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Beyond Project Management Technicalities: Uplifting the Role of Leadership Towards Project Success

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Abstract

This article highlights and discusses the critical role of leadership for effectively managing and achieving project results. As opposed to the conventional and once-dominant thinking of project management that linked project success to project technicalities, this article considers project leadership a central issue for project success or failure. The article stipulates that, despite the strategic importance of robust project management techniques in effectively controlling and executing activities, in the absence of proper project leadership skills approaches may render a project to leadership-related failures. To appreciate the role of leadership towards project success, this article highlights and discusses different elements of project leadership and management—including blueprint and adaptive approaches, similarities and differences between management and leadership—and how they interact towards effective project management; and leadership theories, styles and skills required for effective project leadership and management. The article concludes that generally project leadership is a critical factor towards project success without undermining the importance of conventional project management methodologies, tools and software. Such an understanding demonstrates clearly that, to be successful, project managers are obliged to employ holistic and integrative methodologies and approaches necessary for making projects more relevant and sustainable; taking into account that there is no one single project management and leadership approach or style that is superior to the rest. Last but not least, as it is the case with the management aspect, project leadership needs to be a continuous process to be employed at different stages of a project cycle management.

Keywords: *project management, technicality, leadership and project success*

1. Introduction

Attempts to improve project efficiency, performance and success have prompted project management scientists and professionals to promote the use of robust project management techniques, methodologies and software (PMBOK, 2017; Morris & Pinto, 2004; Clarke, 2004). In theory, the use of such tools and methodologies are expected to enable project managers to efficiently perform their project activities and deliver outputs on time, while meeting the set

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standards and requirements as initially specified in project documents. It is from this background that many academics and professional trainings on project management have been focusing on equipping project managers with relevant and current project management techniques, tools and methodologies; such as work breakdown structures, critical path, ghats charts, programme evaluation and review techniques, agile and waterfall methodologies (PMOK, 2017; Bull, 2010; PMI, 2002). Yet, other experts in the field of project management argue that relying too much on project management methodologies and techniques can only offer partial solution for efficient project management. For example, there is s general appreciation that the five process groups of activities (initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, and control and closing), and the nine (recently ten) project management knowledge areas—presented in many verses of project cycle management and popular project management textbooks—are necessary but not sufficient knowledge and activities for project success (PMBOK, 2017; Bull, 2010; Thiry, 2007; Mill, 2005; Morris & Pinto, 2004; PMI, 2002).

This is often the case due to the growing unpredictability, collusion, and dynamic nature of the environment surrounding the implementation of projects, particularly in less developed countries. It also necessitates a more accommodating, adaptable, and people-focused management styles where project managers are increasingly focused on managing people inside and outside of their project organizations to improve project performance and provide value to project stakeholders (Ahmed et al., 2013). Several studies in the project leadership subfield have identified poor leadership as the major contributing factor for project failure in many development projects (Klopenborg & Shriberg, 2002; Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). Evidence supports the views by Ismail and Fathi (2019), Bull (2010), Thiry (2007), and Mill (2005) who advance the need for project managers to develop competencies and skills for motivating and influencing their teams and other actors within the broader project ecosystem.

The current article is structured around several interlinked sections. Section one sets the foundation by explaining different perspectives of project performance and success based on the two major project management perspectives and methodological approaches. Section two has two major parts: the first presents and discusses different elements of project management, leadership and success derived from selected relevant empirical literature; while the second part critically discusses the key theories that inform project management and leadership. Section three illustrates the procedure and processes that were involved in appraising and developing the article, while section four presents and discusses key results and findings from different sources, particularly from the critical review, of issues and documents pertaining to different project management, leadership and success discourses and debates. The last section includes the conclusion and recommendations based on the key findings of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Studies on Project Leadership and Management

