

Journal of **Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies**



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ISSN NO: 2616-8413

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How to cite this article: Ogochi K., D. (2018). Strategic Leadership: Its Integration with the Church Leadership. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies*, Vol 1(1) pp. 31-40.

Abstract

Strategic leadership is concentrated on those leaders who have general accountability of an organization such as, top management team, executives and board of directors (Phillips & Hunt, 1992) both in the business arena and the church as well. Strategic leadership is analogized with supervisory theories of leadership and so supervisory leaders focus on directing, supporting and building staff while strategic leaders focus on creating organization's purpose and meaning which can enable the church to remain alive and vibrant all through. Churches are not just businesses, institutions or organizations. Churches are very special because they are assemblies that have been called out by legitimate authority (Austin-Roberson, 2009). Much as the church is organized into local assemblies across the world, it is much more than an organization because it has a spiritual constituent that brands it exceptional from the rest of the other organizations. The spiritual and sacred nature of the church affects every aspect of the church's organizational life right from its mission to the structure and the systems employed to fulfil its mission (Jeavons, 1994). The more reason as to why the need for strategic leaders is more real now more than ever before in the history of the existence of churches.

Keywords: *Strategic Leadership & Church Leadership*

Strategic Leadership: Its Integration with the Church Leadership

Strategic leadership is concentrated on those leaders who have general accountability of an organization such as, top management team, executives and board of directors (Phillips & Hunt, 1992) both in the business arena and the church as well. According to Boal and Hooijberg (2000), strategic leadership is analogized with supervisory theories of leadership and so supervisory leaders focus on directing, supporting and building staff while strategic leaders focus on creating organization's purpose and meaning. Moreover, the heart of strategic leadership is development and maintenance of an organization's ability to learn and the capability to change (Cannella Jr & Monroe, 1997).

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is involved in making strategic decisions, developing and communicating the organization's vision for the future, developing vital competencies and abilities, creating organizational structures, design, controls, process and managing numerous constituencies, select and develop the next generation leaders, sustaining an effective organizational culture and pervading ethical values systems into the organization's culture (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004).

According to Finkelstein, Hambrick and Cannella (2009), strategic leadership will only happen in an environment rooted in uncertainty, informational overload and complexity. Due to the argument that the environment that surrounds organizations, the church inclusive is becoming increasingly hyper-turbulent (Eisenhardt, 1989), the quintessence of strategic leadership will be creation and maintenance of absorptive capacity and adaptive capacity (Staber & Sydow, 2002).

Hitt and Duane (2002) postulate that, adaptive capacity denotes to the aptitude of change due to the new competitive environment that is characterized by an increase in strategic gaps and disequilibrium conditions, an increase focus on innovation, continuous learning and hypercompetitive markets. All these depend upon strategic flexibility that can only be handled by the strategic leaders. This is because, flexibility of an organization comes from the leaders at the top thus the organization's ability to change necessitates that the leaders at the apex of the

organization to have behavioral and cognitive complexity and flexibility (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000).

On the other hand, absorptive capacity refers to the ability to learn, in that, the strategic leaders ought to have the capacity to diagnose new information, assimilate it, and apply it towards new ends. This involves processes that are used offensively and defensively to make better the fits between an organization and its environments (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000). The absorptive capacity of strategic leaders is of specific prominence because, they have an exceptional capability to change or reinforce the prevailing action patterns within organizations (Davies & Davies*, 2004).

Further, Cannella Jr and Monroe (1997) describe that strategic leadership theory struggles with top managers' personalities, values and cognitions that affect their field of vision. Their selective perception of information and their interpretation of this information has a great effect in the strategic leadership docket. In other words, strategic leadership places a strong importance on the decision making of the top leaders as the guiding light for the entire organization. According to Austin-Roberson (2009), the 21st century is in full motion and the entire globe is experiencing speedy and deep changes. If we say that change is inevitable for most modern organizations will not be an overstatement but the pure truth. Modern and current churches form equally part of these organizations.

Internal and external forces, both are unceasingly in motion influencing churches all the time. Thus far, change is frequently resisted as church leaders choose to hold on to the old-style approaches of existing and the successful fulfilment of the church mission is compromised (Austin-Roberson, 2009). This is the reason as to why strategic leadership ought to be integrated to our contemporary churches, to help in initiating necessary change in order to add value to the existence of the church.

