

**Examining the Impact of the Leadership Culture on
the Organisational Strategic Decision-Making Process**

AN ACTION RESEARCH INQUIRY

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By

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Abstract

Title of the thesis: Examining the impact of the leadership culture on the organisational strategic decision-making process.

Background: MTI Plc is a telecom infrastructure company, quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange and regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission in Nigeria. The company's operations started in 2002 as an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) company registered to provide world-class telecommunication products and services. The company grew steadily by building capacities and harnessing local expertise, international skills, and critical partnerships to deliver world-class infrastructure solutions.

For over a decade, MTI Plc battled with the leadership and its practices, which impacted several processes, including the strategic decision-making process in the organisation. Many of the organisation's strategic projects involved decisions and decision-making that engendered huge implications. A corrupted strategic decision-making process meant that projects failed, and it was evident that the organisation's fortunes had plummeted. Efforts made to remedy the situation were not successful.

The research interest also arose from concerns raised by different organisation stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Specifically, the Nigerian Stock Exchange and the SEC had demanded that good corporate governance, coupled with good leadership practices, be enthroned for a couple of years. Employees were worried about how the leadership team conducted business, especially decision-making on significant projects, which impacted the going concern status of the organisation.

One of the fundamental issues was a failure to closely examine the problem to determine the extent of its impact and take steps to redirect the practice of the leadership culture in the organisation. To fully understand the fundamentals of the situation and establish a basis for examining the leadership culture, literature on the subject was reviewed. A lot of the reviewed literature on the subject pointed to the negative consequences of a weak leadership culture.

The aims of the Research: The research aimed to examine critical elements or ingredients of the leadership culture in MTI Plc, including the leadership outcomes of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment, and determine how the leadership culture impacted the strategic decision-making process in the organisation. The research was planned to make the leadership culture of MTI Plc more recognisable and visible and provide knowledge that would help design a new system of organisation that will encourage the development of strong leadership culture in MTI Plc and similar organisations or organisations with similar problems. The objectives included the evaluation or assessment of the leadership culture in the organisation, especially the DAC leadership outcomes, using the action research approach, identification of the main factors impacting the leadership culture in the organisation, knowledge creation, formulation of recommendations and action plans on strengthening the leadership culture to achieve excellent strategic decision-making processes

Design and Methodology of the Research: The Action Research methodology was employed within the context of the social constructionist philosophy. It involved the social construction of reality through the aggregation of lived experiences of research participants. The action research method employed was Participatory Action Research. The researcher and the research participants collaborated to generate data through focus group sessions, observations, stakeholders' meetings, questionnaires, and interviews. Data were also collected

through historical documents and records. Collected data were analysed using the template analysis method to generate themes and information, which were used to address the research questions.

Findings: The findings of the research included the fact that the leadership culture in the organisation impacted the strategic decision-making process in various forms, including decisions based on self-interest, lack of transparency, imposition of decisions, etc.; which together led to unintended outcomes and dwindling of the fortunes of the organisation. This intervention has proved that the leadership culture in the organisation was dysfunctional and antithetic to the strategic decision-making process and should be changed. From the details, leaders and other staff were ready for change.

Implications and limitations: From this study, it was learnt that it was necessary to consult relevant stakeholders and follow due process to develop and implement plans to achieve results. The insights gained have gone into the knowledge base and would help in the organisation's future endeavours and provide knowledge to society on the subject of the research. The research has thrown up a challenge in how leadership culture is viewed. The study was specific to the subject of strategic decision-making. However, it has exposed other organisational issues impacted by the leadership culture, which were not part of the substratum of the research. Therefore, it has opened up the opportunity to further examine the leadership culture.

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Keywords and Phrases: Action research, leadership culture, organisational culture, participatory action research, leadership, strategy, strategic decision-making, shared direction, alignment, commitment, change, learning, scholarship, theory.

Declaration

I declare that I undertook this work. No portion of it has been submitted elsewhere for any reason(s) or purposes. Other works used have been acknowledged and referenced appropriately.

Nosike Agokei,

3 March 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of my parents, Chief Isidore Agokei and Mrs Margaret Agokei

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I want to thank Dr Solomon Fadun for his supervision, which was a learning process for me. I would also thank my lecturers, who took us through the various courses before the thesis work. I will not forget to thank Catherine, the indefatigable Students Support Manager who wasted no time resolving or helping resolve issues. I acknowledge the assistance and support of my colleagues in the organisation, who are too numerous to mention. I thank my children Kene, Akudo, Oge and Mary for their encouragement and support in various ways. My gratitude should also go to Timothy Essien, who worked tirelessly, especially during the literature review and data collection months.

Glossary

DBA - Doctor of Business Administration

AR - Action Research

PAR - Participatory Action Research

DAC - Direction, Alignment and Commitment

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH THESIS

1.1 Introduction

This research examines the impact of the leadership culture on the strategic decision-making process of MTI Plc, including how it could be transformed to make it functional. The leadership culture is an operating system that enables leaders to work interdependently and collaboratively, respond to change and guide others to adapt to promote the organisation's sustainability (McGuire and Palus, 2018).

This project has adopted the action research approach, which involves focusing on the organisational problem identified, collecting data on the problem, and analysing and interpreting the data. The process helps to create knowledge through action and application, namely to explore theory and apply it to practice to solve the organisational problem (Eden and Ackermann (2018).

This chapter explains the research problem, provides an overview of the research, explains the rationale for it, and provides other important background information for understanding the research problem. Therefore, the overarching goals of the study and this chapter, in particular, have been considered in structuring this chapter. First, it discusses the background and context, my motivations for the research, the problem that the investigation is intended to help resolve, the research aims, objectives and questions, the research approach, the scope and justification and its significance. Next, it identifies the study's need and explains how it would contribute to research. In articulating these, the environment in which the influencing of the leadership

culture takes place is discussed; the purpose is to set the background for understanding the circumstances which permitted the situation. This builds into the background, purpose and justification of the study. Flowing from these provides the aims and objectives, namely to indicate the fundamental point about making the leadership culture more recognisable and providing knowledge that would help design a more effective leadership culture. As action research requires formulating research questions, introducing research questions is one of the purposes of this chapter, pinpointing the primary research questions. Section 1.7 explains the scope of the research as a critical aspect of developing the research plan and underscores the utility of the subjectivist ontology and the social constructionist philosophy employed in the research. Finally, it discusses the thesis framework and the arrangement of the chapters.

I was motivated to research the leadership culture by the transformations I read about in articles, which were fascinating. Therefore, I decided that I would research the leadership problem in MTI Plc and aim to transform it to achieve sustainability.

Unarguably, leadership is a significant factor in the success of groups of people on many levels. Berraies and El Abidine (2019:3) posited that "leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon and that leaders influence attitudes and behaviours of their followers and orient and sustainably mobilise the achievement of specific goals". Leadership has been related to "a person's skills, abilities and degree of influence to get people moving in a direction, making decisions and doing things they would typically not have embarked on" (Sousa and Rocha, 2019:2).

MTI Plc has had its share of leadership failures and continues to be challenged by what many views as a leadership problem. In the organisation, the leadership is responsible for strategic decision-making. As a stakeholder in the business, I

participated in addressing the organisation's leadership problems. But there has not been any concerted attempt to examine the leadership culture of MTI Plc and the failure of the leadership team to promote a productive strategic decision-making process, even with the knowledge that the quality of decision-making determines, to a large extent, whether or not the organisation will achieve its goals and remain sustainable.

In my studies, I read about leadership culture, defined by McGuire and Palus (2018:149) as "...the self-reinforcing, evolving, memetic web of individual and collective beliefs and practices in a collective for producing the outcomes of shared direction, alignment, and commitment". The leadership culture gives colour and meaning to leadership in a typical organisation and thus helps to explain the nature and context of organisational leadership. According to McGuire and Palus (2018), McGuire and Rhodes (2009) and Ozcan (2021), the leadership culture is examined and influenced through the leadership outcomes of 'Direction', 'Alignment', and 'Commitment' (DAC), which are defined in chapter two. The DAC depends on the organisation's leadership culture (McGuire and Palus, 2018). Therefore, the nature of the leadership culture determines how effective its competencies will produce desired outcomes. I was persuaded by the arguments of its proponents and the results in some case studies and research and actions taken by the proponents and writers on the subject, including the articles by McGuire and Rhodes (2009), Drath et al. (2008), McGuire and Palus (2018) and more recently Ozcan (2021). The authors argue that new and better leadership models are required to tackle organisations' leadership challenges.

1.2 Research Context

Oc (2018) argues that context is about the environment or situation in which the influencing tendency of leadership takes place. He further contends that context could influence the type of leadership and its behaviour. Therefore, It is imperative to define and discuss the research context for it to be better understood and gain a good measure of acceptability by stakeholders.

MTI Plc is a telecom infrastructure company, quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange and regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission in Nigeria. The Company's operations started in 2002 as an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) company registered to provide world-class telecommunication products and services. The company grew steadily by building capacities and harnessing local expertise, international skills, and critical partnerships to deliver world-class infrastructure solutions. It has offices in Ghana and Nigeria.

MTI's business is to build quality, independently owned and operated infrastructure to service Sub-Saharan African needs in telecommunication, energy, transport and sanitation. It created a solid and distinctive reputation for providing efficient services in Nigeria's telecommunication, electrical, and civil engineering industry.

The company has a Board of Directors and Board Committees. Also, it has a Management team led by the CEO, supported by three executive directors. In addition, there are four non-executive directors. The Executive Directors hold over 70% of the company's issued shares and influence decisions at meetings with their voting power. Every decision is expected to advance the company's cause, meet the requirements of transparency and ethics, and avoid conflicts of interest and any interests that might adversely affect the decision-making

process. In the company, there are formal decision-making processes, but it is established that some critical decisions are taken without regard to the formalities established.

