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The organisational life cycle principles applied to leadership practices in growing churches

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Effective leadership plays a crucial role in the sustainability of any institution, including religious organisations such as the church. Although this assertion may be widely recognised, the difficulty lies in identifying the appropriate leadership to effectively guide the organisation. What instrument could be employed to aid in the identification of suitable leadership for newly established and expanding churches? The present article posits the utilisation of the organisation life cycle (OLC) theory tool, which is grounded in integrative models. The evaluation of an organisation's life span conception across various stages is conducted through the utilisation of the non-deterministic OLC framework. This article examines the correlation between OLC and leadership styles, with the objective of elucidating how OLC models can aid nascent expanding churches in identifying suitable leadership based on their growth stage.

Contribution: This article provides a contribution to ongoing discussions regarding conflict management within organisational contexts, including those within religious institutions such as the church. The obstacles encountered by religious institutions and their corresponding resolutions are intertwined with the principles of organisational management. Enhancing comprehension of the correlation between organisational leadership and management contributes to the advancement of our scholarly comprehension. This would aid nascent, expanding churches in identifying the appropriate leadership strategies necessary for their sustenance.

Keywords: organisational life cycle (OLC); church leadership and church growth; church growth and leadership; church establishment and leadership changes; leadership.

Introduction

Like other types of organisations, churches encounter various challenges, including conflicts between institutional structures and individual members. Church organisational matters are inherently linked to the concept of leadership. This observation not only establishes a clear correlation between an organisation and its management, but also underscores the indispensable function of an organisational leader, in addition to emphasising the significance of possessing an accurate conceptual comprehension of organisational leadership. The crucial function of an organisational leader involves the ability to conceptualise and comprehend the current state of the organisation, and subsequently, to effectively manage the situation in a way that ensures its longevity and sustainability into the future. The present article investigates the potential impact of organisational life cycle (OLC) theories when integrated with established leadership styles, in facilitating the identification of suitable leadership for newly established and expanding churches. The article exhibits a preference for the nondeterministic OLC framework methodology. The present discourse commences with an exposition of the OLC theory.

Understanding organisational life cycle theory

There are two main approaches to the study of organisational life cycle namely, the deterministic and the integrative.

The deterministic approach

According to Ford (2016:1), the study of OLC theory was pioneered by an economist Kenneth Boulding in 1950. It espoused the distinctly deterministic view using the organismic metaphor to communicate the point that growth is linear, sequential, deterministic and invariant (Grener 1972; Miller & Shamsie 2001; Quinn & Cameron 1983; Tichy 1980). An OLC theory is defined as:

A theoretical model based on the changes organisations experience as they grow and mature, which specifies the structure, strategy, style and the critical conditions for development and environment according to the phases of the past and experienced by an organization. (Ahmed 2013:450; Dodge, Fullerton & Robbins 1994; Hanks 1990; Miller & Shamsie 2001; Quinn & Cameron 1983; Tichy 1980)

Rahimia and Fallah (2015) posit that firms and businesses undergo a life cycle, during which they adopt various policies in each stage, as per the life-cycle theory. This theory suggests that businesses evolve and change their strategies over time. Stated differently, the phrase denotes the progression and maturation of enterprises in relation to their capacity for management and adaptability. According to Jirásek and Bílek (2018:2), the definition of life cycles is like that of biological organisms, which follow predictable patterns of growth and decline and are influenced by their inception and ultimate cessation.

Notwithstanding, deterministic OLC theory and models are subject to certain limitations, like its strong assumptions on linearity of firm growth and that it has variety of different models as noted by Ahmed (2013:450), Jirásek and Bílek (2018:15), Quinn and Cameron (1983), and Tichy (1980). The limitations inherent in the study of OLC theory have necessitated the development of a novel methodology known as the integrative approach.

The integrative approach

The employment of deterministic OLC theory models gained significant traction in the realm of organisational growth and development until the late 1990s (Czarnecki 2015:42). However, they were subjected to substantial criticism thereafter (Davidsson, Achtenhagen & Lucia 2005:2). According to Czarnecki (2015:45), the critique is deemed excessive and equivalent to the idiom of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. Subsequently, an adapted methodology has been suggested that incorporates the advantageous aspects of the initial deterministic OCL models while addressing their excessive criticism. The present approach posits that the theory of Organisational Life Cycle (OLC) is primarily a communal construal of the organisational milieu, predicated on the evaluation conducted by upper management (Kimberly & Miles 1980; Lester & Parnell 1999, 2002; Lodahl & Michell 1980).

