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Organisational management: An African perspective, now and the future

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Abstract
Organisational management is a central determinant of institutional effectiveness and societal progress. This paper examines the concept, nature, and functions of management, highlighting its evolution from classical theories to contemporary approaches that emphasise adaptability, ethics, and resilience. It explores action research and organisational development as participatory frameworks for change, and analyses the roles of power and politics in shaping institutional outcomes. Using African and Nigerian contexts as focal points, the paper demonstrates how weak governance, corruption, and rigid bureaucracies continue to constrain performance, while digital transformation, innovation, and reforms offer new pathways for improvement. The discussion underscores that effective organisational management is not merely about administrative efficiency but about building trust, fostering inclusivity, and aligning institutional practices with wider developmental goals. The paper concludes that robust, ethically grounded, and context-sensitive management is indispensable for advancing Africa's Agenda 2063 and achieving sustainable development in Nigeria and across the continent.

Keywords: Organisational management, African context, governance, organisational development, digital transformation

Introduction

The study of organisational management has attracted increasing scholarly and professional interest in recent decades, particularly as organisations confront unprecedented complexities in the global and African contexts. Management is no longer simply about ensuring order in day-to-day operations; it has become the central mechanism through which organisations adapt to shifting economic realities, technological disruptions, and social expectations. In Africa, where public and private sector institutions often operate in volatile environments, effective organisational management is indispensable for stability and long-term development.

Organisations, regardless of size or sector, must be properly managed to achieve their objectives. Without appropriate structures, leadership and resource allocation, even organisations with abundant potential can fail to deliver. Recent research emphasises that effective management goes beyond administration of resources; it is also about cultivating human capital, creating trust within institutions, and responding dynamically to external challenges (World Bank, 2022). In contexts such as Nigeria, poor organisational management has been linked to inefficiencies in the public service, low productivity, and a widening gap between institutional capacity and citizen expectations (Transparency International, 2024).

The growing complexities of organisational life, including globalisation, digitisation, and sustainability imperatives, have placed additional demands on managers. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the necessity of resilient organisational management, with organisations across Africa forced to adapt rapidly to remote working, supply chain disruptions, and fiscal pressures (African Development Bank, 2023). These developments underscore that management is not static; it is an evolving process that must continually integrate innovation, ethical practices, and responsiveness to both internal and external environments.

Against this background, this paper explores organisational management as a multidimensional concept.

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It examines its meaning, nature, and theoretical underpinnings; discusses its functions and practices; and contextualises its application within African and Nigerian settings. By drawing from both classical theories and contemporary evidence, the paper seeks to highlight how effective organisational management remains a decisive factor for institutional performance, economic growth, and societal well-being.

Conceptual Framework
Concept of Management
Management has been described in numerous ways, yet it continues to elude a single, universally accepted definition. While it is often associated with planning, organising, and controlling resources, management is also about shaping behaviours, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that institutions adapt to dynamic environments. As Drucker observed decades ago, managers are responsible not only for resource efficiency but also for giving direction and meaning to human effort. Contemporary scholars expand this view, defining management as a process of achieving organisational goals by harmonising efficiency, effectiveness, and equity within ever-changing social and economic contexts (Kaehler & Grundei, 2019; OECD, 2021) [20].

Management therefore acts as an integrative force. It transforms individual contributions into coordinated effort, aligning resources, knowledge, and innovation with institutional objectives. In Africa, where organisations face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, weak governance, and shifting socio-political conditions, management must also involve resilience and adaptability (Adeleye *et al.*, 2020) [2]. Effective managers are expected not only to achieve results but also to cultivate trust, uphold ethical standards, and create value for both the organisation and wider society.

Nature of Management
The nature of management is best understood through its three main dimensions: science, art, and profession. As a science, management draws upon systematic principles, data, and analytical models. The increasing use of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and data-driven decision-making illustrates how management practice is increasingly evidence-based (McKinsey & Company, 2023). As an art, it requires creativity, intuition, and interpersonal skills to handle human complexities, particularly in contexts of cultural diversity such as Africa. As a profession, management has developed formal education systems, professional associations, and ethical codes of practice, though it remains less regulated than fields such as law or medicine (Mintzberg, 2019) [33].