The company is organised on a departmental basis, each with functional areas of responsibility. The policy is that the board should approve strategic decisions. However, most of the employees are excluded from the strategic decision-making process due to the hierarchical nature of the organisation's system and the dependent leadership structure, which is, more or less, a command-and-control type of structure. Therefore, influence and power on strategic decisions are exercised virtually by a few persons. There is no room for participation by others, except to air opinions that may or may not be taken.

The organisation's culture supports a hierarchical structure that gives the board and the management team much power. According to Warrick (2017:396), "Organisational culture describes the environment in which people work and the influence it has on how they think, act, and experience work". The culture of the organisation influences behaviours and the environment of work.

Managers and leaders did not understand the implications of the leadership culture; neither did anyone understand the act of building a leadership culture that would produce desired leadership outcomes. Also, according to Warrick (2017:400), "Leaders throughout an organisation need to understand the importance of strategy and culture in building a successful organisation and make both a top priority in their decision-making and practices".

1.3 Background, Purpose, and Justification for the Study

In section 1.1 of this chapter, I discussed my motivation for researching this topic. The research interest also arose from concerns raised by different

organisation stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Specifically, the Nigerian Stock Exchange and the SEC demanded good corporate governance and sound leadership practices. Employees were worried about how the leadership team conducted business, especially decision-making on significant projects, which impacted the going concern status of the organisation. The shareholders held stakeholders' and other meetings and set up teams to consider leadership problems, but no significant results were achieved.

With insights from the contents of the modules on action research under the DBA programme, I became fascinated by the benefits of using action research to examine organisational problems. One major attraction was that action research would involve other persons in the organisation and the consent of the leaders and the board, which meant that I could embark on the project, knowing that I had the blessings and the nod of the leaders of the organisation.

The articles and books on the leadership culture, including McGuire and Palus (2019) and McGuire and Rhodes (2009), provided the theoretical framework for the study. Accordingly, I have adopted the DAC Framework (McGuire and Palus, 2018; McGuire and Rhodes, 2009; Drath et al., 2008;). Therefore, the purpose of the research is to examine the leadership culture of MTI Plc and its impact on the organisation's strategic decision-making process using the participatory action research approach. Also, the research will consider how the organisation's leadership culture could be strengthened and transformed.

The research is justified for a couple of reasons. First, MTI Plc has been challenged by the leadership problem. So, there is a need to research the leadership problem and find a solution. The research will help to sensitise leaders of the organisation regarding the imperatives of strategy and culture in

the decision-making process. Enough attention has not been given to how culture impacts the leadership process, which Dwairy (2019:511) pinpointed, namely: "The scientific literature has not given enough attention to cultural aspects in analysing the process of leadership". From this perspective, there is justification for the research to help address the issue raised by Dwairy (2019), among others.

1.4 Why use Action Research in the study?

Action research involves, among other things, evaluation and reflection on addressing issues and implementing necessary changes in practice, and ultimately improving practice (Clark, Porath, Thiele, and Jobe, 2020). Action research produces practical, valuable knowledge for organisations, individuals, and society. It is situation and context-based and, therefore, suitable for this study within the context of MTI Plc. Through the action research approach, knowledge is created through action and application. Clark, Porath, Thiele, and Jobe (2020) argue that action research is intended to improve, refine, reform, and solve problems in organisations. This, understandably, makes action research an appropriate approach for the study.

Eden and Ackermann (2018) argue that action research should be employed when there is a genuine need to take action. There is indeed a need to take action regarding the leadership culture in MTI Plc, and this is evident in the purposes of the research and insights shared in the discussion on the background of this study. According to Eden and Ackermann (2018:1147), "Action research is an obvious candidate for a research method when the objective is to explore theory in relation to practice." This study involves applying theory in practice. It provides a panoramic view of the organisation by those who possess pre-understanding and lived experiences and have been selected on defined criteria

to deliver the research outcome(s) through action and further learning. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was considered the best and the most appropriate way to organise the study to achieve effectiveness and the goals of this qualitative study.

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The research aims to examine critical elements or ingredients of the leadership culture in MTI Plc, including the leadership outcomes of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (McGuire and Palus, 2018; McGuire and Rhodes, 2009; Ozcan, 2021), and determine how the leadership culture impacts the strategic decision-making process in the organisation. This research has been planned to make the leadership culture of MTI Pc more recognisable and visible and provide knowledge that will help design a new system of organisation that will encourage the development of solid and result-oriented leadership practices in MTI Plc and similar organisations or organisations with similar problems. In driving these efforts, the following objectives have been formulated:

- a. Evaluate or assess the leadership culture in the organisation, especially the DAC leadership outcomes, using the action research approach, including action research cycles.
- b. Identify the main factors impacting the leadership culture in the organisation and create knowledge in the process for the benefit of MTI Plc and other organisations.
- c. Formulate recommendations and action plans on strengthening the leadership culture to achieve excellent strategic decision-making processes
- d. Achieve the objectives of my thesis action research

1.6 Research Questions

Developing research questions that guide the research process and continuously remind me about the destination is necessary. Questions are critical to the research processes, especially in delivering the research outcomes, and the importance of research questions is well-acknowledged (Brownhill, Ungarova, and Bipazhanova (2017). Like most research approaches, action research requires formulating research questions in advance. And because the study is an action research project, the research questions are questions about the 'action'. According to Brownhill, Ungarova, and Bipazhanova (2017), the quality of the research question is of fundamental importance as poorly conceived or constructed questions would create problems that would affect all subsequent stages of a study.

The research questions helped me decide and explain my research and structure. In addition, the research questions played considerable roles in guiding my research methodology, including data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation of results (Kross and Giust, 2019). Therefore, it was essential to draft questions as lines of enquiry and the foundation for the action research cycles.

The research questions are:

- a. What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc?
- b. How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the organisation's strategic decision-making process?

In reviewing the initial report, I considered the research questions vis-à-vis the aims, objectives and the framework I adopted. Then, following further studies and reviews, I set sub-research questions, which guided the design and

implementation of the action research cycles and aspects of the research process, particularly the critical leadership outcomes of Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC). These are as follows:

- a. What is the paradigm or standard of the cultural web of the organisation?
- b. How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?
- c. How should we coordinate work so that all fit together and achieve Alignment?
- d. How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective?

The literature review provided deep insights and presented, to a large extent, the ingredients for the formulation of the research questions.

1.7 Scope and Methodology of the Research

According to Antonellis and Berry (2017), the scope of the research is a critical aspect of developing the research plan. This crucial point was considered necessary in crafting the research design. The study was limited to investigating the current leadership culture of MTI Plc, determining how it impacted the organisation's strategic decision-making process, and strengthening the leadership culture through a transformation from its current standard of the Dependent Conformist standard to the Independent Leadership Culture standard. This study was not planned to transform the organisation to the highest standard of the leadership culture, namely, the Independent Leadership Culture, because of time and unavailability of resources. Still, it is hoped that the organisation will find it necessary to continue with the core project.

Considering that the action research process is iterative, it was imperative to develop a research design that presented an excellent opportunity for reviews to arrive at a higher standard of the leadership culture. To underscore the necessity for deriving helpful information and data, I chose the subjectivist ontology and the social constructionist philosophy, which underlines the extensive involvement of participants with lived experiences (Coghlan, 2019). Rahi (2017) describes the philosophical paradigm as the beliefs and assumptions researchers share about the world and how knowledge is derived in the research process.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis was developed to facilitate a smooth transition from one study area to the order and encourage reading and meaning-making. After this chapter, I will discuss the literature review in chapter two. The review considered and critically examined studies and literature on the research subject. It was essential to do this, lay the foundation for the study, and expose findings and details in the literature. Chapter three discussed the Methodology and research methods, the ontological and epistemological aspects of the philosophical paradigm and my choice of the research approach. Chapter four discussed the data collection methods, including data sources for the research, analysis of collected data, the action research cycles, sense-making, and reflections. In chapter five, I discussed the development of my practice, knowledge generation, learning outcomes and reflections, including the development of actionable knowledge. Finally, chapter six covers the summary and conclusion of the study.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has introduced vital issues relevant to this study, including a discussion of the leadership question as postulated by various authors, relevant perspectives to the understanding of the research problem, the processes, the need for the research, formulated research questions that guided the research process, the research approach, the methodology and data collection and analysis, etc. It has been an effort to explain the research problem and present an understanding of the motivation for the research, the context and the framework within which this study was organised.

The aims, objectives, and research questions have been discussed in this chapter. The research questions are critical in the research process and are essential in an action research study to guide the research and help reach the desired outcomes.

In explaining the leadership culture question in MTI Plc and the research context, I have distilled the concerns of the stakeholders about the leadership situation in the organisation, the need to introduce change, and other benefits to the company, stakeholders, and society at large. Also, I discussed the justification for the research, including the need to research the leadership problem in MTI Plc and find a solution, sensitise leaders of the organisation regarding the imperatives of strategy and culture in the decision-making process, and contribute towards addressing the issue raised by Dwairy (2019) namely that enough attention has not been given to cultural aspects in analysing the process of leadership.

The reasons for adopting the action research method, especially the Participatory Action Research and its connection with the philosophical stance that guided this research, are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, there has

been a brief introduction of the methodology and design and the imperative of developing a research design that would present a good opportunity for reviews towards achieving expected outcomes.

The next chapter discusses the review of scholarly articles and other publications, including relevant concepts, which helped develop the research questions, the theoretical foundation and the conceptual framework, with particular considerations of the research context, the action research approach, aims and objectives of the study, and scope of the study, discussed in this chapter.

