

Empowering the future leaders against tomorrow's challenges

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Abstract

The world is rapidly evolving – culturally, economically, socially, ecologically, scientifically and demographically. The paper is devoted to leadership in the 21st century and beyond. Widespread disruption in business models and labour markets are predicted due to the fourth Industrial Revolution, which includes developments in artificial intelligence and machine-learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3-D printing, genetics and biotechnology. Organizations also face globalization, deregulation, e-business, telecommunications and virtual teams' dynamics. There is therefore an enormous change in the skill sets needed to thrive in the new landscape. Leaders will need to develop a paradigm shift that favours adaptability, empowerment, collaboration, diversity, team work and open-mindedness. As technology races ahead, leaders will need to foster a culture that embraces technology while also emphasizing development of creative and social skills to counteract loss of jobs due to ever-increasing computerisation. Future leaders must move beyond managing to leading change, while practising the concept of personal leadership which includes taking responsibility and measuring their impact continually.

Keywords: *future challenges, change, adaptability, social skills, empowerment, personal leadership.*

Résumé

Le monde évolue rapidement - sur le plan culturel, économique, social, écologique, scientifique et démographique. Le document est consacré au leadership au XXI^{ème} siècle et au-delà. Des perturbations généralisées dans les modèles commerciaux et les marchés du travail sont prévues en raison de la quatrième révolution industrielle, qui comprend des développements en intelligence artificielle et en machine-apprentissage, en robotique, en nanotechnologie, en impression 3D, en génétique et en biotechnologie. Les organisations sont également confrontées à la mondialisation, à la déréglementation, à l'e-business, aux

télécommunications et à la dynamique des équipes virtuelles. Il y a donc un énorme changement dans les ensembles de compétences nécessaires pour prospérer dans le nouveau paysage. Les dirigeants devront développer un changement de paradigme qui favorise l'adaptabilité, l'autonomisation, la collaboration, la diversité, le travail en équipe et l'ouverture d'esprit. Au fur et à mesure que la technologie avance, les dirigeants devront favoriser une culture qui englobe la technologie tout en mettant l'accent sur le développement de compétences créatives et sociales pour contrer la perte d'emplois à causée'une informatisation croissante. Les futurs leaders doivent aller au-delà de la gestion vers un leadership de changement, tout en pratiquant le concept de leadership personnel qui inclut à prendre en charge et à mesurer continuellement leur impact.

Mots-clés: *Défis futurs, changement, adaptabilité, compétences sociales, autonomisation, leadership personnel.*

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." - Alvin

Toffler

Introduction

The world has become fast-paced. We all operate in a global arena which is constantly evolving – culturally, economically, socially, ecologically, scientifically and demographically. Hence, the topic 'Empowering the Future Leaders against Tomorrow's Challenges' is quite relevant. Questions that will be addressed in this paper are the following:

- What are the most pressing challenges that we will face as future leaders?
- As the next generation of leaders to confront such challenges, how do we best prepare and develop leadership abilities, qualities and skills?
- What are the next generations of technologies, methodologies, models and solutions we will need to overcome such challenges?

You all recall the recent story of the three-year-old boy who fell into Cincinnati zoo's gorilla enclosure, prompting keepers to shoot Harambe, 17-

year-old 450lb silverback Gorilla who grabbed him [1]. Isiah Dickerson was with his mother Michelle Gregg at Cincinnati Zoo, Ohio, when he somehow made his way through a barrier, into a moat - and was lifted up by Harambe. Within minutes, the 17-year-old 450lb silverback was killed by zookeepers who feared for Isiah's safety. The decision sparked a backlash, with calls for the boy's parents to be prosecuted. Many people blamed the boy's parents for 17-year-old Harambe's death. Many people criticized the Zoo management for the decision taken. Let us reflect on the leadership questions inherent in the story:

What would you do if you were the one in charge? If you decided to use tranquilizers and they didn't work in enough time to save the child, how will you handle the fallout? What if he was your child? Will your decision be different?

