Sustainable Development for Uganda: A Switch to Followership Model

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Abstract Leadership, as a habit of thinking, assumes the alpha and omega position for pursuance of sustainable development in Uganda. However, what if we considered followership first? Using literature review, a conceptual framework, and critical reflexivity as data source and analysis, this paper provides a new approach to understand challenges in Uganda. The argument is to transcend leadership models and switch to followership model for possibilities of achieving especially sustainable development. This will not only strengthen democratic practices, but also offers more efficient and effective leadership methods. Followership remains the critical yet silent element that has caused the shift in focus from traits, behavior, and lastly, contingent leadership theories. It is why some leadership theorists are considering feminine styles as more effective because they are prejudiced as natural followers. I suggest possibilities of exploring a followership model where followership is the main factor upon which Empowerment for Sustainable Development (ESD) directly depends.

Keywords Uganda, Empowerment for Sustainable Development, Followership Model, Leadership Model, Critical Reflexivity

Introduction

Leadership, in a usual way of thinking, has assumed the alpha and omega position for pursuance of Empowerment for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Uganda. However, what if we considered followership first? Using literature review, a conceptual framework, and critical reflexivity as data source and analysis, this paper intends to provide a new approach to understand challenges in Uganda. The argument is to transcend leadership models and switch to a followership model for possibilities of achieving sustainable development in Uganda. This will not only strengthen democratic practices, but also offers more efficient and effective leadership methods. The paper is divided into four sections, starting with the introduction and definition of key terms; followed by a review of the leadership model to sustainable development; the illustration of the suggested followership model explaining in an exploratory way how it promises empowerment for sustainable development and lastly, a justification for the suggested switch.

Literature Review and Definitions

Literature reviewed suggests that followership is in a dialectical relationship with leadership (see for example Hollander and Webb 1955, 163–67; Barnard 1986, 92–104; Heifetz 1999, 19–20; Litzinger and Schaefer 1982, 78–81). Kelly (1988, 142–48) provides descriptive characteristics of followership. However, Hollander (1974, 19–33), in agreement with Baker (2007, 50–60), come close to giving the nature of followership by refering to it as a role not a position to be filled. In that case, followership as a role signifies an accident, which is a digression from the anticipated understanding of the concept. Away from an attempt to essentialize the concept, it is important to explore further this idea of followership as a role specifically regarding to its impact on ESD.

Followership had been understood mostly as a negative process due to the potency given to leadership. Some literature suggests that followership is the opposite of leadership. If that is true, it follows that invoking the opposite of leadership definitions is one way to understand followership. However, this might be problematic. For instance, according to Adeyemi and Brlarinwa, leadership is "the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement

of objective" (2013, cited by Kotur and Anbazhagan 2014, 30), follower-ship would therefore mean *the art or process of accepting influence to strive willingly towards the achievement of objectives.* This implies *willful consent to be influenced.* Suda (2013, 3) defines followership as "the willingness to cooperate in working towards the accomplishment of the mission, to demonstrate a high degree of teamwork, and to build cohesion among the organization members." As I mentioned above, many leadership theorists include an act of "influence" in their leadership definition, in-cluding House et al. (2014); and Van Vugt et al. (2008, 182–96). However, "influence" is oftentimes invoked negatively. Who, when, and why would one willingly consent to the influence of someone's power and authority? When under "influence," is there a chance of autonomous action? Else-where, leadership has been defined as "an act of influencing subordinates to obtain organizational goals through authority" (Kotur and Anbazha-gan 2014, 30). Followership then is an *act of being influenced to obtain organi-zational goals through authority.* Whereas the first indicated an element of willful consent, this one signifies subject-object relationship. It conceives of followership as passive.

On considering the nature of followership, Kelly (2008, 8) classifies fol-lowers as sheep or yes-people—passive, pragmatists, star and alienated. Chaleff (1995, 7) brought in an element of "courageous followership," which is similar to Kelly's "star followership" and Kellerman's (2008) "ex-emplary followership." Followership, I argue should be empowered; with liberated and autonomous attributes. Highly fearless, informed, liber-ated, and autonomous followers are capable of neutralizing the excesses of leadership in their dialectical interconnection.