Management as a Process
Management is not a static role but a continuous process that involves identifying goals, mobilising resources, and ensuring that performance outcomes align with institutional objectives. The classical functions proposed by Fayol planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling remain relevant, but they have been expanded to include contemporary functions such as motivating, networking, and managing knowledge. In today's organisations, managers must also consider globalisation, sustainability, and technological change as integral elements of the management process (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Theoretical Perspectives
Organisational management has been shaped by a range of theories, from classical approaches that emphasised hierarchy and control to modern perspectives that prioritise systems thinking, participatory decision-making, and innovation. Systems theory, for example, highlights how organisations are interdependent with their environments and must continually adapt to external forces. Human relations theory stresses the importance of employee motivation and well-being, while contingency theory underscores that there is no single "best" way to manage; strategies must depend on situational variables (Daft, 2021). Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that management is both a practical necessity and a field of continuous intellectual development. It is not merely about administration but about designing and sustaining organisations that can thrive amidst uncertainty, deliver value to stakeholders, and contribute to societal progress.

Functions of Management
The functions of management describe the core activities managers undertake to ensure that organisations operate effectively and achieve their objectives. Although different scholars have presented varying classifications, the central functions remain consistent: planning, organising, leading, and controlling. These have been expanded in contemporary scholarship to reflect new realities such as digital transformation, globalisation, and workforce diversity.

Planning
Planning is the foundation of management. It involves setting organisational goals, anticipating future challenges, and identifying strategies to achieve desired outcomes. In an increasingly uncertain world marked by economic volatility, climate change, and technological disruption, planning must be adaptive rather than rigid. Organisations are adopting agile planning models, which allow managers to make incremental decisions, test alternatives, and respond swiftly to emerging realities (PwC, 2023). In Africa, planning also requires sensitivity to fluctuating policy environments, infrastructural gaps, and the demands of sustainable development.

Organising
Organising is the process of structuring resources, tasks, and authority in a way that enables coordinated action. Traditionally, this function was associated with creating hierarchies and formal structures. Today, however, organising increasingly emphasises cross-functional teams, digital platforms, and flexible structures that promote collaboration across geographic and cultural boundaries. Hybrid working models, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have further reshaped the organising function, requiring managers to design systems that balance in-person and remote productivity (ILO, 2022).

Leading
Leadership remains central to the management process. It goes beyond supervision to include motivating, inspiring, and guiding employees towards shared objectives. Contemporary leadership theories emphasise

transformational leadership, which focuses on aligning employee values with organisational vision and fostering innovation, as opposed to transactional leadership, which relies primarily on incentives and compliance (Bass & Riggio, 2019) [5]. In African contexts, effective leadership also demands cultural competence, ethical stewardship, and the ability to navigate political and institutional complexities.

Controlling

The controlling function ensures that organisational activities remain aligned with set goals. This involves setting performance standards, monitoring outcomes, and correcting deviations. In the digital era, control systems increasingly rely on real-time data analytics, dashboards, and performance metrics. At the same time, controlling has evolved beyond mere compliance to include governance, accountability, and stakeholder transparency (OECD, 2021). This is particularly relevant in public sector organisations in Africa, where weak accountability mechanisms have often undermined efficiency.

Contemporary Additions

In addition to these classical functions, modern organisations recognise the importance of other functions such as communicating, motivating, and managing change. The capacity to communicate clearly across different cultures and technologies is now a defining skill for managers. Similarly, motivating employees in diverse contexts requires approaches that consider not only financial incentives but also opportunities for growth, recognition, and meaningful work (Gallup, 2023) [18]. Managing change has become a distinct function, as organisations must frequently adapt to disruptive innovations, shifting regulations, and evolving societal expectations.

Taken together, these functions illustrate that management is not a rigid formula but an evolving practice. By integrating classical principles with contemporary realities, managers can create organisations that are efficient, resilient, and responsive to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Action Research and Organisational Development

Action research has become an important methodology for shaping organisational development, particularly in contexts where both reflection and practical solutions are required. Unlike traditional research, which is often detached from practice, action research combines inquiry with intervention. It enables managers, employees, and researchers to collaborate in identifying problems, testing solutions, and embedding learning within organisational processes (Reason & Bradbury, 2019) [46].