Leaders face these types of unexpected scenarios when they must make far reaching decisions, sometimes in a split second. Therefore, preparation is key.

Before we move on, let us agree on what we define as empowerment. For us, can we agree that empowerment means the process of equipping future leaders, which we are, with the necessary tools, attitudes, perspectives and resources to become leaders who are ready for the challenges of tomorrow?

Inherent in the definition stated above is that the future is in fact not that distant – it may be interpreted as the next minute, the next hour or tomorrow! The emerging question is: what are the challenges?

Changing landscape of jobs and industry

The last World Economic Forum report – ‘**The Future of Jobs**’ released in January 2016 predicted widespread disruption, not only to business models but also to labour markets over the next five years due to the fourth Industrial Revolution. The industrial revolution includes developments in previously disjointed fields such as artificial intelligence and machine-learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3-D printing, genetics and biotechnology [2]. The conclusion therefore is that there is an enormous change in the skill sets needed to thrive in the new landscape.

Hence, the first challenge is that of ‘change’ and ‘managing change’. Change is the natural law of life. As individuals, we all go through the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood where we seek identity and fulfillment. That change starts from maturation from a medical student to a medical doctor and for those who choose to continue

on that path, change from a ‘baby doctor’ like one elder once called new medical graduates to future specialists. Is that the terminal end? No! of course not!, what about becoming a leading specialist with global recognition or a Professor and leading expert in a subspecialty, say Professor of military genomics! For while we all laugh about that, we must in fact introspect and ponder: is there a locus in some people's genes that predisposes them to becoming rebels or militants against their nation, communities and men? Why is a minority pursuing a destructive course while the overwhelming majority plods on legally? Gene or environment (or as some will say, nature or nurture?). Most certainly a debate for another day.

Managing change and adaptability

Many of us here will surely not pursue the medical specialist training path. Some graduates of this medical school have become musicians, fashion designers, business leaders and of course politicians! Therefore, our discourse today must choose the middle navigation course and remain applicable to all. How, then, do we manage change as they come into our lives? The central lesson is first of all to accept the fact that change is natural and will always occur. Hence, we must use our today well, to ensure that we can adapt to future changes. In fact, adaptability is the next strategy. Darwinian theories still hold sway in the affairs of men. In a speech delivered in 1963 by a Louisiana State University business professor, Leon C. Megginson, at the convention of the Southwestern Social Science Association [3], Megginson presented his interpretation of the central idea outlined in Darwin's “On the Origin of Species”: I quote him:

“Yes, change is the basic law of nature. But the changes wrought by the passage of time affects individuals and institutions in different ways. According to Darwin's Origin of Species, it is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is best able to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself.”

When we apply this theoretical concept at individual level, we can state that the individuals or the future leaders who will survive and thrive tomorrow are those that are able to adapt to the changing physical, social, political, moral, organizational and spiritual environment in which they find themselves. In today's rapidly changing, highly competitive environment, the ability to change rapidly, efficiently, and almost continually will distinguish the winners from the losers. Our winners

will not resist change, they will embrace change and say: "how do I make this work for me, for my team, for the institution where I serve and for the global village". Such individuals are active participants and contributors to the society. They live the dictum: "to serve is to lead."

Challenges of globalisation

Daft and coworkers tell us that the world of organizations is changing rapidly [4]. Organizations are no longer stable and settled. They face globalization, deregulation, e-business, telecommunications and virtual teams. Daft points out that people in organizations around the world are feeling the impact of these and other trends and are being forced to adapt to new ways of working [4]. In this context, leaders are facing really tough jobs to keep people grounded, focused and motivated toward accomplishing positive goals. As Daft sees it, shifts representing a transition from traditional to new paradigms are having a dramatic impact on organizations and presenting new challenges for leaders [4]. Comparing old and new paradigms of leadership, Daft contrasts stability with change and crisis management, control with empowerment, competition with collaboration, uniformity with diversity, self-centeredness with higher purpose and heroism with humility. Such unstable situations call for a continuous awareness of the changing human needs in the workplace, and effective leadership practices to encourage and support people in their achievement of organizational goals.