Followership in this work implies the power and capability each indi-vidual citizen possesses as an empowerment tool to counter the excesses of leadership in the process of pursuing sustainable development. Em-powerment, in this paper adopts Narayan's (2002, xviii) broad definition: "the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life . . . [and] control over resources and decisions." Sustainable development is any proportional transformation towards a better life considered meaningful and valuable to particular individuals, measured using parameters set by themselves as individuals or as a group, and conscious of the needs of the future generation (Narayan 2002; Jabareen 2009). As a philosophical re-search method, critical reflexivity is used mostly by qualitative researchers in ensuring the quality of data collection, analysis, and synthesis (Patton

2002, 64–66). In this paper, it is taken to mean turning in on Uganda, to uncompromisingly question everything about her ESD journey. Reflexivity facilitates the questioning of behaviors and practices; examining how these reflect or diverge from our espoused values, theories, and principles; most importantly, how they impact on the process of achieving ESD. It forces us to identify assumptions, prejudices, attitudes, thought processes and habitual actions. In this paper, leadership is questioned, while considering followership as the focal point upon which attainment of ESD rests. Next is a review of how the leadership model operates.

The Leadership Model to ESD

This section analyzes the concept of leadership focusing on Jex and Britt (2008, ch. 10) along with other literature. Despite the varied definitions of the term leadership, common features are ubiquitous. One outstanding feature is looking at it as an action (influencing), using a tool (power), obtained through an avenue (authority) (Jex & Britt, 2008, 303–05). Drawing from influence, power, and authority, leadership interprets and enforces policies, provides strategic direction and vision to the group, and obtains resources for themselves and followers. Theories advanced to understand leadership have focused on individual traits, behaviors and contingencies, each being succeeded due to failure to provide expected leadership outcome- influence. According to contingent theories, in order that this influence be effective, traits and behaviors exhibited by leaders must be studied in relation to the environment and individual circumstances surrounding the situation a leader handles. In other words, traits and behavior of an individual are necessary but not sufficient for successful leadership.

The critical element in the environment that leaders interact with is subordinates (followers). Jex and Britt (2008, 303–04) identify more than six contingent leadership models all stressing the point of subordinates and the way leaders work with them to execute their duties. They cite Fiedler's contingent theory that focuses on characteristics of situations and of leadership. Specifically, the leaders' characteristics must be attuned to nurturing a positive leader-followers' relationship. The Path-Goal theory focuses on leadership styles suiting the kind of followers they work with. Vroom-Yetton-Jago model looks at decision-making in different situations. Suggestions indicate that decision-making depends on whether subordinates provide information, need to participate in

conceptualizing the problem, or in making actual decisions. The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) model looks at the different groups created as follower-leader relationship takes form. There is the "in-group" and the "out-group," with the former being closer to the leader than the latter. There is also the Charismatic, Transactional, and Transformational leadership models which also tend to get their names depending on the follower-leader relationship, and lastly, the Authentic leadership model, which according to Jex and Britt is the newest added to the debate.

The common denominator alluded to through all these Contingent leadership models is followership in the environment in which the leaders operate. But unlike any other factors, followers have agency and are capable of reacting contingently regardless of the leader's influence, power and authority (Sen 1999, 190). Figure 1 below illustrates the pursuit of ESD with leadership model.

The illustration above underscores the value of leadership in determining ESD in Uganda. If we consider Jex et al. (2008) and their considered functions of leadership earlier mentioned, leadership requires an environment and resources the most valuable being human—followers. Leaders engage followers through "influence" as a way to reach ESD. Jex et al. (2008) point out that leaders require analytical, conceptual, interpersonal, and persuasive skills in order to successfully influence their followers.
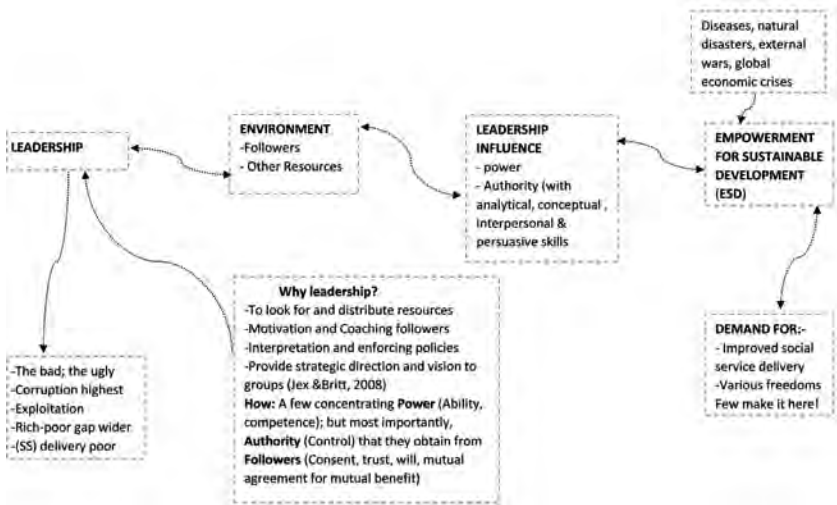

