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A Domain-Based and Integrated Conceptual Framework for Effective Project Leadership

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Abstract: *This paper argues that the project environment is unique and therefore the understanding of project leadership should be approached from that point of view. It also argues that the project leadership theories that have been developed have not explained project leadership in an integrative manner. By analysing definitions, theories and studies conducted in leadership or project leadership coupled with a reflection of experiences of the author having been a project leader or a project team member, the paper proposes an integrated framework made of four project leadership domains. For an effective project leadership process to take place, the project leader requires self-leadership in order to exercise leadership of project stakeholders, leadership of project tasks and leadership of the project situation. The framework deviates from the normal premise of viewing project leadership as a process directed only influencing at project team or stakeholders. Moreover, certain capabilities are needed to 'master' each domain in order to achieve effective project leadership. The paper proposes testing the model as a recommendation for further research.*

Keywords: *Project leadership, leadership, project manager, project leader, project management*

1. Introduction

In modern times, projects are used as focused organisational work structures for achieving corporate goals (Pinto, 2013). However, this happens only if projects are delivered successfully. Project leadership has been identified as one of the critical factors for achieving project management success (Gray and Larson, 2011). This premise has made project leadership the subject of intensive research for over a decade (Clarke, 2012). A number of theories have been developed (or adapted from general management) by project management scholars to determine what capabilities are required for an effective project leader (see reviews by e.g. Turner and Muller, 2005; Toor- and Ofori, 2008a; Clarke, 2012; Walker and Walker, 2011; Hiller et al., 2011). The research has enriched our understanding especially in two areas. First, the increased likelihood that an effective project leader will achieve project management success (Nixon, Harrington, and Parker, 2012; Anantaltmula, 2010), as measured by the 'iron triangle' (Cooke-Davies, 2002). Second, that project leaders are not born but can be trained and developed to be effective (Toor and Ofori, 2008a; Muller and Turner, 2010a, b).

Despite the development of a myriad of project leadership frameworks, a holistic understanding of project leadership is still illusive. Project leadership is often depicted in a disjointed manner without providing linkages among its constituent constructs. Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy (2000) noted that theories discuss leadership from different angles, for example, the nature of who leads (i.e. characteristics or personality of leaders), how they lead (i.e. leadership behaviour or style), and under what circumstances they lead (i.e. situation or context). Clarke (2012)'s specific review of project leadership literature noted three major streams of research namely leadership style; leadership behaviours and roles; and leadership traits (competencies, characteristics and personality). This trend may be referred to as the '*single spanner syndrome*' where a person on the ground, passes on one spanner at a time, instead of the entire tool box, to another fixing a roof of a house. Sydänmaanlakka (2003) added that today there are a lot of theories which try to describe leadership from different points of view only to make the [project] leader's life more confusing rather than being helpful.

This article joins others (e.g. Fernandez, 2005; Ismail et al., 2011) in arguing that literature lacks an integrative framework which practioners can apply to increase their project leadership effectiveness. Its purpose therefore, is to discuss a proposed integrated project leadership framework. The next section describes the approach used to develop the framework while the third section discusses the justification for having the specific project leadership domains in the model. The discussion goes further by describing strategies and capabilities required to master the identified domains. The last section provides the implication of the framework particularly for effective project leadership and how it can be improved through further research.

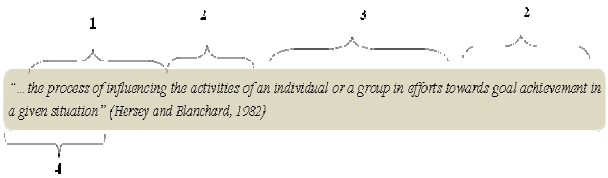
2. Methodology

Being a conceptual study the approach was based on an extensive search and critical review of literature. However, the framework of Bennett, Dunne and Carre (2000) provided useful insights to the study. The framework addresses the question of graduate employability and has been cited widely in various scholarly articles (e.g. Google Scholar recorded 420 citations). The framework consists of four domains of graduate employability viewed as necessary for obtaining meaningful and sustained employment. They include managing oneself, managing others, managing information, and managing tasks. Bennett et al. (2000) noted that employable graduates must possess all four domains. Employable graduates must manage tasks based on the information which is directly or indirectly related to the tasks. Simultaneously, they must manage themselves, as well as others in the organisation. Conceptually, the framework defined a domain as a group of graduate attributes with related outcomes, for example, managing task domain will include attributes such as meeting deadlines; and creating viable solutions for solving problems (Katz, 1993).