2 CHAPTER 2 - THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I discussed the thrust of the project, highlighting, among others, the research problem, the context, my motivation for the research, aims and objectives, the need for the study, the research questions, and the scope and methodology of the research. These have provided the basis for the literature review.

The role of this chapter is to discuss the review of existing research and debates relevant to leadership culture and strategic decision-making. This chapter presents a comparison and a critical analysis of scholarly articles and other materials pertinent to understanding the relevant subjects. It sets the stage for building the conceptual framework and the foundation for the research methodology and articulates the research questions more appropriately. Furthermore, this review shows the state of research in the study area and highlights gaps in existing research. It enables me to understand the subjects and helps improve my knowledge in the field of study. The review also enables me to get a better understanding of how research findings in the relevant areas were presented and discussed, as well as how the concepts and methods were applied to problems.

I have structured the chapter with an introduction and set the literature review context. In section 2.1, the conceptual framework presents the opportunity to expose the insights and ideas relevant to this study and guide action and learning, lay the foundation for the development of the structure that explains the paths and critical elements of this research, using scholarly materials to pinpoint the centrality of leadership and leadership theories and constructing and planning actions on the leadership culture. Next, the chapter discusses

leadership style and organisation structure which mirrors how activities, including roles, rules and responsibilities, are organised towards achieving organisational goals, as well as the authority and powers at the various levels within the organisation. The critical importance of organisational culture in developing the leadership culture is discussed. The insights from scholarly articles on the strategic decision-making process provide materials for designing the research. This chapter also discusses the action research methodology. It exposes the ramifications of the leadership culture and knowledge gained from articles. Finally, it discusses how knowledge from reviewed literature helped develop the conceptual framework, a further review of the research questions and justifies the need for the research.

In reviewing the literature, I had at the back of my mind the ramifications of the central concept, leadership culture, which is defined as ".. the self-reinforcing, evolving, memetic web of individual and collective beliefs and practices in a collective for producing the outcomes of shared direction, alignment, and commitment" (McGuire and Palus, 2018:149). As stated by the authors, the leadership culture is a relatively new concept. Still, many articles and other materials are either directly on the leadership culture or on some subject that touches on and engages with the concept.

In reviewing the literature, I tried to determine if my initial research questions were addressed and the article's usefulness to my research. The literature has assisted me in reviewing my initial research questions. Also, in selecting literature, I assessed the scientific quality of the material, especially regarding the rigour of the research design and process. I looked closely to find themes relevant to the situation in MTI Plc, namely the questions and concepts which recur across the articles and which are relevant to the subject of this study or which are significant enough to influence a review of my initial research

questions. Having designed the questions, I sought to locate the methods that would enable me to secure rich and relevant data in the articles and sought to find the methodology that best addresses the need for data collection and analysis in the articles and critical issues bordering on the validity of the research outcomes in the literature.

The theoretical background of this study is based on a broad literature review on the topics related to the main subject matters and issues which impact the causal relationship between the leadership culture and strategic decision-making process, as well as others that are prime candidates for reviews and discussions towards developing the conceptual framework and setting the structure of this thesis.

2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

A discussion of the conceptual framework presents the opportunity to expose the insights and ideas relevant to this study and guide action and learning, consistent with the plan for the research. According to Adom, Hussiem, and Agyem (2018:1), "The theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs". It lays the foundation for the development of the structure that explains the paths and critical elements of this research and concepts that influence the subject of the study.

I focused on the vital debates central to this study's issue and which positively influenced actions and strategies in constructing, planning, taking action, evaluating the action, and reflecting on results and outcomes. This review was also with the view of equipping me to build a veritable research design and be

guided towards matching theory with practice and the deliver quality research outcomes.

I will discuss the development of the conceptual framework. Still, it is imperative to first review concepts and theories that helped explain phenomena relevant to the research, the themes pertinent to the leadership question in MTI Plc, and the foundation for the conceptual framework. Therefore, the concepts and theories are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.1 Leadership

From my review of articles and other academic works, it is evident that Berraies and El Abidine (2019) argument that leadership had been extensively researched is not out of place. However, despite the extensive research on leadership generally, particularly leadership problems, new grounds and circumstances emerge, and there are gaps in explaining some leadership phenomena (McGuire and Palus, 2018).

Leadership has been related to "a person's skills, abilities and degree of influence to get people moving in a direction, making decisions and doing things that they would typically not have embarked on" (Sousa and Rocha, 2019:2). Berraies and El Abidine (2019:3) posited that "leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon and that leaders influence attitudes and behaviours of their followers and orient and sustainably mobilise the achievement of specific goals". Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Ajibade, and Ajonbadi (2019:2) acknowledged that there were diverse definitions of leadership and different interpretations but stated that "leadership may simply be described as a relationship through which an individual or group of persons with authority influences the behaviour and actions of others". The definitions by Sousa and Rocha (2019), Berraies and El Abidine (2019), and Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Ajibade, and Ajonbadi (2019), point

to a central tendency of leadership as a process of influence on behaviours and practices and have exposed the critical leadership themes, including influence, behaviour, knowledge, authority, direction, and decision-making, which are necessary considerations in research of this kind.

Behrendt et al. (2017) wrote extensively on leadership, hinged essentially on the critical elements of the leadership culture, and viewed it from an integrative perspective. The authors argued that the success of an organisation depends on its leaders. The theoretical framework, based essentially on individual and collective leadership efforts, rhymes with the inclinations of current thinking on influential leadership culture viz, collective and collaborative leadership (McGuire and Palus, 2018). The essence of leadership captures the soul of the concept of the leadership culture. This was pointedly stated by Behrendt et al. (2017:233) when they stated that "the essence of leadership is influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives". The authors employed foundations of scientific research to discuss leadership behaviour and leadership outcomes through a complete process. It is important to stress that the article considered some of the themes inherent in the MTI situation and relevant to any leadership discourse, especially its influence over followers. Also, the article taps into a wealth of knowledge from the past and from contemporary studies in investigating leadership behaviour from the collective effort point of view as espoused by writers on the subject of the leadership culture, such as McGuire and Palus (2018) and Ozcan (2021). Another critical point made by Behrendt et al. 2017) is the impact of the leader's credibility on the delivery or achievement of effective coordination and cooperation. This mirrors the critical situation and the weaknesses in the MTI situation. Although they argued that the research was constructive and rigorous, they admitted that their work did not cover the entire spectrum. The admission

of a limited cover points to the need for further research. It should be stressed that the effort was theory-based and not an observation of leadership behaviour and outcomes of interviews and questionnaires.

Dwairy (2019) contributions, which introduced the culture and stressed the importance of culture on leadership behaviours and practices, are instructive. I could not agree more with his argument that the scientific literature has not given enough attention to culture in discussing leadership roles, behaviours, and leadership practices. I find great value in the article because it exposed the key leadership themes that help us understand and appreciate leadership circumstances in our organisation. The argument by Dwairy (2019) found support in the position taken by Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Ajibade, and Ajonbadi (2019), who argued that leadership in organisations could manipulate the organisational culture and influence its cultivation.

Oc (2018) argued that context could influence leadership and its behaviour. But the central points about leadership themes necessary for explaining leadership phenomena are recognised by different authors, despite different contexts. Moreover, as Ozcan (2021) pointed out, there is a commonality of themes.

Vilas-Boas, Davel, and Bispo (2018) posited that leadership should be seen as a sharing phenomenon, the very foundation of the leadership culture. McGuire and Palus (2018) canvassed that the new view of leadership, anchored on the leadership culture, emphasises collectivism while recognising the individual competencies and skills of those who make up the team and constitute the leadership and exploiting these qualities. The Vilas-Boas, Davel, and Bispo (2018) argument that culture is a fundamental element in constructing organisational practices and how leaders make and base their decisions is pertinent to understanding phenomena in the research area and crafting the

research design. The discussions by the authors have helped to enrich my thought processes on the direction of this research and elucidated themes, including values, a culture of leadership, organisational purpose, collaborative practice, collaboration, etc., which bear directly on understanding the leadership situation in MTI Plc. Their exposition of leadership as a cultural practice has directed my mind to the scope of the research questions on the issues being examined in this study. Although I understand the authors' idea of the context in explaining leadership and its practices, I find their arguments on context over-extended or over-stretched, as undoubtedly the leadership themes identified in the study bear relevance and were discussed globally, making them applicable in different contexts.

Having reviewed some articles and arguments on the concepts and practices of leadership, it makes sense to articulate further the issues bordering on leadership by looking at the leadership theories to help in employing approaches to gain a better understanding of leadership and its foundations as part of the conceptual framework.

2.2.2 Leadership Theories

2.2.2.1 Introduction

The centrality of leadership theories to examine leadership in any shape or form informed the need for discussions of the leadership theories vital to constructing and planning actions on the leadership culture. The leadership approach has shifted over several years, and many leadership theories have emerged (Amoo and Singh, 2018). While I acknowledge values in each of the theories, this study has concentrated on the critical leadership theories directly relevant to this study and which impact the themes inherent in the subject matter of this research. These theories are discussed in this section of this literature review.

2.2.2.2 Behavioural Theory

The behavioural theory focuses on the behaviour of leadership. According to Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwarb (2018:181), "Behavioural theories of leadership emphasised more on studying the determinants of behaviour of a leader and concluded that using these determinants, leadership style can be learned." The authors emphasised the vital place of training in shaping the behaviours of leaders. The behavioural theory focuses on top management, which does not cover leadership at different levels. Much as the behavioural theory has helped ascertain certain behaviours and their expected impact, it has not fully explained the behaviours consistently necessary to achieve leadership effectiveness. In any case, specific behaviours are exhibited under particular situations (Amoo and Singh, 2018). However, the behavioural theory touches on leadership style and practices, which are vital ingredients in explaining the leadership culture in MTI Plc.

