

THE NEXUS BETWEEN DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between developmental leadership and church administration has become increasingly significant in contemporary ministry, as churches strive to remain effective, mission-driven, and adaptive in a rapidly changing environment. Developmental leadership emphasizes the growth and empowerment of individuals, equipping them with skills, values, and capacities necessary for sustained organizational effectiveness. In church administration, which involves coordinating resources, personnel, programs, and structures, adopting developmental leadership principles enhances team competence, participation, and shared responsibility. Drawing on scholarly insights, this study highlights how developmental leadership fosters capacity building, leadership continuity, and organizational growth within the church. Furthermore, integrating developmental leadership into administrative systems supports sustainability, innovation, and effective governance, enabling churches to navigate administrative complexities while advancing their spiritual mission. This paper examines the conceptual foundations, challenges, and interrelationships between developmental leadership and church administration, offering a framework to enhance both leadership effectiveness and institutional performance.

Keywords: *Developmental Leadership and Church Administration*

Introduction

The relationship between developmental leadership and church administration is increasingly significant in contemporary ministry, as churches seek to remain effective, relevant, and mission-driven in a rapidly changing world. Developmental leadership intentionally fosters the growth and empowerment of individuals within an organization, equipping them with the skills, values, and capacities needed for sustained effectiveness. In church administration, which involves coordinating resources, personnel, programmes, and structures for ministry, leadership plays a decisive role in determining how well these elements function together. Scholars such as Northouse (2022) emphasize that leadership is fundamentally about influencing others toward shared goals, while Maxwell (2007) highlights the importance of developing people as the core of effective leadership. It underscores the need to integrate developmental leadership principles into church administrative systems.

Developmental leadership contributes to effective church administration by fostering capacity building, leadership continuity, and organizational growth. Rather than focusing solely on task completion or hierarchical control, this leadership approach prioritizes mentoring, training, and empowering church workers and members for ministry. According to Schein (2010), leaders play a critical role in shaping organizational culture through learning and development processes. In the church context, this means that administrators who adopt a developmental leadership style are more likely to build competent teams, enhance participation, and promote shared responsibility in ministry. The approach also aligns with biblical leadership principles, which call leaders not only to direct but also to equip others for service (Ephesians 4:11–12).

Furthermore, the nexus between developmental leadership and church administration is evident in the pursuit of sustainability, innovation, and effective governance. As churches face increasing administrative complexities, including financial management, programme coordination, and conflict resolution, the need for leaders who can develop others becomes more critical. Warren Bennis (2009) argues that

leadership development is essential for organizational adaptability and long-term success. In this light, developmental leadership provides a framework for nurturing future leaders, ensuring continuity, and enhancing administrative efficiency. Consequently, integrating developmental leadership into church administration not only strengthens institutional effectiveness but also advances the church's overall mission and growth. This paper explores some conceptual clarifications, challenges, and interrelationships of developmental leadership and church administration.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Developmental Leadership

Developmental leadership is an approach that focuses on developing the capacities of individuals and groups within an organization so they can contribute more effectively to shared goals and long-term success. Rather than emphasizing positional authority or control, developmental leadership prioritizes mentoring, training, empowerment, and the continuous enhancement of followers' skills and competencies. In the African context, leadership scholars such as Akan Williams (2018) argue that developmental leadership is rooted in the African philosophy of "ubuntu"—the belief that a leader's primary role is to nurture, support, and elevate others. Similarly, Muchiri Githinji (2015) notes that developmental leaders focus on creating enabling environments where followers are equipped with knowledge, responsibility, and confidence to serve effectively.

A central dimension of developmental leadership is **empowerment and participatory engagement**. Unlike directive or authoritarian models, developmental leaders in African contexts encourage shared decision-making, capacity building, and delegated responsibility. According to Sola Fajana (2017), leaders who adopt this approach deliberately create space for followers to contribute ideas, take initiative, and grow into leadership roles themselves. This collaborative emphasis enhances motivation, loyalty, and team cohesion, and reflects traditional African community leadership patterns in which group consultation and consensus are valued over unilateral decision-making. In ecclesial settings, such as church leadership, this

means equipping ministers, lay leaders, and volunteers with the spiritual and administrative skills necessary for effective ministry.