Principles of Action Research

Action research is characterised by several principles: it is practical, addressing real-life organisational challenges; participatory, involving stakeholders in generating solutions; and iterative, building knowledge through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. It values multiple forms of knowledge empirical, experiential, and narrative and seeks to produce outcomes that are both useful to organisations and generative for wider society (Coghlan, 2021) [7].

This approach is particularly relevant in Africa, where many organisations operate in complex socio-political environments. Here, action research can bridge the gap between theory and practice by empowering employees and managers to co-create solutions suited to local realities rather than imposing externally designed models.

Organisational Development

Organisational development (OD) refers to systematic efforts to improve organisational performance, culture, and capacity for change. Rooted in behavioural science, OD interventions include leadership development, team-building, conflict resolution, and culture transformation (Cummings & Worley, 2020) [11]. Increasingly, OD also incorporates digital transformation, sustainability goals, and diversity and inclusion practices, reflecting the evolving nature of work and society.

In African organisations, OD is often applied to improve public service delivery, strengthen governance, and build resilience against economic and political shocks. For example, initiatives to digitise government services or restructure state-owned enterprises are frequently supported by OD principles such as stakeholder participation, process consultation, and capacity building (UNECA, 2022).

Varieties of Action Research in OD

Different forms of action research have been applied within organisational development:

- **Organisational Change Research** - used to study and improve work processes, often leading to interventions in communication, workflow, or decision-making.
- **Co-operative Inquiry** - groups of stakeholders engage both as co-researchers and participants in developing practical knowledge for change.
- **Action Science and Action Inquiry** - these methods integrate inquiry into daily organisational life, aiming to align purpose, values, and behaviours with institutional outcomes.

Through these approaches, organisations move beyond surface-level adjustments and instead foster deeper cultural and structural change.

Relevance to Contemporary Organisations

The limitations of rigid, top-down change strategies have highlighted the importance of participatory and adaptive approaches. Post-pandemic realities, for instance, showed that organisations with inclusive learning systems were better able to navigate disruptions such as remote working, supply chain breakdowns, and fiscal constraints (ILO, 2022). Action research and OD provide frameworks that not only address immediate challenges but also strengthen organisational resilience and capacity for continuous learning.

In summary, action research and organisational development are vital for building organisations that are adaptable, inclusive, and capable of long-term growth. In Africa, where institutions often face capacity gaps and legitimacy challenges, these approaches are particularly powerful in linking evidence-based knowledge with context-sensitive solutions.

Power, Politics and Organisational Development

Power is an inevitable feature of organisational life. It shapes interactions, influences decisions, and determines how resources are allocated. In every organisation whether

public or private power dynamics influence not only efficiency but also the culture and legitimacy of the institution. Politics, understood as the strategies individuals and groups use to pursue interests within organisations, can either enable innovation and collaboration or breed conflict and mistrust (Mintzberg, 2019) [33].

Understanding Power in Organisations

Power in organisations can be viewed as ethically neutral; it is the purposes to which it is applied that give it positive or negative meaning. While some interpret power as manipulation or coercion, others see it as a tool for coordination, empowerment, and collective achievement. Recent literature stresses the need for managers to apply power with accountability, ensuring that it aligns with organisational values and societal expectations (OECD, 2021).

In African contexts, the use and misuse of power within organisations often mirror wider political and institutional realities. Patronage systems, nepotism, and weak accountability frameworks can distort organisational processes, leading to inefficiency and corruption. Conversely, when power is exercised transparently and inclusively, it can strengthen organisational legitimacy and build trust among stakeholders (Transparency International, 2024).

Organisational Politics

Organisational politics refers to the informal, often unrecorded strategies used by individuals or groups to influence decision-making. While frequently associated with negative behaviours such as favouritism or manipulation, politics can also serve constructive purposes. For example, coalition-building among departments or interest groups may drive innovation and secure resources for beneficial projects. The challenge for managers is to recognise political behaviour and channel it towards outcomes that support organisational goals rather than undermine them (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2020) [57].