According to Jirásek and Bílek (2018:15), the OLC theory provides a valuable perspective on the various stages of organisations, which can enhance other areas of literature. However, they suggest that it should not be viewed as a standalone analytical tool.

As stated by Miller and Friesen (1984:1177), it is argued that while there may not be a universal corporate life cycle, there are distinct life-cycle stages that exhibit significant and consistent differences from each other. According to Quinn and Camerons (1983:1), specific models hold significance in assessing the efficacy of organisations during specific life cycle stages, but not in all stages. Ford (2016) presents an integrative perspective in his statement:

> The common thread holding the diverse scholarly approaches together is the belief that organizations are a relevant variable in determining the performance of the public and nonprofit sectors. Hence, organizational life cycle theory has both explanatory and normative values to the field of public administration. (p. 1)

There are different phases that an organisation passes through called life stages. Hanks (1990:19) defines a life stage as 'a unique configuration of variables related to organisation context, strategy and structure'. Organisational progression from one stage to .another can be attributed to the presence of challenges that impede its optimal functioning and jeopardise its sustainability. Distinctive factors that impact the performance of an organisation during a given period are associated with each stage of life. To survive, 'appropriate strategies should be developed, and different policies adopted for dealing with a particular situation effectively to achieve controllability and flexibility of the organization' (Rahimia & Fallah 2015:51). According to Lester, Parnell and Carraher (2003) and Ford (2016), the stages of OLC can range from three to 10, but the most used cycles consist of four or five stages. These stages include the start-up phase, also referred to as the birth or planning phase, the expansion or growth phase, the maturity phase, the decline phase, and the death or renewal phase. Upon examining the concept of OLC theory, we may now contemplate its significance in relation to organisational operation and administration.

The importance of organisational life cycle theory

According to Austin-Roberson (2009:35), the contemporary global environment is characterised by a natural order of change, rather than stability. Therefore, it is imperative for organisations to incorporate both adaptability and constancy in their operations to foster both creativity and productivity. The OLC theory holds great significance as it offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the life cycle of an organisation and the various stages it may undergo. According to Lester et al. (2003:340), OLCs, which refer to a collection of organisational activities and structures, can serve as effective instruments in facilitating organisational change management. The recurrence of a pattern in the OLC renders events that occur during a specific phase of an organisation relatively foreseeable. The OLC theory can serve as a crucial tool for managers to comprehend the evolution of activities and structures as organisations expand and progress. Hanks (1990) emphasises the significance of OLC by stating:

> It could provide a road map, identifying critical organisational transition, as well as pitfalls the organisation should avoid as it grows in size and complexity … It could help management know when to 'let go' of cherished past strategies or practices that will only hinder future growth. (p. 1)

Additionally, there exist diverse approaches to exhibit the explanatory and normative efficacy of the OLC theory.

Greiner's (1997) model involves the utilisation of the various phases of the OLC as successive intervals for renewable 5-year agreements by an organisation. The organisation utilises each contract renewal period as a change point for its goals and systems, thereby interrupting one evolutionary period and initiating another. Another significant aspect of OLC is the establishment of legitimacy. Delmar and Shane (2004) argue that the OLC approach 'creates legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholders especially for new organisations as it overcomes the liability of newness problem associated with that early-stage organisational actions'.

Furthermore, OLC relieves donor-funded non-profit organisations of the burden of underestimating administrative costs, which could jeopardise the organisation's future (Ford 2011). According to Lecy and Searing (2015), this pressure is the result of donors' and managers' demand for minimal overhead costs in strategic planning to obtain funding. In addition, OLC is used in a cross-cutting manner. Organisational life cycle contextual factors, such as age, time, and competition, impact organisations in predictable ways (Aldrich & Martinez 2001; Hager, Galaskiewicz & Larson 2004). As a result, they can aid in the survival of small or large, profit-making, or non-profit organisations.

