



BASIC DIAGNOSTIC FRAMEWORK

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**THE ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION**

adaptiveleadershipfoundation.org

OVERVIEW

In this book, we will cover the basic diagnostic framework. Adaptive challenges are hard to solve for they require change in the way we handle things, change in our behavior, learn new ways, discard what we had believed and held dearly, unlearn and relearn some practices.

INTRODUCTION



We encounter adaptive challenges every day in life. Most people jump into solving the challenge without having a clear understanding of the problem. Getting back to the balcony helps you look at a problem from a different perspective and understand it. This process is called diagnosing a problem.

Why is it important to diagnose a problem before trying to solve it? One area where the diagnosis process has been used effectively is the medical field. Doctors, before treating a patient, they first have to find out what the patient is suffering from. They do this through asking the patient different questions and carrying out different tests that will enable them to establish the disease. There are no maximum number of tests that are conducted during this process.

In some aspects, when two different doctors end up with different opinions about the patient's diagnosis, they exchange their reasons; more and more fine stepwise tests may follow to collect more data that will enable the two reach into agreement of what disease the patient will be suffering from. Medication will then be prescribed; and the patient gets better. Without the diagnosis, the patient is likely to be prescribed medication that will make their health deteriorate or at times lead to misdiagnosis that could be fatal.

Diagnosing an adaptive challenge is a key step in solving it and much investment therefore needs to be placed in this step. Getting this wrong may lead to failure.

SIGNALS OF ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE

Treating adaptive challenges as a technical problem results in failure. Most people have faced the reality of doing whatever they have in their powers to solve a problem but their effort has resulted in the same results. It calls for new ways of doing things. How can you for example distinguish a lion from a leopard? Or a leopard and a cheetah? Identifying the characteristics of different animals will enable you to master hence you will be able to distinguish them.

Adaptive challenge does not have rules of thumb. However, adaptive challenges present two signals. These signals are:

- 1) **A cycle of failures:** This is the most dominant signal that results from the mistake of using a technical solution in solving adaptive challenges. People in authority make this mistake due to misinterpretation of the problem, misjudging the problem or by preference to avoid distress. By so doing, part of the problem will be solved leaving out the other part which may be avoided hence temporarily solved. Authorities will continue applying the same approach with more enthusiasm and consciousness but

will end up with almost the same results. Anyway, how will you sow beans and expect to harvest maize?

2) Persistent dependence on authority: Adaptive challenges affect our society. Whether it is in our homes, work places, learning institutions and so on, those challenges will be experienced by people and solving it provides the same people with the answer to their problems; the people own the problem and solution. People in the society rely upon authorities to offer protection, give direction and also provide solutions to problems. This has worked well for the technical challenges.

People in authority cannot solve adaptive challenges by issuing instructions or by employing experts since the solution to these challenges lie in the competencies, in new attitudes, coordination and collaboration of the people facing the problem. This means the task of solving an adaptive challenge must be carried out by the same people who are connected to the challenge. Those in authority should be responsible in mobilizing people to do the work other than trying to offer solutions to them.

PERSISTENT GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATION AND REALITY



Treating adaptive challenges as a technical problem results in failure. Most people have faced the reality of applying technical solutions to challenges that require adaptive solution. Technical challenges have a known solution. This is not the case with adaptive challenges. Authority figures will most of the time treat adaptive challenges the same way as technical challenges. A challenge may be partly adaptive and partly technical. Treating this challenge as fully technical will solve only the technical component. How will one know that the problem has not been solved fully?

SCENARIO

The death penalty has been used by many countries as a way of punishment. This is still practiced in different countries in the world. Crimes that are punishable by death depend on the jurisdiction, but mostly include offences such as murder, rape, terrorism, drug trafficking and genocide. The death penalty ensures that criminals do not have a chance of doing bad things over and over again; in other words, criminals are silenced forever. This penalty aims at deterring further criminal activities.

Capital crimes are still being committed across the globe. In 2019, at least 2,200 death sentences were recorded. Is death penalty not effective enough? Are criminals not afraid of death penalty? Society agrees that crime is bad and we need to join hands in stopping it. But does the society agree to the death penalty as solution to crime?

People in position of authority have relied on death penalty as a means of deterring criminal activities. It may have worked; no one is so ready to die, not anyway when the consequences are well known. However, this punishment does not take into consideration complex social and economic components that drive crime and criminal activities; perhaps for criminals they don't often think of the consequences of their actions. In Canada the capital offenses were reported to have dropped by 44% after the government stopped executing criminals. What may have triggered this drop? Death penalty deprives people the opportunity to reform; society believes if criminals are taken through rehab, they are likely to change and be useful members in the society.

In the above scenario, the death penalty aimed at solving the problem of capital crimes. However, same crimes are still being committed. These crimes affect society who are still looking forward to the people in positions of authority to help them against the menace. The decision by governments to execute criminals does not solve the problem. As a person

who exercises adaptive leadership, you will need to identify the language of complaints which will increasingly be used to describe the current situation in diagnosing an adaptive challenge. In this case complaints may include cases of error in judicial system, the victims having no alternatives i.e. self-defense and some will remain adamant that death penalty is the cruelest punishment.