The Interplay of Power, Politics and Organisational Development

Organisational development cannot be fully understood without recognising the role of power and politics. Efforts to introduce change such as restructuring, performance management, or culture transformation are often contested because they affect existing interests and power relations. Managers must therefore be adept not only at technical planning but also at navigating political realities. Strategies such as stakeholder analysis, transparent communication, and participatory decision-making can reduce resistance and increase the legitimacy of reforms (Daft, 2021).

In Nigeria and other African countries, reform efforts in the public sector illustrate this tension. Attempts to strengthen accountability systems or restructure civil service institutions often face resistance from entrenched interests. Yet successful reforms, such as the digitisation of public services in countries like Rwanda and Kenya, show that when power is used constructively, organisational development can deliver transformative results (World Bank, 2022).

Ethical Dimensions

The ethical use of power is increasingly emphasised in modern organisational development. Leaders are expected not only to deliver results but also to demonstrate integrity, fairness, and accountability. Ethical leadership reduces the risk of corruption, improves employee morale, and fosters stakeholder trust. In Africa, where corruption and governance deficits are persistent challenges, embedding ethical considerations into the use of power is critical for sustainable organisational development (AfDB, 2023).

In sum, power and politics are inseparable from organisational life. They can obstruct or enable development depending on how they are exercised. For African organisations seeking to build resilience and legitimacy, the challenge is not to eliminate power and politics, but to manage them in ways that reinforce ethical conduct, promote inclusivity, and support long-term institutional effectiveness.

Future of Organisational Development

Organisational development (OD) has evolved significantly since its emergence in the mid-twentieth century as a response to the human and social dimensions of work. While early interventions focused on team building, leadership training, and culture change, the scope of OD has broadened to include issues such as digital transformation, sustainability, and inclusion. Looking to the future, OD will continue to shape how organisations remain resilient in turbulent environments, balance economic goals with social responsibility, and adapt to technological and demographic change (Cummings & Worley, 2020) [11].

Emerging Trends in Organisational Development

Several global shifts are redefining the practice of organisational development:

- **Digital Transformation** - The widespread adoption of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and data analytics has reshaped how organisations are structured and how work is performed. OD must now facilitate the integration of technology while safeguarding human dignity and inclusivity (McKinsey Global Institute, 2023).

- **Sustainability and Responsibility** - Organisations are under growing pressure to integrate environmental and social goals into their operations. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063 have placed sustainability at the centre of organisational priorities. OD practitioners are therefore increasingly expected to align institutional practices with climate action, equity, and social justice (UNDP, 2022).

- **Workforce Diversity and Well-being** - The future of OD involves fostering inclusive workplaces that value diversity in gender, culture, and generational perspectives. With Africa's youthful population where over 60% are under the age of 25 organisations will need OD strategies that unlock the potential of young talent while addressing issues such as mental health and decent work (ILO, 2022).

- **Resilience and Agility** - The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of resilience and the

ability to pivot rapidly in the face of disruption. OD interventions of the future will focus on building adaptive capacity, encouraging innovation, and embedding learning cultures that enable organisations to survive and thrive in uncertainty (World Bank, 2022).

Implications for African Organisations
In Africa, the future of organisational development will be shaped by structural challenges such as limited infrastructure, political instability, and institutional capacity gaps. At the same time, it will be driven by opportunities presented by digital economies, demographic growth, and continental integration through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

For public institutions, OD will remain critical in strengthening governance, improving service delivery, and combating corruption. For private sector organisations, OD will be central to scaling businesses, attracting investment, and competing in global markets. In both cases, effective organisational development will depend on leadership that is transformational, inclusive, and ethically grounded.

The Human Dimension
Despite advances in technology, the future of organisational development will continue to depend on people. Human capital remains the most decisive factor in organisational success. Leaders and managers will need to focus not only on efficiency and performance but also on nurturing relationships, building trust, and creating meaning at work. In Africa, where institutional trust is often fragile, OD that prioritises employee engagement, stakeholder participation, and ethical leadership will be critical for long-term legitimacy.

Conclusion on the Future of OD
Organisational development will remain a powerful tool for ensuring that organisations are not only efficient but also socially relevant and sustainable. For Africa, the future lies in building institutions that can adapt to global change while reflecting local realities. By embedding digital innovation, sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience into their core practices, African organisations can position themselves as engines of both economic progress and social transformation.

