

COMMUNICATING CORPORATE CULTURE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The understanding of cultural dimensions in organizational behavior is one approach of looking at specific elements under organizational behavior that could be considered in improving organizational performance. This article looks at corporate culture as an aspect of human life within an organization which has perpetual influence to a better or worse performance of corporations. It is being considered as a dynamic organization behavior which can improve organizational performance. The author puts the leadership role in the creating as well as communicating of desirable corporate cultures to the organization members who are involved in constructing and sharing the meanings in an organization. Strong corporate cultures are most favorably discussed than weak corporate, cultures consistently with the definitions presented. We have also presented indications for strong and weak corporate cultures for the purpose of sensitizing corporate leadership styles which have a role to play in promoting and communicating good organizational behavior for organizational development.

Persistently the article identifies types of corporate culture, manifestations and advantages of an organization which has articulated strong culture which promotes good employees behavior which in a long run may enhance organizational performance and development. The conceptual framework of corporate culture has been undertaken as a fundamental cognitive dimension that influences the way employees behave, act and develop sense of identity to organizations. The totality of these behavioral aspects have greater influence towards organizational performance. At another level the article suggests that the success of companies depends on the corporate leadership which may be able to create and communicate strong corporate cultures, which in turn may necessitate increase in performance and productivity. Finally, the article throws a challenge to corporate leaders to see cultural change as inevitable factor which all should be thriving to achieve if at all they want to deliver necessary success to their organizations.

Introduction

Sackmann (1991: 24) noted that "description of culture focus variously on concepts such as ideologies, coherent set of beliefs, the basic philosophy, basic assumptions, a set of core values, or a set of norms. The few studies that have been conducted do not help to clarify this conceptual jungle". Such descriptions only reflect the selective emphasis that is placed on any one of these concepts in addition to that, the use of these concepts seems, at times, arbitrary because some authors use for example, values in the

same way that others use beliefs or vice versa. It is therefore the attempt of this paper to clarify the meaning of the term organizational culture to a meaningful understanding which may enhance corporate life and development.

Our discussion on organizational culture would amongst other things try to envisage the proposition by Sackmann and Martin (1992), that discussion of organizational culture are conceptually confusing "... Sackmann (1991) shows her dilemma to the understanding of what

is real meant to the variable of culture as long as there are many variables which are attached to it. This discussion would try to go through a number of school of thoughts that have discussed at length, the concept of culture and organizational culture as an attempt to see how the understanding of corporate culture can contribute to the study and practice of organizational behavior and development.

Organizational culture in context

In the attempt to verify what and how academic researchers, consultants and managers have conceptualized their term corporate or organizational culture some definitions and descriptions are provided. For instance, Bate(1984:43) sees organization culture as a subject which has failed to capture the serious attention of researchers. This kind of negligence has existed due to the following factors: First, it has been overlooked as a factor in work behavior. Secondly, it is viewed as a vague entity and so it is simply ignored. Thirdly, it is considered to be a component of organization climate and then just ignored. Generally speaking, there has been a general failure to comprehend the gist of cultural knowledge towards healthy development organizational environments. Frank and Brownell (1989:196) define culture by viewing it as a concept with many tentacles that have been looked by many different scholars from different perspectives. They revisit Smircich (1983) views who discusses several important differences in the way various scholars have viewed organizational culture. There are those scholars who have looked organizational culture as a critical variable, (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982) and those who have looked at culture as a root metaphor, (Harris & Cronen, 1979; Pacanowsky & O'donnell- Trujillo, 1983 Ponaly & Mitoff, 1979). This kind of approach adheres to the similar contention by Sackmann (Ibid.) that organizational culture has been studied and looked at as a conceptual jungle that embraces a basket of variables (i.e. ideologies, beliefs, philosophy, basic assumptions, set of values, norms etc). Deal and Kennedy (1982:23)

for example, give a list of corporate values which at one level appear as slogans, phrases, or more or less like the mission statements. They call these phrases 'core values' because they become the essence of the organizational philosophy. In an example of the corporate slogan "*Caterpillar: 24 - hours parts service anywhere in the world*", we are told it symbolizes an extraordinary commitment to meeting customer' needs. The phrase is understood as a company belief, at the same time it is considered a slogan, value, and philosophy which are all embraced under the term organizational culture. The tantalizing question is to what extent can we think and say that the concept of corporate culture is an attributing factor towards building a unified cultural group for organizational development?