Based on the above-mentioned examples, it is crucial to comprehend and utilise the OLC expertise to acknowledge the significance of each phase and subsequently make informed decisions that are most suitable for that stage. In certain instances, an organisation's inability to adopt a proactive approach towards changes in its life cycle can lead to a state of crisis and eventual decline. Therefore, the theory of Organisational Learning and Change (OLC) can be considered advantageous in facilitating the achievement of organisational success to a certain extent. The determination of whether an organisation progresses to the subsequent stage of development or experiences failure could be facilitated. Thus, a correlation can be established between OLC and ecclesiastical activities.

Linking organisational life cycle theory to church life

The OLC theory processes elucidate a comparable comprehension of the OLC and its diverse features, which is also discernible in ecclesiological contexts. Just as the OLC theory is a conceptual framework that delineates the various phases an organisation undergoes in its evolution and expansion, this theoretical framework can be effectively implemented in the context of ecclesiastical affairs, enabling leaders to gain insight into the various phases of maturation and advancement that their congregation may undergo. The initial phase of church development is commonly referred to as the start-up stage, during which a nascent religious organisation is founded and commences the process of recruiting adherents. Subsequent to the initial phase, the church undergoes a period of expansion and consolidation, thereby solidifying its presence within the community. The

subsequent phase is characterised by maturity, wherein the church has attained its pinnacle and exhibits stability with regard to its membership and available resources. Ultimately, decline ensues when the church experiences a reduction in both its membership and available resources. Leaders can proactively anticipate challenges and opportunities that may emerge during each phase of their church's life cycle by comprehending these stages. One potential approach for church leaders is to formulate effective strategies that can facilitate sustained growth and prosperity of their congregation over time.

According to Mbewe's (2014:150–166) church planting discourse, a new church plant undergoes three primary phases prior to achieving independence or maturity. The three distinct phases identified in this context are as follows: (1) the paternalistic phase, (2) the shared leadership phase and (3) the final withdrawal phase. Mbewe (2014:66–72) pointed out that the prescribed method for planting churches or establishing church ministries was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ and imparted to his disciples. Mbewe (2014) elucidated that strict adherence to these phases can effectively eliminate the paternalistic mindset. While this mindset may have been suitable during the initial phase of church establishment, it should be eliminated as the church matures. Mbewe (2014:152) insightfully stated that it is imperative that pioneers and indigenous leaders are regarded as equal contributors when they reach maturity. Mbewe's proposition serves to emphasise the necessity of comprehending and exhibiting sensitivity towards the precise stage of an organisation's life cycle. In addition to the OLC theory studies, it is imperative to consider the appropriate leadership strategies necessary for the sustenance of an organisation.

Understanding leadership styles

White (2019:8) states that 'The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership'. Effective organisational functioning necessitates the presence of leaders. The crucial function of an organisational leader involves the ability to conceptualise and comprehend the current state of the organisation, and subsequently administer the situation in a manner that facilitates its sustainability and longevity into the future. The purpose of our discourse on organisational leadership is to examine various leadership styles that are commonly used. The objective is to demonstrate how OLC can aid in identifying the most suitable leadership style for an organisation, considering its current stage of development.

Leadership style is an 'art' to influence employees to work optimally in achieving the goals of the organisation (Ariussanto et al. 2020:5). Others define it as 'the pattern of behaviours displayed by leaders or interactions between leaders and subordinates during their work, with two obviously independent dimensions: task and interpersonal relationships' (Al-maaitah et al. 2021:774). Leadership style is useful in achieving organisational goals and in increasing

organisational effectiveness (Al-maaitah et al. 2021). Al-maaitah et al. (2021) stated the following:

> To strengthen organisational productivity, leaders' ability needs to be developed sustainably and systematically. Organisations that want to increase productivity need to find ways to develop leaders to adopt appropriate leadership styles. (p. 141)

Tewari, Gujarathi and Maduletty (2019:115) insist that 'there is no prescribed style for all organisations; rather, the leader should recognise the best style that suits a particular context'. For the purposes of this article, we shall focus only on five of these leadership styles: autocratic (authoritarian), paternalistic (father figure), democratic (participative), laissez fair (delegated), and bureaucratic (rule by book) (Nurani, Indrati & Tajib 2018:142).