Like other management sciences, it is difficult to draw a clear line between project management and leadership. Yet, to be effective and successful, project managers need both management and leadership competencies. As noted by Bull (2010), Thiry (2007), and Mill (2005), there is no special position within an organizational arrangement where someone is appointed or employed as a project leader in both conventional and project-based organizations. This suggests that the management and the leading of a project team and activities are two distinctive roles undertaken by one person (PMOBOK, 2017). As explained elsewhere in this article, there is increasing evidence that if we want to increase the rate of project success, we should increase the speed of converting project managers into project leaders. The emphasis on the need for leadership came around the 21st century following countless challenges that were being encountered by many project managers. As shown in Table 1, project management can be differentiated from project leadership using overlapping criteria.

Table 1: Management versus Leadership Project Management Approaches

Approach to project management	Management	Leadership
Focus	• Monitoring and control of the project activities and individuals • Focus on project technicalities, completion of project on time, specified time and standard, coping with complexity, accept the status quo	• Deals with strategic issues in setting project direction • Goal achievement, higher level project outcomes and impact and sustainability • People oriented, coping with changes, challenge the status quo
Competencies and skills needed	Competent in project management technicalities such as project management, methodologies, and software	Human relations skills such as stakeholder engagement, team empowerment, motivation and retention
Project management approaches	Blueprint /waterfall	Adaptive/agile

Source: Author's creativity

From Table 1, it could be argued that management and leadership perspectives may play a distinctive, but a complementary, role towards achieving project success. Thus, as much as we need project managers to be versatile with management technicalities, characteristics and skills, there are observations that managing project-based organizations demands more of leadership qualities and

competencies than the former (Thiry, 2007; Moore, 2000; Richards, 2011). Thierry (2007) and Morris and Pinto (2004) observed that the use of linear and mechanist approaches embedded in the many traditional project management methodologies can only thrive within capital-intensive contexts, particularly in construction projects with clear goals, straightforward procedures and less uncertainty throughout a project cycle management. However, this has not always been the case, especially with increasing implementation of social projects that are often surrounded by complex social, political and ecological environments (Morris & Pinto, 2004). In view of this, some observers—such as Clarke (2004), O'Sullivan (2000) and Blair (2005)—emphasize the need for project managers to employ more holistic and integrative approaches to accommodate interests and politics from a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that projects create value to the lives of the intended beneficiaries.

More emphasis on project leadership than management approaches is also prompted by the truth that, unlike conventional organizations that are relatively more stable, project-based organizations are often new organizations to new environments and stakeholders, and which comprise teams with different education and cultural backgrounds (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2000). Such complex and dynamic environments require managers to employ a series of leadership skills to manipulate a wide spectrum of project environment and influence, empower and motivate a project team and other stakeholders, while exploiting existing diversities towards a common goal (Lindkvist, 2004; Morris & Pinto, 2004; Clarke, 2004).

2.2 Theories and Approaches for Project Management and Leadership

To understand the strategic role of leadership in ensuring project success, one may need to revisit different management and leadership theories and approaches that determine the philosophies, approaches and styles of managing both the project activities and people in a project organization. Important to all these theories and approaches is that each theory and approach offers different explanation over the strengths and limitations of different management and leadership styles likely to affect project management processes, project outcomes; and the relations between project managers, teams and the larger project environment.

2.3 Managerial Functional and Managerial Role Approach Theories

Project management as a new field of management borrows heavily from other management sciences. Thus, for many years, management theories—such as managerial functional and managerial role approaches—have been widely used to understand the functions, particularly of how project managers are supposed to perform and behave (Daft, 2011). In this section, the two theories are presented and discussed to justify the need for both management and leadership qualifications towards effective project management.