If the churches today want to upsurge their ministry effectiveness, and experience long lasting success, they must be willing to design and redesign themselves as part of their strategic leadership (Austin-Roberson, 2009). They also have to integrate new strategies, structures and systems that will give the strategic focus, thrust and working support that is required to prosper and succeed in the ever-changing and uncertain biosphere; while at the same time, preserving the very sacred nature that makes the church to be exceptionally different from the rest of the organizations.

The Unique Nature of the Church

Churches are not just businesses, institutions or organizations. Churches are very special because they are assemblies that have been called out by legitimate authority (Austin-Roberson, 2009). Much as the church is organized into local assemblies across the world, it is much more than an organization because it has a spiritual constituent that brands it exceptional form the rest of the other organizations. The spiritual and sacred nature of the church affects every aspect of the church's organizational life right from its mission to the structure and the systems employed to fulfil its mission (Jeavons, 1994).

Furthermore, Jeavons (1994) posit that "The church is a unique organism in which Christ and the spirit dwell. The church has a unique source of life, is directed toward particular ends and goals, and is governed by particular commitments and practices – such as prayer, worship, study, witness, and service – that gives peculiar shape to the church's life and ministry. The church cannot be explained in organizational terms alone and must guard against approaches to leadership that merely accommodate the broader culture" p. (96).

The churches are characterized by godly and human attributes which include the spiritual and organizational attributes. It is at once the body of Christ as well as a human institution. Die to this exceptional dual, the church needs both the spiritual and the organizational management to run its affairs optimally (Janssen & Carton, 1999). Moreover, it is evident that church management becomes a challenge of amalgamation of the spiritual with the organizational that call for an urgent need for strategic leadership in the church. Consequently, churches should respond spiritually to spiritual challenges and managerially to organizational challenges. But, more often than not, many churches have failed because of ignorance and underutilization of managerial response to organizational challenges (Austin-Roberson, 2009).

Many books on the subject of strategic leadership focus on business orient organizations. However, these topics and concepts can be transferred to other types of organizations like the church. Strategic leaders give formal, guided procedures for integrating information, people and technology of the church for better performance (Tracey, 2012). Through a proper church strategic leadership, there is a high likelihood of coming up with the church organizational design that will give a road map to the success of the church's strategies. Therefore, organizational design is a guided and formal process of assimilating information, people and technology to match the form

of the organization as closely as possible to the core purpose the organization is seeking to attain. Through this processes, the organization acts to develop the possibility that the combined energies of members will be successful.

The church's strategic leaders will endeavor to identify the organization's mission, that is why do they exist, develop the organization's strategy, which is the plan of action for accomplishing the intended purpose, create the structure to support the strategy and coming up with systems that will help keep things running smoothly to ensure that the mission has been successfully accomplished (Carver, 2011). For any church to thrive like any other organization out there, there is need for its leadership to consider, strategy, structure and systems as very vital components of the church design.

Contemporary churches that desire to successfully reach out, need to be both strategic and deliberate in all their doings and decisions. Metaphorically speaking, such churches take strategy as the brains of the organization that gives the organization the direction and focus it requires for success (Carver, 2011). Having the strategy as the brain of the church's organizational design, that means that the church's structure is the skeletal system that grips together the entire organization (Jones & Jones, 2013).

Furthermore, Carver (2011) asserts that the structure is the hard wiring of the design which defines how divisions, departments, functions and people join together and interrelate meaningfully. The organization's structure discloses the vertical operational responsibilities and the horizontal linkages that clearly define who does what, who has the decision making powers and to what levels are the powers leveled to, and the rules and regulations to govern what everybody does and how they do it.

The Need of Church Strategic Leaders

In Mark 13:7, Jesus warned His disciples of the end time events and required them to be watchful about them so that they would not be caught unaware. Further, He encouraged them to prepare for such times. This calls for church organizations to urgently and deeply understand why the need for strategic leadership is highly required now for churches than any other time in history. The trends and shifts that are happening all around us, require a strategic mind partnering with God to lead the church to the next level and also to navigate through the turbulence of uncertainty and change (Austin-Roberson, 2009). Thus, the strategic leaders will seek to well understand their

environment and be better equipped to lead their church organizations through the process of change and organizational design for optimum performance.

Due to globalization, where different churches are now running across their original communities, there is need for strategic leadership in the church to come up with a church design that can enable the church to be ethnically and culturally diverse (Tracey, 2012). This will enable such churches to display greater mutual respect for leadership, ministries, styles and the church will minister more intentionally to the oppresses, suffering and the poor (Austin-Roberson, 2009).