With Bennett et al. (2000)'s framework in mind two research questions were posed to guide the study with the first being: Could project leadership be organized based on some form of domains (RQ_1)? A systems theory approach (Ashy, 1956) was also applied in defining 'domain' in the sense that project leadership was viewed as made up of interrelated and interacting parts (domains) linked together to produce an outcome (effective project leadership) amidst a dynamic project environment. This would mean that domains are broad 'elements' that make up the scope of effective project leadership. The second question was: How can these domains be mastered by project leaders in order to be effective project leaders (RQ_2)? As explained later project leaders need to identify appropriate strategies and deploy their capabilities to master identified domains. Strategies are defined as broad capabilities designed to collectively master a project leadership domain.

The two research questions guided the search through definitions, theories/models/frameworks and results from leadership/project leadership studies. This was further guided by a search for the terms "leadership', 'management', 'project leadership' and 'project management'. Scholarly work included books (e.g. Yukl, 1989; Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Northouse, 2012); articles in peer reviewed journals found in on-line databases such as Emerald, Science Direct and Ebscohost; and references of articles found in reviews such as those by Bolden et al. (2003), Turner and Muller (2005), Toor and Ofori (2008a,b), Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; Walker and Walker (2011), Hiller et al. (2011) and Clarke (2012). The terms 'management' and 'project management' were included in the search because they are often closely linked with leadership and project leadership, respectively. Where appropriate, effort was made to change the wording used in general leadership discourse to fit the project management nomenclature, for example, 'followers' was interpreted to mean either 'project stakeholders' or 'project team'. The content analysis technique which allows the identification and organisation of emerging themes in text (Bryman and Bell, 2003) was used in identifying project leadership domains, strategies and capabilities.

The search for articles and compilations of definitions by various authors (e.g. Rost, 1993; Barker, 2002; University of Warwick, n.d; Sydänmaanlakka, 2003; Northhouse, 2012; Adeoye, 2009; Winston and Patterson, 2006) yielded a total of 55 definitions. In addition, a total of 65 leadership/project leadership models/frameworks were identified from articles and scholarly reviews (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; Clarke, 2012). Figure 1 shows an example of how the analysis of a definition to identify project leadership domains was conducted.



1: Nature of project leadership is a process of influencing;
2: Activities and goal achievement –- project tasks and success;
3: Individual and group- project team/stakeholders;
4: Given situation – project situation

Figure 2. Definition of project leadership

The analysis indicated that in most definitions (83%) and models (70%) [project] leadership was referred to as a process of influencing (though in some definitions and models, for example, it was referred to as a process of exchange). Table 1 shows results of an analysis to identify project leadership domains. Four domains emerged namely leadership of project stakeholders and leadership of project tasks which were mentioned in all (100%) definitions and models; leadership of project situation was mentioned in 64% and 71% of the definitions and models, respectively; and self-leadership was least mentioned i.e. in 53% and 63% of the definitions and models, respectively.

A comparison with Bennett et al. (2000) model indicated that three of the domains were similar namely self-leadership ('management of self'), leadership of project stakeholders ('management of others') and leadership of project tasks ('management of tasks'). However, leadership of project situation was introduced in the proposed project leadership framework as a number of models supported its inclusion (e.g. the situational and contingent theory cluster) and also happens to reflect the unique, dynamic and situational nature of the project environment.

Table 1. Result of an analysis of literature to identify project leadership domains

Project leadership Domains	Definitions (N =55)		Models (N=65)	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
1: Self-leadership domain	27	53%	33	63%
2: Leadership of project stakeholders (influencing followers)	55	100%	65	100%
3: Leadership of project tasks (achievement of goal/task)	55	100%	65	100%
4: Leadership of project situation (in a given situation)	35	64%	46	71%

'Management of information' was dropped because it was believed that it is subsumed in the leadership of project tasks domain since tasks are driven by project information. Also, 'task' was preferred to 'goal' because from a project management's point of view, tasks lead to the achievement of a project goal and it is within the execution of project tasks that project leadership manifests. However, it is fully acknowledged that the ultimate outcome of effective leadership should be the achievement of a project goal.

As a last point regarding the analysis and the subsequent discussion of the domains, the author could not withhold reflecting on past personal experiences of project leadership as a project team member, a project leader and a trainer of project leaders. Such experiences became useful in corroborating the theoretical propositions from literature in constructing the proposed model and in providing practical examples.

3. Project Leadership Domains and Strategies

This section discusses the four identified project leadership domains (self-leadership, leadership of project tasks, leadership of others and leadership of situation), strategies and the associated capabilities identified in literature. The order in which they are discussed has no consequence to effective project leadership because in practice the strategies are deployed concurrently.