FIGURE 1 | The Leadership Model

However, influence alone is not adequate to get followers to trust, co-operate, and willfully consent to leaders' influence. There are those who will go along—"just follow" (Sen 1999, 155). Others will follow cautiously especially if trust is fragile. Fukuyama (2014, 100–124) emphasizes trust as so critical for leadership success. As a bridge, between what leaders do and how they do it; and the expected goal—ESD, if followers actually trust and therefore cooperate with leaders, as in the early years of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) reign, so much would be accomplished favorably. The opposite spins into withdraw and alienation. Leaders then employ multiple sources of power and resources to coerce followers into compliance.

All good intentions come with liabilities and side effects. Like Hobbes (1999), some political theorists advise concentration of power in the sovereign which breeds cut-throat competition for top political leadership positions. This was the case during the 1960s, 1970s, and part of 1980s, in Uganda resulting in mayhem. Presently, as a one-man-show, President Museveni of Uganda employs any means to keep power in a brutish style (Kisekka and Tshimba 2017). The habit of "rent seeking" (Fukuyama 2011, 82; Mamdani 1996, 23–30), so attractive to the "bad and the ugly," is the order of the day especially because they get to control distribution of resources. All forms of corruption, nepotism, and exploitation; widening the gap between the rich and the poor and directly affecting social services delivery also invite themselves; ultimately limiting the level of empowerment and the number of those who can attain ESD.

Natural disasters such as epidemic breakout—Ebola being the current threat; and climate or weather related changes; externally initiated wars or neighborhood political spill-overs (Uganda-Rwanda border closure as the most recent phenomenon); and global economic turbulence are factors beyond leadership control, and are potentially damaging. If all these are mitigated, or if there is adequate preparation in case they occur, it leads to an empowered citizenry that agitates for various freedoms and improvement in social services delivery. However, the unpredictability of human beings, coupled with the fragility of trust between leaders and followers potentially impact negatively on the level of ESD attained. As a result, the few who manage to get appropriate resources, and social services that contribute to their ESD are too few to make macro changes.

The above interpretation of the leadership model to ESD influences the suggestion to switch to the followership model. Leadership has for

long inspired thinkers and theorists to come up with methods, strategies and theories to help loosen up the tension leaders face as they "influence" followers. Partly fueled by the debate between those who think leadership is inborn or learned and whether the masculine or feminine attributes are most suitable for leadership or not, leadership has been named and renamed: Transformational, Transactional, Situational, Collaborative, and Authentic. The argument in this paper is: followership remains the critical yet silent element that has led to the shift in focus from traits, behavior, and lastly, contingent theories. It is why some theorists are considering feminine styles as more effective because they are prejudiced as natural followers. Thus, I suggest possibilities of exploring a followership model where followership is the main factor upon which ESD can directly depend. Below is Figure 2, with the illustration of the followership model to ESD.

Figure 2 below is an indication of the switch to *Liberated and autonomous Followership* model from *leadership* model as the *focus* to obtain ESD. This can be implemented by putting more emphasis on education, improving and maintaining health standards, work on roads, and information and communication technology (ICT) (Musinguzi 2017, 41–56). Markets are important for persons to engage in trade and for the national economy to grow (Smith 1776; Narayan 2002). Various freedoms are important in terms of the capabilities for people to enjoy different functionings (Sen 1999, 75; Nussbaum 2004, 4–18). In all, taking care of both practical and strategic needs of individuals as determined by themselves as individuals or groups (Tripp 2000), is key to ensuring a functional followership.
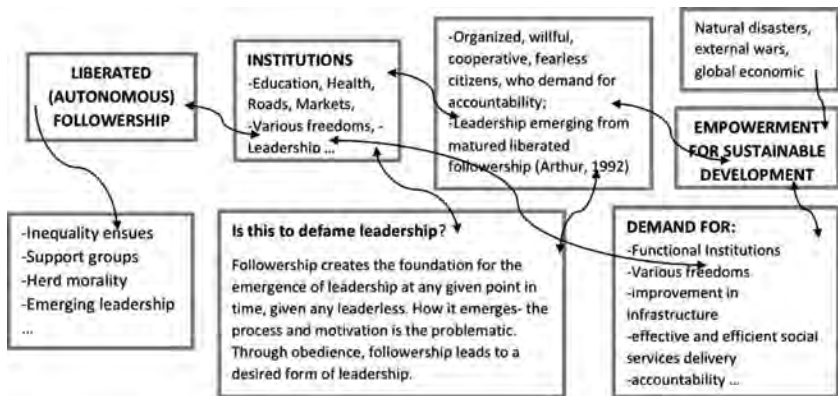

