Storytelling:
An African Leadership Journey of Performance Improvement Innovation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study presents an insight into an African leadership journey over a period of two decades within a professional storytelling format, from 1999 to 2019. It provides an overview of the subject's application of germinal and emerging theoretical concepts in performance improvement innovation, as a female executive of African descent and a working mother. For context, the chapter presents the case study subject's leadership trajectory from early life, with insights to her personal orientation on related issues via an interview with the subject, testimonials, and organizational outcomes of the case study subject's leadership styles. The chapter closes with emerging challenges facing performance innovation practice in Africa, solutions and recommendations for further action, leveraging the case study subject's experience as a performance improvement practitioner. Although the case study presents an African experience, the principles can be explored across cultural and environmental settings, based on this self-application narrative

INTRODUCTION

Tibetan Buddhist monks excel at concentration. They tell a traditional tale about focus called 'The Lion's Gaze', which says; When you throw a ball to a dog, it chases the ball. But when you throw a ball to a lion, it keeps its gaze on you. When we tell a story, our Lion's gaze is one thing – connecting with our audience. (Murray Nossel, 2018. pp.1)

This chapter titled *Storytelling: An African Leadership Journey of Performance Improvement*, presents insights into the leadership journey of a female executive of African descent and a working mother, over a period of two decades from 1999 to 2019. The chapter's 'lion gaze' is to demonstrate practical application of Transformational Leadership and other Performance Improvement Innovations, over a

two decades window into the case study subject's leadership journey as a female executive. The unique aspect about this chapter is that the author narrates the case study subject's personal application of concepts and standards to her individual career, as narrated here-in, using a third person professional story telling methodology.

In terms of structure, this chapter starts with an executive summary which provides a broad purpose of the chapter, followed by an introduction which gives a perspective to the chapter by specifically stating the chapter's objectives. For more context, the introduction is followed by a background which gives broad definitions and discussions, incorporating some review of related literature within which the chapter situates concepts. Having set the boundaries via the abstract, introduction and background, the main focus of the chapter discusses issues as applicable to the case, controversies on the subject and problems observed. The chapter then naturally closes with solutions and recommendations for consideration and action for aspired levels of improvement in practice.

The author hopes by presenting the chapter using third person professional storytelling narrative to present the case study's pursuit of meaningful impact and contribution within her sphere of influence as a leader at home, at work and in society, the 'lion gaze' of readers will be that *employees, executives, professional career coaches and emerging performance improvement professionals will find the case study inspiring in planning how to personally apply some of the concepts in their continued aspiration for performance improvement innovation.*

BACKGROUND

Leaders don't move mountains with mountains of data. They do it by giving their audiences a piece of their heart. (Carmine Gallo, 2016. pp.213)

This chapter is a case study on an individual case study subject, using a third person professional story telling format. As such, this background section will start with an overview of the case study subject's early life, education, work life and an interview with the case study subject. Thus, giving the reader an opportunity to strike a personal connection with the case study subject's situation.

Early Life and Education

The subject of this case study was born into an African mixed family of nine [9] siblings. Her Wikipedia profile indicates that she completed sixth grade [called primary level in most of Africa] at Shehu Garbai Primary School and the twelfth grade [called secondary education in most of Africa], at Federal Government College, Kaduna. Figure1 titled *The Case Subject's Leadership Journey* in this chapter, provides a schematic of the case study subject's educational and work progression from the completion of her undergraduate studies to the beginning of her career break to explore new areas, in 2019. As indicated in Figure 1, for her high school or what is referred to in some countries as high school education, she attended the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria's School of Basic Studies and then proceeded for her undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, in Nigeria. For a tertiary degree, she attended University of Phoenix Arizona, in the United States of America. With her academic journey giving her various areas of focus from financial management at undergraduate level, international business at master's level and the leadership and performance all within the broader area

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