

MANAGING CHANGE IN A CHANGING WORLD: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Globalisation and the “Two Worlds”

Through the process of globalisation, cultural and social change in Africa is now more rapid and more profound than in any earlier period of history. Advanced communications technology now transmits the images and ideologies of American/European culture to every country in the world, thus threats to African heritage are now greater than at any time in history.

Every nation has its particular “genius” - its own ways of acting, thinking, communicating. How can the uniqueness that is Africa survive the onslaught of American/European global culture? “Development”, which implicitly assumes Western superiority, can be misleading and patronizing, and has not narrowed the gap between rich and poor countries. Is it a helpful concept? Western science and technology can benefit African countries in many ways, but Western technological “progress” has also contributed to the destruction of societies, communities and the natural environment. In so many instances science and technology do not fit the African context.

Change is a process, not an event. There is no escape from adaptation and change, the question is whether this is accomplished through integration, synthesis or conflict. Do African countries have to repeat the mistakes of Western cultures - environmentally, socially and psychologically – or can they maintain their own unique “genius”?

One answer – for both multi-national organisations and governments - lies in developing inspired and inspiring leaders: leaders who have the vision to integrate what is relevant and beneficial from the American/European global culture while at the same time maintaining and incorporating uniquely African traditions. Change can be daunting and potentially threatening. An inspiring leader gives others courage.

Does your organisation have Leaders or Managers?

There is often much confusion. Managers are often assumed to be leaders, and leaders are usually expected to be managers, but the personal attributes required for managing and leading are fundamentally different. Sometimes the same person can be successful as both a manager and leader, but not necessarily. **Every organisation needs both.**

Complexity requires a **manager** who is able to control and organise.

Change requires a **leader** who is able to inspire others to follow.

The development of Leadership in Africa

The effectiveness of organisations depends on the capacity of managers to **lead, inspire, and facilitate change** within individuals and teams. In African contexts leadership also requires the additional capacity to reflect critically on cultural change and the effects of globalisation, and to work with others to create dynamic syntheses of cultures for the benefit of organisations and governments.

Topics would include:

- normal responses/reactions to change
- managing staff through the process of change
- personal and professional strategies to provide the leadership and support to manage change more effectively
- initiating, implementing and sustaining change within the participants' own working environment

Support through change

Every generation has specific losses and changes to which it must adapt, the recent processes of cultural change in Africa have been far more rapid, of a greater magnitude and much more profound than in earlier historical time frames or in other cultures. It is therefore not surprising that enforced social change at many different levels has brought disorder, disorientation, anger and resentment.

How do individuals and emerging African nations forge cultural identities which encompass the ambivalent processes of loss and bereavement and incorporate sufficient threads of continuity from their own past to survive the onslaught of American/European global culture?

Excess consumption by affluent countries is depleting the world's natural resources and contributing to environmental degradation, and the adverse effects of technology on human relationships are only now being fully recognised. Unfettered market forces and the power of global business corporations have been catastrophic for trade in much of Africa, and the ideology of materialism which translates all areas of life into commodities that can be bought and sold, is the major cause of depersonalisation and spiritual emptiness in the West (Moore, 1997). The questions then become, in addressing the onslaught of American/European cultural globalisation in African nations, will there be integration, synthesis or conflict in the process of adaptation? Can the mistakes of Western cultures - environmentally, socially and psychologically - be recognised and addressed and the necessary efforts made to avoid their replication in African countries? Can African countries maintain their own unique "genius" - their own ways of acting, thinking, communicating, without succumbing to the new colonialism of American/European cultural globalisation? Recovery from grief, at both personal and national levels, depends on restoring a sense that lost

attachments can still give meaning to the present, not on finding new substitutes. The purpose and feelings which past attachments and meanings expressed have to be somehow abstracted from past settings and reformulated. This transition must incorporate the past and continue its