2.2.2.3 Contingency Theory

The Contingency Theory is founded on the principle that different leadership styles are deployed under other circumstances or situations. The situation determines the leadership style and leadership culture to be employed, believing that the adopted leadership style will achieve the maximum outcome (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwarb, 2018). Therefore, the theory is a reference for charting a good environment and system of beliefs, assumptions, and practices that would guarantee a productive leadership culture, knowing from this theory that the circumstances will significantly influence the event and the kind of leadership culture or style that emanates. This theory is also instructive on the issue of generalising research findings which borders on one of the critical goals of this research, namely knowledge creation. In my view, although the article seems to dwell on context and context related issues, it presents essential elements and

themes necessary for explaining leadership and the framing of processes, including appropriate methods of data collection that would lead to data validity and integrity, as well as plan for any inconsistencies and variabilities.

2.2.2.4 Shared Leadership Theory

The primary objective of shared leadership is to achieve an interactive influence process among employees in an organisation, which should lead members to accomplish organisational goals (Wu and Cormican, 2016). Shared leadership is viewed as an interactive process among individuals in an organisation. From this theory, one can deduce that different individuals or leaders play different but active roles in the decision-making process in a collaborative fashion against the traditional approach, which emphasises hierarchy with a control-and-command structure and top-down decision-making system. It is rested on the distribution of leadership responsibility, as a single leader is not likely to possess all the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to advance its strategic objectives and interests. Shared leadership leads to employee motivation and satisfaction, encourages leadership development, and ultimately leads to organisational effectiveness. It facilitates trust, openness, collaboration, and learning and presents opportunities for developing and reshaping the strategic vision. It seems plausible that a vision created through shared leadership is more likely to encourage commitment, shared direction, alignment, and loyalty to the organisation.

The significant values inherent in a shared leadership system point to the necessary conditions for a productive leadership culture, as pointed out by Ozcan (2021), McGuire and Palus (2018), and Drath et al. (2008), especially collaboration, commitment, direction, alignment, as well as openness and trust,

which underpin the significance of the concept of shared leadership to the subject of this study.

2.2.2.5 Ethical Leadership Theory

Engelbrecht, Heine, and Mahembe (2017) argued that ethical leadership is critical to assessing a leader's credibility and ability to influence followers and determine the standard of trust between him and his followers. Ethical leadership is underpinned by values and themes such as reliability, transparency, accountability, honesty, impartiality, justice, and ethics. Ethical leadership is necessary to achieve favourable organisational outcomes, including strategic decision-making.

It is essential to point out that ethical leaders affect their followers' commitment and loyalty because of the moral content of the leader's character, including traits that encourage or motivate employees to act ethically. I would argue that the opportunities presented by shared and collaborative leadership are more likely to promote a sound ethical culture in the organisation. Going by the dictates of ethical leadership, emphasis should be placed on such themes as employee satisfaction, commitment, behaviour, and other stakeholders' interests.

2.2.3 Leadership Style

As part of the discussion of leadership theories, it is appropriate to discuss the leadership styles and the relevant leadership theories bordering on leadership style. The leadership style is not only applicable to the discussion of the leadership culture, but it also impacts the leadership culture and the leadership outcomes

Leadership style is how a leader directs and motivates employees to achieve the organisation's goals (Al Khajeh, 2018). The author emphasised that it involves the deployment of specific characteristics and tactics in interacting with employees and getting them to deliver their tasks. The article by the author examines the impact of the leadership style on organisational performance, focusing on six major leadership styles, namely transformational, transactional, autocratic, charismatic, bureaucratic, and democratic, and provides deep insights into these leadership styles. The exciting part of the author's recommendation is that organisations should deploy a leadership style that enhances the capabilities and abilities of the employees.

I find some of the author's conclusions bewildering. One such finding is that charismatic leadership style is negatively related to organisational performance. At the same time, the author admitted that charismatic leadership was one of the successful leadership styles, with leaders developing a vision and motivating followers to follow and execute the idea. This leadership style invites innovation and creativity, but he concluded that it was negatively related to organisational performance. Although his argument that employees are dependent on the charismatic leader under this style seems valid, it does not follow that employee performance would be poor, as the author seemed to imply. He emphasised "a long time negative effect" but did not define "long-term".

Regarding autocratic leadership, the author argued that authoritarian leaders tend to retain the decision-making power, are less creative, and affect the motivation and satisfaction level of the employees. Autocratic leadership also leads to organisational conflicts, which negatively affect the overall performance. Organisations are not meant to exist in the short term; therefore, conclusions based on the short time should, in my view, be somewhat

discounted. While I argue that the decision by the author on some of the secondary sources of data was misplaced, I admit that the article in part discussed vital issues relating to the subject of this research, including the relevant leadership themes which have sensitised me to review and consider my ideas and questions on the topic of this study.

Berraies and El Abidine (2019) examine the effect of the transformational and transactional leadership styles and their sub-dimensions on exploitative and exploratory innovations. The results of the authors' examination were that experimental innovation is linked to transformational leadership. The authors argue that leadership styles are models that leaders should use concerning the specific context; that leadership style is a leader's approach to providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. These mirror the leadership themes for explaining and understanding the leadership culture of MTI Plc. Although the authors surmised that the sampling technique was a method that could hamper the generalisability of the results, it was quite an extensive research that is amenable to generalisations and should apply to circumstances such as those of MTI Plc. The article was built on works of various authors whose studies were not localised and used a research design that meant that the process was rigorous. They used a structured questionnaire that was pretested among researchers and practitioners in management. Four hundred and six senior managers were respondents, and a sampling method based on reasoned choice was used in collecting data. Research questions were drafted to elicit descriptions of the CEO's leadership behaviours, with 273 responses. This is significant, especially as they touch on the critical leadership themes, including decision-making, culture, effectiveness, performance, motivation, collective work, and leadership behaviour, the explanations of which are relevant to how data is collected and how they are analysed. One of

the low sides is that the study was based on a quantitative approach which does not offer an excellent opportunity to understand how leadership styles are implicated, unlike a qualitative approach employed in this research. Still, it presents facts and perspectives relevant to this research in no small way.

The study by Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Ajibade, and Ajonbadi (2019), aimed to explore the impact of organisational culture on leadership styles in Nigerian universities. I find their arguments and inclinations to culture in explaining the leadership style exciting and directly relevant to the study. They argued that the espoused culture of an organisation might encourage one form of leadership style or the other. They further argued that the transactional leadership style works in an organisational culture primarily based on strict procedures. In contrast, the autocratic leadership style thrives in a work culture that gives the leader extensive powers and thus exercises tremendous control over decisions and policies. Their approach was qualitative research, and a qualitative design was made for data collection and analysis. The themes are relevant even though the sample was not diversified enough.

The article by Sharma, Aryan, Singh and Kaur (2019) summarised the research published in the integrated field of leadership and organisational research. They argued that the leadership style must be effective and consider the virtues of motivation, learning, teamwork, leadership competency, etc. The authors' argument emphasises the leadership culture processes based on collaboration, motivation, competency, skills, and collective leadership. The significance and value of this article lie in the rigorous research process spanning different regions and environments, categorisations, and investigations of empirical and case studies. Two hundred and eight papers related to leadership studies were reviewed, but 119 articles were used for further systematic review related to leadership studies, which is considered a significant scope. The authors also

presented the opportunity for future research when they stated that the research field was wide open for future research in leadership and related areas based on the gaps they found.

Romana (2020) analysed three fundamental aspects of organisational life, focusing on the company and managerial life, its culture, and leadership style. The author employed the fundamental terms of openness, integrity, humility, a healthy vision of the present and the future, optimistic perspective, appropriate use of authority, and a strong understanding of personal and organisational objectives, to characterise the behaviour of leaders. One can argue that these words and phrases represent a priori themes upon which emergent themes will be built, thus showcasing the significance of this article in framing research questions and the research design. The article followed a qualitative approach involving reviews of relevant documents, and semi-structured interviews on business strategy were conducted.

From the reviews in this section, it is evident that the leadership style forms part of, or is integral to, the leadership culture and impacts decision-making and leads to outcomes. The different articles point to the relevance of the leadership style to organisational culture and the leadership culture outcomes of DAC.

2.2.4 Organisation Structure

An organisation's structure mirrors the relationships between units and how activities are organised towards achieving organisational goals. Activities here refer to rules, roles, and responsibilities. In addition, the structure mirrors the authority and powers at the various levels within the organisation.

Billinger and Workiewicz (2019) propelled my thought processes on the central place of the organisation structure in influencing the leadership culture. They focused on addressing the gradual replacement of traditional top-down

hierarchies with organisational structures that are more decentralised, where employees take part in determining how to carry out their jobs. This is the central argument of the proponents of solid leadership cultures, such as McGuire and Palus (2018).

One of the objectives of Ramos et al. (2019) was to identify the behaviour of organisational networks in an organisation structure based on existing sources of power. The authors argued that power, one of the key themes in leadership studies and practice, is a critical organisational attribute to understand. Furthermore, they argued that modelling the structure and interactions could lead to knowledge about the power networks that shape the interactions. The methodology was a 12-question personalised questionnaire applied to 1190 workers in a company. I was fascinated by the idea in the article that the study could be generalised and used in organisations to determine the relationships between people within the organisation and identify those within power networks as a way of knowing the "key" actors in the promotion of organisational changes. This is very significant for a couple of reasons. First, it would enable me to determine how to plan interviews and the nature of the interview questions for leaders. Second, since one of the research goals is a change in the leadership culture of MTI Plc, it is essential to identify those who would make or mar the change process and design the study to motivate such persons and ideas from the article assisted me.