RESPONSES WITHIN THE CURRENT REPERTOIRE INADEQUATE



It is almost impossible for one to solve an adaptive challenge alone. When working with others and having to resist the leap to action, many ideas will be obtained on how the problem can be solved. The analysis of each option, involving the society to better understand the problem and possible work around increases the chances of providing a working solution.

People in authority will apply technical fixes to most of the problems. They will implement many ways in their position to solve the problem. They will increase resources and even employ proven experts to handle the challenges. However, these options may always deem inadequate.

SCENARIO

Unemployment remains a major problem facing Africa and the rest of the world. Youth unemployment accounts for 60% of all of Africa's jobless. According to the World Bank report, in North Africa, the rate of youth unemployment is 25% but is even greater in Senegal, Botswana, the Republic of Congo and South Africa.

For many years, politicians have used youth unemployment in their manifestos; with the promise of creating more job opportunities. This has been a metric in rating the performance of different governments. In 2016, Ghana opposition leader used the high unemployment rate in the country to mobilize youths against former president John Dramani Mahama.

In Africa, governments are tackling unemployment in many different ways. Some of the initiatives include creation of national youth service, youth policies and youth enterprise fund, increase in the financial allocations to youths' funds to stimulate job creations. Statistics indicate that in Africa, there are about 10-12 million youths joining the labor market every year. The high number means youth unemployment remains a ticking time bomb. With every existing opportunity shrinking, youths have reacted to this differently.

Youths have opted to move from rural to urban centers looking for jobs, university and college graduates have also opted for menial jobs to sustain themselves - even if it means cleaning hotel floors, being a factory laborer or selling mobile phone cards. In south Africa, xenophobia attacks have been reported as a result of youth unemployment. In countries such as Nigeria, Somalia and Kenya, youths have been recruited to join terrorists and other rebel forces.

Despite governments employing different methods in reducing unemployment rates in the continent, the issue remains unresolved. Including all people in the discussion and listening to their inner voices is important in diagnosing an adaptive challenge. This will help people exercising adaptive leadership to understand the problem and the best way of solving the problem.

DIFFICULT LEARNING REQUIRED



Failures are more frequent than before when handling adaptive challenges. People will get frustrated and stress will manifest. There will be a need to learn new ways of addressing the challenge. This may involve getting on the balcony and look at the challenge from the balcony perspective. It may also require unlearning and relearning. In an effort of handling or solving an adaptive challenge, different groups will be formed; each group will try to address the problem without success. There will be a need for joint efforts in understanding, analyzing and coming up with a working solution.

SCENARIO

In a matter of months, Coronavirus Covid-19 which had emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 had evolved from a mere enemy to one of the most feared viruses worldwide. Covid-19 brought another battle and changed the slogan of “united we stand.” This time it was the opposite. Human race was locked from movements. Activities across the world were brought to a standstill; businesses, tourism, sports, entertainments, technology forums were all impacted.

Although scientists have encountered other diseases caused by coronaviruses such as **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** and **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)**, they managed to come up with measures to contain the spread. Cure for common cold, which is also as a result of coronavirus is yet to be discovered despite years of work. Common cold was forgiving unlike Covid-19 which has claimed more than 265,000 lives within 5 months with more than 3.8 million infections.

The World Health Organization in March 2020 declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic. It was time for the governments, medics and general population to learn new ways of containing the spread of the virus. Different approaches were implemented by governments. First it was educating the public on the need to maintain a high level of hygiene by washing hands using soap and running water and maintaining social distance. Restricting travels into and out of the country, increasing border surveillance and isolation on arrival of travelers arriving to the country. This was followed by closure of all learning institutions, churches and most restaurants. Lockdowns in a number of countries also meant that the government had to come up with ways to provide food and other basic needs to vulnerable families. In some developing countries, governments had to implement a mechanism of increasing intensive care beds and emergency response, provision of masks and isolations units.

Medical practitioners have taken to the front line in saving the world against the virus. They were the last hope after they started getting infected. Doctors had to work for longer hours without rest, without seeing their loved ones. With the high number of reports of new infections, they had to learn how to manage different categories of patients while taking all the precautionary measures not to contract the virus. Some doctors contracted the disease and they had to go through the same pain patients were going through.

Human race operations were interrupted. Lockdown meant no movements out of the residential and people had to learn to cope up with this. Teachers and other professions had to devise new methods of delivery through use of technology. Employees had to learn to work from home. With diminishing job opportunities, families had to learn to survive on whatever little they had with some relying upon well-wishers for survival.

In diagnosing an adaptive challenge people will be stretched; and difficult decisions are likely to be made. These decisions may be in contrast to our ways of life. However, in exercising adaptive leadership placing people at the center brings a difference. People will appreciate the need to make difficult decisions. They will learn from the challenge.