- All human beings have a profound need to maintain consistency and to sustain familiar attachments and understandings which make life meaningful.
- Some socio-cultural changes, at both individual and societal levels, involve the irretrievable loss of important attachments, thus the processes of grief will occur.
- Too many changes in too short a time break down emotional resilience. In terms of the rapidity of social change and the onslaught of cultural globalisation upon African nations, it is imperative that the human need for continuity between past and present is recognised.
- It is essential to make clear what crucial purposes and attachments seem threatened by changes and then explore how these purposes can be retrieved and reformulated in different contexts in the future.
- What is familiar needs to be made to serve a purpose and attempts be made to rehabilitate familiar forms when possible before decisions are made as to what to destroy.
- The process of change must always expect and even encourage conflict. Whenever people are confronted with change they need the opportunity to react, to articulate their own ambivalent feelings and work out their own sense of it.
- Change requires time and patience because conflicts involve not just the accommodation of different interests but the establishment of an essential continuity in the structure of meaning.
- In conflict it is essential to respect the autonomy of different kinds of experience, to accept that individuals and groups will react to change differently, and accept the need of every group to find its own sense of continuity.
- It must be acknowledged that all individuals love particular places, people, language, rituals, kinds of work, and cannot readily substitute for them by any generalised calculation of well being.
- If adaptation to change inhibits and does not explicitly acknowledge the need for these enduring attachments, a satisfying meaning to life will not be achieved and there will be nagging doubt about identity.
- If people are not able, and are not helped, to react in articulate ways to the threats of disintegration of their own culture and identity, their

sense of loss will turn inward resulting in apathy, depression, cynicism guilt and violence.

- If changes are disruptive and frequent people lose confidence that their own lives have a meaningful continuity of purpose.
- If people cannot make sense of changes in terms of their own experience, they will become aimless or cynical even when changes may be intelligent and necessary.

These principles need to be placed within the context of an historical study of the contributions of the visionary leaders that Africa has produced in the past. Greater understanding of the qualities of African leaders of the past may help to identify what factors could be utilised in the present. In addition, incorporating psychological perspectives on loss and identity within African leadership initiatives could be facilitated in the following ways:

Individual mentoring

The individual examination of a leader's own experiences of psychological cultural conflict. This would include, in particular, reflecting on the culture of their own childhood, subsequent education and experience in other cultures, and identifying their own internal strategies for dealing with internal psychological conflict. Participants would develop increased confidence through this personal knowledge, be able to articulate and share their understandings with others, and further develop their own strategies for integrating the diverse aspects of their cultural backgrounds.

Participative workshops

Workshops would review the processes involved in individual internal cross cultural psychological conflict, but apply this to societal perspectives on their own tribe and nation. The psychological effects of cultural globalisation could be considered in terms of different social groups within their own societies. Participants would consider how the process of cultural globalisation might be contained, develop greater clarity regarding the disadvantages of Western global culture, and articulate more clearly what is to be treasured in African traditions.

Conclusion

The larger socio-cultural processes of change are directly reflected in individual experience, and individuals and leaders must confront and negotiate cultural transformations within themselves which used to be experienced in generational change. It is imperative to search for new ways

to interpret the past, provide a clear vision for the future and enable processes of change to be respectful and humane.

With the worldwide onslaught of American/European culture, threats to national and personal cultural identity have never been greater and ever increasing numbers of people within Africa will experience the internal psychological conflict of the “two worlds”. It seems essential that potential leaders in African countries examine such psychological perspectives, that facilitation is provided such that internal psychological processes can be examined and discussed openly, and that strategies for increased mental well being are developed. Through understanding their own experiences of cultural conflict, and becoming more articulate in describing this process, potential leaders would have increased self knowledge, leading to greater self confidence. This personal understanding would also ensure a greater sensitivity to others, and leaders would be more adept and personally equipped to actively facilitate change within their own countries.

1. Individual mentoring

Participants of the programme would have one to one sessions to examine their own experiences of psychological cultural conflict. This would include, in particular, examining the culture of their own childhood, subsequent education and experience in other cultures, and identifying their own internal strategies for dealing with internal psychological conflict. Participants would develop confidence through this personal knowledge and develop their own strategies for integrating the diverse aspects of their cultural backgrounds.

2. Participative workshops

Workshops for participants would review the processes involved in individual internal cross cultural psychological conflict, but consider this process from societal perspectives, using their knowledge of their own countries. The psychological effects of globalisation would be considered in terms of different groups within a society. Participants would consider how this process of cultural contamination might be contained, and ideas as to how confidence in, and commitment to, traditional beliefs and value systems can be sustained would be developed.