# Organizational Culture, Leadership Models and Leadership Development

Kehinde David Folarin

Doctoral Candidate at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia USA, for a Ph.D. in Strategic Leadership; Principal Consultant of Harold Global Consulting; Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Daystar Christian Centre, Lagos, Nigeria

**Abstract.** There is a complex relationship between organizational culture, leadership models or approaches, and leadership development. Effective organizational leaders prioritize leadership development. They create organizational cultures that aid leadership development, leverage appropriate leadership models.

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Leadership, Leadership Development, Culture, Survival and Identity

### Introduction

All highly successful organizations have something in common: they each have a distinctive, readily identifiable organizational culture that is easily identifiable by their internal and external stakeholders. The culture of an organization evolves over time, and more often than not, founders have great influence on the process as we have seen with Ford Motors, Microsoft and Apple Inc. Organizational culture is also developed deliberately by management teams who guide their organizations to success in systematic ways, such as General Electric. Culture has a powerful influence on the direction of an organization, and has the potential to supersede corporate strategy or technological advantages. Organizational leaders have great influence on the evolution of organizational culture.

Organizational leaders need to make leadership development a priority for the long-term survival of their organizations. They will have to be deliberate about the models of leadership they adopt, and such models of leadership should support the culture of leadership development. Sometimes, managers in charge of leadership development efforts are so embedded in their own cultures that those cultures are practically invisible to them. It is expedient to assess the culture of an organization before the commencement of leadership development efforts. Where necessary, there should be a renewal and or restructuring of the organization's business drivers to align with the strategies for leadership development.

Bal and Quinn (2001) assert that an organizational culture that encourages and recognizes new behaviours goes a long way toward building sustainable leadership capacity. Such a culture, once understood, can help organizational leaders to identify what may be hindering or enhancing leadership development efforts.

### Organizational Culture and Leadership Development

Organizational culture is the unique personality of an organization, shaped by its vision, collective belief and values. Schein (2010) defines culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 18). Organizations form habits as they respond to circumstances, and those habits practiced over time form the character of the organization. Hofstede (2010) defines culture as a collective phenomenon consisting of unwritten rules of the social game, the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group from others.

There are observable characteristics of organizational culture like knowledge of the vision, mission and core values of the organization, the prevalent management and leadership

styles, the structure of social interactions between management and employees on one hand and between employees on the other, and the interaction between the organization and its stakeholders. Culture gives the members of an organization a sense of identity. Culture impacts an organization's capacity to achieve its objectives on the long term. It determines whether an organization will be flexible enough to change to take advantage of new opportunities or not. Culture impacts on the success of an organization.

Managing corporate culture is one of the responsibilities of the leadership of an organization. Culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. Leaders have the opportunity to leverage intangible factors like the vision, mission, and core values of an organization to shape the sense of identity and behavior of an organization. Van Velsor et al. (2010) assert that leaders are "able to shape the identity of the organization to be inclusive of all and use this shared identity to sustain the commitment of a group to move in a coordinated direction" (p. 150). This is where leadership development intersects with organizational culture as social identity impacts on the development of all leaders.

Social identity can either unlock leadership potential when leadership development is integrated with it, or it can lock leadership potential and impede leadership development in a subtle way (Van Velsor et al., 2010).

The process of creating the social identity of a group begins with the leader's development of a sense of identity. Ruderman and Ernst (2010) assert that leaders must gain knowledge of their own social identities: their membership in certain social groups defined by categories such as gender, race and religion, and the implications of belonging to these groups (p. 14). So much that makes leaders effective revolves around accurate self-awareness. Self-aware leaders function as what Van Velsor, McCauley, and Ruderman identify as expert leaders. Expert leaders can actually look outside themselves to actively include people with different perceptions, experiences, and outlooks. Leaders must have the ability to engage a culture at deeper levels, to assess the functionality of assumptions made at those levels (Schein, 2010).

Christ modeled these leadership abilities perfectly. He demonstrated self-awareness through His "I AM" statements; "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). He understood the shared assumptions that undergirded existing culture, challenged them, and proposed a new set of beliefs and values. Ultimately, He built a very effective leader development and leadership development program. The results were evident in the testimony of the Jewish Council in Acts 4:13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

### Leadership Models and Leadership Development

Northouse (2013) has explored several approaches to leadership. There is the traits approach that deals with the character of a leader, the skills approach that focuses on what the leader can accomplish (competence), and the styles approach that emphasizes the leader's behavior. Other approaches include those of situational leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, psychodynamic leadership, and the path-goal and contingency theories.

It is good to explore the various leadership approaches within the context of organizational systems that enhance leader development. These systems enhance leader development through self-awareness, learning engines, values, managing conflicts, and building relationships and communication skills. Coaching and leading the organization through the development of management skills, intuitive skills and strategic thinking also enhance leader development. All these point towards the skills and traits approaches of

leadership which when embedded in organizational culture creates a system for the continuous development of leaders. When leaders develop other leaders, a virtuous cycle is created.

Van Velsor et al. (2010) propose a two-part model for building leader development systems. The first model is built on developmental experiences. Some experiences are developmental while others are not. Three elements that combine to make developmental experiences more powerful are Assessment, Challenge and Support (ACS). The second model is built on the development process, which involves developmental experiences and the individual's ability to learn. Developmental experiences can enhance an individual's ability to learn, while an individual with a high ability to learn would seek out and benefit from developmental experiences (Van Velsor et al., 2010). The development process however evolves within a context, which is determined by elements such as national culture, economic conditions, organizational purpose and mission, business strategy, age, gender mix, leader's level in the organization, social identity, and current challenges (Van Velsor et al., 2010, p. 5).

The leader development process, however, needs to evolve into the broader process of leadership development, which is the expansion of a group's capacity to produce direction, alignment and commitment (DAC). Van Velsor et al. (2010) submit that there is no empirical data to figure out how to sequence the leader development and leadership development processes. Individual development can precede organizational culture change, both can happen at the same time, and organizational culture change can influence individual development.

### Conclusion

Organizations seek to build cultures that enhance their long-term success. Effective leadership and leadership development is focussed on building such a culture. There are dimensions to an organization's culture that aid leadership development, and there are others that hinder leadership development. Organizational leaders need to assess the cultures of their organizations and to initiate the changes that may be required to enhance both leader development and leadership development.

Individual change and organizational culture change can happen in tandem, with the changes in one dimension reinforcing changes at the other.

Schein (2010) posits that organizational culture and leadership are intertwined. The leadership models and organizational cultures adopted are central to the understanding of how effective organizations work. There is a complex relationship between various approaches or models of leadership, organizational culture and leadership development.Ultimately, organizational leaders should design leadership development programs that enhance the expansion of the collective's capacity to produce direction, alignment and commitment (Van Velsor et al., 2010).

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**About the Author**

Kehinde Folarin is a Strategic Leadership Expert, Certified Management Consultant, Success Coach, Trainer, and Facilitator. He has worked with some of the most successful leaders to grow their business and organization exponentially by focusing on people and leadership development.

**His trade tools include people empowerment, dispensing leadership principles and institutionalizing personal development to fast-track individual goals and transform organizations.**

He is a doctoral Candidate at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia USA, for a Ph.D. in Strategic Leadership. He is the Principal Consultant of Harold Global Consulting. He is also the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Daystar Christian Centre, Lagos, Nigeria. He can be reached through Email: Kennyfolarind@gmail.com