Autocratic (authoritarian) style

According to Aghahowa (2021), this leadership approach is characterised by a significant degree of power and authority retention. The objective is to exercise stringent oversight over the employees to safeguard the regulations of the institution. It is anticipated that employees will comply with directives without engaging in critical analysis of the determinations rendered. The leadership approach in question has led to various outcomes, including a notable level of reliance on the leader among staff, decreased motivation, staff disengagement, reduced job satisfaction and a high rate of staff turnover (Aghahowa 2021:10). Notwithstanding the drawbacks, the autocratic leadership style can prove advantageous in circumstances that demand prompt and resolute decision-making. This approach may also be applicable in scenarios that necessitate comprehensive directives and guidelines, or in cases where a high degree of oversight is imperative, such as when inexperienced personnel who lack knowledge of the requisite tasks or procedures are involved (Murari 2011:32).

Democratic (participative) style

The participative leadership style, also referred to as democratic leadership, promotes the involvement of employees in the decision-making process with the aim of enhancing organisational policies. The organisation places significant emphasis on human personality, acknowledges and values worker involvement and input, and promotes and incentivises worker accomplishments (Aghahowa 2021:11; Dike & Madubueze 2019:131). The leadership approach in question is deemed advantageous in situations that involve non-standard or ambiguous tasks, where the interpersonal dynamics are non-hierarchical, and the employees' sense of autonomy is not externally imposed.

Paternalistic style

According to Pellegrini and Scandura (2008:568), paternalistic style is a leadership style in which 'a dominant, assertive figure operates as the father figure whom employees must trust, obey and be loyal to'. It combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity

(Dedahanov, Bozorov & Sung 2019:2). In response, staff express gratitude and feel obliged to give back in a similar manner (Dedahanov et al. 2019:3). It is a useful leadership style in communities where paternalistic leadership is appreciated.

Laissez-faire (free rein) style

A laissez-faire leadership style, also known as the 'hands-off' leader style does not exercise control over its employees directly. 'Laissez faire leaders rarely or never guide the team members and give the decisions for the team members' (Suong, Do & Truong 2019:274). The leader gives staff a great deal of freedom and supervision is often minimal. Workers themselves determine goals, make decisions, and resolve problems on their own. Thus, it often leads to unclear roles and a lack of motivation for staff (Murari 2011:32). However, Suong et al. (2019:274) believe that this leadership style is important and useful in contexts where staff are excellent in their fields of expertise such as specialists or consultants.

Bureaucratic leadership (rule by the book) style

The bureaucratic leadership style is characterised by a leader who adheres to structured procedures and mandates strict adherence to these procedures by subordinates. This style of leadership is characterised by a lack of flexibility in problem-solving approaches, as it requires adherence to established procedures and policies (Callahan 2017:3; Murari 2011:32). According to Spaeder (2021:28), the implementation of this approach can prove to be efficacious in establishments where standardised procedures are in place and employees are obligated to carry out repetitive tasks on a regular basis.

In the opinion of Khajeh (2018), Nagendra and Safia (2016), and Saleh, Mohammed and Ibrahim (2018), it is imperative for organisations to implement appropriate leadership styles to achieve success. It is acknowledged that certain stages of an OLC may not benefit from all types of leadership styles. As stated by Tewari et al. (2019:115), the utilisation of a suitable leadership approach is crucial in achieving successful implementation of plans aimed at fulfilling the long-term objectives of an organisation. Consequently, it is imperative for organisations to enhance their comprehension of the impact that various leadership styles exert on employees and the organisation as a cohesive entity (Aghahowa 2021:5; Ariussanto et al. 2020:7; Dike & Madubueze 2019:130). The preceding discourse prompts us to contemplate the potential utility of OLC methodologies in effective leadership, particularly in the context of ascertaining the appropriate leadership approach for an entity.

Relational leadership style

According to Uhl-Bien (2006:654), the concept of relational leadership is a recent addition to the field of leadership studies, and as such, its definition remains subject to varying interpretations. Two distinct perspectives on

leadership have been identified; an entity perspective that aims to identify the attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships, and a relational perspective that considers leadership as a process of social construction, whereby certain understandings of leadership are formed and given privileged ontology. The notion of behaviour that is oriented towards relationships has been present since the initial formal investigations of leadership in organisational settings, as documented by Stogdill and Coons (1957). However, the term 'relational leadership' is a relatively recent addition to the literature, as noted by Drath (2001) and Uhl-Bien (2005). The ambiguity surrounding its significance persists. Within the context of conventional management discourse, the term 'relational' denotes an individual's proclivity towards social interaction and their ability to flourish within interpersonal relationships (Lipman-Blumen 1996:165). According to Uhl-Bien's (2006) explanation, conventional leadership research investigates behavioural styles that are either relationship-oriented, characterised by being considerate and supportive, or leadership behaviours that concentrate on cultivating high-quality, trusting work relationships. The term 'relational' has been recently introduced in the discourse of leadership (Drath 2001). It refers to a perspective that views leadership and organisation as social constructs that arise from the complex interconnections and interdependencies among members and organisations (Drath 2001). In contrast to a conventional approach that regards relationships as independent and distinct entities of individuals, a 'relational' approach prioritises processes over individuals and perceives persons, leadership, and other relational phenomena as products of these processes.