The paper by Raziq et al. (2018) considered the relationship among elements of an organisational structure and the mediating role of knowledge sharing, a significant feature in any well-articulated and implemented action research project. The authors utilised data from 220 respondents from both the private and public sectors. Their finding indicated that centralisation of the organisation structure, i.e. a hierarchical structure, was negatively related to organisational

success, which mirrors the situation in MTI. They concluded that knowledge sharing, which encompasses distributed decision-making, teamwork, and collaboration, is necessary for success. The article's emphasis on knowledge sharing exposes one of the leading problems in MTI Plc, which is the characteristic absence of teamwork and knowledge-sharing.

Therefore, it is imperative that in discussing the leadership culture, it is essential that a view of organisation structure is taken, as organisation structure types determine the dimensions of the leadership culture (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009). The opinions by McGuire and Rhodes (2009) and McGuire and Palus (2018) on how the organisation structure impacts the leadership culture presented significant insights, and it was not difficult to discern the relationship between the structure and culture and to exploit it in planning and in taking action in the research.

It is safe to argue that the organisation structure may be limited in defining the leadership culture as it simply defines roles and powers. The exercise of the powers and authority may be influenced outside or contemplated by the organisation's structure. However, the type of organisation structure impacts the leadership culture. The arguments reinforce this point by McGuire and Palus (2018), Burton and Obe (2018), Billinger and Workiewicz (2019), Ramos et al. (2019) and Raziq et al. (2018). A key takeaway from the various articles is the enormous role the organisation structure plays in defining and establishing the organisation's leadership culture. It is essential to mention that McGuire and Rhodes (2009), McGuire and Palus (2018), and Ozcan (2021) exposed the strong foundation that the organisation structure lays for the leadership culture.

2.2.5 Organisational Culture

Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Adisa, and Ajonbadi (2019:4) asserted that an "organisation's culture develops largely from its leadership while the culture of an organisation can also affect its leadership development". Therefore, leadership can manipulate the organisational culture and redirect the organisation, which should be insulated from the leadership problems of poor governance, weak cultures, poor value systems, etc.

Culture impacts leadership behaviours and practices, but enough attention has not been given to the cultural aspects or how culture impacts leadership actions (Dwairy, 2019). Culture comprises values and assumptions shared by members of an organisation that guide behaviour and other practices at the workplace (Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Adisa, and Ajonbadi, 2019). The perspectives shared by Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Adisa, and Ajonbadi (2019) and (Dwairy 2019) present insights necessary for designing this research and framing the research questions.

The paper by Tran (2020) aimed to discuss the influence of organisational culture on leadership behaviour and job satisfaction. The author argued that organisation culture includes the range of values, beliefs, behaviours, and conventions that influence the way subordinates think and act in an organisation. In explaining organisation culture, the author emphasised trust and corporate governance as critical elements and themes necessary for building a strong organisation culture, both of which had not received due attention in MTI Plc. The research result presents practical implications: it influences those who make decisions, including leaders. The methodology seems excellent and relevant to the research process. It involved a purposive questionnaire adapted to collect surveys from 294 working people in several sector organisations in Vietnam. The author considered the sample small, but I think it presents good

value regarding the number of respondents and the spread across several organisations. The author found that hierarchical cultures negatively correlate with relationship-oriented leadership behaviour in the investigation. Although the study was within a particular context, it does not detract from generalisation. The themes and practices highlighted and examined are relevant to understanding the leadership phenomenon in MTI Plc and the planning processes in this research.

The study by Areiqata et al. (2020) examined the theoretical literature associated with definitions of culture and its relationship with leadership. Critical themes considered were organisational culture, leadership, power, individualism-collectivism, communication, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. The authors argued that leadership and organisational culture were two sides of the same coin and constituted crucial organisational elements that propel organisations to compete effectively and succeed. This emphasises the critical place of organisational culture in any discourse on leadership. Again, the authors' view that leaders transform culture by imposing their values and standards of behaviour supports the opinions expressed by Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Adisa, and Ajonbadi (2019). They surmised that most researchers held that culture influenced the decision-making practices, communication, working styles, behaviour, and employees' view of the world. The methodology involved reviews of works and analyses of previous literature, which focused on the relationship between culture and leadership. Therefore, the article was specific as to what it wanted to examine. The article covered a broad spectrum of relevant concepts, including leadership studies, intercultural communication, cultural management, teamwork, leadership competencies, and organisational management practices.

It is evident from research findings that the cultural web examination helps extract leadership themes. It demonstrated the cultural web's relevance and suitability in providing valuable insight into MTI by depicting its organisational culture and areas requiring improvements to strengthen the cultural web paradigm and the organisation's culture. The cultural web model identifies different themes, usually generated in qualitative research from all participants' responses on all six aspects of the cultural web. I consider the article extensive enough and relevant to this research effort to investigate the current organisational culture and leadership culture.

2.2.6 Strategic Decision-Making

Gopalan and Mehrotra (2017) argued that strategic decision-making refers to choosing a strategy to achieve organisational goals and considering alternatives or a plan according to the circumstances or the demands of the situations faced. The argument by the authors that the effectiveness of an organisation's strategic decisions depends on the well-developed internal decision-making system is instructive. Still, the authors have not considered the implementation issue and whether or not those with the decision-making power will adhere to the prescribed internal decision-making rules. The case in MTI Plc was that the leaders flouted the rules on decision-making. But a significant takeaway in the article is the idea that a well-developed internal decision-making system is necessary to guarantee a productive strategic decision-making process. The authors' arguments have lent credence to the rationale for the study, namely that the characteristics of the leaders include many factors that influence the strategic decision-making process. Moreover, the study employed a methodology to develop detailed findings. It was research based on primary and secondary data, including a collection of required information from identified leaders and managers and secondary sources.

Abubakar et al. (2019) surmised that organisational decision-making strategies are essential. The article highlights the need for a framework for knowledge management and decision-making. In leading organisations, managers are required or expected to engage in excellent decision-making to achieve the organisation's goals, and the process involves adequate knowledge management. The experience in MTI is a strategic decision-making process that is, to a large extent, not founded on rationality, and there is virtually no consideration of alternatives. Strategic decisions rested on the whims and caprices of a few of the leaders, especially the CEO.

Nahum and Carmeli (2020) recognised that an organisation's leadership, represented by the Board of Directors, takes the strategic decisions more often than not. Still, some directors were not involved in the organisation's strategic decision-making process. Therefore, the research methodology looks appropriate, with data collected from fifteen open interviews and twenty strategic decision events.

Christopoulos et al. (2017) and Vitale and Cull (2018) discussed the role and behaviour of an individual in the decision-making process. They argued that it was essential to recognise the reasons for the individual's attitude during the decision-making process. This argument presents a significant insight that will help determine focus areas during interviews with the leaders. Vitale and Cull (2018) focused on developing a model for examining the influence of CEO values on decision-making. They further argued that values, especially personal values and experiences, coupled with ethics and moral reasoning, were important considerations and that these factors affect the decision-making process outcomes. With the dynamics of the leadership culture, it is safe to argue that the goals of the strategic decision-making process will be better

served by a strong leadership culture in which individual interests are subordinated to group or collective interests.

Van Knippenberg (2020) advanced a model that expressed the need for collective and distributed decision-making. A good argument of the author, which provided a good insight into the leadership culture dynamics and an opportunity for me to exploit it in constructing and planning the action in this research, is the argument that leadership built on shared purpose is not a matter of top-down leadership, involving a one-way communication from the leader to group members, but one that is genuinely a group process in which employees at different levels participate in leadership processes.

The arguments of writers and researchers discussed in this section are significant. The key points are the need for leaders to avoid poor or dysfunctional decision-making or decision-making influenced by self-interest and the need to design a productive strategic decision-making system. These arguments have distilled some of the key themes that have influenced the research questions' direction.

2.2.7 The Concept of Leadership Culture

McGuire and Palus (2018) and Ozcan (2021) argue that, as a phenomenon, the leadership culture is impacted by epistemological consideration, particularly the social construction of culture through the intervention of the practices and beliefs of the people who make up the organisation.

Within the sphere of leadership, there is a growing focus on the leadership culture which has been defined by McGuire and Palus (2018:149) thus: "Leadership culture is the self-reinforcing, evolving, memetic web of individual and collective beliefs and practices in a collective for producing the outcomes of shared direction, alignment, and commitment". The leadership culture gives

colour and meaning to leadership in a typical organisation and thus helps to explain the nature and context of organisational leadership. The Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC), described and illustrated below, are outcomes of the leadership culture. The DAC depends on the organisation's leadership culture (McGuire and Palus, 2018). The nature of the leadership culture determines how effective its competencies will produce desired outcomes. Unarguably, effective leadership development cannot be separated from the leadership culture. The statement by Dwairy (2019:510), namely "If culture is a set of norms, values, and directives that guide people on how to behave and manage their lives, then culture is a form of unidentified leadership", adds to the illumination of the concept of the leadership culture.

The article by McGuire and Palus (2018) focuses on defining and explaining the leadership culture and a framework for its development and transformation. They stated that the focus on individual leaders alone would not do the magic but that the belief system should be transcended by the leadership culture based on collective leadership and that leadership cultures can evolve and be transformed. According to McGuire and Palus (2018), it is necessary to make it visible, explain it, and achieve collective awareness, coupled with moral action. Unarguably, a leadership culture devoid of morality and ethical considerations may not achieve efficacy and deliver the leadership outcomes. This is very instructive for this research. A significant point of their argument is that leadership should be understood in constructing shared beliefs, practices, and systems to achieve shared outcomes through collective leadership action. So, a leadership culture should not be discarded right away, but the change should be systematic. This is significant when viewed against the understanding that culture is sticky and takes time to decay and regenerate. This is also instructive for the research as it informed the decision on the scope of this study, namely,

not to move straight to the highest level of the leadership culture but to make the transformation systematic. McGuire and Palus (2018:147) argue that the outcomes of the transformation of the leadership culture are “greater maturity, agility, wisdom and collective ownership of the whole enterprise; and efficacy in volatile, complex, and uncertain times”.