3.1 Self-leadership Domain

The self-leadership domain was identified in a number of leadership models including ancient leadership approaches (e.g. see Sydänmaanlakka, 2003; Muller and Turner, 2005b); trait approaches (see e.g. Parry and Bryman, 2006; Northhouse, 2012), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998); the exemplary leadership model (Kouzes and Posner, 2003), leadership pipeline model (Drotter and Charan, 2001), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1996), superleadership (Manz and Sims, 1991; Manz and Neck, 2004), authentic leadership model (George, 2003) and the 6-L model (Tirmizi, 2002).

The inclusion of the domain of self-leadership in the proposed project leadership framework emphasises that 'what project leaders are (e.g. think, act and behave)' affects 'how they are perceived' by project stakeholders. In turn this affects 'extent to which they influence project stakeholders' and hence 'what they are able to achieve'. The nature or persona of the project leaders impacts on their behavioural profile, an important aspect for effective project leadership (Toor and Ofori, 2008b). It is argued therefore, that to focus on 'what project leaders do [influence] with project stakeholders' without looking at their nature is to tell a half-story of project leadership. It gives the impression that the nature of a project leader is inconsequential in understanding project leadership, which is a fallacy.

This idea is supported by Kippenberger (2002) who noted that leadership is a reflection of the character, personality and experience of the leader. The perception of project stakeholders towards the project leader affects their relationship and hence the project leadership process. Manz and Sims (1991:23) succinctly noted that 'it is important for leaders to first learn how to lead themselves before they lead others'. Drotter and Charan (2001) also noted that potential leaders must learn to 'manage' themselves as this prepares them to effectively deal with [project] work and human relationships.

Self-leadership can be achieved through the development of appropriate strategies and deployment of capabilities based on the individual's persona as characterised by their cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual and social (CEPSS) elements (Goleman, 1998, Sydänmaanlakka, 2003; Kouzes and Posner, 2003; Muller and Turner, 2005b; D'intino, Goldsby, and Houghton, 2007). The cognitive element refers to the individual's thinking, reflective and learning pattern which drives and affects (positively or negatively) personal actions and decisions. The emotional element relates to the ability to identify, understand, use, and manage emotions in such a way as to relieve stress, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict (Segal and Melinda, 2012). The spiritual element relates to the values, meanings, beliefs and personal objectives of an individual while the physical element relates to the physiological aspects of an individual (e.g. health and eating, sleeping, exercising and resting habits). The social element refers to a catalogue of environmental factors which affect the well-being of an individual (e.g. housing, financial and human relationships).

Sydänmaanlakka (2003) noted that a leader will be impacted positively when there is balance in the total well-being as judged by these elements (CEPSS) because they provide the individual with the mental and emotional stability to act and behave in an appropriate

manner. For example, illness, distress in marriage or financial problems, can be some of the destabilising factors in an individual's life which may have a huge knock on effect on project leadership.

Some scholars have included spirituality in the self-leadership domain, for example, Fry (2003) noted that the ultimate effect of leadership is to bring together four fundamental forces of human existence namely body, mind, heart, and spirit. This provides the motivation for high performance and personal experience of joy and tranquillity which will flow to project leadership.

From the work of various scholars (e.g. Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1973; Manz and Sims, 1991; Goleman, 1998; Drotter and Charan, 2001) three interrelated strategies were identified as being critical to achieving self-leadership. They include self-awareness, self-management and self-concept.

3.1.1 Self-awareness strategy

Through self-awareness individuals are able to recognise a deviation in any , or combination of all of the CEPSS elements and their impact on the total well-being. The deviation may affect, for example, the individual's thinking pattern, decisions, actions and behaviour which in turn has an impact on the self-leadership domain. To deal with the deviation especially if it is adverse, individuals must have the ability to read or seek information on CEPSS elements through what Manz and Sims (1991) called self-observation. Feedback from the project team, directly or indirectly is part of self-observation.

3.1.2 Self-management strategy

Self-management, regulation or control is a natural follow up of the self-awareness. Goleman (1998) noted that self-management deals with managing the thinking and emotions such that they do not adversely affect judgement, actions and relationships with others. However, self-management goes beyond thinking and emotions and includes the ability of an individual to control of CEPSS elements in order to adapt to the changing circumstances. One of the self-management capabilities is self-assessment which is the determination of own propensity to change observed deviation in personal elements (Manz and Sims, 1991). Self-assessment must be optimal, i.e. neither too pessimistic nor too optimistic, but a reflection on the personal strength and weakness. Other self-management capabilities geared at managing observed deviations in the CEPSS elements include being able to:

i) motivate oneself to achieve set targets in terms of time and extent;

ii) identify and seize opportunities that initiate personal changes;

iii) develop confidence in oneself to sustain a sense of self-worth;

iv) adapt to changing situations to cope with stressful and uncertain project situations (i.e. being patience and resilience);

v) organise and prioritise personal affairs to create time to meet project milestones; and

vi) constantly reflect and learn from past experiences to improve the self-image.