Moreover, developmental leadership contributes to **organizational adaptability and sustainability**. As African societies face rapid social change, complex challenges, and shifting expectations, leaders who invest in follower development enable institutions to respond more effectively to evolving demands. Nkiru Onyechi (2020) asserts that organizations with a culture of leadership development are better positioned to innovate, solve problems, and ensure continuity during leadership transitions. It is particularly relevant for religious institutions where succession planning, leadership renewal, and capacity building are critical for long-term mission fulfillment. Thus, developmental leadership not only strengthens current performance but also prepares the church or organization for future challenges, fostering resilience and sustained impact.

The concept of Church Administration

The concept of **Church Administration** refers to the systematic process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources—both human and material—within a church context to achieve its spiritual, social, and organizational objectives. Church administration is not merely a managerial function but is deeply rooted in biblical principles, emphasizing stewardship, accountability, and service to God and the congregation. According to Adeyemo (2018), effective church administration ensures that the church's mission and vision are realized through strategic planning, proper resource allocation, and active participation by both clergy and laity in decision-making. It encompasses diverse areas, including financial management, record-keeping, facility management, committee oversight, and coordination among various ministries.

Scholars have highlighted the importance of leadership and organizational structures in church administration. Oduro (2020) posits that an effective church administration balances the spiritual guidance of pastoral leaders with structured operational frameworks, allowing for the smooth functioning of both ministry and day-to-day activities. Furthermore, Adegbite (2017) underscores that church administration is

unique in integrating spiritual discernment with practical management principles, requiring leaders to navigate the challenges of human behavior, cultural expectations, and congregational diversity while maintaining the church's biblical mandate. This dual responsibility makes church administration both a spiritual and managerial endeavor.

Moreover, contemporary studies recognize church administration as a critical tool for fostering growth, sustainability, and accountability within religious organizations. Eze (2019) emphasizes that proper administrative systems help churches implement effective programs, manage conflicts, and mobilize resources efficiently. Church administration also encourages transparency, participatory leadership, and ethical stewardship, aligning organizational activities with biblical teachings and societal expectations. In this light, church administration is not merely operational but is an essential expression of servant leadership, reflecting the church's commitment to both spiritual nurture and organizational excellence.

Challenges of developmental leadership and church administration

The challenges of developmental leadership and church administration are multifaceted, arising from the unique intersection of spiritual, organizational, and socio-cultural demands within the church context. One major challenge is **resistance to change** among congregants and church leaders. Developmental leadership seeks to transform and improve church structures, programs, and engagement strategies; however, many members may prefer traditional methods or fear disruptions to established practices. According to Nwokolo (2018), resistance often stems from a lack of understanding of the vision, inadequate communication, or perceived threats to personal influence within the church hierarchy. This challenge requires leaders to exercise patience, communicate effectively, and engage in inclusive decision-making to cultivate buy-in from all stakeholders.

Another significant challenge is **resource constraints**, which affect both developmental initiatives and routine church administration. Churches, particularly in developing contexts, often struggle with limited financial, human, and material resources, making it difficult to implement programs or sustain administrative

structures. Okafor (2020) notes that resource scarcity can lead to prioritization conflicts, overburdening of church officers, and delays in ministry projects. In addition, the lack of professionally trained personnel in administration or leadership roles may impede efficient management, reducing the church's capacity to achieve both spiritual and organizational goals. Leaders must therefore develop creative strategies for resource mobilization, capacity building, and delegation to mitigate these challenges.

A further challenge lies in **balancing spiritual guidance with managerial responsibilities**. Developmental leaders are tasked with fostering spiritual growth while simultaneously ensuring effective governance, financial accountability, and operational efficiency. As highlighted by Akinola (2019), church leaders often experience role conflict, where the spiritual expectations of the congregation may clash with administrative necessities, such as implementing policies or enforcing discipline. Additionally, issues such as leadership conflicts, lack of accountability, and cultural pressures can complicate decision-making. Addressing these challenges requires leaders to integrate biblical principles of servant leadership with modern administrative practices, ensuring that organizational growth does not undermine spiritual integrity or congregational trust.