Organisational Management in Africa
Organisational management across Africa faces unique opportunities and challenges that distinguish it from other regions. While the fundamental principles of planning, organising, leading, and controlling are universal, African organisations must also contend with diverse institutional traditions, resource constraints, and socio-political contexts. These realities make management both complex and deeply context-specific.

Internal and External Environments
Effective organisational management in Africa requires a dual focus: the management of internal processes within organisations and the navigation of external environments shaped by national and regional institutions. The external environment includes financial systems, regulatory frameworks, industrial relations, macroeconomic performance, and technological development. These factors collectively influence how organisations in Africa function, compete, and grow (Wood, Dibben, Stride, & Webster, 2011) [59].

Internally, African organisations must manage limited resources, workforce diversity, and often weak institutional cultures. The effectiveness of internal management processes is closely tied to leadership capacity, human resource management, and the ability to adapt structures to changing demands.

Cultural and Institutional Perspectives
Two main perspectives dominate scholarly analysis of African management. The first is the cultural perspective, which highlights the continuing influence of colonial legacies, the challenges of applying imported Western management models, and the need to integrate indigenous practices. Scholars argue that blending African values such as communalism, consensus-building, and respect for hierarchy with global management principles can create more context-appropriate approaches (Adeleye *et al*., 2020) [2].

The second is the institutional perspective, which examines how broader governance systems, labour markets, and policy environments shape organisational behaviour. For example, weak regulatory enforcement or politicisation of appointments can undermine merit-based management, while stronger institutions as seen in countries like Rwanda can foster accountability and performance.

Recent Developments
Despite persistent challenges, African organisations have made notable progress. Many firms and institutions have adopted innovative human resource practices, embraced digital transformation, and improved service delivery. The African Development Bank (2023) highlights that technology adoption and youth-driven innovation are transforming organisational practices, particularly in financial services, agriculture, and education. Similarly, the World Bank's Doing Business reports show that several African countries including Mauritius, Kenya, and Ghana have implemented reforms that improve organisational efficiency and competitiveness.

However, the continent also continues to grapple with systemic issues such as corruption, weak infrastructure, and political instability, which often undermine effective management. These dual realities suggest that the future of organisational management in Africa depends on strengthening governance frameworks, professionalising management practices, and fostering leadership that is both ethical and adaptive.

Towards Context-Sensitive Management
Ultimately, organisational management in Africa cannot simply replicate models developed elsewhere. Context-sensitive management is needed one that combines global best practices with African cultural and institutional realities. This means recognising the value of indigenous knowledge systems, adapting management education to African challenges, and building resilient organisations that can withstand political, economic, and social shocks.

Organisational management on the continent is therefore not just about achieving efficiency within firms but also about contributing to broader societal transformation. Well-managed organisations have the potential to drive inclusive

growth, create jobs, and enhance governance outcomes across Africa.

Organisational Management in Nigeria

Nigeria presents one of the most complex cases of organisational management in Africa. As the continent's most populous nation and its largest economy, Nigeria's organisational landscape is shaped by both immense potential and persistent structural challenges. Public and private sector organisations alike must navigate weak institutions, widespread corruption, and socio-political pressures while striving to achieve efficiency and legitimacy.

Public Sector Organisations

Nigeria's public sector organisations include ministries, non-ministerial departments, local governments, agencies, parastatals, state-owned enterprises, universities, hospitals, and other public institutions. These institutions are responsible for critical service delivery but have often been characterised by inefficiency, limited accountability, and resource mismanagement. Despite numerous reform initiatives since independence including civil service reforms, privatisation efforts, and public financial management strategies implementation has frequently been undermined by a lack of political will and entrenched vested interests (World Bank, 2022).

The public sector continues to face challenges such as weak transparency, nepotism, and excessive political interference. Recruitment and promotion processes are often distorted by ethnic, religious, and regional considerations, as well as the Federal Character Principle, which, while intended to ensure inclusivity, has sometimes compromised merit-based decision-making. Nigeria's ranking of 145 out of 180 countries in the 2023 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index illustrates the persistence of systemic governance weaknesses (Transparency International, 2024).