Change in the leadership culture means changes in behaviour, development, or infusion of new competencies and best practices are necessary but not sufficient to transform leadership; culture change must take place, and this is, as Ozcan (2021) put it, the beliefs and ways employees view leaders and leadership should change. McGuire and Palus (2018) and Ozcan (2021) argued that employees should be involved in the learning process in the evolution of the leadership culture. The learning process has been incorporated into the design of this research. This includes plans for using the focus groups, stakeholders’ meetings and workshops to train and develop employees to understand the intricacies and practices of the leadership culture. The authors further argued that for DAC to occur, a practical framework and tools that would help make leadership culture more visible would be needed.

The critical point regarding the DAC framework is how DAC is cultivated to produce its leadership outcomes. In other words, what styles and practices are deployed to create DAC? The authors beamed searchlights on some realities and challenges in the process of changing the leadership culture, which is explained in the authors’ statement, namely, “Collaborative leadership cultures are new on the horizon. They are increasingly capable of engaging in deep dialogue, uncovering hidden assumptions, and generating multiple right answers....” (McGuire and Palus, 2018:157).

The leadership culture presupposes that the behaviours of employees and leaders constitute leadership practices. The DAC framework presupposes a shared direction and that employees will commit to this; employees should be prepared to interact collaboratively with others if alignment is to produce coordination and collaboration; and for commitment to be achieved, individual interests should be subordinated to the collective good (McGuire and Palus, 2018; McGuire and Rhodes, 2009; Ozcan, 2021). The authors postulated that the collective is central in developing and deploying the leadership culture. So, the shared beliefs and practices indicate leadership culture and how participants and others, especially employees, view, recognise and understand leadership. The authors stated that leaders are produced by leadership cultures whose members change and develop. This emphasises the dynamism of the leadership culture and its transformational nature, especially within the organisational culture context. In explaining the web of individual and collective beliefs, they took a look at the three levels of leadership culture, with varying degrees of leadership control, collaboration, and employees' participation in decision-making. The authors opined that it is necessary to choose the right level of leadership culture that the organisation requires for its future to advance to new levels of organisational capability that engender success and survival. It is safe to argue that the leadership strategy cannot function effectively without a productive and supportive leadership culture. Therefore, the leadership culture must support the leadership strategy, which, in turn, drives the organisation's business strategy.

The DAC framework is the basis for the theory and practice described in the articles by McGuire and Rhodes (2009), Drath, Palus and McGuire (2008), McGuire and Palus (2018), and Ozcan (2021). The authors explained 'Direction' as agreement on shared goals, 'Alignment' as the organisation of

work, and ‘Commitment’ as the willingness to subsume individual interests for the good of the collective. All participants in the leadership process must believe in the methods and systems, including values, and commit to behaving and working as a team in tandem with their espoused beliefs and practices to deliver on their mandates. It also means that it is not enough to achieve a collective; participants must understand all the issues, systems, and practices and how they impact the organisation.

McGuire and Palus (2018:6) state that “The complexity of an organisation’s strategic work is linked to the capability of its leadership cultures”. A central argument by the authors is that to achieve the organisation’s strategic goals, leaders should not stress working independently as an end but strive to achieve collectivism and teamwork. However, this does not prevent individuals from developing needed skills and competencies deployed in the group or team dynamics. A fundamental point stressed by McGuire and Palus (2018:14) is that “Leadership culture will make or break any strategy, change effort or business transformation”. Ozcan (2021) argues that the direction of thought on the leadership culture is the enthronement of collective leadership, and this is the perspective from which this research proceeds. Table 2.1 hereunder explains achieving DAC under each type of leadership culture.

Table 2.1: DAC and Leadership Culture

| | Direction | Alignment | Commitment |
|--|---|---|--|
| | How do we achieve agreement on a direction? | How do we coordinate our work so that all fit together? | How do we maintain a commitment to the collective? |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Interdependent | Agreement on direction is the result of shared exploration and the emergence of new perspectives | Alignment results from ongoing mutual adjustment among system responsible people | Commitment results from engagement in a developing community |
| Independent | Agreement on direction is the result of the discussion, mutual influence, and compromise | Alignment results from negotiation among self-responsible people | Commitment results from an evaluation of the benefits for self while benefitting the larger community |
| Dependent | Agreement on direction is the result of willing compliance with an authority | Alignment results from fitting into the expectations of the larger system | Commitment results from loyalty to the source of authority or the community itself |

Source: McGuire and Palus (2018:151)

McGuire and Rhodes (2009) argue that it is necessary to speed up the process toward attaining the next stage of leadership culture development. The journey to the next stage of logic is a path to achieving a bigger mind.

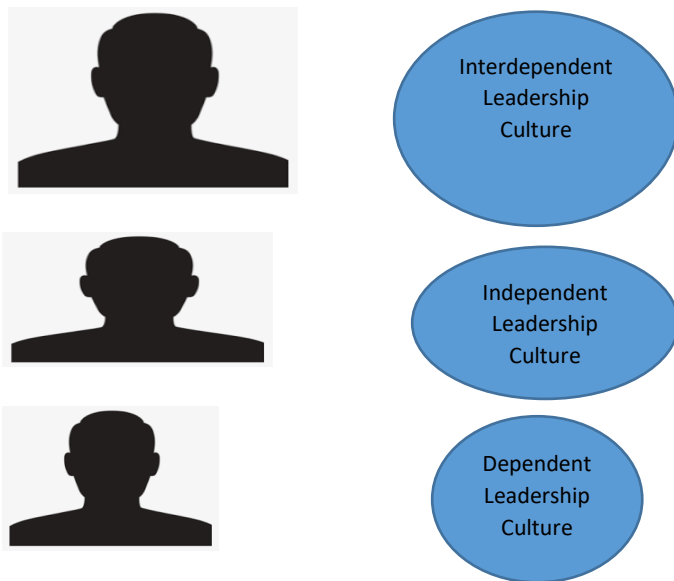


Figure 2.1: Leadership Logics: Getting a Bigger Mind

Source: McGuire and Rhodes (2009)

According to McGuire and Palus (2018), McGuire and Rhodes (2009), Drath et al. (2008), and Ozcan (2021), the three types present leadership cultures at one stage or the other and in different forms. There is a possibility of moving from Dependent to Interdependent, but there could be challenges. The strategy needs the right culture. The people must be involved; otherwise, it may be difficult to achieve strategic goals. But to what extent are the people or employees involved? This is a critical question that determines the standard of DAC and for which this study will find answers concerning MTI Plc. Another critical question is, ‘To what extent are the beliefs shared?’ Shared beliefs, in this case, relate to how employees and other stakeholders view leadership in the organisation. Therefore, one may argue that the shared beliefs and practices help create an understanding of the nature of the leadership culture in the organisation. The beautiful and significant thing in the arguments is how

leadership creates and shapes the framework that defines and shapes the leadership culture.

The argument by Ozcan (2021) centres on shared values, assumptions, and beliefs about leaders and leadership endorsed by employees. Key leadership themes and concepts are discussed and explained, including dominance, power, and hierarchy. The author argued that high leadership failures demand the identification of the mechanisms that produce leadership cultures. The author aimed to provide theoretical answers to how leadership cultures take shape and change over time and how leadership could be improved upon. These insights engendered the need to tweak my research design. He pointed out that the beliefs and norms include the spoken and unspoken criteria that determine how leaders should act and who are expected and allowed to be part of the leadership. According to the author, leadership culture is formed when many employees share similar assumptions and beliefs about leaders and leadership.

The leadership culture framework developed by various authors mentioned in this review, such as Oczan (2021), McGuire and Palus (2018), and McGuire and Rhodes (2009), presents the foundation for the examination of the leadership culture as a phenomenon that impacts the strategic decision-making process in this study.

The various articles did not consider the prime place of knowledge in the leadership process. Although they referred to individual competencies, learning involves more than knowing leadership practices. It includes forms of understanding and ways to understand the world, including competition, colleagues, challenges, etc. and not just job competencies or the result of an individual's mind. It involves recognising a social character able to interact well in the leadership process, especially as leadership is cultural practice (Villas-

Boas et al., 2018). A view of leadership should not be limited to exploring what leaders and followers do in the organisation but endeavour to understand how the organisation and the processes within the group are organised to produce results. The arguments by McGuire and Palus (2018) tend to align with this view, especially when viewed against the DAC framework, but leadership should not only be concerned with outcomes; the processes are as important as outcomes as a critical action research process, challenge the context and process assumptions to achieve validity. An interesting point made by Vilas-Boas et al. (2018) is that group culture shapes and confers legitimacy on leadership practices and influences leadership practices. Therefore, in any examination of the leadership culture, there is a need to examine the organisation's culture represented by its cultural web and not simply focus on dealing with issues regarding the leadership culture.

It is important to closely consider 'collaboration which has been greatly emphasised in virtually all the articles on leadership culture. Most of the time, it is a taken-for-granted factor in discussing leadership culture and new ways of leadership being canvassed. It would seem that collaboration is taken as a panacea for control exercised by top leaders in a hierarchical control-and-command structure. However, there is still a form of control in a collaboration subject to rules of engagement and controls in virtually all cases. Therefore, a view of the leadership culture should consider the ramifications of collaboration and what may impact the efficacy of collaboration. The articles have also not considered the issue of cohesion between drivers of the collaboration who should form a collaboration to help achieve DAC and the collective vision and goals of the organisation.

Despite these limitations, the articles have provided the foundation for the conceptual framework for this study.