To start with, the managerial functional approach (MFA) is probably the most common theory/framework used to describe the key functions of managers, in this case, project managers. As a theory and framework for management, the MFA was first coined by Henry Fayol in his attempt to explain the key functions and activities of a manager (Daft, 2011; Juli, 2011). As a managing director of a big mining company, he used his experience to describe five major functions of a manager. There is a general consensus that management in different industries—including project-based organizations—is likely to be guided by the Fayol management functions. Key to this theory is that project managers are supposed to perform a series of interconnected strategic duties (functions) in the course of exercising their management powers and responsibilities (Table 2). Fayol divided these functions into five major categories, ranging from planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling and leading, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Fayol Key Functions of the Project Manager

Key Categorical Function	Detailed Functions	Management vs Leadership
1) Planning	Setting strategic direction, defining the project scope, scanning the environment, setting project objectives	Both management and leadership
2) Organizing	Structuring different specialized units to accomplish the project goal, assigning roles and responsibilities and reporting lines to units and individual people	More of management but with some elements of leadership
3) Coordinating	Ensuring coherence of different functional departments towards project performance	Inclined more to management
4) Controlling	Monitoring of project activities, reporting progress and people behaviour	More of management with some elements of leadership especially the people element
5) Leading	Influencing others (team and stakeholders), manipulating the project environment, empowering and motivating the project team	A typical leadership

Source: Author's creativity

Table 2 indicates that the MFA theory is an important theory that shows the practical reality of what is happening in the field of project management. For example, despite its concentration on project management technicalities (1-3), it still addresses leadership issues through stages 4 and 5.

On the other hand, the managerial role approach (MRA) was developed by Henry Mintzberg in 1970, both as a continuity and critique of the Fayol linear approach to organizational management. As a departure from Fayol's linear function of management, there was a concern that uncertainties and chaos embedded in the field of management could not allow managers to follow a systematic procedure as proposed in the Fayol managerial approach. Thus, unlike the Fayol management functions, the MRA borrows from behavioural sciences to explain how a manager should behave when fulfilling the key functions focusing on describing how managers perform their key functions. Of interest to project management, the MFA focuses on leadership competencies and skills that are critical in managing uncertainties and complexities embedded in modern-world industries, including project-based organizations. Based on this approach and theory, managers are expected to focus more on human relations categorized as interpersonal, informational and decisional, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Fayol Key Roles of the Project Manager

Management Role	Specific Activities	Management vs Leadership
1) Interpersonal	• Maintain relationship with internal and external stakeholders, • Lead and direct the team as icon and image of the project, • Act as a link between team and outside world	Typical leadership characteristics
2) Information	Receive, collect, filter, manage and disseminate information in and outside the project organization	Both leadership and management characteristics
3) Decision	Make critical decisions about the project including resource distribution and negotiation on behalf of the project organization	Both leadership and management

Sources: Adapted and modified from Daft, 2011

3. Methodology

As is the case with many conceptual papers, this article employed desk review and analytical framework in the field of *strategic project management and leadership*. Both empirical and theoretical reviews were systematically conducted to gain insight of the various studies, theories and frameworks informing the emerging field of strategic project management and leadership. As indicated in Table 4, the empirical and theoretical reviews focused on several issues to appreciate the strategic roles of project leadership for project success and performance.

Table 4: Empirical and Theoretical Aspects

Aspect for Review	Objective of Review	Information Sought
1) Essence of the project management	Linkages and differences between project management and leadership	Differences and complementarities between the two project management aspects, the strengths and weaknesses of each and why the project managers should employ leadership qualities
2) Managerial functional and role approaches	Reflect on the different functions and roles of project managers	How key aspects of the two related theories inform project management and leadership, qualities and skills needed for effective project leadership and management
3) Blueprint and adaptive project management approaches	Highlight the essence and key features of different project management approaches	How the two approaches influence project management and leadership styles, the factors influencing the adoption of the two approaches, how each approach impacts the project performance and sustainability and lastly the complementarity of the two
4) Results-based project management	Appreciate the role of project leadership and management towards results-based project management	Qualities needed by managers if they have to focus on higher level results, how the results-based conception influences the adoption of either project leadership or management orientation
5) Leadership theories, skills and styles	Appreciate the contribution of different leadership theories and styles in managing projects more effectively and sustainably	How different leadership theories and styles influence and affect project teams, stakeholder participation, and ultimately good project management practices

Source: Author's creativity

4. Results and Discussion

Elements such as blueprint and adaptive approaches, results-based management, leadership competencies, extended dimension of project success, progressive stage of leadership in project cycle management and leadership theories, styles and skills required for effective project leadership and management were highlighted, identified, and discussed from the desk review. The elements are elaborated in the sections that follow.

