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Guest editorial: leadership and organizational development in Africa

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to preview contributions on leadership and organizational development in the African context, covered in this special issue of the *African Journal of Business and Economic Studies*.

Design/methodology/approach – Summaries of the underlying theoretical/conceptual and/or empirical frameworks, as well as key findings for each paper, were outlined in order to provide insights of each paper's thematic contribution.

Findings – Paper 1 identified four basic modes of understanding organizational culture which provides a unique and expanded view on pursuing research in the field. Paper 2 found that managers use authentic and transactional leadership skills to cultivate and nurture the creativities of employees toward increased performances. Paper 3 found the interaction between authentic leaders and followers as inducing high levels of moral and ethical behaviors in followers. Paper 4 found that employee engagement and affective commitment minimize employees' attrition, irrespective of leadership styles. Paper 5 found that managers can enhance organizational development by creating an atmosphere for innovation development, and being involved in its implementation. Paper 6 found that leaders who are emotionally intelligent positively evoke subordinates' citizenship behaviors. Paper 7 identified three distinct and interrelated archetypes of managerial role preferences (i.e. change agents, affective leaders, and result-oriented realists) needed by leaders in their administrative practices.

Originality/value – The papers provide new insights, in terms of thematic learning and knowledge, which add to the understanding of the contemporary Afrocentric perspective on leadership and organizational development, especially, the dialogue of management activities that promote the relational, critical and constructionist perspectives on leadership and organizational development.

Keywords Africa, Leadership, Editorial, Organizational development

Paper type Research paper

The business world is known to be changing very rapidly due to the effects of globalization, liberalization, technological changes and advancement. This has given rise to market changes that is also transforming the business environment in which organizations operate. Going by Hammel and Prahalad's (1994) argumentation, an organizational environment is stochastic in nature and as such, might not always remain stable in the midst of such rapid changes. In this regard, the future outlook of an organization's productivity and performance might need to be situated in the intersection of changes professed by technology, organizational life style, organizational diversity and geopolitics (Hammel and Prahalad, 1994) of globalization and economic liberalization. Thus, it imperative for managers of businesses to develop future-oriented survival strategies, which can help them manage the challenges emanating from changes in their organizations' operating environments toward enhance organizational productivities (Hammel and Prahalad, 1994). This is because, managing the consequence of these changes is deemed the single most difficult task for managers, especially those in organizations operating in the African business environment. Underlined by the general view among management scholars that organizations are embedded in social, cultural, economic and political contexts (see Kuada, 2012), This perception is informed by the notion



that: management and leadership styles in African firms are mostly shaped by cultural issues, such as collectivism, embeddedness and power distance. As such, there is the need for the development of the requisite leadership and management models, as well as organizational structures and systems, for the efficient and effective management of transformational developments in organizations. This is based on the notion that for a manager to have the ability to lead an organization efficiently and effectively in a world of technological change, globalization, competition and social responsibility, she/he might need to be a person who possess the following competencies: ability to work effectively as a self-aware and reflective change leader, ability to understand organizational dynamics and how to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and ability to use sound leadership and organizational development practices to manage the organization successfully.

In the African context, there is the perception that institutions are characterized by cultural tensions, manifested in the form of dichotomies, such as, individualistic vs collectivist world visions, local vs global cultures, and formal vs informal relationships (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). Thus, in order for African organizations to be able to face the momentous challenges emanating from changes in the global market environment, they might need visions of the future, which when made so attractive, inspiring and compelling will shift the mindset (Bina, 1997) of their managers from not only focusing on managing crises, but also anticipating the future (Bina, 1997). However, there appears to be a dearth of empirical studies that explain the nature, as well as confirm the existence of a relationship between leadership style and organizational development in the African context. For example, what empirical or conceptual answers do we have on how business managers in Africa lead in today's ever-changing work environment? Also, going by the argument that effective leadership does not always translate from one situation to the next, what contemporary tools do managers of businesses in Africa use or require in tackling today's organizational development challenges? Since Africa is in a unique position as an emerging market economy pursuing affirmative action policies characterized by an open economy, the provision of answers to these questions is of particular importance to our contemporary understanding of leadership and organizational development issues in organizations operating in the African business environment. Therefore, this special issue of *African Journal of Business and Economic Studies (AJEMS)* is a move away from the notion that sees management research as focusing on the nature and consequences of managerial actions whereas business research primarily focuses on the determinants of corporate performance (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). This issue of *AJEMS* brings together seven papers that provide new insights and add to our understanding of the contemporary Afrocentric perspective on leadership and organizational development, especially, the dialogue of management activities that promote the relational, critical and constructionist perspectives on leadership and organizational development. The papers discuss the functionalities of various organizational leadership styles, such as administrative leadership, authentic leadership (AL), transactional leadership, and transformational leadership and their contributions to organizational development, from the perspectives of leaders' emotional intelligence and employee creativity, as well as the creation of climate for creativity and work-related flow in specific firms, industries and economies in Africa.