2.2.8 Action Research as a methodology

This research investigates an issue that has impacted processes in my organisation, including the strategic decision-making process over several years. It is an inquiry into our organisation that presents challenges that have exposed it for a study, and the action research approach has been adopted. The action research methodology has been employed through the Participatory Action Research method with its associated action research cycles, which involve applying theory, taking action and reflections, and creating knowledge. According to Coghlan (2019), action research enables the co-creation of knowledge with other participants.

Coghlan and Shani (2018:4) provide an exciting definition of action research: “Action research may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organisational knowledge and applied to address real organisational issues. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organisations, developing self-help competencies in organisational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry”.

The framework of the action research process involves four critical factors. First is context, namely, where the research takes place and the need to emphasise context. The second factor considered in the framework is the quality of relationships. Action research is research with people, and the quality of the relations between the researcher and others is good and productive. Third, the quality of the action research process is essential. Fourth, the dual outcomes of change and knowledge creation.

According to Coghlan (2019:6), action research:

- “a. seeks to generate practical knowledge through engagement in cycles of action and reflection
- b. is grounded in collaborative, democratic partnership.
- c. is grounded in a philosophy of practical knowing where timely, voluntary, participative, validity-testing, transformative action is enacted in the present tense
- d. engages the action researchers in interiority, that is, attending to both data of sense and data of consciousness”.

The action research cycles follow the stages of plan, act, observe, and reflect (Nyanjom, 2018; Coghlan, 2019). These have provided great insights for the design of my action research cycles, including the research methodology and methods.

Action research demands a transparent process and should not be coloured or masked by the researchers’ pre-understanding. Therefore, it directed my efforts and those of the research participants to be unbiased and work through transparent data collection and analysis processes that considered and clarified multiple perspectives of all participants.

The action research approach imposed a responsibility on me to set quality standards and explain how the outcomes and process met these standards. Action research afforded the opportunity of sense-making to achieve validity, and efforts were made to achieve validity through continuous evaluation, sense-making, reflections and reflexivity, which form part of a typical, well-articulated action research project. The essence of the action research cycles is a quality enhancement and the need to achieve validity to make the research

outcomes and output trustworthy. The action research cycles must be fit-for-purpose and specific to the context. The research was designed to achieve these.

2.2.9 Developing the framework for this study

The DAC elements allow employees to work together happily, honestly, and effectively to realise the organisational mission, vision, purposes, and goals. To make leadership happen, DAC must occur and must be strong. According to McGuire and Palus (2018), Ozcan (2021) and McGuire and Rhodes (2009), the way to know if leadership is effective and if the leadership culture is vital is to look at the presence of these three leadership outcomes (DAC) and their strengths in the organisation. Individual skills and competencies are essential, and these are considered in this study and the assessment of the DAC and leadership culture in MTI Plc. The actions, interactions, reactions, and exchanges of employees produce the DAC together. According to the Centre for Creative Leadership (2020), the DAC framework makes leadership happen, as pictured in fig 2.2 below.

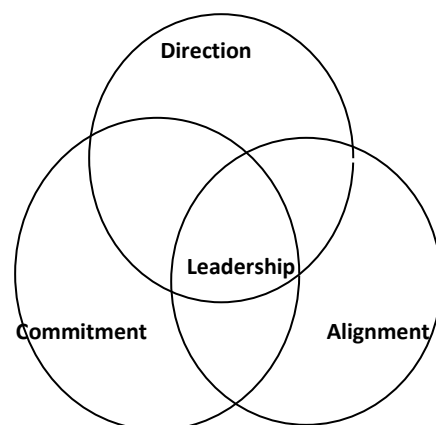


Fig. 2.2: ‘How Leadership Happens’ - adapted from the Centre for Creative Leadership

Table 2.2 below is instructive on how to recognise DAC in an organisation.

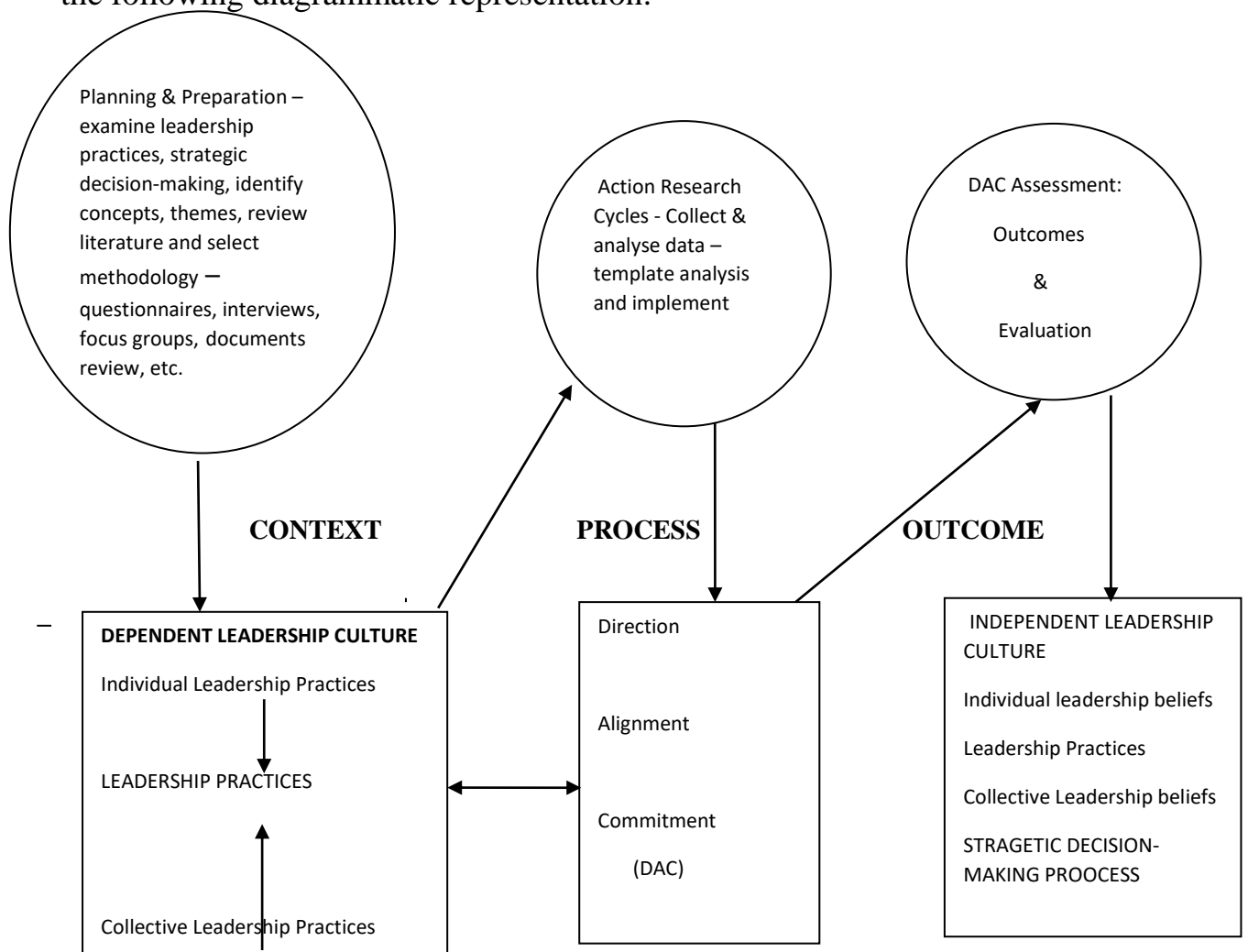
Table 2.2: ‘How to recognize whether direction, alignment, and commitment are happening in your organization or team’

| | HAPPENING | NOT HAPPENING |
|------------|--|---|
| DIRECTION | <p>There is a vision, a desired future, or a set of goals that everyone buys into</p> <p>Members of the collective quickly articulate how what they are trying to achieve together is worthwhile. People agree on what collective success looks like</p> | <p>There is a lack of agreement on priorities</p> <p>People feel as if they are being pulled in different directions</p> <p>There is inertia; people seem to be running in circles</p> |
| ALIGNMENT | <p>Everyone is clear about each other’s roles and responsibilities</p> <p>The work of each individual fits well with the work of other individuals</p> <p>There is a sense of organisation, coordination, and synchronisation</p> | <p>Things are in disarray; deadlines are missed; rework is required; there is duplication of effort</p> <p>People feel isolated from one another</p> <p>Groups compete with one another</p> |
| COMMITMENT | <p>People give the extra effort needed for the organisation to succeed</p> <p>There is a sense of trust and mutual responsibility for the work</p> <p>People express considerable passion and motivation for the work</p> | <p>Only the easy things get done</p> <p>Everyone is just asking, “What is in it for me?”</p> <p>People are not “walking the talk”.</p> |

Source: Centre for Creative Leadership

Having reviewed the relevant literature and picked insights from them, the development of the path of this research became more apparent, and the

conceptual framework that led the way and showed the route is represented in the following diagrammatic representation:



Adapted from McGuire and Palus (2018)

Fig 2.3 Diagrammatic representation of the Conceptual Framework anchored on the Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC) Framework

I noted that a good comprehension of the framework would help me understand the examination processes (Adom, Hussein, and Agyem, 2018). Therefore, I built the conceptual framework of this research based on the propositions of the authors whose articles are discussed in this chapter, especially McGuire and Palus (2018), Drath et al. (2008), and McGuire and Rhodes (2009) and the

action research model described by a good number of writers on the subject, especially Coghlan (2019).

In developing this framework, I considered the research questions because they form the foundation for understanding the leadership culture, general leadership practices, and the organisation's strategic decision-making process. In addition, the literature review has provided deep insights and has presented, to a large extent, the ingredients for the design of the research and formulation of the research questions, which have been developed, namely:

- a. What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc?
- b. How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the organisation's strategic decision-making process?