FIGURE 2 | The Followership Model

In order that we attain ESD, the bridge that links the *implementation factors* to our goal must be strong. This link entails a fearless, willful, cooperative, and organized citizenry. The people must be willing to learn, seek information, actively engage in affairs affecting them as individuals and as a community and not limited to their selfish interests. There is need for majority "constrained maximizers" other than "straight forward maximizers" (Gauthier 1986, 15, 281); first trained in the art of obedience (Rousseau 1968, 121) is preferable here to nurture cooperation, trust, and respect for systemic rules. That sets the ground for liberated and autonomous followers.

The followership model is not without potential constraints. Natural disasters like floods, drought that could lead to famine, epidemic outbreaks such as Ebola or cholera can become a menace. Examples in recent years include landslides in Bududa located on the southwestern slopes of Mount Elgon in Uganda, prolonged drought seasons in the northeastern part of Uganda, and potential civil and political unrest such as shootings in Kasese, in western Uganda and recent border conflicts already mentioned between Uganda and Rwanda are indicative of danger to the ESD realization. Uganda, being landlocked and highly dependent on Kenya for import and export transportation, finds that whatever affects Kenya, potentially affects Uganda as was the case in 2007 Kenya elections that ignited ethnic clashes. Such conflicts can turn into full-blown wars affecting the operations of the country. Global economic crises already mentioned also can be source of danger. Nyerere (1968), once advocating for socialization and rural development pleaded with his followers to understand his inability to influence global market prices for their agricultural produce. Even with the switch to the followership model, there cannot be adequate shock-absorbers for such natural, external, and globally influenced potential dangers to ESD.

There are likely side effects to emerge out of implementing the followership model. Sen 1999, 261 emphasizes the need to reflect on negative effects even of well-intentioned plans.

Therefore, even with followership model, inequality is inevitable. Due to the natural differences in attributes, some people will emerge better predisposed than others to cope with prevailing circumstances (Locke 1764; Rousseau 1764). There is also a possibility of a herd morality developing as the majority fails to develop independent thought and instead

follows a few outspoken ones (Kant 1784). Exploitative tendencies are likely to emerge where the ingenuous fall prey. But within humanity, some are attuned to helping the weak and oppressed. Philanthropic activities sprout to support the weak and oppressed. This might lead to dependence of sorts, that can be managed if citizens are organized, willfully consent, cooperate, and demand for accountability (Fukuyama 2014, 24).

Self-help groups with philanthropic traits are likely to crop up although from an alienated followership attitude. For instance, Nduhukhire-Owa-Mataze (2004) points out that Grassroots Women's Organizations (GWOs) that he researched helped thousands of grassroot women reduce poverty, hunger, subordination, marginalization, and exclusion through their own groups. The effort to actively engage in changing undesirable situations withstanding, we need to question how this was achieved in isolation from mainstream partriarchal organizations. He also notes that through taking responsibility to change their conditions on a basic needs level, women learn to meet their strategic needs. However, the challenge is that followership often spills over into leadership that soon leads many to fall into the pitfalls of the leadership model explored above.

However, as a result of the followership model, if human resources are developed, strong institutions and infrastructures are put in place; and, that no natural and external forces interfere, a considerable number of people can attain ESD. With followership experiential training in various skills, individuals become conscious of both practical and strategic needs. They are thus attuned to demand for the creation, maintenance, and improvement of those institutions and infrastructures that make life meaningful. It is at this point that a certain kind of leadership is important to aid such well-trained followers to demand various freedoms just like the current People Power movement spearheaded by Member of Parliament the Honorable Robert Kyagulanyi. People Power is premised on the idea that political power belongs to the citizens as Rousseau (1968) noted as opposed to the leaders as Hobbes prescribed (1999). Below is an exploration of the kind of leadership relevant in the followership model.