Managerial Effectiveness

Managerial effectiveness in Nigeria varies significantly between public and private sector organisations. In the private sector, particularly in industries such as telecommunications, banking, and fintech, effective management has supported rapid innovation and competitiveness. By contrast, public institutions often struggle with inefficiency and low productivity, which reduces citizen trust and weakens governance legitimacy.

Effectiveness in public organisations is not measured solely by profit but also by service delivery, policy implementation, and societal impact. Martz (2013) [28] observes that effectiveness in non-profit and public organisations must be assessed in terms of community outcomes, programme reach, and responsiveness to citizen needs. Nigerian organisations therefore require management approaches that prioritise accountability, ethical leadership, and citizen engagement.

Drivers and Barriers

Employee motivation remains a key factor for organisational effectiveness in Nigeria. Managers who involve employees in decision-making, recognise contributions, and provide opportunities for professional development are more likely to build committed and productive workforces (ILO, 2022). However, barriers persist, including limited training opportunities, weak performance evaluation systems, and poor work environments.

In addition, corruption is often systemic and institutionalised, shaping organisational culture in ways that normalise unethical practices. This undermines reform efforts and weakens citizen trust. Scholars argue that without embedding integrity, transparency, and meritocracy into management practices, Nigerian organisations will continue to underperform despite reforms (Nwokorie, 2017).

Towards Reform and Renewal

Recent initiatives offer cautious optimism. The digitisation of government services such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the use of integrated payroll systems has reduced opportunities for fraud and improved efficiency in some areas. Similarly, partnerships between government and private sector actors in sectors like agriculture and digital technology have demonstrated that when accountability frameworks are strengthened, performance improves.

Nonetheless, achieving sustained organisational effectiveness in Nigeria requires more than technical reforms. It demands leadership that prioritises public interest over personal gain, institutional cultures that reward merit and ethical behaviour, and robust accountability mechanisms that curb impunity. Nigeria's demographic advantage, with a youthful and increasingly educated population, offers an opportunity to revitalise organisational management if these systemic reforms are pursued with seriousness.

Organisational Structure

Every organisation requires a structure that defines how work is divided, coordinated, and supervised to achieve its objectives. Organisational structure establishes the framework for communication, authority, and accountability, thereby ensuring that resources are utilised effectively. Without clear structures, even well-intentioned strategies often fail due to confusion over roles and responsibilities.

Defining Organisational Structure

Organisational structure refers to the formal arrangement of roles, responsibilities, and relationships within an organisation. It outlines who reports to whom, how decisions are made, and how different departments interact. Effective structures reduce duplication, promote accountability, and enhance efficiency by ensuring that tasks are allocated and monitored appropriately (Daft, 2021).

Structures are not static; they evolve in response to organisational size, strategic objectives, and changes in the external environment. In Nigeria, for example, rapid growth in sectors such as telecommunications and banking has driven firms to adopt more flexible structures that facilitate innovation and customer responsiveness. Conversely, many public sector institutions continue to rely on rigid bureaucratic models, which often stifle creativity and slow decision-making (World Bank, 2022).

Types of Organisational Structure
1. Functional Structure

A functional structure groups employees according to specialised roles such as finance, marketing, human resources, and operations. This promotes efficiency and

expertise, as staff develop deep knowledge in their areas. However, it can also create silos, where departments focus narrowly on their own goals rather than the organisation's overall objectives. In Nigeria, functional structures remain common in both public and private institutions, particularly where standardised processes are required.

2. Divisional Structure
In divisional structures, organisations are segmented by product lines, services, or geographic regions. Each division operates with relative autonomy and contains its own functional units. This structure is particularly suited to large organisations operating across diverse markets. Nigerian multinationals in sectors such as manufacturing and oil and gas frequently adopt divisional structures to manage complexity and regional variations. The drawback, however, is the duplication of resources and potential conflicts between divisions.

3. Matrix Structure
A matrix structure combines elements of both functional and divisional arrangements. Employees may report to more than one manager for example, a functional head and a project leader. This structure encourages collaboration and flexibility, making it effective for organisations engaged in dynamic and innovative work. However, it also introduces complexity in reporting lines and may cause role conflict if not managed carefully. Some Nigerian banks and international NGOs have experimented with matrix structures to balance global strategies with local responsiveness.