In light of the above, and with the development of knowledge and understanding of organizational culture becoming increasingly important as a focus area in academic research of organizational theory, as well as in management practice (Alvesson, 2012), Charlotte Pietersen discussed the nature of research in the field and its associated quantitative and qualitative approaches. She performed a typological review of published research aimed at contributing to existing knowledge by expanding the scope of such research efforts. This was informed by the recognition that an organization's culture is a crucial dimension that can either be an asset or a hindrance in shaping behavior in organizations, as well as in achieving long-term organizational success, in the complex and

dynamic environment businesses function today (NunezRamirez *et al.*, 2016). Using the current lack of broader conceptual and methodological perspective in the organizational culture literature as a point of departure, Charlotte used an approach that has not been followed before, that is, using a number of sources with a primary focus on each of the following four identified types of basic knowledge orientations: Type I (culture theory research), Type II (culture science research), Type III (culture narrative research) and Type IV (culture development research). In her documentary analysis of publications on organizational culture, she used the key search term “organizational culture” in the Ebscohost and Google Scholar search engines over a period of six months to obtain requisite scientific publications. Based on the reviewed literature, Charlotte showed evidence of the appropriateness of a proposed framework for classifying research orientations in this field. The framework provided a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective than the current intellectual polarization in the organizational culture literature. Charlotte found that organizational culture scholarship in a Type I (culture theory) mode gives evidence of the theoretical integrative quest to find the most encompassing frames or possible ideas related to a phenomenon. She found that a Type II (culture science) research in this field operates in the standard scientific paradigm of empirical, hypothesis-testing studies, with the aim of providing objective explanations of various elements of organizational culture and its relationship with other organizational variables. She found a Type III (culture narrative) research to be about recounting the lived-experiences of, and meaning of organizational life for organizational members, using a variety of methods, such as content analysis, in-depth interview and case studies, and metaphorical descriptions. She found a Type IV (culture development) research to concern itself with activities and programs aimed at influencing, changing, and even transforming organizations, in terms of their basic management philosophies, values, norms and corresponding policies and practices. Charlotte argued that all the four basic modes of understanding organizational culture are typically at play, irrespective of methodology. She concluded that the analysis of research in the field of organizational culture, in terms of fundamental types of human knowledge, provides a unique and expanded view on pursuing research in the field.

In the second paper, Sanda and Arthur explored how AL and transactional leadership styles influenced employees’ creativity and the effect that climate for innovation and work-related flow has on such relationship. Focusing on the telecom industry in Ghana and guided by the implicit theory of leadership, Sanda and Arthur found that managers in telecom firms use transactional leadership styles and AL styles to enhance employees’ creativity. They also found that the work climate, which is prevalent with work-related flows, fostered employees’ creativity and encouraged not only their innovation, but also enhanced their job performances. Arguing from the perspective of Fagerlind *et al.* (2013), Sanda and Arthur noted that employees of telecom firms in Ghana operate in highly challenging work environments, using skills that are highly appreciated by their managers. They found that employees have the ability to make a well-balanced self-choice of the skills and abilities to use in their task performances (Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989; Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Bakker, 2005). Sanda and Arthur observed that while the prevalence of an innovative climate mediated the effect of AL on the employees’ creativity, it rather moderated the effect of transactional leadership on the employees’ creativity. Sanda and Arthur also found that work-related flow moderated the effects of both authentic and transactional leadership styles on employee creativity. Based on these findings, Sanda and Arthur concluded that managers in telecom firms align their leadership styles to given situations and positively influence their followers’ creativity to achieve organizational goals. Sanda and Arthur’s paper showed that managers of telecom firms, especially in Ghana, can create conducive psychosocial work climate that support innovativeness and then use the requisite authentic and transactional leadership skills in their managerial functions to cultivate and nurture the creativities of their employees toward increased performances.