The place of leadership in the followership model

The switch to the followership model does not necessarily disregard the role played by leadership. The argument is, from a well-nurtured liberated and autonomous followership springs an effective and efficient

leadership. The way to effective leadership is through a well-nurtured, empowered, liberated, and autonomous followership. This kind of leadership emerges with the right motivation, particularly to play custodial role to the resources and overseeing that all have access to justice and equity (Arthur 1992). In the followership model, leaders "only provide the necessary information, guidance and organization for the people to build their own country for themselves." (Nyerere 1968, 157). Many of the things that citizens need to live a fulfilled life, can best be attained if they are actively engaged in realizing them (Fukuyama 2014, 282–283; Sen 1999, 282–283). Leaders should play a supportive role, working closely with the people.

In the followership model, I adopt the attitude espoused by Nyerere, (1968) where leaders are not indispensable. They work closely with followers, explaining, teaching, and inspiring. Leaders are part of the group and listen to views of others. Their views do not override those of the followers even when they think their position is more plausible. They instead encourage them to pursue their position to allow them an opportunity to learn from their mistakes as a way of building followers' capabilities. However, leaders are tasked with responsibility for ungrudgingly mitigating effects of such mistakes. If and when the leader cannot fulfil these conditions, it is advisable that they give way to someone else. The challenge in Uganda is that the majority of potentially effective leaders are alienated followers who, as Aristotle suggested, might need to be forced into leadership even though they do not want to, a rather dubious proposition for practical reasons (Aristotle 1959, Book VI).

The idea is that leaders ought to be guided by altruism. But self-sustenance usually overrides altruism. Oftentimes it manifests itself in the form of "reciprocal altruism," which unfortunately breeds corruption (Fukuyama 2014, 88–90). Switching to followership stands better chances of followers demanding for accountability from different angles, ultimately suffocating nepotism and reciprocal altruism so common with leadership models. As Nyerere (1968) argued, the act of reciprocal altruism, in form of rewards for previous favors or participation in selfish agendas, is not good leadership. This is what the leadership of President Museveni displayed when positions of authority were distributed based on past favors or participation in the NRM war that brought his government into power in 1986.

Followership's vital force to ESD, its boosters and its inhibitors

The vital force of followership rests in the power to reinforce democratic practice and bring about ESD. The adage "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" by Lord Acton (1834–1902) may have been an understatement of what the dialectics of followership and leadership can do. However, this is in relation to the power not in the followers' possession. In this paper, I speak and write about power with the belief that it resides with followers but because they neglect it, it is snatched away by leaders. Jex et al. (2008, ch. 10) consider power as potential or having the capacity to influence. They discuss bases of power including coercive power, reward-based power, legitimate power, expert power, and information-based power. In all these instances, coercion, hoarding information, rewards, expertise, are tools for influence. But all those can be bases of power for followers to engage democratically in decisions that affect their lives. Such power bases alone are insufficient to have an impact in the influence process unless that power resides with followers who are also empowered to do so.

Influence yields both intended and unintended results but whatever the case, followers have agency. Kisekka and Tshimba (2017) note that President Museveni uses "customer-like" influence involving gifts and other person-specific rewards targeting particular individuals for specific purposes, while oftentimes coercion is common. Once the influence process begins, four outcomes are anticipated, namely: compliance, identification, private acceptance or internalization, and resistance (Jex et al. 2008, ch. 10). None of these outcomes can happen unless followers consent, whether voluntarily or otherwise. Even out of fear, coercion, or bribery (reward), still, followers decide to yield or resist all temptation. Where followers yield to influence—fear, ignorance, or simple-mindedness lie as inhibitors at the back of their action or inaction, all of which can be overcome if they act on their agency.

Such inhibitors are easily neutralized through quality, intentional and consistent education together with functional institutions as boosters to empowered, autonomous, and liberated followership. This kind of education should;

> [E]ncourage in each citizen of three things: an inquiring mind; an
> ability to learn from what others do and reject or adapt it to his
> own needs and a basic confidence in his own position as a free

and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued
by them for what he does and not for what he obtains. (Nyerere,
1968, p.53)

In the current situation however, where education seems to liberate only
a few individuals, those inhibitors are likely to linger longer than neces-
sary. It thus gets tough to envisage a future free of such incapacitating
ontological states (Wabule 2017; Mandy 2009; MoES 2005; Muhwezi 2003;
MoES 2001). With such education, followers take refuge in the comfort
of prejudices and fallacious thinking (Nyerere 1973), relinquishing their
own power because they fail to task their minds to think beyond what is
taken for granted. The reality is that with education, and functional insti-
tutions, such attitudes can be neutralized. Many nations, including Japan,
China (Fukuyama 2014), and South Korea (Musinguzi 2017), attest to the
need for education as a means to development. The history of western
philosophy also indicates how development came about with every epis-
temological advancement (Russell 1945). The enlightenment period, with
thinkers like Kant (1784), urged individuals to think for themselves as a
way of avoiding fallacious thinking. Fear, ignorance, and simple minded-
ness must be neutralized by education to reach autonomous and liber-
ated followership.