It is the responsibility of the strategic leaders of the church to guide the church in the change process. It is a vital role of creating, implementing and sustaining the effective organizational change that is greatly needed to meet the new challenges that are facing the church (Austin-Roberson, 2009). As change is inevitable in the business organizations, so it is in the church and its organizations. To navigate through the turbulent environments and uncertainties of tomorrow, there is a dire need for strategic leadership in the church for it to survive in this era.

Unfortunately, Austin-Roberson (2009) posit that some church leaders are not up to the challenge and are comfortable with the status quo, forgetting that the current church structures are strangling the church thought they are still loved by many. Some of these leaders feel that bringing in change feels like disloyalty to God, which is contrary to Mark 3:7. This attitude is likely to lead to a loss of relevancy in the biosphere the church requires to reach. Church leaders who embrace, understand and lead change are urgently needed to prevent this consequence (Hamm, 2009). The answer to this dire need is to have strategic leadership in place for our churches.

Does Strategic Leadership Matter

Conservative wisdom proposes that in aggregate, strategic leadership matters in running our churches (Malphurs, 2013). The amount of will enjoyed by the leaders at the apex of the organization will moderate the relationship between their strategic choices and organizational outcome (Finkelstein et al., 2009). This agrees with Hyuk-Soo (2010) who posit that choices are influenced by the demands and constraints facing the leaders. It is now evident that leaders who have absorptive and adaptive capacities and managerial wisdom are more effective than those who don't, either in the business arena or even in the church. Further, the more the absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity and managerial wisdom possessed by the leaders, the more likely they will identify and act on strategic inflection points.

According to Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996), strategic leadership theory adopts that organizations are a total reflection of their leaders. The values and beliefs of the leader, structure how matters are interpreted and acted upon. Thus, the choices that leaders will make, will affect the organization's performance. The top most leaders of an organization need to have a deep understanding of the environment within which their organizations function (Osborn, Hunt & Jauch, 2002) including technological advances in related and unrelated areas that can impact their organization. Further, the strategic leaders need to understand the impact of changes in social-political, economic and technological factors.

Leaders who are more behaviorally complex have a greater capacity to change than leaders who have limited behavioral complexity. In addition, leaders high in social intelligence have greater managerial wisdom than leaders who have limited social intelligence. This applies in organizations be it businesses or churches. The church is desperate for good leaders (strategic leaders), leaders who are willing to learn the principles and nitty gritty skills and discipline it takes to lead at the apex of the church organization (Malphurs, 2013).

According to Fry (2003), God loves raising up faithful men and women to lead ministries, businesses, churches, small groups, and communities. They all need effective and godly leaders. One needs not be born a natural leader but just have to care enough and accept the challenge to serve. Therefore, strategic leadership was built to be a catalyst for change. God's people need leaders to help them reach the world, influence culture and inspire true change (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011).

The Future of the Church with Strategic Leadership

Strategic Leadership in Churches will foster change that is greatly needed by all churches. For any organism to exhibit signs of life, it must reveal that it is responding to its environment and so should the church. The church's frequent and constant response to the environment through the guidance of its strategic leadership will make the church relevant and vibrant and the gospel will move faster to reach every part of the globe (Malphurs, 2013). The vibrancy in all its aspects of operation and running will help it survive in the hard times ahead. Change is part of life and transformation is key for growth and development thus, to stop changing is to die. It is through strategic leadership that in ten years to come the church will still be alive and vibrant (Lowe & Gardner, 2000).

The top leadership and the membership as well will cease seeing the church as a place of comfort and stability in the midst of rapid change. Certainly, every member will understand that God's truth is unchanging and will find reality and stability in it but will keep pace with the changes around by changing the approaches, methods and some traditions that hinder or will trail the growth of the church (Baker, 2013). Moreover, the church leadership and its members will be up in action. Everyone will be busy doing something for God and for the growth and development of the church. No one will be just idle liking what others are doing and not being part of doing something. This will improve not only the gospel aspect of the church but also its development in its other branches of operations (Lowe & Gardner, 2000).

Finally, with strategic leadership embedded in churches, there will be no wastage of time in unproductive meetings, businesses sessions and committees. These meetings will be strategic and strategically guided to yield pleasing outcomes in whatever vision each church will be pursuing (Lowe & Gardner, 2000).

Conclusion

Strategic leadership is concentrated on those leaders who have general accountability of an organization such as, top management team, executives and board of directors (Phillips & Hunt, 1992) both in the business arena and the church as well. Strategic leadership is analogized with supervisory theories of leadership and so supervisory leaders focus on directing, supporting and building staff while strategic leaders focus on creating organization's purpose and meaning which can enable the church to remain alive and vibrant all through.

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