Looking at the complexity of defining culture, Williams in Bennett, et. al. (1981:43) gives three categories of defining culture. The first category ; is the 'ideal' in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. The second category is 'documentary' in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work in which a detailed way human thought and experience in which variously recorded, third, is the social definition of culture in which culture is a description of a particular way of life in which expresses certain meanings and values not only ;in art and learning but also in institutions and dictionary behavior".

Culture as defined by Eldrdge and Crombie (1974:89)'is a characteristic of all organizations through which at the same time, their individually and ; uniqueness is expressed. The culture of an organization refers to the unique norms, values, beliefs, ways of behaving and so that characterize the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done". Mckinsey & Company considered corporate culture as the unique behavioral aspects which simply tells" the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982:4), the working culture that many organizations have failed to implant.

A more precise definition by Schein, (1986:9) describes culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered or developed by given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems". This definition cuts across culture as perceived at societal level, [e.g. countries - that we may be talking of American culture, African culture, British culture or Polish culture professional groups, occupational or organization cultures of doing things.

Some other studies on organizational culture not only view culture as values and norms that exist in organizations but also as the dynamic components in organizations that can undergo transformations. Pheysey (1983:3) looks at culture as a concept in academic discipline called Organizational Behavior [OB] as the 'values and beliefs which provide with a programmed way of seeing... and that culture itself is subject to transformation. Managers may deliberately seek to change it'. By adopting Pheyseys; (Ibid.) ideology of transformational changes in organizational culture, we may be tempted to think and accept that the concept of culture is not only 'arbitrary' (Sackmann, op.cit.) but also slippery ;as long as the organizational culture may take different faces at different organizations depending on time and management change.

Organizational culture and Organizational Behavior

The dynamism of culture can be observed at two paradigms. In the first place as the institutionalized organized culture, say for example the organizational beliefs, mission statements, philosophy, ways of dressing, greetings (personal address and identification), recruiting and socialization, these can undergo transformation alongside with time and management changes. At another level, we may be talking about dynamic in organizational subcultures, what Turner, (1971) in Salaman (1979:184) calls

'industrial sub cultures' which he defines as 'the distinctive set of meanings shared by a group of people whose forms of behavior differ to some extent from those of wider society'. It is amongst this group that things like colloquial language, euphemism, jokes, nicknames, greetings, and the like may grow as mushrooms ultimately undergo transformations as organizational subcultures that are used by sub groups in production. At times these may appear to be valued and performed by certain groups of people within an organization as a way of doing and making things done.

Nselibe (1986:13) looks at culture in the new concept of myth and its role to managers in the African environment. Myth provides organizational members with understanding of its relationships between persons, groups and supernatural forces. For instance the Yoruba of Nigeria believe that they are the children of Oduduwa; this defines their relationships amongst themselves to the rest of Nigerians. The concept can be inferred to organizations which have been able to create strong myths that have united all employees to act and behave as one.

In an attempt to analyze the term organizational culture, Schein (1986:6) may be used as a focal point of reference to the understanding of cultural knowledge and the associated components. Schein, (Ibid.) identifies some common meanings which are attached when examining organizational culture. He identifies them as follows:

1. Observed behavioral regulations when people interact, such as language used and rituals around.
2. The norms that evolve in working groups.
3. The dominant values espoused by an organization such as Product Quality or Price Leadership [Deal and Kennedy, 1982]
4. The philosophy that guides an organization's policy toward employee and customers.
5. The rules of game for getting along ;in the organization, 'the ropes' that a new employee must learn in order to become an accepted member.

By adopting such a conceptual framework, one can comprehend the term organizational culture depending on the existing variables that are intended to be a focal point in the discussion. It can therefore be argued that different scholars have dealt with the organizational culture in different ways but still the concept is understood in the line of 'how people get things done in their organizations' by observing their norms, values, philosophy, rituals, language, recruitment and socialization. Salaman (1979:185) observed that 'newcomers learn mastery of their organization culture - they learn the ropes through the process of socialization'. And that the concept manifests itself at different levels in societal, ethnic groups, occupation, profession, and organizations.