Under these new conditions, to make change work for you is the call. For all progress require change. We all have to adapt to new ways of working. Many in developed nations are already choosing to work from home. And you wonder how they do it with the TV, internet and social media clamoring for their attention? Leaders today already have a tough job trying to keep people focused and motivated towards accomplishing intended goals, how much more tasking will this be for future leaders?

We also have to remember the unsettled, challenging and constantly evolving economic situation and the increase of ethical scandals like that of the recent Global fund for AIDS/MALARIA and Tuberculosis grant recently suspended for Nigeria[5]. Reports stated that "grants to Nigeria have faced substantial systematic and operational risks and challenges" [5]. These identified risks are challenges we should develop strengths in to change the narrative about grant management in Nigeria. Further, we must not forget the increasing relativity in saying 'we live in a secure environment'. Yes, the

question of security which is associated with terrorism, wars and crime are extant challenges we all must have answers to, to thrive in the future.

Leading change and innovation

Let me challenge you to go a step ahead of what we have been discussing so far. Move beyond managing change at a personal level to practicing 'leading change'. Leaders that organizations need henceforth are those who can guide people through the uncertainty and confusion, which periods of rapid change entail. Today's world is in a constant motion, and nothing seems certain anymore. It is now clear that managers who believe that stability is all they need to maintain in the twenty-first century, would surely be mistaken and unsuccessful. Initial success without innovation is a recipe for failure. How then do we become masters of change and innovation?

To master change, there are a myriad of things you must do and which I will discuss in some detail: societal understanding, embracing technology, cultivating an open mind, anticipation, emotional intelligence development and the concept of personal leadership.

We must understand the society of today – we are participants in a global knowledge economy. To "learn today is to live." A man who has stopped learning has embarked on the journey to the land of the dead. Utilise today to learn the best about your field, while not forgetting other areas of human endeavor. Read, read and read! Be a well-rounded person which people will be happy to stay with at a dinner table or during other social interactions. Be versatile in sports, philosophy, economics, politics, arts and other fields of science. Explore other areas that interest you outside of medicine. Let your mind be like a sponge soaking knowledge and enjoying it. Networking is easier when you have varied interests – some you will meet and they will get endeared to you because you are a versatile doctor who is at ease during conversations about diverse subjects. A sound mind attracts people. You should be one.

Open-mindedness and technology

Cultivating an open mind is paramount, this includes having wide interests, being imaginative and insightful and having a willingness to consider new ideas. People with such open minds are intellectually curious and often seek out new experiences through travel, the arts, movies, reading widely, or other activities. Open-mindedness is important to leaders because leadership is about change rather than stability. In an interesting study of three nineteenth-century leaders - John Quincy Adams, Frederick

Douglass, and Jane Addams; early travel experiences and exposure to different ideas and cultures were found to be critical elements in developing open-minded qualities in these leaders [6]. Travel during the formative years helped these leaders develop a greater degree of openness to experience because it put them in situations that required adaptability.

The next strategy is to embrace technology and you have to immerse yourself in it. None of you should be scared about coding and programming – that is the language of today and the future. Schools abroad and some even in Nigeria are already teaching primary school students coding. Coding is the thinking science. Can you imagine a doctor, a bank manager or a lawyer today who doesn't know how to use the computer and the internet becoming successful? Are you versatile in the use of Excel and other spreadsheets? What about SPSS? Take on the challenge and learn something beyond what medical school affords you. Several free online courses are available to empower you and give you that edge to be the chosen one – I just completed one on 'Project Management' with "EdX" – a Harvard-based online course - for we all have projects, to manage – personal, family and organizational [7]. Your colleagues abroad are several years ahead – versatile in statistical software and already writing papers. *See yourself as being prepared for the global competition not the local survival rat race.*