Upon examination of diverse leadership styles, it is evident that each style holds significance in leading expanding churches at specific junctures. For example, in the case of a recently established church, it may be necessary to implement autocratic leadership styles to a greater extent than democratic ones. The rationale behind this assertion is that the implementation of a democratic leadership style during the early phases of establishing a church may lead to a misalignment of the leader's vision if appropriate oversight is not exercised.

How organisational life cycle approaches help good leadership

Once the precise phase of an organisation is determined, stakeholders can readily implement suitable leadership styles, policies, and control measures that align with the corresponding life cycle stage (Rahimia & Fallah 2015:51). The selection of a suitable leader is contingent upon the specific requirements of the organisation at a given moment, necessitating the identification of distinct leadership competencies. The subsequent list enumerates several competencies related to leadership.

One notable leadership skill is that of enabling others to achieve their goals. A leader's ability as an enabler comes from

concepts presented by Elkington et al. (2015) and Pearse (2011) of 'enabling function' and 'balanced patterns of interactions' respectively. Elkington's model of the 'enabling function' conceptualises the church as a system that operates like an organism, where the proper functioning of its parts is essential for its overall performance. His (Elkington et al. 2015) focus on the OLC concept is centred on the notion of mutual benefit, where a reciprocal relationship exists between the constituent parts of the system, ensuring its continued operation over time. It is in this context of organismic functioning that the leadership role must support the system's wide self-maintenance and growth or inhibit its self-maintenance and growth. Therefore, in this context, the right leadership style to be picked is one that would be able to play the enabling role of ensuring that the relational functioning occurring between the different parts of the organisation is self-maintaining (Elkington et al. 2015:7). The concept being discussed aligns with Pearse's (2011) proposition of the 'situational-adaptation leadership' framework. This model entails the observation of equitable and consistent patterns of communication between leaders and their subordinates over a specific duration. According to the author, his OLC concept places great importance on ensuring that equilibrium is preserved among the three effective patterns (namely, the freewheeler, the focused-pioneer, and the reflexive-accommodator) during any church-related transitions (Pearse 2011:3). The rationale behind preserving this equilibrium is to safeguard the organisation's 'sense of community', which constitutes the fundamental enterprise that unites it. Another leadership ability is that of being sufficiently equipped.

Another crucial aspect of effective leadership is the possession of comprehensive qualifications and adequate preparation. For a leader to be considered an enabler, it is imperative that they possess a comprehensive set of skills and resources. Nkonge (2011) has argued that it is one thing to have leaders, but it is another to have qualified leaders. He (Nkonge 2011:166) maintains that if a church is committed to growth and change, it must think seriously about its leadership and how this leadership can be improved. White (2019:5), who has written the church's centenary history of Ghana's largest Pentecostal church, the Christ Apostolic Church International (CACI), laments that the lack of thoroughly equipped leaders in CACI has been one major cause of the problems the church has experienced over the 10 decades of its existence. The lack of sound theological knowledge in turn led to doctrinal and leadership challenges as well as the inability of the church leaders to handle differences and conflicts (White 2019:7). These sentiments of a leader's ability to be well qualified for the task are expressed by Elkington et al. (2015) who also comment:

> It would seem that, more than ever before, not only should people in vocational ministry be theologically adept, they also need to have incredible leadership capacity to navigate the complexity of a globalised world. (p. 3)

Leaders who are adequately equipped will possess a comprehensive comprehension of their organisation and the

appropriate leadership approach that can optimally cater to its interests.