Sackmann, (1991:9) traces the etymological development and use of the term culture from the anthropological to sociological point of view. From the anthropology point of view, culture refers to "specific aspects that are considered components of culture such as artifacts, rituals, customs, knowledge, ideas, or symbols." We are further introduced to the development of conceptualization of the concept culture to the modern organizational literature which essentially drew some influential ideas from anthropology which came up with three broad categories of understanding culture; namely, 'holistic perspective' variable perspective 'and' cognitive perspective. (Ibid. p.17). We are exposed to their thinking of 'holistic perspective' that within this perspective culture is defined as patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting. It is from this kind of perception that corporate culture is described as 'a general constellation of beliefs, mores, customs, value systems, behavioral norms and ways of doing things that are unique to each corporation' (ibid p.18). From the variable perspective, culture is defined as "the way of doing things or as manifestations of behavioral norms - more specifically things like rites, rituals, ceremonies, language, jargon, stories, myth, or humor"(p.20). Whereas with the cognitive perspective, modern organizational literature focus on "ideas, concepts, beliefs, values or norms that are seen as the core of the complex

phenomenon called culture" From their point of view culture refers to 'what human learn, what they have in their mind (cognitive domain) and what they do and make'. All these concepts about culture in organizations are aggregated in the Schein's(1985:6) proposition that 'culture should be reserved for deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization'.

The conceptual framework of corporate culture for change and development

In society where there is no defined culture, people tend to misbehave and act harphazadly. The implication is that there are neither ethical norms nor acts which are healthy to that society. Likewise, an organization without clear defined ways of doing things, employees can not know how and what to do for the organizational development. Corporate cultures which are for organizational change and development should therefore must emulate its basic principles and ethics which enhances coherent managerial skills, financial regulations and control, rationize personnel development policies, corporate goals. Should also be able to generate good interpersonal relations, create sense of being responsible to jobs and any other values of the organization. Employees should know what exactly the organization stands for on the one had, on the other hand, they should as well know what they should be doing for the organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982) insist on the need for clear defined strong corporate culture that employees by knowing what exactly is expected of them, employees will waste little time in deciding how to act in a given situation. Whereas in organizations with weak culture on the other hand, employees waste a good deal of time in accomplishing their duties, it takes such long time to make firm decisions, and some employees feel insecure of what they should be doing. The challenge towards our organizations is to re-oriented our organizations to emulate strong cultures that would emanate organizational developments. Organizational leaders should

effectively lead and communicate their vision and values to the employees to follow suit of the desirable corporate culture. We mean the culture that promotes sense of hardworking and discipline at work.

The Influence of Cultural Dimension to Organizational Behavior

The term culture could mean different to different professions. Culture to sociologists means 'Integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, action and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generation, (Deal and Kennedy 1982) to agriculturists, culture has 'agricultural overtones in the word cultivation which means to foster a particular kind of growth (Clampit, 1991:51). In organization behavior studies, the term culture is defined as the way things are being done' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) in an organization. Different organizations have different ways of doing things. In some organizations employees put on unique dresses which reflects their distinct culture of dressing whilst in some other organizations employees greet clients with smiling face. Corporate culture in this sense involves styles of action and thinking, entire symbolic of values (Clampit 1991). It tells what is, what should be, how should be, in words of (Clampit 1991:51) culture consists of fundamental values and beliefs of a group of people' and therefore corporate culture is the underlying belief and value structure of an organization collectively shared by employees that is symbolically expressed in a variety of covert and subtle ways. Lovis (1980) recognizes corporate culture since it manifests itself in the shared sets of assumptions, beliefs, and values that are held by members of an occupational group. Culture acts as a cognitive map that influences the way in which the context is defined.

Manifestations of corporate culture

Corporate culture must express itself through the deeds of its employees because lives of organizations are expressed in the deeds of employees.

