

**Effective Management: A Key factor in sustainable development in Sub -Saharan
African Economies.**

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At the start of the 21st century, managerial roles are in a flux and traditional practices are being found less effective. In a global context, changes in societies caused by factors such as economics and social – cultural environments require adjustments in managerial roles. Scholars have concluded that effective management is a crucial factor in the achievement of societal goals. African policy makers should address the issue of competent managers and develop skilled managers who would be equipped to address the managerial problems of the 21st century. Perhaps, nowhere is the conflict between reliance on traditional management practices and the need to develop enhanced competence skills more glaring and urgent as in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Researchers have agreed that irrespective of the abundance of natural resources, Sub-Saharan African economies still lag behind most developing economies due to ineffective management, case in point Nigeria. It is an established fact that the quality of management of an organization or a nation is a major factor which makes the difference between success and failure. In other words, the concept and practice of management as well as its underscoring effects on the activities of mankind for effectiveness and efficiency have never been a subject of dispute.

The Management Environment in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Management is the issue and the problem. It is the ability to manage innovatively that distinguishes a successful manager, society, organization and nation from that which is not. Erondu (1996) observed that some management experts have subscribed to the principle of universality of management approaches in all situations across all organizations and geographical boundaries. They imply that management approaches are designed to suit specific situations, people, ages, and cultures. The universality of management has worked in developed economies such as United Kingdom, United States of America, and Germany where the art of management originated from the military.

The military in the developed countries is regarded as one whose effectiveness, efficiency and continued relevance are hinged upon the mastery of the art of management. It is however, becoming increasingly clear that direct application of “universal management concepts elsewhere are difficult at best, or require significant modification.

Jolaoso & Iyanda (1994), stated that developing countries like Sub-Saharan countries have come under the wrong notion that these management concepts of universality have promoted the development of developed economies, and must therefore have universal and international application. They also stated that this has often resulted in the jettisoning of the cultural and other environmental aspects of management by developing economies. The exposure to such international management concepts seem to have led to neglect of indigenous practices and the “adoption” rather than “adaptation” of those foreign concepts to suit the local conditions. Sub-Saharan managers unlike their counterparts in the western world are faced with demands from outside the organization, such as extended family and kinships. Such demands may well conflict with the manager’s organizational role. The managers would therefore need to be skilled in explaining the demands and limitations under which he or she operates in the organization.

At the advent of the 21st century, Sub-Saharan business context is characterized by a high degree of environmental uncertainty-much, as was the case towards the end of the 20th century. Uncertainties include fluctuating foreign exchange and interest rates, high inflation, a liquidity squeeze, political vicissitudes which often culminate into border clashes and wars, an unreliable and inadequate infrastructure, governmental interference and widespread ambiguity surrounding the rule of law. More recently, as was noted by the economic secretary for Africa (K.Y. Amoako, 2001-2002), that the impact of September 11th 2001 terrorist attack on United States has no doubt affected African economies too. As he made his remark at the end of the year (2001), he predicted that the growth rate for Africa in 2001 would be lower than that of 2000. The early indications are that there are increasing volatility and uncertainty. This volatility constitutes a serious challenge to strategic planning and management in general (Blunt & Jones, 1992; Kamoche, 1997; Kiggundu, 1989; Muuka, 1997; Munene, 1991). At the level of strategic planning, this volatility forces managers to resort to short-term decision making in which

efficiency is sacrificed for expediency, for example in stockpiling raw materials because future deliveries cannot be guaranteed (Muuka 1997). These methods are used because they have proven to be effective within the circumstances, and are considered a pragmatic response to circumstances that are often entirely beyond the control of the manager.

Culture and Management

In today's global environment, success depends to a great extent upon the understanding of the dynamics and nuances of culture. Culture is here defined as the "software of the mind", a collective phenomena, shared with the people who live in the same social environment. It is collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one social group or category of people from another. It includes the society's institutions, legal systems, methods of government, family patterns, social conventions and all the interactions and transactions which define the particular flavor of a society (Hofstede, 1991). Andre Laurent (1983), also observed that national origin of managers significantly affected their views on how effective managers should manage.

Iguisi (2001) noted that beliefs in the convergence hypothesis of management practices and creation of a global corporate village are strongly held among many managers and management scholars. He noted that their core argument is that management is management, consisting of sets of principles and techniques that can be universally applied. He stressed that management is considered to be similar to engineering or science, and therefore transcends national boundaries and yet even in science and engineering this assumption may be misplaced. Jaegar et al (1990) stated that one assumption in most work in the area of comparative or cross-cultural management is that the organization is indeed an "open system". They also stated that the practical impact of culture on management practices will therefore be twofold. First, it will influence management behavior which might be said to be occurring "naturally". Management behavior will reflect the values of the local culture. It will not include behavior which runs counter to culture. Second, culture will influence the perceptions which individuals in organizations have of the world around them. This will include their perceptions of both the internal and external organizational environments.