An additional leadership skill pertains to the capacity to possess a visionary outlook. Organisations often experience life cycles, necessitating the need for visionary leaders possessing creative aptitudes to effectively navigate prevailing challenges. In line with the literature, visionary leaders facilitate an organisation's successful transition through three stages of change management, namely, adjustment to change, management of change, and implementation of change (2015:3). A study by Lacerda (2019:191) shows that the implementation of visionary leadership style has the capacity to facilitate the development of a corporate culture that fosters trust and teamwork within an organisation. Additionally, this leadership approach has the potential to mitigate the negative impact of uncertainty on employees, thereby reducing feelings of insecurity.

The capacity to solve problems is closely associated with the ability to lead with vision, particularly in times of crisis. Organisations encounter challenging business environments and must persevere to remain viable. Lacerda (2019) has demonstrated the significance of problem-solving skills through an illustration of the leaders of Portuguese enterprises who successfully protected their companies from the adverse effects of the economic downturns that impacted global economies, particularly Europe and the United States, in 2008. The leaders of organisations can act as 'blocking agents' to alleviate negative social impacts. This is achieved by identifying major social elements within the organisation that typically have negative effects on both the organisation and its members, and then implementing barriers to serve as 'shock absorbers' (2019:192). According to the authors, they were able to address three primary social factors within the organisation, namely, distrust, uncertainty and negative emotions among individuals (2019:190).

Being relational or a people person is yet another leadership ability. In business management, there is a huge gap that exists between leaders and workers, with the leaders' focus being more on achieving the objectives of an organisation than on workers' personal needs and their welfare (Huizing 2011:62; Kheng 2015:3; Magezi 2015:6; Mahan 2012:72; Odeneye, Hoon & Phlypo 2018:62). In the church, relations are understood not just as mere social interactions (as is the case with management theories) but intimate loving relations where a leader has holistic interest in the person. Thus, ecclesiological organisation theories put more emphasis on mutual love relations between leaders and their followers (Magezi 2015:6; Mbewe 2014:169–170; Pearse 2011:6; Resane 2014:6) than business organisation theories. The degree of implementing good relations is higher in ecclesiological than in management settings. Despite the differing degrees, both the management and ecclesiological theories bring out the importance of relational leadership. Having good relations with subjects unlocks many channels to smooth leadership

which otherwise would be littered with obstacles. There are many advantages to relational leadership ability.

Firstly, it facilitates the appropriate utilisation of power. The concept of health relations serves to govern the exercise of power or control by individuals in positions of leadership. According to Mbewe (2014:21), relational leadership fosters a culture of reciprocal esteem and deference between the leaders and their followers. The concept of 'servant leadership' as proposed by Magezi (2015) emphasises the infusion of servanthood into authority, with a core characteristic that extends beyond self-interest. The author proposes a leadership model that is relational in nature, drawing inspiration from the servant leadership model of Jesus as Servant King. This model portrays a paradoxical blend of a king with power, yet vulnerable and serving (2015:6, 7). The perspective of leadership authority described here fosters a collaborative atmosphere that bolsters notions of inclusivity and parity, ultimately cultivating a shared sense of ownership, obligation, and liability among all stakeholders. In addition, health-related initiatives offer the benefit of fostering social cohesion among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Secondly, it promotes diversity within unity. The workforce of organisations is comprised of individuals from diverse origins. In such circumstances, there is a high probability that disorder, pandemonium and discord will erupt, resulting in organisational disruption and discord. This was the concern of Gatut and Tribhuana (2013:28) when they wrote about the 'unifier spirit' transformational leadership model. They desired to identify a pattern that unifies discord among individuals and groups within an organisation. The objective was to manage diversity in organisations in an equitable manner by preventing disruption and disunity attributable to differing opinions and perspectives among employees. Consequently, they advocated for 'unity in diversity' (Gatut & Tribhuana 2013:26). Although it is challenging to manage diversity and establish unity in a diverse organisation, it is possible to do so through the influence of relational leadership. Relational leadership can eliminate individual differences and unite groups for the organisation's common objective. When there is unity among employees, performance and output are enhanced. Relational leadership also encourages leaders' integrity and accountability.