3.1.3 Self-concept strategy

By developing a self-concept capability project leaders should strive to preserve and sustain their true image. The premise of the self-concept is that no individual is born with an undesirable behaviour, it is shaped by the environment and hence it can be changed. Literature review (e.g. Brown and Trevino, 2006; George at al., 2007; Brown and Trevino, 2006; Walker and Walker, 2011) identified several capabilities for achieving the self-concept strategy, including self-respect, integrity, accountability and servitude. Self-respect requires being true to themselves by not faking their image and hence upholding their values and principles; and practicing what they preach by setting a good example both in action and behaviour (Kouzes and Posner, 2003). Closely related, is the ability to uphold integrity by sustaining an ethical, honest, fair and transparent personal profile (Walker and Walker, 2011). In addition, individuals must be accountable for their decisions and actions. Lastly, servitude requires being able to avail oneself to the service of project stakeholders and sharing with them decision making processes (Greenleaf, 1996).

The theory of authentic leadership reinforces the self-concept strategy. According to the theory (see e.g. Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005) authentic leaders as those who are deeply aware; of how they think and behave; of their own values, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate. In addition they are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and are of high moral character. Two real life project scenarios can put some aspects of the self-leadership domain in context. In one project scenario 'a project manager often came late to meetings and each time gave all sorts of excuses for being late. It became unbearable for the project team members who and started being agitated about time they spend waiting for the meeting to start'. The reaction of the project team provided a cue about the undesired behaviour (self-observation). The project leader targeted to change (through self-assessment) the behaviour of late-coming which was most likely emanating from lack of organising and prioritising activities to create time to meet project meetings. In another incident 'a project team member uttered something which the project leader interpreted ('thought') as a statement meant to undermine his authority. The project leader lost his temper ('emotion') and this resulted in a nasty incident'. Loss of temper was a result of loss of control of emotions which in turn blurred the thinking of the project manager leading to

the adverse behaviour. The scenario indicates that a habitual loss of temper must be targeted by project leader for change to avert its disruptive potential.

3.2 Leadership of Project Tasks

The inclusion of the leadership of project tasks domain deviates from the commonly held view of project leadership which is about 'influencing stakeholders'. Literature (e.g. Kerzner, 2013; Meridith and Mantel, 2011) indicates that project leadership actually manifests through the execution of project tasks. Project leaders are held accountable for the smooth and efficient execution of tasks by project stakeholders, even if they delegate the responsibility (Meridith and Mantel, 2011). The project team members, for example, look up to the project leader to guide them in identifying, resourcing, assigning, coordinating and controlling project tasks. Comments such as *'... he is a weak leader who cannot even marshal adequate resources for the projec*t' have been heard from frustrated project teams starved of resources. It would then appear that the legitimacy and credibility of project leaders is sustained only if the project stakeholders perceive project leaders as having the capability to execute the project tasks, including marshalling adequate project resources. The project sponsors too, often judge the effectiveness of a project leader based on the progress of project tasks and the meeting of project milestones and reporting deadlines. Other project stakeholders (e.g. suppliers) expect project leaders to use their leadership prowess to maintain a smooth relationship, particularly by solving project related challenges including negotiating with the finance departments to expedite payments.

One might say that the examples above are functions of the project management processes. However, this paper argues that there is a close relationship between project management and project leadership. Despite the fact that the two are distinct constructs, in project practice their separation leads to an inadequate understanding of the latter. Parry (2004) observed that an effective project leader is one who sustains the efficient and effective execution of tasks throughout the project's life cycle. Project leaders with poor leadership of project tasks eventually turn out to be ineffective leaders. Muller and Turner (2010a) quoting Henry Mintzberg noted that the 'separation of management and leadership is dysfunctional: leaders who do not manage will not know what is going on (perhaps practising a lassie-faire style of leadership); management without leadership [of project stakeholders] is demoralising'. The reason for this is simple. As already noted project leadership manifests through the execution of project tasks or processes.