4.1 Project Management Approaches

Project success or failure, among other things, depends on methodological approaches and philosophies guiding the governance and implementation of a project. Both project management theorists and practitioners now agree on the following once debated truths (Morris & Pinto, 2004; Lindkvist, 2004). One, there is no one superior project management; two, there is no one-fits-all project management approach; and three, the choice of a certain project management style depends on a combination of several factors, including the experience and management culture of the key and powerful stakeholders, professional and academic background, and even more so, the nature of the project. In view of this, project managers have often employed one of the following project management approaches.

4.2.1 Blueprint Project Management Approach

The blueprint management approach, also known as the closed approach, emerged around 1950 and 1970 as part of reductionist and rationalist thinking. Through this approach, the implementation of a project is guided by pre-described steps and a detailed plan of activities informed by scientific principles and procedures to set up activities, outputs, and schedules as required. For many years, blueprint project management was a strategy used particularly in engineering projects whose implementation involves well-known specifications, procedures and standardized outputs. To a large extent, blueprint management, as a methodological approach, resembles waterfalls and many other 'top-down', often country-wide, programmes across many sectors that would otherwise be considered as part of adaptive methodology. This argument refutes the conventional thinking that sought to classify projects as either blueprint or adaptive on the basis of their sectoral orientation (Therkildsen, 1988).

4.2.2 Adaptive Project Management Approach

The adaptive approach became a dominant project management philosophy around the 1980s. The adoption of this approach came as a result of the realization that many project management technicalities and standardized methodologies advanced through the mechanistic, linear and one-fits-all methodologies constituting the blueprint model, were not working in many real development environments (Thierry, 2007; Morris & Pinto, 2004; Therkildsen, 1988). Thus, according to Andrews et al. (2013) and Therkildsen (1988), as opposed to mechanistic and linear approaches, the foundation of the adaptive approach—also known as iterative (agile) project management approach—is based on a package of principles that call for continuous planning and dialogue with the intended beneficiaries; regular monitoring and evaluation to encourage collaborative learning; involvement of a range of stakeholders to increase project viability, relevance and sustainability; and the adaption of a project to the local context to promote and accommodate local concerns, solutions and priorities.

Table 5: Blueprint and Adaptive Managements Approaches

Approach	Blueprint Management/Water Fall	Adaptive Management/Agile
Project goal	Getting the job done on time, on budget, and within requirements	Getting business results, meeting multiple criteria
Project plan	A collection of activities that are executed as planned to meet the triple constraint	Organizing a process to achieve the expected goals and business results
Planning	Plan once at project initiation	Plan at outset and re-plan when needed
Managerial approach	Rigid, focused on initial plan	Flexible, changing, adaptive
Project work	Predictable, certain, linear, simple	Unpredictable, uncertain, nonlinear, complex
Environment effect	Minimal, detached after the project is launched	Affects the project throughout its execution
Project control	Identify deviations from plan, and put things back on track	Identify changes in the environment, and adjust the plans accordingly
Distinction	All projects are the same	Projects differ
Management style	One size fits all	Adaptive approach; one size does *not* fit all

Source: Authors' creativity

Debates over the strengths and weaknesses of each approach on the one hand, and the attempt to classify projects as either blueprint or adaptive, on the other, are now things of the past. Questions are now focusing on where, when and how to employ one of these approaches more efficiently. However, development practitioners and scientists are increasingly questioning if the existing approaches are two distinctive project management methodologies. Like the management and leadership debate, there is the view that it is extremely difficult to draw a line between blueprint and adaptive approaches in project management. As noted by Andrews et al. (2013), at the beginning projects tend to be dominated by several elements of the blueprint approach; but for some reason 'somewhere', as a struggle to adapt to local and social contexts, managers may decide to take the adaptive way of management.