Personal experience

Truly to be globally competitive is to anticipate. You have to ask yourself the following questions periodically as I do. What will I need in the future to function in the field I wish to pursue? Which certificates will I need to help boost my CV and make me qualified for future opportunities? Opportunities favor the prepared folks as chance favors prepared minds. The days I was expending my scholarship savings while on fellowship in Germany on writing Membership of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Glasgow (MRCS) exams; I never had an inkling that an opportunity for a fellow position in Cardiothoracic surgery in the UK for which I will need the MRCS qualification will emerge. I still remember my pensive mood while on the train taking me to the Frankfurt airport, Germany in March 2008, (after 18 months in Germany with only 170 Euros remaining in my pocket!) That expensive MRCS has added a lot more in material wealth and beyond to me. To be prepared for an uncertain future is to anticipate, make decisions and take action.

Social skills and emotional intelligence

Part of preparation for the future is what you are all engaging in today – involvement in extra-curricular activities to learn how to work in teams and develop leadership skills. By the time I was starting residency I already had about 4 papers published – of course in *Dokita* which prepared me for the future. How many of you are joining *Dokita* today and contributing articles to the journal? My writing skills were partly honed as a *Dokita* editorial board member with authorship and editorial experience. You also use these engagements to develop a key ingredient of success for leaders – emotional intelligence [8]. Emotional intelligence is the ability to control and identify emotions, and applying that ability to given tasks. Think of Emotional Intelligence in terms of specific competencies that you need to consciously develop.

Important components of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-management and regulation; social competence and relationship management. Empathy is a part of the social awareness cluster and deserves special mention in today's world. When you have empathy, you can walk in someone else's shoes to better understand what they are going through and why they are experiencing specific emotions. This allows you to be kinder and to more effectively communicate having looked at the situation through their perspective.

Good social skills enable you to cultivate positive emotions in other people. This helps you to build strong bonds with people that will last long-term. Another aspect of better social skills is knowing that emotions are like a virus. They spread quickly to everyone around. For example, if you are with a group of people and you are upset about something, this causes those in the group to feel down too. It is important to recognize this and then you are able to use your self-regulation to exert positive emotions to keep the people around you happy.

Once you master your social skills, you will be able to be an effective leader. You will be able to make negative people more positive and people will naturally respect you and what you have to say. The most successful people have solid social skills because they can adapt to a variety of situations with ease and maintain their poise. The social skills are much more important in this age of fourth industrial revolution [2] with relentless automation replacing people. Current findings suggest that as technology races ahead, workers will have to take on tasks that are non-susceptible to computerisation – i.e., tasks requiring creative and social intelligence. For

workers to win the race, however, they will have to acquire creative and social skills [9].

If you have already forgotten everything said so far, please make sure you keep the following points intact in your memory for life:

(i) Learn to build relationships from now on. (ii) Connect with key people in your life on a regular basis. (iii) Set dates in your calendar to touch base every few months. (iv) Find new relationships that might be able to connect you with key people some day in the future or who are authorities in their own right. (v) The relationships in your professional life are probably the most important asset you have. Now is the time, when you don't need it, to seek out and establish your professional support system so that it is there for you when you really do need it.

Mentoring is also a great way to develop your leadership potential. Find role models whom you want to emulate, who are doing what you want to do in the future or stand out as examples of the kind of leader you want to be. If you know them personally, foster that relationship, feed it, nurture it and make lots of notes. If they are a public personality and inaccessible in person: read everything they write, watch them on Youtube or on Ted Talks and attend any event that gets you closer to their thoughts, ideas, and dreams. It's important to realize that no one is going to pull our hands and drag us to the table but we must walk there ourselves. And part of this walk is through getting the right leadership skills and knowledge so that one earns a right to be at the table. Leadership is not given on a platter of gold, you have to claim it.

Leadership readiness qualities

To sum up, I will like to acquaint us all with the four qualities the future demands, well captured by a world renowned Consulting firm – Hays Group of the UK [10]. These four qualities identify an individual's readiness to extend himself/herself beyond current role and take on leadership positions successfully in the future. Tested against data from thousands of assessments conducted by Hay group around the world, these attributes are:

Eagerness to learn

The willingness to take a risk in exchange for the opportunity to learn something new. This factor reflects an individual's confidence in stretching beyond their comfort zone, as well as their ability to listen to – and learn from – others.