Employees attitudes towards work manifests the innate organizational culture. How employees value their work individually and or collectively. In an organization which has strong culture for example employees are committed to the values' of their organization (Clampit 1991). How often do we value our organizational goals, rules and procedures? How often do we play active roles to realize the institutional mission?

The fundamental questions to organization managers is how successful have they inculcated the desired corporate culture? The culture that make people love to work, culture that builds trust to each other, and culture that enhances transparency in an organization.

There are means through which corporate cultures are manifested; there could be: **Articulate corporate culture**; Articulate corporate culture is expressed through: Mission statements, slogans or philosophies. Mission statements and slogans provide clues on what sort of an organization is, how is the organization, in other words, they provide clear images of organizations to the outside world. For example, **Imperial Incorporated** has become to be known as telemarketing firm that has consistently grown because of its internalized corporate mission which says;

Through the development of our people Imperial, Inc. intends to be the recognized national leader in Teleservicing that provides quality products and is committed to uncalled customer service and state-of-the-art distribution systems, while meeting our profitability and growth objectives.

Such a mission statement has potential symbolic

values to its employees who are embedded in the words 'our people'. It shows that the organization values its employees' development as it recognizes that its existence and development come through the development of its people. It is therefore through such articulated mission statements that employees are tightly attached to the corporate goals. It may be envisaged that because of this strong culture which is expressed through the mission statement employees are certain about what the organization stands for (Clampit 1991). On the other hand, the organization realizes its goals because its employees are committed to the organizational values.

Let's examine the potentially of slogans in enhancing organizational cultures. At one time Professor Chijumba (1990) who coined a slogan 'Hiari Yako' which connotes 'It is up to you to decide, if you want to stay in the organization you have to work accordingly, alternatively, if you don't want to stay in the organization, you don't have to work. Deal and Kennedy (1982) noted that 'companies that did best over the long time were those that believed in something. For example;

GE: had a slogan: 'Progress is our most important product'

Chubb Insurance : 'Excellence in underwriting'

Examples of some other Slogans:

'We do it all for you'

'Fly the friendly skies'

Such messages confirm and clarify the company's value - such as customer service, warmth and personal touch, education for excellency, quality education, quality management. The philosophies recapture the sense of loving to work, sense of discipline at work and sense of being responsible to an organization. By and large that is an attempt to create and build a new culture in which employees feel the need to be responsible to their jobs. Impliedly the articulate culture as a healthy corporate culture enhances institutional development as employees will categorically know their roles and responsibilities towards achieving organizational goals.

Certainly we can speculate some other organizations with articulate slogans or philosophies. However, it is necessary and important to envisage; What sort of culture do they portray? How do these beliefs, attitudes, slogans, or philosophies affect job performance? How would you characterize the job performance in the presence or absence of the culture?

Deal and Kennedy (1982) argues that "strong culture" is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of time whilst Frank and Brown well (1989) identifies corporate strong culture as 'when organizational leaders effectively communicate their vision, when values are acted upon by all organizational members', more emphatically when all employees work as a team in the realization of the organizational goals.

Types of corporate cultures

It was briefly noted earlier on that there are some organizations with strong cultures and others with weak cultures Clampit (1991) makes a distinction between healthy cultures and unhealthy cultures with the following characteristics.

Healthy Cultures	Weak Cultures
1. There are stated values	there are unstated values in conflict.
2. Employees are certain about what the organization stands for	Employees are uncertain about what the organization stands for.
3. Employees are committed to the values	Employees are pathetic
4. Violations of values are treated seriously	Violation of values may be treated seriously.

Source; Adapted from; Clampit (1989)

One can assess his/her organizational culture using this model chart of values and decide where he/she belongs. Nevertheless, our prime target, I presume should be to implant seeds' of a strong corporate culture into our organizations where we should categorically state our objectives/goals, employees know exactly the values which the organization stands for, where employees are

committed to observe rules and procedures of their jobs.