Project leadership and project management are Siamese twins whose separation can lead to a 'very complicated surgical project leadership process.' Project management processes include planning by identifying the broad project work to be done i.e. project objectives and deliverables; organising by arranging work in a systematic structure; identifying responsibilities and roles for project stakeholders; resourcing project tasks; budgeting, accounting and controlling project resources; coordinating the project tasks to ensure their integrated and efficient execution to achieve the project goal; and reporting and providing feedback on project progress and issues to project stakeholders. These are generalist and not technical functions (Meredith and Mantel, 2011) which require a project leader to have project management knowledge and be able to use the associated tools and techniques to successfully complete project processes (PMI, 2013).

What strategies and capabilities does a project leader require for the domain of leadership of project tasks? A review of literature indicated that the transactional leadership theory (e.g. Bass, 1985) provides a significant explanation to this effect. According to the theory a project leader needs to identify the needs, wants and expectations of project stakeholders in order to satisfy them (reward) in exchange for their effort to complete the project tasks (Rollinson, 2005). In reviewing literature, the transactional leadership was found to be offering the most appropriate strategies for mastering the domain of leadership of project tasks. The theory views a task as a transaction between the project manager and the project team or stakeholders. In this regard the theory offers three critical strategies a project leader may use in the leadership of project tasks namely management by exception, contingent reward, and laissez-faire.

3.2.1 Management by exception strategy

Managing by exception requires a project leader to have the competence for setting the standards or defining objectives required for executing project tasks (OGC, 2009; Kotter, 1990). This can be achieved by active or passive management by exception. Tyseen, Wald and Speith (2013) noted that active management by exception requires a project leader to attend to the work of project stakeholders by correcting deviations where they occur in order to meet project task requirements (or complimenting where there is achievement). This is useful where work is unstructured and where the project leader has to couch and mentor the project team to complete the tasks. Passive management by exception on the other hand is where the project leader waits until project tasks become almost severely impaired by challenges before intervening. Passive management by exception is a natural strategy in project management that requires a project leader to act simply as a coordinator of tasks that require delivery of project outputs.

3.2.2 Contingent reward strategy

Contingent reward is a follow up strategy of management by exception which may produce two

extreme scenarios: either project stakeholders have performed their tasks and achieved the set standard or objective; or they have not attained what is required (Kotter, 1990). The former requires a contingent reward while the latter requires a contingent sanction. However, literature (e.g. Alimo-Metacafe and Alban-Metacafe, 2005) seems sceptical about the project leader's ability to reward or sanction since they are often endowed with inadequate formal authority. The strategy nonetheless adds to the project leader's strategic arsenals. Northouse (2007), for example, suggests that if the contingent reward strategy is used appropriately it can improve performance.

3.2.3 Laissez-faire strategy

Though in practice, the laissez-faire is sometimes employed by some [non-]project leaders, it is not really leadership strategy because it is an abdication of responsibility by avoiding taking decisions. Since the purpose of the proposed framework is to identify strategies for effective project leadership, prescribing the laissez-faire strategy would be misnomer. Furthermore, a project leader is often referred to as 'single point of responsibility' (PMI, 2013) and abdicating responsibility therefore contradicts this key principle.

3.3 Leadership of Project Stakeholders

Leadership of project stakeholders was the most discussed domain in literature (see reviews e.g. Northouse, 1997; Bass and Stogdill, 1990). Frameworks which discuss this domain include, for example, transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; and Bass, 1985), exemplary leadership model (Kouzes and Posner, 2003), leader member exchange (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1985). The central theme of the theories is that leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve a project goal. The view of this article is that this is true but a partial view of project leadership. The proposed model is based on the premise that project leadership begins with the project leaders i.e. the ability to lead themselves. This gives them credibility (Kouzes and Posner, 2003) for obtaining favourable perception, attitude and cooperation from the project stakeholders (this is the cradle of the influencing process). In addition, they must be seen to be competent in managing project tasks and being able to handle project situations as they evolve. Once these are in place the process of influencing project stakeholder can start taking place.

Literature (e.g. Tyseen, Wald and Speith, 2013; Prabhakar, 2005) seems to indicate that transformational theory provides a significant baseline of strategies for influencing project stakeholders. The strategies are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual simulation and individualised consideration. Before discussing these strategies it is noted that there is criticism levelled against the theory. Yukl (1999), for example, noted that it is ambiguities regarding the influencing processes. The view of this paper is that the inadequacy stems from viewing leadership as a single domain construct– leadership of followers – instead of being multi-domain as suggested by the proposed framework. Therefore, if transformational leadership theory is viewed not as the sole contributor to leadership understanding, greater appreciation can be made of its strategies. It is noted, for example, that to execute the idealised influence strategy a project leader must master the self-leadership domain while intellectual stimulation strategy manifests during the leadership of the project tasks. As discussed later, other models, for example, the exemplary leadership model augments and reinforces several constructs in the transformational theory. The next sections briefly discuss the four strategies of transformation leadership and how they apply to the domain of leadership of project stakeholders.