Thirdly, it also promotes honesty and accountability. Leaders must consider how their employees perceive them. To avoid ineffective responses, leaders must be excellent role models for their subordinates to foster rapport. In doing so, they earn their integrity. Without credibility, a leader's ability to continue any initiative is compromised (Pearse 2011:6). One method for leaders to earn their integrity is through accountability, which makes them vulnerable to their followers through good relations. Integrity in leaders is advantageous because it enhances leadership credibility, a crucial element in fostering a climate of trust and confidence within the group. Odeneye

et al. (2018:62) found that team members who perceived their team leader to have high integrity were less likely to engage in unethical behaviour that negatively affected the team and the organisation. Consequently, detachment of leaders from their subjects has far-reaching effects on the socioeconomic aspects of an organisation, as evidenced by the 2008 global economic recession (Odeneye et al. 2018). Similarly, the ongoing corruption scandals in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate the same trend. The absence of moral-ethics and accountability in public leadership administration, which readily trickle down and influence the behaviour of public employees, corrupts the entire system (Yeboah-Assamah et al. 2016:326). Therefore, excellent relations between leaders and followers are the foundation of moral and ethical leadership that leads to the promotion of integrity and accountability. In addition, relational leadership is essential for fostering effective communication between leaders and followers.

Fourthly, it promotes good communication. At the heart of leadership is communication. This comes out clearly by Stanford (2015) in his leadership language (LL) model. It emphasises effective communication between the leader and the follower. From his studies in the books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Stanford observed Paul as a leader to Timothy. By the manner of usage of language through their interaction verbally, he noticed that there was a consistent LL in him (Stanford 2015:3). This made him conclude that effective leadership is about effective communication and for effective communication to happen the leader must be careful in the selection and use of the language. But selection of words will depend on the degree of the relationship that exists between the leader and the follower. The healthier the relations, the better the language of communication. 'Leaders lead through communication of concepts and ideas with the goal of influencing and persuading followers to receive, accept, and implement such designs' (Stanford 2015:4). Therefore, language may determine the leader's effectiveness and believability in the process of leading. This largely depends on how good the existing relations are. Another aspect worth noting regarding relational leadership is that it helps to protect the sense of community, which is a common factor that binds the leader and the worker in an organisation.

Fifthly, it protects the sense of community. Relational leadership has the potential of preserving the common interest of the leader and the worker, which is, the organisation's core business responsible for its existence. Pearse (2011:3) calls 'the sense of community' the core characteristic that holds the organisation together. The organisation's continuity is of importance and benefit to both the leader and the worker in many ways; therefore, both have the interest to protect it from collapse. This common interest in the company is a good basis for building healthy relations between leaders and workers. In addition, good relations between leaders and their subjects help reduce resistance to change and leadership.

Lastly, it reduces resistance to change and leadership. Credibility in leadership is an important ingredient to building a climate of trust, confidence, and a culture of teamwork within the group (Hao & Yazdanifard 2015:2, 3), for in turn, it helps to reduce resistance to change and to leadership from the subjects. According to Pearse (2011), leaders who had closer relationships developed relational influence with people. As intimacy and genuineness in relations are promoted at several levels within the organisation, it has the effect of increasing the depth of a sense of community. As such, even in times of change, this connectedness helps to reduce resistance to change and to leadership (2011:4). But what does secular leadership have in common with church leadership?

Linking organisational life cycles and leadership styles to church leadership and growth

According to Eklou (2021:2), the dual nature of ecclesiological leadership as both a spiritual and physical entity results in significant differences from secular management leadership. For example, a noteworthy contrast between secular leadership and ecclesiastical leadership is the expectation that pastors emulate the character of Christ, thereby assuming the role of Christlike leaders. The perspective of leadership espoused by Jesus is notably distinct from the commonly accepted beliefs of the secular realm. The distinctiveness of the church can be attributed to various factors, including but not limited to its unique origin, message, purpose, ethic, reliance and mission. This view is supported by scholars such as Mahan (2012), Magezi (2015), Huizing (2011), Kheng (2015), Odeneye et al. (2018), and Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015). As evidenced within the discourse surrounding OLC theory and leadership styles, there exists a significant degree of convergence between secular management and ecclesiological leadership. The comprehension of the church as an organisation in a physical sense is a point of convergence between the leadership of the church and that of secular management. The church, akin to any other organisation, necessitates an efficient leadership structure to ensure optimal utilisation of resources and management practices for its success and growth, as evidenced by scholarly works (Awuku-Gyambo & Asare 2019:99; Chatira & Mwenje 2018:103; Oosthuizen & Lategan 2015:554). The overlapping leadership traits have the potential to yield benefits for the church in the subsequent ways.

