church growth and relationship with their communities by finding solutions to the research question: "how can the members of our churches be the light of Jesus Christ in our communities?" By this action, the new administrators acknowledged that there were challenges in the local churches, they did not approach the church leaders with prescribed solutions, but invited them to participate in finding solution and chat the path for the application of proposed solutions.

Using the instrument of the Delphi technique for consensus building, the participants raised fourteen prospective solutions for answering the research question. These proposals were subjected to four additional rounds of iterations, which enabled the items to be reduced to six, considered as critical factors. The factors are: Leaders should serve as light; provide detailed teachings from the Bible; live a life of integrity; practice forgiveness, show love to unbelievers and obey God completely. The six factors were sub-divided into two clusters, namely 'pastor' and 'congregation' related. The first two items, Leaders should serve as

light and provide detailed teachings from the Bible, challenges the pastors to live an exemplary live, use the skills of expository teaching to educate, prepare and disciple his local church to know their responsibilities in the church and society. When the knowledge base of the church members is improved, it become easier for them to live out the requirements of the other four factors, namely, live a life of integrity; practice forgiveness, show love to unbelievers and obey God completely.

This research has demonstrated that the practice of the principle of participative leadership style is useful for the integration of all stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process of an organisation, including the church, and facilitates the ease of resolving group problems, as well as developing potential leaders. This research recommends the practice of the principle of participative leadership, more than committee system, in our local churches.

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