3.3.1 Idealised influence strategy

Idealised influence strategy depicts the nature of project leadership and how it manifests during project leader's interaction with project stakeholders. It is linked to the cognitive and emotional elements discussed under the self-leadership domain. For project leaders to deploy the strategy they must have a clear set of values and principles to act as role models for project stakeholders. Bass and Avolio (1994) noted that idealised influence strategy requires positive charisma. This capability gives a project leader the vision and a sense of mission to reassure project stakeholders that project challenges are surmountable. This disposition promotes confidence among project stakeholders in the execution of tasks and hence the achievement of a project goal (Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Howell and Frost, 1989). Incidentally, this is a kind of charisma that is not self-centred and deviant but which facilitates a project leader to behave in an admirable manner based on a display cognitive prowess and behavioural appropriateness. Another capability required to implement idealised influence is networking - the ability to acquire and maintain contacts with individuals who can be relied on to facilitate in solving project challenges when they arise. The 'network only hangs around and maintains contact' where there is idealised influence from a project leader. The end game of idealised influence is for the project leader to gain the trust and confidence of the project team.

3.3.2 Inspirational motivation strategy

Implementing the inspirational motivation strategy requires project leaders who articulate their vision that appeals and inspires project stakeholders with optimism about the possible successful completion of a project (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Once this is communicated it provides, especially for the project team, the binding glue to efficiently and effectively execute project tasks.

Therefore, this is closely linked to the idealised influence strategy.

Inspiration motivation requires two related capabilities; the ability to craft a compelling vision and the means to articulate it to project stakeholders. Crafting a vision is the ability to develop a compelling project vision and aligning it to both the goals of the project team and organisation. This requires, first, a mental imagery (an outcome of the self-leadership domain); and second, the eloquent use of oral and written communication to articulate the vision and inspire project stakeholders to 'buy' into the project vision. In trying to inspire the project team, a project leader at a kick-off meeting made the following remarks: *'... The company has selected a few of us to deliver this strategic project not because of our existence in the organisation but because of what they see in us, a team of cable people. The journey we are embarking on will be treacherous but it is worth travelling because it is achievable. There will be trying moments but unity, cooperation, hard and smart work will together make us triumph. The achievement will be yours, mine and above all for the organisation we serve'*.

In addition, researchers (e.g. Bass and Avolio, 1994) have noted that the use of symbols and artefacts (e.g. in the speech - the likening of project delivery to a journey) can enhance the conveyance of the vision to project stakeholders.

3.3.3 Intellectual stimulation strategy

The intellectual stimulation strategy aims at provoking project stakeholders to 'think out of the box' in order to solve project challenges in a different way. A project leader needs to empower project stakeholders through the creation of a conducive environment (democratic and with no-blame seeking tendencies) that allows participation in the creation of solutions, ideas, reflection and learning (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

3.3.4 Individualised consideration strategy

Individualised consideration strategy requires a project leader to treat each project stakeholder in a 'customised' manner by attending to their personal and project related needs. In general terms, when using this strategy the project leader gives due respect to project stakeholders by recognising and appreciating their individual contribution to project work. Two capabilities have been identified to execute the individualised consideration strategy namely empathy and mentoring. By empathy a project leader seeks to understand the emotional structure of a project stakeholder and respond to his or her emotional reactions (Goleman, 1998). Mentoring aims at couching and developing project team members where there is a skills gap. This enhances their self-worth and self-fulfilment resulting in further performance and growth (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Some scholars (e.g. Kouzes and Posner, 2003; Greenleaf, 1996) have suggested that the strategy 'makes leaders out of followers'.

3.4 Leadership of the Project Situation

Project leadership does not take place in a vacuum; it takes place in an environment where a project leader interacts with so many facets, both human and non-human. In other words, projects are planned and implemented within a particular situation. The situation may remain stable over time but often changes over the project's life cycle, for example, organisational procurement policies may be changed during the implementation of the project; or when a project assumption fails to hold. The project situation affects the project leadership process to the extent that a project leader may fail to deliver a similar project that he/she successfully implemented before. Therefore, the inclusion of leadership of project situation in the framework is to acknowledge this domain. Likewise some leadership theories, for example, the contingent and situational schools (see e.g. Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971; Vroom and Jago, 1988; Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) have acknowledged situational variables as factors in achieving effective leadership. Unfortunately, none provides an exhaustive list of all possible situational variables.