NEW STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES NEED TO BE ENGAGED



A well solved challenge gives society a required environment to grow. People will be happy with authority figures. A challenge which recurs once solved requires a different approach. Dealing with the same group of individuals will fail to provide the required solution. It is key for one in the journey of exercising adaptive leadership to mobilize the system to make people face the challenge and to come up with possible solutions. In exercising adaptive leadership, understanding stakeholders and including them in the system will be key in solving the challenge.

SCENARIO

Poaching continues to affect wildlife conservation in most African countries. Population for animals such as elephants, rhinos and lions have been declining for years. In 2011, Western Black Rhinos were declared by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to have gone extinct. Extinction of animals remains the most devastating effect of poaching. Impact on the environment and economy have also been realized.

Poaching has been fueled by the readily available black market in China. In this market, animal parts such as tusks, bones and pelts are sold for a huge amount of money. Governments in Africa, animal rights groups and environmental groups for years have invested heavily in protecting wildlife. The governments have supported these groups to end poaching. This has been done through funds allocation on anti-poaching, providing dedicated and highly-trained anti-poaching forces, wildlife helicopter support, acquiring dog tracker packs and improved technologies such as animal trackers and drone technologies in monitoring of animals in the parks. Tougher measures were formulated to deter people from poaching. Despite this, animals have continued to be poached.

African Wildlife Foundation through partnership with governments, private groups and NGOs formulated three phased strategies in the fight against poaching in Africa. The three phases are: stop the killing, stop the demand and stop the trafficking. The strategy was on the basis that it impacts stakeholders in the whole cycle. To stop the killing, they placed the local community at the heart of protecting the wildlife. This was based on Professor James Scott's outlined reasons for poaching and why it is challenging to control. He states that poaching is as a result of local community resistance. Locals have been sidelined and they have not benefited from wildlife conservation. As a result, they engage in poaching for economic gains. It will be difficult to solve the problem without cooperation from the local community.

The second and third phase aimed at minimizing demand through educating society and to establish joint measures between different governments and unions in the fight against poaching. This ensured ever growing support toward banning of wildlife products. Through this initiative, China implemented a countrywide ivory ban in its black market in 2018. This led to an 80% decline in ivory being trafficked into the country from Africa.

Handling an adaptive challenge with the usual stakeholders may not lead to the required solution. From the above scenario, governments working with the military did not solve the problem. However, involvement of the local communities, people and government in the target market have led to significant success in the fight against poaching.

LONGER TIME FRAME NEEDED



Adaptive challenges require longer time to solve. This is as a result of the need to understand the problem and placing society at the core in coming up with a solution. Society has always relied upon people in authority to offer solutions to their problems. Because of this, problems always recur after a short time fix is applied. Society will need to be empowered to realize they own the solution to their problems and people in authority are meant to assist by providing where necessary required resources and conducive environment. The adaptive challenge will require one who is exercising adaptive leadership to invest time to learn the ways of the society, understand the problem, negotiate purposes and to avoid common traps.

SCENARIO

In 1994, the Republic of Rwanda lost approximately 800,000 people through genocide. Manslaughter started after news broke of the death of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana through a plane crash. The genocide involved two tribes; the Hutus and the Tutsi. Members of the Hutus tribe, including children, took part in stealing and destruction of properties, rape and killing of the Tutsi. Not all victims were Tutsi and not all Hutus engaged in the crime against humanity. Hutus who were against the killings or who attempted to protect Tutsi were also maimed or killed.

After the genocide, close to 130,000 people were arrested and imprisoned for having been suspected to have engaged in the genocide. The Rwanda government, in collaboration with the international criminal courts has endeavored in rebuilding the nation through ensuring justice for those who were affected. In 1998, the Rwanda government developed four different courts to prosecute suspects. These courts included foreign courts, International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR), domestic military tribunals and domestic criminal courts. In 2004, which was 10 years after the genocide, ICTR had only managed to resolve a total of twenty-three cases. In addition, none of the four courts was able to resolve the problems of arbitrating genocide suspects.

In ensuring rapid reconciliation and rebuilding of the nation, the government of Rwandan formed a community-based judiciary system called gacaca in 2005 to try genocide crimes. Gacaca was run by the local judges and gave the local community an opportunity to take part in the healing process. This was on the basis that the local community would be the main actors as they were likely to have witnessed the killings and they know who amongst them committed the crime.

Giving the local judges an opportunity opened doors for transparency as the suspects were able to open up and confess their mistakes, seeking forgiveness from affected families. The

local judges were responsible for ensuring a smooth arbitration process. Gacaca trials were to be completed by the end of 2007. This was not possible and the set deadlines were repeatedly extended. The trials were completed in 2010.

Dispensing justice and ensuring reconciliation took the courts longer than expected. Many families had gone through trauma of losing their loved ones, some who were maimed and raped were still in pain. The courts had to connect people to the purpose by providing a conducive environment for reconciliation. The courts had to learn to avoid the common traps such as jumping into conclusions.