Firstly, in church transformation management, Pearse (2011), whose research is predicated on the notion that change is inevitable for organisations, recognised the need to manage potential change in the church context. His 'situation-adaptation' methodology employs three effective patterns: (1) *the freewheeler*, (2) *the focused-pioneer* and (3) *the reflexive-accommodator*. The *freewheeler* approach stipulates that organisational modifications may be implemented as necessary to align with the intended state, particularly if there are significant areas that require adjustment.

The *focused-pioneer* pattern of leadership involves the dual task of guiding the organisation towards a new direction while simultaneously addressing the concerns of its members. According to Pearse (2011:3), the *reflexive-accommodator* pattern is employed when the focused-pioneer pattern results in significant levels of organisational inertia. The reflexive accommodating pattern is then utilised to mitigate these concerns and restore balance among members. The system is intended to measure observable patterns of balanced interactions between leaders and their adherents over time. Whenever a change is observed in any of the three patterns, 'situation adaptation' must be used to fix the afflicted pattern (Pearse 2011:3). The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that balance is maintained whenever there is a change in the church. The contribution of this method to the church is that it helps 'preserve the sense of community and healthy relationships of the church' along its growth path and change circle, even though the system is highly technical and may not be user-friendly for some church members (ibid).

Secondly, in situations involving church planting, eliminate paternalistic tendencies. Mbewe's (2014:150–166) research to discover a solution to the reoccurring problem of the weaning process is an OLC approach. Before a new church establishment becomes independent (reaches maturity), he identifies three major phases: (1) the paternalistic phase, (2) the shared leadership phase and (3) the final withdrawal phase (Mbewe 2014:66–72). Each of these phases, he opined, must be strictly observed if paternalistic mentality, which is acceptable at the beginning stage but wholly undesirable when the church has reached maturity, is to be avoided. At the stage of maturation, pioneers and indigenous leaders must be treated as equal workers (Mbewe 2014:152). He (Mbewe 2014) attributes the difficulties associated with the weaning process in church planting to the pioneers' insistence on maintaining a paternalistic mindset even after the church plant has reached maturity. This typically provokes a response from indigenous leaders who feel marginalised. As a solution, Mbewe (2014:154) proposes that the key to achieving this equal status is mutual respect and admiration, which must be fostered and permeate the relationship from the beginning to the end of the church-planting phases. Mbewe's (2014) hypothesis emphasises the OLC concept of the need to comprehend and be sensitive to the exact phase of an organisation's life cycle to intervene appropriately for the survival of the organisation.

Thirdly, in developing robust leadership capabilities. Through managerial principles and skills, the church can benefit significantly from OLC strategies, even in the area of training and personnel development. 'The lack of fundamental management principles and skills negatively impacts the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness in pursuit of its mission and purpose' (Oosthuizen & Lategan 2015:566). Both Nkonge (2011:166) and White (2019:5) provide examples of how menial labour has negatively impacted the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) and Ghana's largest Pentecostal church, CACI, respectively. To accomplish its mission, the church requires qualified personnel who can effectively equip it. Elkington et al. (2015) describe the significance of efficiently cultivating human resources for the church:

> It would seem that, more than ever before, not only should people in vocational ministry be theologically adept, they also need to have incredible leadership capacity to navigate the complexity of a globalised world … If weak leadership is offered and substandard approaches adopted, the follow-on impact can lead to disaster and disillusionment. (p. 4)

As essential as theology is in vocational ministry, it cannot thrive in the absence of effective leadership, as demonstrated by Elkington et al.'s statement (2015). In order for churches to have an impact in society, sound theology and effective leadership go hand in hand.

Conclusion

The impact of an organisation's leadership on its success or failure has been widely acknowledged. Comprehending the fundamental tenets and advantages of organisational design, such as the OLC framework and prevalent leadership styles and competencies, is crucial in ascertaining an efficacious leadership approach for an institution, including ecclesiastical entities. Hence, it is imperative to adopt a proactive approach that involves the continual pursuit of integrative OLC strategies to revitalise an organisation's operations. Additionally, it is crucial to determine suitable leadership styles for various stages of the organisation. Failure to adhere to the OLC theory and incorrect utilisation of leadership style for a specific OLC phase can hinder the effective execution of the corresponding strategy of an organisation, such as a church, particularly those that are newly established and experiencing growth.

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