An alternative way of looking at the types of corporate culture is proposed by Sackmann (op.cit) under the umbrella of 'generic constructs and mechanism of perceiving, interpreting, believing, and acting' which are represented in what she refers as the 'cultural knowledge map' with the components:

- "Dictionary knowledge": this is a kind of cultural knowledge in organizations which describes the slice of organizational reality that is considered relevant in a given cultural setting by its members.
- "Directory knowledge": which contains information on how to do things', usually it is contained in job descriptions and or passed to employees under orientation programme.
- "Recipe knowledge": it represents prescriptive recommendations based on collective experiences and judgments. It contains recipes for survival and success'. Usually it is expressed through corporate stories, myth, rumors, and grape vines on how employees work live and survive in the company.
- "Axiomatic knowledge": involves explanations about why certain strategy is chosen, why a certain organizational structure is preferred over another'. This is handled by Chief executives and other managers as the think tanks of the organizations.

What Sackmann (op.cit) proposes is a new fashion of looking at corporate culture as an element of Organizational Behavior. By labeling dictionary knowledge as the slice of organizational reality that is considered relevant (p.35) she is more or less referring to the cultural beliefs of what the members of an organization believe on an adheres to as their way of getting things done in their organizational setting. Or by conceptualizing what she calls recipe knowledge as a representation of prescriptive recommendations based on collective experiences and judgments; that is nothing else than what other schools of thought have referred as the handy hints on the basic assumptions, philosophy

and beliefs that members of an organization are being socialized to, inherit them and pass them to the new generations.

External indicators

The category of external indicators involves all those aspects which define organizations to the external environments as well as within the organization. We consider things like mission statements which have external as well as internal values. Mission statement expresses what kind of organization it is, how does it performance, where would it like to reach (corporate vision). In a way it expresses the macro-organizational perspectives. Frank and Brownwell.(1989) comments that 'effective organizations articulate a central mission statement, that is they present a clear definition of their purpose and reason for being. By doing so they fulfill the condition of having a strong corporate culture in which employees would be guided to perform their duties effectively. When employees have clear vision and goals in mind about how the company should operate, they tend to excel their performance. However, it should be noted that, by merely articulating the mission statement does not assure a lively strong corporate culture, it is only when the members are fundamentally operating in accordance with the values stated in the mission statements. It is the commitment which every member bears in achieving the stated vision and goals. This requires high standards of moral, mental and physical commitment to organizations.

Communication channels

Formal Communication channels in organizations indicate a significant nature of culture. There must be clear lines of information from one person to another or from one department to another as a cultural rule of an organization. However, much should be done by the leadership style to see as to whether the channels of top-down, or upward forms of communication are culturally oriented to every single communication.

Internal indicators of corporate

culture

We shall briefly mention them as they are self explanatory, these include, language, myth, stories, rituals, dressing, greetings etc. Language aspects: The use of similes, analogies, euphemism and metaphors. Dressing habit: Managers in suits and neckties or employees in white shirts, etc.

Who should spearhead the creation of strong corporate culture

Culture in organizations is created and killed by people. There has been a tendency of employees to follow suit to what their managers say or do. The Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and managers are the most likely originators of corporate cultures, they have potential powers to create and influence their employees towards corporate cultures. Managers do act as the symbolic heroes of their organizations, they are the ones who orientate employees on the Do's and Don'ts in the organization, by doing so they implant the corporate culture. Moreover, Managers are symbolic models of good deeds, by their deeds, organizations may cultivate strong or weak cultures indicators of corporate culture.

We have identified signs of strong and weak cultures in organizations, we have also indicated how corporate cultures are created, we can therefore be able to identify organizations with lively corporate culture. We can categorize some visible and invisible features of companies culture, through which the basic assumptions of organizations operate and the values which members of the company share in common. Schein (1985) has identified internal and external indicators of corporate culture. We shall use his approach to re-examine the existence and influence of culture into our organizations.

Winning the Business Environmental Culture

The world of Business today is such in turbulent situations. The competitiveness is so much speeding. Every business is trying to excel by acquiring more clients. The secret towards achieving any of the preset corporate goals is to enrich the business culture which promotes employees cooperation, positive attitude towards, job performance, customers care and high discipline at work. Through communicating pleasant organizational culture to the public, one

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Employees attitude towards corporation					
2	Customers service care					
3	Communication channels (internal)					
4	Communication systems (external)					
5	Transparency and open-minded					
6	Time keeping at work					
7	Time wastage					
8	Adherence to policies made					
9	Completing decisions					
10	Restrictive centralize decision making					
11	Encourage creativity					

NB: 1 = Very little importance,
5 = Very high importance

would be promoting the good image of his/her company which in a long run may be having greater impact towards organizational performance. Which elements would you like to promote as the required corporate culture in your organization.