The Importance of Robust Structures
Maintaining a robust organisational structure is essential for efficiency, adaptability, and employee satisfaction. A clear hierarchy of roles and responsibilities helps avoid duplication, ensures accountability, and supports strategic alignment. In contemporary organisations, robust structures also need to accommodate hybrid working models, digital collaboration tools, and knowledge-sharing platforms.

For Nigerian public institutions, reforming organisational structures is a pressing need. Many remain heavily bureaucratic, characterised by excessive centralisation and limited flexibility. Modernising these structures through decentralisation, process automation, and improved communication systems could significantly enhance service delivery and public trust.

In sum, organisational structure provides the backbone of institutional effectiveness. It shapes how decisions are made, how resources are deployed, and how organisations adapt to their environments. The challenge for Nigerian and African organisations lies in creating structures that balance efficiency with flexibility, ensuring both stability and the capacity to respond to change.

Maintaining a Robust Organisational Structure
A robust organisational structure is central to long-term institutional effectiveness. It not only defines roles and responsibilities but also provides the framework through which organisations can adapt to change, maintain accountability, and pursue strategic objectives. In today's rapidly changing world, organisational structures must be both stable and flexible stable enough to provide clarity and accountability, yet flexible enough to respond to

environmental disruptions, technological innovations, and shifting stakeholder demands.

Key Elements of a Robust Structure
Maintaining a strong structure requires more than creating reporting lines. Several elements are essential:
1. **Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities** - Every employee must understand their responsibilities, reporting lines, and contribution to organisational goals. Ambiguity often leads to duplication of tasks, inefficiency, and conflict. Clear job descriptions and well-communicated policies are critical to reducing these risks.

2. **Alignment with Strategic Goals** - Structures should be designed to serve the mission, vision, and strategic priorities of the organisation. For example, organisations focused on innovation must design flexible, cross-functional teams, while public institutions tasked with service delivery need decentralised systems that bring decision-making closer to citizens.

3. **Communication and Transparency** - Effective communication channels are vital to ensure that information flows seamlessly across levels and departments. This includes using digital platforms for internal communication, publishing organograms, and providing regular updates through bulletins, emails, or town-hall meetings.

4. **Employee Development and Appraisal** - Structures must support professional growth by creating opportunities for training, appraisal, and feedback. Annual evaluations and anonymous employee surveys can help identify weaknesses and improve organisational culture.

5. **Adaptability and Innovation** - Organisations must regularly review and update their structures to reflect socio-economic changes, policy shifts, and technological advancements. This requires flexibility in assigning teams, creating project-based units, and integrating digital solutions into workflows.

Contemporary Practices
Post-pandemic realities have demonstrated the importance of adaptable structures. Organisations that incorporated hybrid working arrangements, digital collaboration platforms, and decentralised decision-making were more resilient to disruption (ILO, 2022). Similarly, organisations that invested in leadership training and cultural diversity management have reported stronger employee engagement and productivity.

In Nigeria, reforming rigid bureaucratic structures in the public sector remains a critical challenge. Excessive centralisation often undermines service delivery and discourages accountability. Initiatives such as e-governance platforms, digital payroll systems, and public sector restructuring programmes show that modernisation of structures can yield tangible improvements in efficiency and transparency (World Bank, 2022).

Towards Sustainable Structures

For African organisations, the sustainability of structures lies in their capacity to balance hierarchy with collaboration, and formal authority with participatory decision-making. This requires cultivating workplace cultures that respect diversity, encourage innovation, and promote ethical behaviour. Strong but flexible structures create the foundation for organisational resilience, enabling institutions to survive shocks and sustain long-term performance.

In summary, maintaining a robust organisational structure is not a one-off exercise but a continuous process of alignment, communication, and adaptation. Organisations that invest in building such structures will be better positioned to achieve efficiency, legitimacy, and impact in an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment.

Keys to Organisational Problems and Change Models

Every organisation encounters challenges that threaten its effectiveness and legitimacy. These problems may stem from structural inefficiencies, cultural resistance, leadership gaps, or shifts in the external environment. Successful organisations are distinguished not by the absence of problems, but by their ability to identify root causes and implement effective solutions.