4.3 Leadership Competencies and Skills for Managing Project Teams

From the perspective of management science, management is defined as the art and science of doing things through other people (Burke & Barron, 2014; Kloppenborg & Shriberg, 2002; Daft, 2011; Juli, 2011). From this understanding, project management can simply be described as processes and tasks of delivering project activities through a group of people brought together under

the coordination of a project manager. In several publications of PMI (2000, 2008, 2017), a project is simply defined as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service within a specified time. Unfortunately, the so-called project teams often involve people with different cultural and professional backgrounds, who are assembled together to accomplish a certain project task within a limited time (Thiry, 2007; Shenhar et al., 1997). Thus, managing a project team is one of the most cumbersome and volatile tasks managers are exposed to. It is accepted that managing project teams is probably more complex and important than even managing project technicalities and activities. It also envisaged that project success is often a result of team effort and performance: thus the critical role of a project manager is to support and coordinate this effort based on the situation of a team (Lategan & Fore, 2015; Thiry, 2007). The role of a project manager, in this case as a leader, is to build a strong team through a series of strategic actions such as building team cohesion, capacity building and empowerment, providing strategic direction, and motivating and influencing the team to annex and direct their efforts and focus on achieving the project objectives (Lategan & Fore, 2015; Barron, 2014; Avolio et al., 1999).

Table 6: Leadership Qualities and Skills

Approach	Key Competencies	Skills Needed	Importance
Management	Mastering project management technicalities such as planning, monitoring, and scheduling	Team building, coordination and supervision skills	Increase project efficiency to comply with project quality standards within time and budget
Leadership		Team motivation, influencing facilitation and skills, capacity building, transformation and empowerment	Enable and raise the team performance to achieve the intended objective

Source: Authors' creativity

4.4 Project Leadership Theories, Skills and Styles

As it is the case with other scientific disciplines, leadership theories may be used as a framework to explain the leadership qualities, skills and styles needed; and why a certain type of leadership is chosen and is likely to work within certain social and institutional arrangements. The discipline of project management may benefit from most of the common leadership theories presented in many sources of literature. However, for the purpose of this article, focus is on at least four theories, namely, trait, transformational, transactional and situational leadership theories as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Project Leadership Theories, Skills and Styles

Theory	Contribution to Project Success	Required Skills	Leadership Style	Project Management Approach
Trait	Qualities and knowledge of the manager will ensure project efficiency	Influencing skills	Often dictatorship	Blueprint
Transformational	Managers use their human relation skills such as influence, motivation, and communication to empower the team, to imitate its own character and performance attributes	Influencing, motivation skills	Participatory and laissez-faire	Adaptive/ Agile
Situational leadership	Adaptive and problem-solving approaches will be applied to provide the right solution and address real life challenges	Influencing, motivation skills	Participatory and laissez-faire	Adaptive/ Agile

Source: Authors' creativity

4.5 Results-Based Project Management

Managing for results has emerged as an important management approach in both conventional and project-based organizations (UNFPA, 2001). This came after the realization that the implementation-based project management approach was prompting project managers and their teams to focus their energy and resources towards realizing lower level project elements and results, such as efficient use of project resources, efficient implementation of project activities, and maximum delivery of project outputs and services. As a new project management philosophy—and indeed as part of the larger results-based management culture—the results-based project management (RBPM) approach emerged after the realization that, despite continued and increased support and funding of many poverty alleviation efforts, the level of poverty did not go down as it was formerly expected (Thiry, 2007; Morris & Pinto, 2004; Clarke, 2004; Therkildsen, 1988). Following this observation, various international development organizations such as the UNDP, donor agencies, coupled with national governments and parliamentarians, have in the last two decades called for project managers to demonstrate practical value for money invested in their respective interventions, by focusing their resources and locus towards higher level project results, such as outcomes and impacts beyond activities and project deliverables (Chan et al., 2001; UNFPA, 2001).