Hizkman and Siwa (1984) present a list qualities of a good corporate leader in the cultural dimension perspective; She/he must demonstrate New Age Skills (NAS) such as: Vision, Versality, Focus, and Patience. On top of that we can add some good qualities of good corporate leadership as the ability to:

- Create sense of commitment to our job.
- Excel in customer service care.
- Create transparent information network.
- Articulate the corporate mission action plans.
- Prevent corruption.

Leaders as Corporate Images

Most corporations are seen in the eyes of their leaders. Organizations with or without outstanding performance are mostly associated with their leaders and leadership styles. Those which build good images to public is because of their good leadership, attitudes, values and performance created by their leaders. Frank & Brownwell (1989) asks from the corporate culture perspectives, what makes an outstanding leader? Why is it that some individuals have tremendous impact on their organizations? Answers to these questions would automatically be emulating qualities of a good corporate leader. Over some years of performance to some known corporations in Tanzania, when you mention names of their organizations, people have tended to equate leader's names with institutions. Institutions are seen in the eyes of their leaders. Think of Amon Nsekela and NBC (National Bank of Commerce), Masha with Tanesco (Tanzania Electric Supply), Utouh with NBAA (National Board of Accountants and Auditors) etc. These are a kind of leaders who emanated to be strong leaders in their organizations due to their influence in promoting the culture of Bankers, electricity

supply, and accounting professional ethics respectively. They were the people who managed to create and communicate clear visions of their organizations. A corporate leader who creates a good image of his/her organization, the culture that inspires employees to see the success of their organization. Here we should emphasize on corporate leaders who are able to create and communicate strong corporate culture who at the end emerge to be the corporate heroes.

Checklist of Corporate culture for Change of and Development

1. Timely delivery of goods and services
2. Wastage of time at work.
3. Keeping time at work.
4. Employees General attitude to work.
5. Employees Willingness to work
6. Employees attitude towards clients and customers.
7. Financial Planning and Control.
8. Channels of communications.
9. Transparency communication.
10. Bureaucratic decision making.
11. Employees involvement in decision making.
12. Employees participation in development.
13. Hypocrisy.
14. Male/Female Chauvinism.
15. Nepotism.

Conclusion

By looking at the Sackmann's (op.cit) conceptual framework on the term organizational culture in parallel association to the anthropological and sociological point of views, one can be tempted to think that, Sackmann has done a nice academic analysis which traces the etymology of the concept to the moment times. Furthermore, she gives a new perspective of looking at the way organizations create, develop and maintain their respective cultures as the fundamental phenomena of doing things.

The notion of corporate culture as a unifying factor in achieving goals can't be underestimated as it is all agreed and shared by

Sackmann and other scholars like Deal and Kennedy (1982) who tirelessly argued that companies with strong culture have almost been in continuing success towards their goals as the employees identifies themselves with the organization's goals, philosophy, beliefs, values and norms of doing things. The argument for the need for the corporate leaders to be able to create and communicate strong corporate cultures provides a challenge towards our Organizations which have lost a sense of common direction to their employees, proper job guidelines for their day to day activities, proper job behavior, professional ethics, transparency, job commitment as well as trust to each other. We should therefore be tempted to think how can we make our institutions succeed by reviving and communicating corporate cultures to such that employees identify themselves with the company, embrace and act in accordance to the values of the organization. This is observed, quantified and concluded in a research by [Deal and Kennedy, 1982:7] in which the findings show that 'of the eighteen companies with qualitative beliefs, all had uniformly outstanding performers'. The task ahead for our managers to is see how best can they create, influence and communicate strong corporate cultures that may pursue further developments instead of cultures that have persistently been promoting the sense of laziness, individually, nepotism, irresponsibility, resistance to change, corruption and the like, the festers which have been degrading organizational developments in many African countries.

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