However, literature (e.g. Hammuda and Dulaimi, 1997; Slevin and Pinto, 1986; Chan et al., 2004) indicates that situational variables emanate from various sources of the project's profile and its environment. They include nature of project (e.g. tasks complexity, tightness of schedule, duration, resource endowments and size); nature of stakeholders (e.g. diversity, culture, support of the project team, and competence of the project team); spread of participants (e.g. virtual vs. face-to-face teams); organisation factors (e.g. management support, union/employee support, organisational culture and structure, policies and procedures and project maturity); industry factors (e.g. industry standards and norms, competition levels, strength of trade associations, green issues and state of industry - boom, down turn or stable); national (e.g. state of economy, political stability and state of the infrastructure); and global (e.g. threats of terrorists, epidemics and recession).

Review of literature indicated that it is not possible to use one strategy for all situations. The contingent and situational schools of leadership provide two broad strategies for dealing with project situations namely changing the project situation and changing the leadership style (Rollinson, 2005).

3.4.1 Change the project situation strategy

The reason for changing the situation could be because the current setup does not allow a smooth execution of project tasks. In their exemplary leadership framework, Kouzes and Posner (2003) support this view by asserting

that challenging the process is a good leadership strategy. Capabilities for changing the project situation were identified as conceptual, negotiation and persuasion. Katz (1955) noted that the conceptual capability provides a 'bird's eye view' of how various parts of a project fit together. This is why a project leader is required to assume a stance of a generalist as opposed to being a specialist (Meredith and Mantel, 2011) so that he/she is not subsumed in details. This ability is useful in reconfiguring the project situation to achieve the same objectives and avoid being bogged down in technical, professional or functional silos. However, changing the situation will often attract disagreements and misunderstandings with some project stakeholders. Therefore, negotiation and persuasion capabilities are needed to sell the change and persuade project stakeholders that a 'win-win' situation will emerge.

3.4.2 Change the leadership style strategy

In some cases it is not possible to change the situation but to change the leadership approach. In reviewing literature, a range of capabilities were identified ranging from the extreme case of the need to attend to project tasks or relationship with project stakeholders. This provides four capabilities namely directive, supportive, participative and achievement oriented (House, 1971; House and Mitchell, 1974, Vroom and Jago, 1988; Hersey and Blanchard, 1988; Houghton, 2005). Directive capability is where a project leader gives subordinates firm guidance and clear instructions wherever possible. Supportive capability is where a project leader tries to be as approachable as possible to project team. Using the participative capability the project leader solicits project team's suggestions and incorporates their input into the decision process. Lastly, achievement-oriented capability is where the project leader tries to get the project team to assume full responsibility for their work, to set challenging targets and expects them to achieve them. Rollinson (2005) noted that in practice, it is possible that project leaders may use all capabilities during the life cycle of the project.

4. Discussion

Based on the preceding discussion a working definition and an integrative framework for effective project leadership are proposed. The proposed framework is specifically directed at project leadership and hence project work which is often described as temporary and unique both in context and outcome (PMI, 2013). It is strongly argued that to construct a realistic understanding of project leadership, the nature of project work and the situation in which the project tasks are executed must be recognised and understood (Tyseen, Wald and Speith, 2013). This sets project leadership apart from political and corporate leadership. Effective project leadership is therefore, defined as: ... an interactive process in which a project leader's persona influences project stakeholders towards the achievement of project tasks within a given project situation to achieve a project goal. The definition includes the nature (a process), expected outcome (project goal) and all the four project leadership domains identified.

Figure 2 summarises the proposed model and indicates that for an effective project leadership process to successfully occur a project leader requires self-leadership in order to exercise leadership of project stakeholders, leadership of project tasks and leadership of the project situation.