Understanding Organisational Problems

Organisational problems often arise from misaligned structures, poor communication, and weak accountability mechanisms. In African contexts, challenges are compounded by governance deficits, limited resources, and socio-political instability. Resistance to change is particularly common, as employees may fear losing power, security, or status. Such resistance, if not managed carefully, can stall reform efforts and undermine performance (Daft, 2021).

Key sources of organisational problems include:

- **Leadership Failures:** Inadequate vision, poor communication, or unethical behaviour erode trust.
- **Structural Weaknesses:** Overly centralised or bureaucratic systems slow decision-making.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Organisational cultures that tolerate corruption, favouritism, or inefficiency weaken performance.
- **Environmental Pressures:** Political instability, economic volatility, and rapid technological change require constant adaptation.

Change as a Response

Organisational change is the process of moving from one state of affairs to another in order to adapt to new realities. Change may be incremental, such as gradual improvements in systems, or transformational, involving major shifts in strategy, culture, or structure. In both cases, the success of change depends on clear communication, employee involvement, and leadership commitment.

Research suggests that involving employees in the change process reduces resistance and fosters ownership. Even when full participation is not possible, engaging opinion leaders within the organisation can help champion change and reduce scepticism (Kotter, 2012).

Weber's Contribution

Max Weber's models of bureaucracy remain influential in understanding organisational problems and solutions. Weber emphasised rational-legal authority, clear hierarchies, and formal rules as a means of ensuring predictability and efficiency. While these principles remain valuable, especially for large public institutions, modern organisations must adapt them to avoid rigidity and inefficiency. For instance, excessive bureaucracy in Nigerian public institutions often creates bottlenecks rather than solutions.

Contemporary adaptations of Weber's ideas stress the need to balance formal structures with flexibility, encouraging organisations to retain accountability while fostering innovation. In practice, this means combining rule-based systems with performance-based incentives, participatory management, and technology-driven processes.

Modern Change Models

Several frameworks guide organisations in managing change:

- **Lewin's Three-Step Model:** (unfreeze-change-refreeze) highlights the importance of preparing employees for change, implementing it, and embedding it into culture.

- **Kotter's Eight-Step Model:** Expands this by stressing urgency, coalition-building, vision communication, and celebrating short-term wins.

- **Agile Change Approaches:** Emphasise iterative progress, rapid experimentation, and flexibility, which are particularly relevant in today's digital and uncertain environments.

Implications for African Organisations

For African organisations, especially in Nigeria, addressing organisational problems requires both structural reforms and cultural transformation. Combating corruption, decentralising authority, and promoting ethical leadership are essential to overcoming persistent barriers. Equally, embracing digital tools and agile approaches can help organisations become more adaptive and resilient in the face of volatile environments.

In sum, organisational problems cannot be avoided, but they can be effectively managed. By applying change models thoughtfully and adapting classical theories like Weber's to contemporary realities, organisations can strengthen their performance and legitimacy, positioning themselves for long-term success.

Conclusion

Organisational management remains a cornerstone of institutional success. Whether in the public or private sector, effective management provides the structures, processes, and leadership necessary to transform resources into results. Without it, organisations risk inefficiency, weakened legitimacy, and eventual decline.

In Africa, where institutions often operate in fragile political and economic contexts, the importance of robust organisational management cannot be overstated. It is through effective planning, sound structures, ethical leadership, and adaptive strategies that organisations can withstand turbulence and deliver value to citizens and stakeholders. The Nigerian case illustrates both the challenges and the opportunities: persistent issues such as corruption, bureaucracy, and political interference continue to hinder performance, yet reforms in digital governance and private sector innovation demonstrate that progress is possible.

The future of organisational management on the continent will be shaped by global forces digital transformation, sustainability imperatives, and demographic change as well as by the ability of leaders to ground management practices in local realities. Institutions that prioritise inclusivity, transparency, and ethical stewardship will not only achieve efficiency but also foster trust and legitimacy.

Ultimately, strong organisations are the foundation of prosperous societies. Africa's development aspirations, including the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, depend on institutions that are well-managed, resilient, and people-centred. Building and sustaining such organisations will require visionary leadership, committed human resources, and structures that balance stability with adaptability. For Nigeria and Africa more broadly, organisational management is therefore not just an administrative necessity but a developmental imperative.

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