The third paper by Emuwa and Fields looked at the renewed interest for transparent and positive leadership approaches (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), and the current need for expanded perspectives on applicable leadership models, especially in Africa (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). Emuwa and Fields situated AL as a contemporary leadership model that focuses on the transparency of a leader's integrity and the active concern for the viewpoints and developments of followers (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Fields, 2007). They viewed the underlying theory of AL as evolving (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Klenke, 2007), and as such continues to receive favorable interest, in terms of the development of multiple alternative measures of the construct and its components (Jensen and Luthans, 2006; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Ladkin and Taylors, 2010). Arguing from the perspective that the influence of AL behaviors (such as organizational commitment and perceptions of a leader's self-effectiveness) on employee outcomes have received limited empirical examination, Emuwa and Fields examined the extent to which individual dimensions of AL are related with employee organizational commitment. With the aim of providing valid and empirical evidence to the theoretical structure of AL theory toward developing a contemporary leadership model that is applicable in Nigeria, they explored the effectiveness of AL on employees' organizational commitment and the moderating effects of contingent reward leadership behaviors on this relationship. Using data obtained in 16 organizations across various sectors in Nigeria, Emuwa and Fields found a positive relationship between AL behaviors and organizational commitment among Nigerian employees. They concluded that the interaction between authentic leaders and their followers induces high levels of moral and ethical behaviors in the followers, and as result made contingent rewards appeared less important to the followers. These findings by Emuwa and Fields provide insight into a contemporary leadership model that can positively impact leadership development in Nigeria, with potential applicability in other African countries.

The concept of leadership has long been contested by several writers (e.g. Grint, 1997, 2005; Tejada *et al.*, 2001), and there abounds empirical evidence characterizing transformational leadership as an effective form of leadership at the organizational, sectorial and national levels (Garcia-Morales *et al.*, 2012; Gyensare *et al.*, 2016; Howell and Avolio, 1993; Nemanich and Keller, 2007). Riding on the back of these observations, the fourth paper by Michael Gyensare and colleagues examined the mechanisms and processes by which transformational leadership influences voluntary turnover intention in the Ghanaian public sector. Arguing from the perspective that the few studies on the nexus between transformational leadership and engagement have basically come from Europe, America, Asia and Australia, Gyensare and colleagues posited that similar empirical studies appeared lacking in Africa, and for that matter Ghana. Gyensare *et al.* sought to enhance our understanding of the complex relationship between transformational leadership and voluntary turnover intention by exploring how employee engagement and affective commitment mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and voluntary turnover intention, on the one hand, and how psychological climate moderate same relationship on the other. In study conducted in a large public sector organization in Ghana, and guided by a cross-sectional design framework and a hierarchical linear modeling with bootstrapping analytical approach, Gyensare *et al.* found that transformational leadership has a positive influence on employee engagement, but a negative influence on employee turnover intention. They also found that both employee engagement and affective organizational commitment mediate the effect of transformational leadership on voluntary turnover intention, with psychological climate moderating the effect of affective commitment and voluntary turnover intention. The findings of this study supports the proposition that employee engagement and affective commitment in African public sector institutions, such as in Ghana, will help minimize employees' decision to leave, regardless of how they perceive the leadership style of their immediate supervisors.

The importance of organizational leadership in strategy implementation, especially in firms operating in emerging markets that are characterized by socioeconomic and cultural