In two decades, organizations—including, but not limited to, the United Nations, World Bank, European Union, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and the UNFPA—have been advocating for RBPM, among other things, to promote good governance and best practices in development interventions; including accountability, transparency, project performance and project achievement at different levels of project spectrum (Turner & Muller, 2006, 2005; UNFPA, 2001; PMI, 2000). Like other logical results frameworks, Figure 1 shows how the RBPM applies a result chain to develop an iterative planning and management process that starts with a clear picture of project objectives, outcomes, down to inputs. As a strategy to operationalize the RBPM philosophy, many development partners including—but not limited to, NGOs—have increasingly been promoting and adapting new ways of assessing and evaluating project performance, such as though results-based monitoring and evaluation, and participatory monitoring and evaluation. As part of the larger RBPM framework, RBPM is geared towards collecting baseline data to indicate the conditions before interventions, focus on evaluating project relevancy rather than the involved processes, assess changes and value of the project from the perspective of the project stakeholders, assess value for money, and focus on results than mere project activities (Chan et al., 2001; Thiry, 2007; Shenhar & Dvir, 2004; Shenhar et al., 1997).

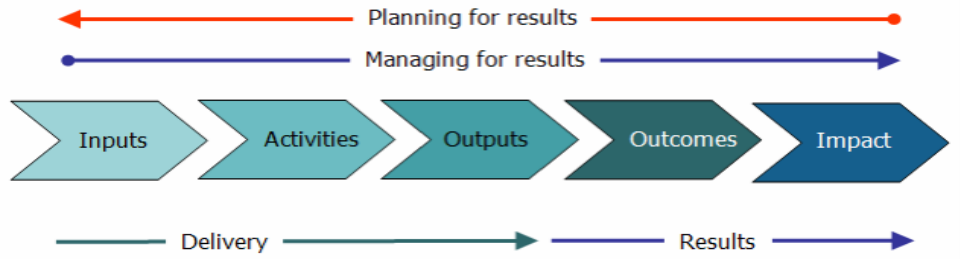

Figure 1: Result Based Management Chain
Source: Result Based Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit, 2009

4.6 Extended Dimensions of Project Success

There is no universal criterion of what could be considered as project success (Lategan & Fore, 2015; Turner & Muller, 2006; Chan et al., 2001; Thiry, 2007). The conventional approach over project success has for many years been dominated by quality, time and budget; also known as the iron triangle (Chan et al., 2001; Shenhar et al., 1997). From this perspective, a project manager is considered to be successful if s/he has been able to accomplish the project within the required time; meet the specified procedures and quality standards, and—more importantly—within the budget line.

Studies such as Chan et al. (2001) and Turner and Muller (2006, 2005) provided a more comprehensive and holistic view of project success. Such views are supported by the frameworks of Shenhar et al. (1997) and Atkson (1999). Shenhar

et al. (1997), for example, used four criteria to describe different levels of project success. These include project efficiency (short-term measures, complete in time, within specified budget); impacts of the project on beneficiaries (meeting performance measures, customer needs, functional requirements and technical specifications); business success (total improvement on the organization or lives of the project beneficiaries); and lastly, preparing for the future, which entails assessment of the likelihood of the project manager to sustain both project organization, outcomes and activities (Cacammese & Bragantini, 2012; Thiry, 2007). Such a clarification of project success resembles, with slight differences, that of Atkson (1999), who attempted to categorize project success on the basis of increased project efficiency, delivering the right things according to project standards, and meeting budget and timelines (the delivery stage), on the one hand; and more of a comprehensive success that measures project success based on project assessment of the extent to which it has been able to satisfy the needs and interests of the intended beneficiaries, on the other.