In Uganda, institutions of various forms, especially of socio-cultural
nature, and particularly family, have continued to play an important part
in shaping followership before one proceeds to formal education. Chil-
dren "absorb beliefs about witchcraft [and] taboos from family but . . .
not learn the methods of making nutritious foods." (Nyerere 1968, 58).
What young people selectively learn from the family and all informal set-
tings are usually taken for granted practices. And because many socio-
cultural practices are taken for granted, institutions in that realm are also
taken for granted. As such, the form of those institutions remains intact,
but the rationale for their creation and preservations slowly fades away.
This is the state of family institutions which are on the verge of breaking
down. The role of nurturing autonomous and liberated followership is
lapsing into neglect, resulting in individuals who lead lonely, brutish lives
(Hobbes, 1999). As individuals are struggling to survive, leaders take ad-
vantage of their helplessness and swindle power out of followers' hands.
The nature of institutions, their role and impact on followership, needs
to be considered.

We may ask why Ugandans keep following institutional leaders who do not meet their needs—in resource allocation, ensuring protection, and justice. The answer I argue lies in two issues: first, underrating the vital force of followership by nurturing self-interests expecting those who care less to meet them. Those who want freedom must secure it and preserve it for themselves; followers must ensure that their interests are met. However, in different constituencies, voters with selfish interests select representative members of parliament (MPs), hoping that they will in turn satisfy those interests. MPs and ministers also follow their individual interests in hope that the president will meet them if they ignore all else and follow him religiously. The president too has individual interests that he follows and expects that MPs, ministers, and support from certain corners of the international community, will satisfy them. The MPs, ministers, and countries like China and Korea (Musinguzi 2017) from the international community have individual interests that they expect to be met by the president, who pushes MPs and his ministers to coerce and lobby their constituencies to offer land and other resources to support their self-interest. While the circle of followership in whatever form continues, the general impression is, leadership is in control. Followers face a dual loss of their power and un-satisfied self-interests. In circularity, followership power fragments, resources divided among a few to sustain their grip on power as majority wallow in poverty.

Secondly, this followership is divided into sub-groups that cannot coordinate their capabilities to counter the effects of leadership influence. Such a divide-and-rule approach used during colonialism is still at large although at this point it is instigated by the very people it oppresses. Through psycho-analytics, the unconscious determinants (Vrabel et al. 2016) of the kind of followership and the division among the opposition groups can be identified to help in sensitizing people concerning the danger of such divisions. Even with multi-party politics or representative government, if not careful, divisions can obstruct the unity necessary to strengthen the power of followership. Rousseau (1968), among the contractarian proponents, discouraged such representatives and multi-party politics that reduce the power of the people, though this is better in theory than practice.

At this juncture, we notice the pattern showing that whereas leadership requires power and authority to carry out its influence, followers consent to that arrangement through their various followership styles. Proponents of the tacit consent argument claim that agreeing to live in a

geographical location warrants obedience to the laws governing the area (Kisekka and Tshimba, 2017). Despite that, there is need to be intentional in the practice of followership knowing that in whichever form it takes, followers are handing over power and authority. There is need to cultivate autonomous and liberated followership to counter the ills created by the defective leadership model.

Conclusion

In this paper, using critical reflexivity, I have argued for a switch to the followership model in Uganda. That leadership is vital but in a supportive role. I have noted that changes in leadership brands and styles is due to followership treated as step-child. The power and authority rightly belongs to followers who must in turn decide how it can be wielded. With the followership model, lesser evils are expected yet more individuals will obtain ESD. There are unintended results foreseen but these can be countered if the implementation is effected and the bridging factor strong in trust, cooperation, willful consent, and a strong leadership emerging from below. This paper hence is intended to pave the way for intensive and extensive research into the phenomenon of followership and how it can be harnessed in pursuit of ESD.

NOTE

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