factors, such as high embeddedness and hierarchy, has been emphasized by Burgess and Steenkamp (2006). In the fifth paper, Thomas Anning-Dorson and colleagues assessed the moderation effect of organizational leadership on the relationship between service firm's innovation strategy and organizational development. This assessment was influenced by the notion that organizations operate open systems where there is the need to fit business operations with environmental conditions (Tang and Zhou, 2012), with leadership playing an important role of balancing internal strengths with the environmental conditions within which firms operate (Van Dierendonck *et al.*, 2014). Despite organizational leadership being established in extant literature as creating the boundary condition for strategic actions to thrive, Anning-Dorson and colleagues argued that leadership, as a moderating factor between innovation strategy and firm performance in the African business context, has not received enough attention in both leadership and innovation management research. Using Carmeli *et al.*'s (2010) call for organizational leadership to be viewed as a boundary condition for strategy effectiveness, and based on the premise that in African countries, such as Ghana, where power distance is high, with organizational leadership deemed as providing the needed impetus for innovative strategies to achieve enhanced firm performance, Anning-Dorson *et al.* explored the importance of leadership in strategy implementation, especially, the moderating effect of leadership on the influence of innovation on firm performance within service firms setting Ghana. Using data collected from different service firms across Ghana and guided by a confirmatory factor analytical approach, they showed that both product innovation (as strategy) and organizational leadership are positively related to organizational development (i.e. financial and non-financial performance). Anning-Dorson *et al.* found that in achieving organizational development, organizational leadership does not only serve as a predictor of strategy formulation, but provides the necessary strategic fit between a firm's strategy and business environment. The study offers some practical implications for businesses operating in cultures that support hierarchical structures, especially the intermediate role of organizational leadership in the dynamics between innovation strategy implementation and organizational development in service firms in Africa, and more specifically in Ghana. Anning-Dorson *et al.* proposed that in contexts where the culture supports hierarchical structures, leadership of organizations must deliberately and purposely be involved in the implementation of innovation. In other words, the management of service firms in Ghana, and by implication, Africa, should not just create an atmosphere for innovation development, but must be involved in its implementation in order to create a competitive advantage that enhances organizational development.

In the sixth paper, Benjamin Mekpor and Kwasi Dartey-Baah addressed the gap in the extant literature on how emotional intelligence of leaders in African firms influences employees' voluntary workplace behaviors. Underlined by the argument that leaders in organizations must not only need to understand the voluntary work behaviors of employees, but also know how to motivate the positive ones and mitigate the negative ones (Ali and Waqar, 2013; Organ *et al.*, 2006; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000), Mekpor and Dartey-Baah explored the extent to which leaders' emotional intelligence predict voluntary work behaviors of employees in the Ghanaian banks. Using a quantitative approach with data from 234 respondents working in both high and low performing banks in Ghana, Mekpor and Dartey-Baah found that the organizational citizenship behavior of bank employees is influenced positively by the emotional intelligence of their leaders. They also found a negative relationship between the leaders' emotional intelligences and employees' counter-productive workplace behavior. Mekpor and Dartey-Baah concluded that leaders in the Ghanaian banking sector who are emotionally intelligent evoke positive citizenship behaviors among their subordinates and mitigate behaviors that are counter-productive.

The seventh article by Adare Mitiku, Annie Hondeghe and Steve Troupin provided an understanding on the leadership roles expected of managers in the Ethiopian Civil Service. This study was underlined by the concern that little attention has been given in the extant literature to how African public service is organized in its own contexts (Nkomo *et al.*, 2015; Kuada, 2010), and especially, the smallness of the number of existing studies on Ethiopian public sector, which are mainly confined to issues related to reform. While acknowledging the existence of extensive literature on understanding the role of public sector leadership, Adare and colleagues shared Nkomo's (2011) observation that these studies were predominantly conducted in Europe and the Americas; thus, raising arguments as to whether their deductions holds true for the public sector leaders operating in the African firm environment. Adare and colleagues' therefore conceived administrative leadership as a practice strongly influenced by a much wider settings (Van Wart *et al.*, 2015; Cox *et al.*, 1994), which shapes an individual's perceptual filter (Cox *et al.*, 1994). Adare and colleagues supported this conception with the notion that transferability of management and leadership concepts and practices across nations are usually controversial (Hafsi and Farashahi, 2005), and the claims that western management and leadership models fit less in the context of developing countries (e.g. Sartorius *et al.*, 2011; Jackson, 2004; Blunt and Jones, 1997; Blunt, 1978). Guided by the Q-methodological approach, which allows managers to conceptualize their definitions or preferences of leadership roles, Adare and colleagues obtained data from 51 managers working in Ethiopian Federal Civil Service organizations. Based on their analysis, they identified three distinct, but yet interrelated archetypes of managerial role preferences, which they classified as: change agents, affective leaders and result-oriented realists. Adare and colleagues concluded that though the ostensible echoes of each of these perspectives were professed, they were overlooked functions that are needed to be performed by leaders in their administrative practices.

In conclusion, the collection of papers in this special issue has provided us new insights, in terms of thematic learning and knowledge acquisition, that add to our understanding of the contemporary Afrocentric perspective on leadership and organizational development, especially, the dialogue of management activities that promote the relational, critical and constructionist perspectives on leadership and organizational development.

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Further reading

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