4.7 Progressive Stages of Leadership in the Project Cycle Management

Effective project leadership needs to be considered as a continuous and overlapping process in the entire project life cycle (Lategan & Fore, 2015; Kerzner, 2013; Heagney, 2011; Shenhar & Dvir, 2004; Dvir et al., 2002; Turner & Muller, 2005). While the managerial project approach assumed a distinctive role of management and leadership functions, the use of project cycle management suggests that project leadership is a progressive process starting from the first to the last stage of a project cycle. The project cycle management approach, also known as project life cycle, consists of five phases: initiation, planning and design, execution, monitoring and controlling, and project closure. Early studies on the role of leadership on the performance of different types of projects attributed project failure to either the lack of leadership, and/or poor leadership styles at different stages of the project life cycle (Ismail & Fathi, 2019; PMI, 2008). Lategan and Fore (2015), PMI (2008), Taylor (2004) and Avolio et al. (1999) seem to suggest that successful project management requires a project manager to perform strategic and sensitive decisions, including manipulating the micro, meso, and macro political environments to work in favour of a project.

During the initiation (programming) stage, project management plays a leadership role as it tries to analyse and understand existing policies, strategies and programmes operating at global, regional and national levels so that it can adapt the projects to operate within these broad frameworks. Although analytical skills are often linked to the managerial realm, there is increasing evidence that analysing and understanding the politics involved in aligning projects to policies, and vice versa, requires a skilful and strategic project manager (PMI, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Shenhar & Dvir, 2004). Here, the stages in the cycle involve project analysis (context analysis, stakeholder analysis and engagement, problem analysis, objective analysis); and later developing a logical framework matrix as part of project formulation and appraisal, environmental and social impact assessment,

use of human relation skills such as team facilitation, effective listening, consensus building, negotiations, focus group discussion, problem solving and giving feedback. The use of such adaptive and participatory planning techniques requires project managers to develop high leadership competencies that will focus more on managing people and stakeholders in the wider social, political and economic systems (Lategan & Fore, 2015).

The growing use of participatory and adaptive project methodologies have increased the chances for local communities to be involved in the formulation and implementation of projects (Mashinya, 2007). However, several studies—including Kengera (2016) and Songorwa (1999)—have revealed that the intention of governments to involve communities in the management of their natural resources in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa, among other things, has been constrained by the lack of interest from the community, lack of effective community facilitation, lack of communication, and the lack of skilful managers to coordinate diverse teams of stakeholders at different phases of implementing community-based programmes. All these suggest that the future of these programmes will largely rely on the degree of implementing more adaptive and flexible policy guidelines that are supported by strong leadership and coordination at different levels of intervention.

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

This article has generally discussed and appraised the strategic role of project leadership as a critical factor towards project success without undermining the importance of the conventional project management methodologies, tools and software. Such analyses and discussions have clearly demonstrated that successful project managers are obliged to employ holistic and integrative methodologies and approaches necessary for making their projects more relevant, meaningful and sustainable. Either, issues and arguments raised in this article have also shown that there is no single project management style and approach that is superior to the rest. The choice of certain project management approaches, techniques, methodologies, on one hand; and leadership styles, on the other, need to be carefully scrutinized and selected to suit different types of projects across a wide sectoral and project spectrum.

As is the case with the management aspect of a project, leadership is a continuous process to be employed at different stages of the management of a project cycle. As part of policy recommendation, this article recommends that, to improve project performance, impact and sustainability, project management should try to adopt a more effective leadership approach than the current trend of focusing on project management technicalities. Efforts should be made to enhance the capacity of many technical-based project managers towards developing leadership competencies and skills such as problem-solving skills, communication skills, transformation of a team, and effective stakeholder engagement and communication.

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