Breadth of perspective

The ability to include multiple perspectives and disciplines when evaluating and solving problems.

This involves viewing a given job within the broader context of the organization.

Understanding others:

The capacity to accurately perceive other people's perspectives and experiences. This factor is a measure of an individual's motivation and ability to learn from others- particularly those with different outlooks- by listening with care and respect.

Personal maturity

The ability to see criticism and difficulties as opportunities for learning and growth. Every senior manager knows the path to leadership can be challenging, even painful, with setbacks along the way. The mature leader maintains emotional balance and keeps on learning in the face of turmoil.

In essence, ladies and gentlemen let us develop the skills needed for and beyond the 21st century – collaboration, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership and entrepreneurship – to prepare for tomorrow. The word 'discipline' means to sacrifice something immediate for something more meaningful later. It includes ability to delay gratification. Discipline is the price you pay for dreams to become reality.

Closing comments

Let me remind us of the three primary questions set at the beginning:

- What are the most pressing challenges that we will face as future leaders?
- As the next generation of leaders to confront such challenges, how do we best prepare and develop leadership abilities, qualities and skills?
- What are the next generation of technologies, methodologies, models and solutions we will need to overcome such challenges?

I have attempted to address these questions.

As future leaders, we will need to continually reflect on them and answer them in our contexts and within our various spheres of influence.

Let us avoid being like those people who externalize or postpone leadership to that day when they are pronounced as President, Governor, Chief Medical Director, Vice Chancellor or Chief Executive Officer. Leadership does not always need a position or title. You are all leaders as you are sitting down, for to serve is to lead. Who are you leading? **Self.** Leadership is both an ART and an ACT. It is innate and at the same time corporate. It requires taking responsibility and being accountable. You are responsible and mature when you accept that the

world owes you nothing. You have to maximize all opportunities to develop yourself. Hold yourself accountable daily. As you lie on your bed to sleep, ask yourself the questions that define the quality of your impact in life. Let us subject ourselves to daily checks of whether we are making enough impact and helping to put smiles on others' faces as we plod on in life. These are integrity questions which are core to being a real success in life and a leader who is equipped for tomorrow challenges.

The questions:

- What difference did you make today?
- Who did you affect?
- What opportunities to inspire or help did you miss?
- What do you need to change?

For when we regularly hold ourselves so accountable can we develop our integrity and move beyond competence to emotionally intelligent leadership with character. And that is the seed for a great tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is rapidly changing and as future leaders we must move beyond managing to leading change, embracing technology, developing the requisite skills and abilities and regularly measuring the impact of our lives. Let us embrace the concept of personal leadership – taking responsibility, holding ourselves accountable and growing.

Take this Latin proverb to heart and live it: *'Si præsens bene collocaveris, de futuro tibi dubium non erit.'*

(If you make good use of the present time, you need not be apprehensive about the future.)

I thank you for listening.

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Tribute of PROFESSOR BABATUNDE O. OSOTIMEHIN (Editor, *African Journal of Medicine and Medical Sciences* - 1996 - 2003)

Gaudemus igitur; Gaudemus igitur!!

We are gathered here today in honour of a worthy Alumnus and a past Provost of this College of Medicine. I have the special privilege of welcoming to this occasion our special guests, who are connected in a special way with the deceased as we do.

I wish to recognise and welcome all our distinguished members of staff to this Special College Assembly Convened with the sole purpose of celebrating the life of a former Provost of the College of Medicine.

I warmly welcome the dear wife of the departed, Mrs. Olufunke Osotimehin, the children and indeed the entire family. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity given the College to play this part in paying respect to a man deserving honour. The news of death of this foremost Clinician came as a shock to the College, University and indeed the entire nation. Late Professor Babatunde O. Osotimehin who was much loved and fondly referred to as 'Bob' will be greatly missed.