Technological Adaptation: In today's digital age, churches are increasingly expected to integrate technology into their administrative processes and ministry activities, including online services, digital record-keeping, social media engagement, and virtual discipleship programs. However, many churches, especially in developing regions, face challenges due to a lack of infrastructure, low digital literacy among leaders and members, and high costs of technological implementation. As noted by Adesanya (2021), the inability to leverage technology effectively can hinder communication, limit outreach, and reduce administrative efficiency. Developmental leaders must therefore prioritize training, adopt cost-effective digital solutions, and gradually introduce technology in ways that align with the church's capacity and vision.

Leadership Succession and Capacity Development: Another persistent challenge is preparing the next generation of leaders while ensuring continuity in church

administration. Churches often face a shortage of well-trained, visionary leaders capable of sustaining developmental initiatives and maintaining organizational integrity. According to Chukwuma (2019), a lack of succession planning can lead to a leadership vacuum, conflicts, and program stagnation when experienced leaders retire, leave, or become incapacitated. Developmental leadership requires intentional mentoring, continuous training, and empowerment of younger leaders to ensure that the church.

Developmental Leadership and Church Administration

The interrelationship between developmental leadership and church administration is fundamental for ensuring that a church achieves both its spiritual mission and organizational goals. Developmental leadership, which emphasizes vision, transformation, and capacity building, directly shapes administrative practices by fostering goal-oriented planning and participatory governance. According to Nwosu (2020), developmental leaders provide direction and inspiration, thereby strengthening church administration by ensuring that processes such as resource allocation, ministry coordination, and committee oversight align with the church's mission. This integration ensures that administration serves as a tool for advancing the church's spiritual and organizational objectives.

A second interrelationship is evident in strategic planning and goal implementation. Developmental leaders formulate long-term visions and set strategic goals that guide the church's growth and community engagement. Adeyemi (2019) emphasizes that church administration operationalizes these goals through structured policies, proper planning, and program management. Without effective administrative systems, visionary leadership cannot translate ideas into concrete actions, making the partnership between leadership and administration essential for achieving measurable results and sustaining church programs.

Thirdly, human resource development and empowerment are closely connected. Developmental leadership prioritizes mentoring, training, and empowering clergy and lay members to participate in church life actively. Oladipo (2021) notes that church administration provides clear roles, accountability structures, and procedural

systems that enable members to apply their skills efficiently. Together, they create an environment where leadership and organizational structures nurture talent, encourage initiative, and support the growth of both individuals and ministries.

Fourth, conflict management and ethical governance demonstrate another critical link. Developmental leadership fosters participatory decision-making, transparency, and servant leadership principles, while church administration enforces rules, policies, and accountability mechanisms. As Okeke (2018) observes, this combination reduces disputes, promotes ethical conduct, and maintains cohesion within the congregation. By integrating spiritual guidance with administrative frameworks, churches can manage conflicts effectively and maintain organizational stability.

Finally, resource mobilization and sustainability illustrate the interdependence of developmental leadership and administration. Leaders with a developmental orientation inspire stewardship, mobilize volunteers, and encourage financial and material support for church programs. Administration ensures that these resources are managed responsibly through budgeting, financial reporting, and accountability systems. According to Ezeh (2020), this synergy enables churches to implement sustainable projects, expand outreach, and maintain stability while fulfilling their spiritual mission.

Conclusion

This paper presents the integration of developmental leadership into church administration as essential for fostering both organizational effectiveness and spiritual growth. Developmental leadership emphasizes the empowerment and capacity building of individuals, ensuring that church members and leaders are equipped to contribute meaningfully to ministry. When applied within church administrative systems, this approach enhances teamwork, participation, and shared responsibility, while promoting sustainable structures and effective governance. The nexus between developmental leadership and church administration also ensures the continuity of leadership, adaptability to emerging challenges, and alignment with the biblical principle of equipping others for service. Therefore, churches that embrace

developmental leadership are better positioned to navigate administrative complexities, innovate in ministry, and achieve their mission, making leadership development a critical component of organizational growth and long-term success.

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