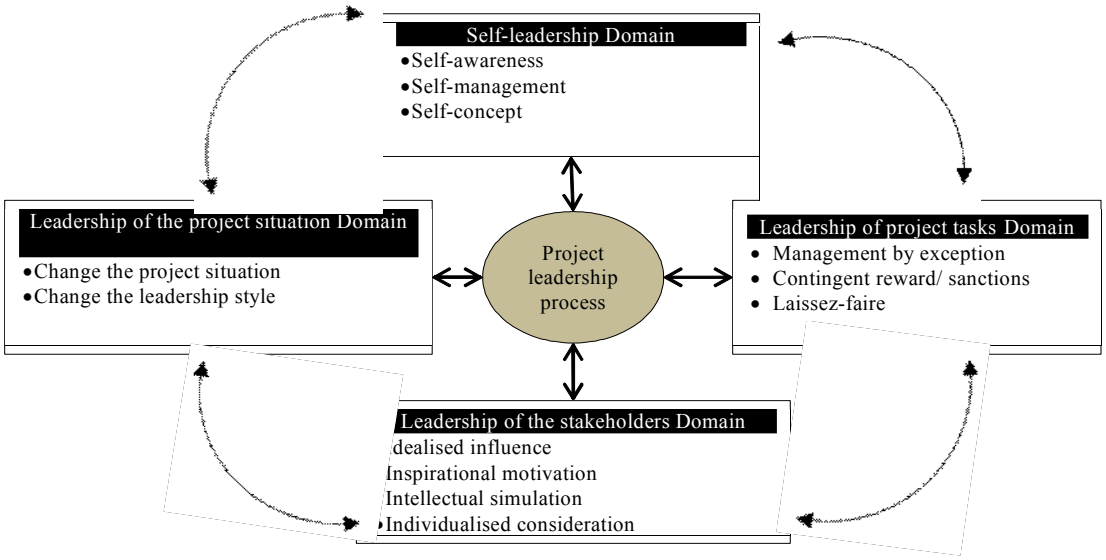


Figure 2. The Perspectives of Project Leadership

The self-leadership domain emphasises that the project leader needs to manage his persona – thinking, behaviour, actions and all aspects surrounding him – to gain credibility in the eyes of project stakeholders. In line with other leadership discourse (e.g. transactional theory) the framework views project leadership as an interactive process. However, the point of departure is that a number of theories concentrate on the domain of leadership of stakeholders (e.g. transformational theory) and ignore the other three domains. In addition, some theories (e.g. transformational theory) view leadership as a one-directional process where a leader influences a group of passive followers.

In contrast, it is argued that project leadership is an interactive process which is multidirectional (hence the arrows pointing to and from the centre in Figure 1). The project leader influences and is influenced by project stakeholders task and situation (Gofee and Jones, 2007). Viewing leadership as an interactive process also means it can be learnt and developed through interaction. This is in line with the view that people are not born with project leadership traits (Gofee and Jones, 2007).

Furthermore, viewing leadership as an interactive process also indicates the transactional nature of the construct. Some form of social exchange occurs between a project leader and project stakeholders (particularly the project team) during the execution of project tasks. Therefore, without project tasks, it is unimaginable how project leadership can manifest. In fact the life span of project leadership is the duration of the project. In addition, the word 'tasks' has been construed as leading to a project 'goal'. From a project management point of view, the successful completion of project tasks leads to achievement of a project goal (APM, 2012). The execution of project tasks provides the interaction in which project leadership is exercised by a project leader. Project tasks are often performed in an ever-changing situation caused by the project's specific and dynamic variables (e.g. organisational policies). These situational dynamics combine to affect the effectiveness of the project leadership process. While most leadership models use the word 'followers', the framework adopts the project management terminology of 'project stakeholders'. The latter emphasises that a project leader does not only show leadership capabilities among the project team members but with diverse parties with various stakes on a project e.g. management, sponsors, regulators and suppliers (Cleland, 1986).

The proposed framework also emphasises that project leadership is a continuous process right from when a project leader is identified. It is neither a once-off activity nor one which comes in quanta. Furthermore, even though the project leadership domains have been ordered in a linear sequence in practice they are not engaged in any particular order. In fact the project leadership perspectives are 'operated as if they were blades of a windmill rotating about a centre' (hence the circular arrows in Figure 1). The speed of the blades may also depict the changing project situation. The framework therefore, emphasises that when the project leader learns to 'tame' or master the four project leadership domains, there is a high chance for effective project leadership to occur. Lack of attention to any of the four domains is likely to lead to a dysfunctional project leadership process.

5. Conclusion

Project leadership is a very important aspect in project delivery. However, despite the numerous research studies, understanding how it works has often proved elusive. A number of project leadership theories have been developed or adapted to provide an understanding of its nature. What is noticeable is that most theories have not provided an integrative approach for project leadership. This paper has proposed a framework which views project leadership as a four-domain integrated construct consisting of self-leadership, leadership of project stakeholders, leadership of project tasks and leadership of the project situation. This has been noted as deviation from the normal view that project leadership should only be about influencing project stakeholders. The framework emphasises that for project leaders to be affective, they must acquire and develop capabilities to enable them to execute the various strategies identified for each the of four project leadership domains.

It suffices to note that the framework is expansive enough to include recent topics such as gender and cultural differences in leadership (e.g. Tirmiza, 2002). For example, if there are cultural issues, a project leader must deal with them by identifying them as belonging to the domain of project stakeholders and/or project situation and deploy the most appropriate strategies and capabilities. Further research is being carried out to test the propositions in the framework and will appear in a forthcoming article.

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