Ars longa, Vita brevis - For life is short, but art is long.

With this phrase Greek philosophers challenged our thoughts about life and death whenever it comes as it must, because in the end the essence of life is not how long it was, but how creative, or impactful, a life had been. From all we have heard about our much loved Professor since his demise, it is safe to say that, whilst it would appear that the length of his life was relatively short, his creativity in living it has ensured that the art of his life will indeed be long. This as he has left many legacies in the various stages of his life, in the places he worked, and with the people he met.

His spent his longest time in the College of Medicine, from his medical student days till death (50 years in all), and what a time. We have been told he was a brilliant student, who did not appear to be an 'effico'. We have heard that he not only acquired the competencies to diagnose the best life-partner for him with just one short-case sitting of the particular *derrière* on his knees, on the back seat of a crowded car in the dark; but also those with which he found, clerked and investigated that partner at the Scala laboratories one year later; as well as the

skills he managed her with successfully for the next 44 years. What a guy!!! What a well-trained student!!

We have been reminded that Professor Babatunde Osotimehin was a brilliant man of 'molecules', an accomplished scholar and Provost before he 'found his calling' as international social scientist, civil servant and ambassador which position he had first desired at the age of 19. In those testimonies, one caught a hint that the various groups were trying espouse what their part of his life



Professor Babatunde O. Osotimehin
OON, MD, FWACP, FRC P, FAS
1948 - 2017

contributed to his legacy. But indeed, a closer look at molecules indicate that Bob was being Bob as he moved determinedly, from one effortlessly executed posting of life to the other. This is because from studying molecules you learn that all life is just a transformation of one type energy to another as is demonstrated by the cell cycle which is the basis of life. In this ever-continuing process, nature is at its best as it transforms cells from one stage to another without losing energy, and even when the cell dies the process of its demise is energy-efficient as all its components are resorbed and used by other cells - its progeny.

*Tribute read at the Special College Assembly
on Thursday, 20 July 2017*

Late Professor Osotimehin had also learned from his time in the molecular laboratory that the life and death of a cell is determined by surrounding cells and is dependent on its environment. This theory was proven first by Schellhammer in 1904 when he showed that a cell isolated from others quickly died not matter the amount of nutrients in its immediate milieu. It was further elucidated by Chung, Cunha and others in the early 1990 when they showed that a normal cell placed amongst cancerous neighbors becomes cancerous, whilst a cancerous cell placed amongst normal neighbors reverts to a normal cell. Realizing his qualities, this understanding may have contributed in part to Professor Osotimehin's decision to redirect his efforts from the relatively small environment of the laboratory and the University to the larger field of international health in his quest to make his society better in as large a scale as possible and thus ensure his own well-being. His success at this task has of course been laid bare over the past month.

From the above and other testimonies we can conclude that this Professor's life was made up of a heterogeneous collection of Shakespearean acts with this world as his stage. From his birth in a country of the Tempest, his Macbethian pre-destination, through his emulation of the toasts of Romeo and the nimbleness of the elves of A Midsummer's night dream in his admirable waltzes through his academic and political careers; and finally his Hamlet-like exit from the stage. The art in his life, which has

inevitably made him a legend, can only be admired but not copied, and this is perhaps a welcome comfort to his successors who would rather not be measured by the yard-stick his achievements.

Mrs. Osotimehin and the rest of the Osotimehin family and friends here present, distinguished audience of this Special Academic Assembly, the first of its kind for a departed Provost, it is true that Professor Osotimehin's candle has gone out and that his body will soon leave this institution for ever, we are however assured that through his works and deeds, the light of his legacy will continue to illuminate our hallowed chambers and corridor of academe eternally, and the name 'Bob' will be remembered in this citadel of learning for more than a life time.

We pray that his soul will rest in the peace of his Lord, and that that peace will abide with his family, friends, students and mentees forever. Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, by the grace of God the 4th Provost of the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, 1990-1994. *Requiescat in Pace.*

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