From the literature, it is evident that cultures vary in distinct and significant ways. Our ways of reasoning, feeling, managing, and behaving are not mechanical, but are heavily influenced by our cultural heritage. Before the advent of cross-cultural research, it was generally believed that organizations were beyond the influence of culture and that organizational success was only determined by technology and job assignment. Due to cross-cultural research, we now know that culture influences organizational behavior at all levels, rather than attributing work to a simple mechanical outcome of technology or job assignment. This is in line with Jaeger et al (1990) observation that organizational function depends on the behavior and attitudes of people within a given society; organizational behavior is profoundly influenced by the socio-cultural environment within which the organization operates.

Human Development, Management and Leadership

One of the lessons of the 20th century is that economic progress does not always translate into human development. Zahra (1999) observed that these two variables should be related. To this effect, Sub-Saharan economies should know that economic development can neither be achieved nor sustained if it does not promote or encourage human development. Zahra noted that one of the most important lessons of the past decade is that intellect and knowledge are the fuel of global competitiveness and growth. Sub-Saharan economies should realize that investments in developing, nurturing, sustaining, and cultivating this knowledge are among the most important ways societies can achieve growth and development.

Marva (1997) observed that there is no gainsaying the fact that good management is a sine-quo-non for the successful operation of any organization. He noted that Africa is blessed with natural resources but lacks the right quality of managerial culture and the dearth of highly committed managers. In other words, African economies need good leaders. Leadership may be defined as the act of influencing or inspiring subordinates to voluntarily, competently and enthusiastically strive towards achieving organizational objectives or goals. It is desirable not only for the achievement of organizational objectives but also requires staff who willingly and confidently do so. Zahra (1999) emphasized that leadership is the key to competitiveness. He further noted that in a

dynamic environment that brings opportunities and challenges, the role of leadership in achieving organizational transformation and evolution is pivotal. History has shown that great leaders build great organizations. Many companies or nations rise and fall based on the quality of their leadership.

Africans need visionary leaders because such leaders have the qualities of recognizing the beginnings of strategic change in industry dynamics, see the future before it materializes and move quickly to capitalize on these changes. Great leaders know that the secret of their success lies in building an organization that values change, innovation, and the inclusion of diverse skills, views and backgrounds. They realize that resources and strategies are important for external success, but so does the soul of their organization.

21st Century Vision

A vision is a difficult thing to describe and this difficulty has been a stumbling block for most leaders to formulate a clear vision for their organizations. Vision as a concept to management of a nation or organization, is deeply rooted in the belief that it is better to focus on the future as we can neither alter the past nor do much about the present. In this view, both the past and the present are only relevant to the extent that we can reflect on them and thereby learn lessons from them in planning for the future.

Sub-Saharan African countries should be aware that successful competitiveness in the 21st century will demand the use of visionary and dedicated leadership, a balanced scorecard that enhances corporate accountability, and sustained investment in creating dynamic capabilities. The countries should know that it will also require the effective management of intangible resources and assets to achieve growth.

Today, as managers engage in more complex and less routine tasks, we need a greater integration of knowledge, judgment and skills as well as capacity to synthesize various perspectives and provide input for cooperative action. Efficiency in a complex, unstable society like Sub-Sahara, requires human resource development in new coping skills. Moran, et al (1982) cited Coelho extensive research into adaptation, and believes that efficiency is learnable, improvable, and constrained by limits. Among the constraints are personal disposition and capabilities, institutional policy, organization or

climate; cultural factors that influence role expectations, incentives and reward systems, value orientations and transnational situations that are new, complex, and stressful. Training can bring the best out of a person if it is based on what that person potentially has. Training cannot change a person if the training seeks to train individuals in work methods and work organization out of line with their cultural attributes. Culture-independent training can best meet with limited success. For effective training in Sub-Saharan, one must proceed with on-the-job training with emphasis on practical hints of do's and don'ts. Theoretical training will follow later to provide a required background to the practical level already attained. This approach is called community concept which sees the organization as a community to which the individual belongs, not just as one with a fixed contract but as a member by choice. This community is built on close interpersonal relationships and group interactions welded by a feeling of security and harmony on the part of all its members. This supports Onyemelukwe (1973) studies of various businesses in Africa which he concluded that a community concept of management is the answer to a society in which cohesive forces, with their origin in traditional culture and values, are very strong.

Discussion and Conclusion

Contrary to the western management assumptions of universality, management experiences across cultures now recognize that traditional societies could have growth positive factors as well as growth negative factors. The challenge for Sub-Saharan management is therefore to properly identify the growth positive and growth negative cultural elements within the individual economy or society, document them, understand their roots and linkages and go about isolating, marginalizing or removing the negative elements while incorporating, enlisting and productively utilizing the growth-positive elements. The situation can be improved through the development and advancement of management theories and techniques that take cognizance of the peculiarities of African socio-cultural milieu. Adaptation rather than adoption is encouraged. This is the biggest challenge to managerial leadership so badly needed for sustainable economic development in Africa.

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