With insights gained from the literature, I set sub-research questions to guide the design and implementation of the action research cycles and aspects of the research process. These are as follows:

- a. What is the paradigm or standard of the cultural web of the organisation?
- b. How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?
- c. How should we coordinate work so that all fit together and achieve Alignment?
- d. How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective?

2.3 The Need for this Study

As stated in chapter one of this report, the leadership culture in our organisation has been exercised in ways that were dysfunctional to organisational goals,

which are meant to be pursued through result-oriented strategic decision-making processes. Therefore, as stated in chapter one, there was an urgent need to deal with MTI Plc's leadership problems and, more specifically, the leadership culture. Furthermore, there is also a need to research the problem to satisfy part of my studentship requirements and help advance or develop my scholarship of practice.

Khan et al. (2015) stressed that it was essential to research the links between the two concepts of leadership and culture and the impact such an association has on organisations. From the literature reviewed, it is inevitable that while organisational culture has been accorded some attention from several perspectives, leadership culture has not attracted the full attention, especially its impact on the strategic decision-making process. While the literature on the subject has advanced, especially conceptually, there is a shortage of published studies examining the impact of the leadership culture on the strategic decision-making process. According to McGuire and Palus (2018), the concept of leadership culture is new to leadership scholarship, and empirical research on how the leadership culture develops is scanty.

2.4 Summary

In this effort, many journals and books on action research were reviewed. Although I had in prior modules of the DBA programme studied action research and read several journals and books, I needed to review additional materials on action research. The reasons for this are not far-fetched. First, I considered thesis writing was of a higher standard, and consequently, I needed to undertake extensive reviews of the literature on the subject. Second, it is essential to review current materials on action research to infuse currency into the study and findings on action research. Third, the reviews provided ideas in several areas,

especially designing, planning, taking action, and evaluating the action research project. These have been influenced by insights from several articles and books, especially the works of Coghlan (2019). I considered it appropriate to discuss action research in the introduction in chapters one and three, where more detailed discussions are presented.

It is evident from the literature reviewed that leadership culture has not attracted the full attention it deserves. Furthermore, while the literature on the subject has advanced, especially conceptually, there is a shortage of published studies examining the impact of the leadership culture on the strategic decision-making process.

This review was designed to consider and investigate studies on the research subject and justify its need. The articles reviewed in this report pinpoint the critical issues about leadership and its impact on organisations. From the arguments, it is not in doubt that the ways leadership is organised and the organisation structure impact the decision-making process. The leadership culture can primarily influence the organisational strategic decision-making process and may affect achieving the organisational goals. The review of leadership theories has helped clarify views about leadership and the different leadership styles and how the organisation structure may impact how leaders behave. The need to emphasise the effect of leadership culture on the strategic decision-making process is justifiable.

The views and ideas expressed in the articles by the different authors have generally influenced this research. The reviews extended to learning how the organisation's culture could be analysed to understand the organisation's leadership culture to lay a solid foundation for planning and implementing change.

The numerous case studies discussed and exposed by McGuire and Rhodes (2009) have been of tremendous help in constructing the research design and the research questions. In addition, the leadership theories and the views of researchers such as Berraies and El Abidine (2019), Sousa and Rocha, 2019), Sharma, Aryan, Singh, and Kaur (2019), Akanji, Mordi, Ituma, Ajibade, and Ajonbadi (2020), Van Knippenberg (2020) and Behrendt et al. (2017) have also influenced the approach and direction of the study.

In chapter three, I will discuss the methodology and methods of the research, explain the research approach and highlight the main philosophical assumptions considered and adopted, with particular references to the details expressed in chapter one, such as the context, scope, aims and objectives of the study, participatory action research, and the insights and knowledge derived from the literature review in this chapter.

3 CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two discussed the review of scholarly articles, which helped me understand the existing research and debates relevant to leadership culture and strategic decision-making and improved my knowledge in the field of study. I also discussed other benefits of understanding relevant concepts and methods and their applications to problems, which helped form the foundation for the research methodology and choice of research methods, the focus of this chapter.

This chapter aims to provide information on the research methodology and the methods used to answer the research questions to achieve the study's objectives. It gives the rationale and describes the procedure I have gone about the research, namely, relating the processes and providing the research work plan, with a close consideration of the research context.

I have structured this chapter to provide the specific procedures and techniques used to collect, process, and analyse data and understand the overall research work plan. It discusses action research as a methodology necessary for presenting the data collection and analysis framework and reinforces the principles that guide the research processes. It explains the imperative of good research and the philosophical paradigms on which it rests and which help to fit the situation and purpose, namely a collaborative design that involves engaging managers as research participants and how the research participants were selected. As ethics and politics are critical considerations in an action research enquiry, this chapter includes a discussion of the relevance of ethics and politics in the research process and how these impact the process. It discusses my assumptions which, in part, form the foundation upon which the study rests. Because theory informs practice, and practice impacts theory, especially in

action research, and action research thus facilitates the connection between theory and practice, this chapter pinpoints the understanding that practice and theory are linked. It provides the opportunity to justify my choice of methods and other plans of action and explains the design and nature of the action research cycles and stages of the research.

Other aspects discussed are the need to secure quality data and achieve validity, the imperative of sharing knowledge, reflections, the criticality of my role, management of challenges in the research process and how I planned to avoid assumptions that might affect quality and validity.

In the study, especially in this chapter, I have adopted the word “Social Constructionism” as a paradigm or “Social Constructionist” as a reference to the practitioner, rather than the word “Constructivism” or “Social Constructivist”. “Constructionist” emphasises social interaction and collaboration rather than the individual. According to Rob and Rob (2018), a constructivist emphasises a learning environment that fosters individual learning and presents a problem to be solved. The constructionist sets up the environment for collaborative learning. In other words, the social constructionist approach facilitates a more engaged and motivating attitude towards learning and allows participants to work constructively and collaboratively and share their knowledge.

I have adopted the philosophical paradigms of subjectivist ontology and social constructionist epistemology. With regards to the methodological approach, it is primarily qualitative. However, given the action research approach to this study, I have been mindful of the need to employ a methodology that would rhyme with my philosophical assumptions. I have thus integrated the action research approach with the research philosophy to achieve my expectations and intended outcomes.

My relationship with the organisation as an insider and, therefore, a scholar-practitioner influenced my choice of methodology, which inevitably and rightly led to a decision to adopt the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Accordingly, I adopted the participatory approach to engage research participants and draw on their tacit knowledge and perspectives (Bogna, Raineri and Dell 2020).

I have studied the organisational system of strategic decision-making. I have designed a participatory action approach process to help realise the research objectives. Insights from the literature have also influenced the design of this research.

My research methodology explains the path through which this research has been conducted, including describing the various steps and methods of obtaining data and knowledge. In addition, I have considered the steps taken to understand the environment and context, namely the ‘world’ relevant to this research.

As a participant researcher, I worked with others in a self-study action fashion (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Coghlan, 2019) to deliver the outcomes and achieve the research objectives of effecting change in the current system in MTI Plc and coming up with new knowledge.

3.2 Research Setting

MTI Plc, a telecommunications infrastructure company, is the target organisation. In the organisation, leaders have had a significant influence on organisational processes. Some of the leadership issues reflected in the way leaders viewed issues and acted, which ran counter to the goals and interests of the organisation. As a telecommunications infrastructure company, MTI Plc is

basically in the service industry with an extensive network of contacts, employees, and infrastructure. A typical service organisation is open to an action research inquiry. Therefore, it is appropriate as a setting for an action research inquiry. I discussed the context of the research extensively in chapter one to properly situate the study and explain the details that informed the selection of MTI Plc and the problem.

3.3 Action research as my methodology

Coghlan (2019), quoting Bradbury (2015:1), wrote: “Action research is a democratic and a participatory orientation to the creation of knowledge”. Coghlan and Shani (2018:4) defined action research “as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organisational knowledge and applied to address real organisational issues. It is simultaneously concerned with changing organisations to develop self-help competencies in organisational members and add to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process undertaken in the spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry”. These definitions reinforce the principles that have guided action research processes. I have taken them on board to craft the aims of this research, its purposes, and the research questions.

Action research is fit for my research, which is to examine the leadership culture of MTI Plc and its impact on the organisation's strategic decision-making process. By the principles of action research and to drive the aims and objectives of this research, I have designed the study to, among other things, give a high priority to participation by the research participants and, through action and research, introduce change and create knowledge. Furthermore, action research aims to improve work practices through collaborative inquiry, involving a spiral of cycles of constructing, planning, taking action and

evaluating action and reflecting on the measures taken and events in the course of the research, especially during the action research cycles, to gain a better understanding of the issues, and the change and development processes (Zuber-Skerritt, 2018; Coghlan, 2019).

According to Coghlan (2019), the action research framework is presented in terms of four factors. First, the context surmises that action research occurs within a local situation. It is fundamentally important to understand the context, among other things, including how it functions and factors that impact the organisation, etc. I have explained the context of this research and critical issues that informed the construction of the case under examination. The second factor is the ‘Quality of relations’; in this regard, I have emphasised respect, mutual trust, concern for the research participants, and equality of influence, all of which I consider paramount. The third factor is the ‘Quality of the action research process, and this must be given due attention in the process of inquiry and implementation. The action research cycles are three in number. Rather than undertake one cycle, I designed the cycles to closely examine the issues and enable the methodological process to deliver quality outcomes. The fourth factor is ‘Outcomes’, namely sustainability regarding building competencies in human, economic, social and ecological spheres and knowledge creation.

The action research approach enabled me to examine both intended and unintended outcomes against plans and determine the dimensions of constructing, planning, action and evaluation, as depicted in the action research cycle spiral below.

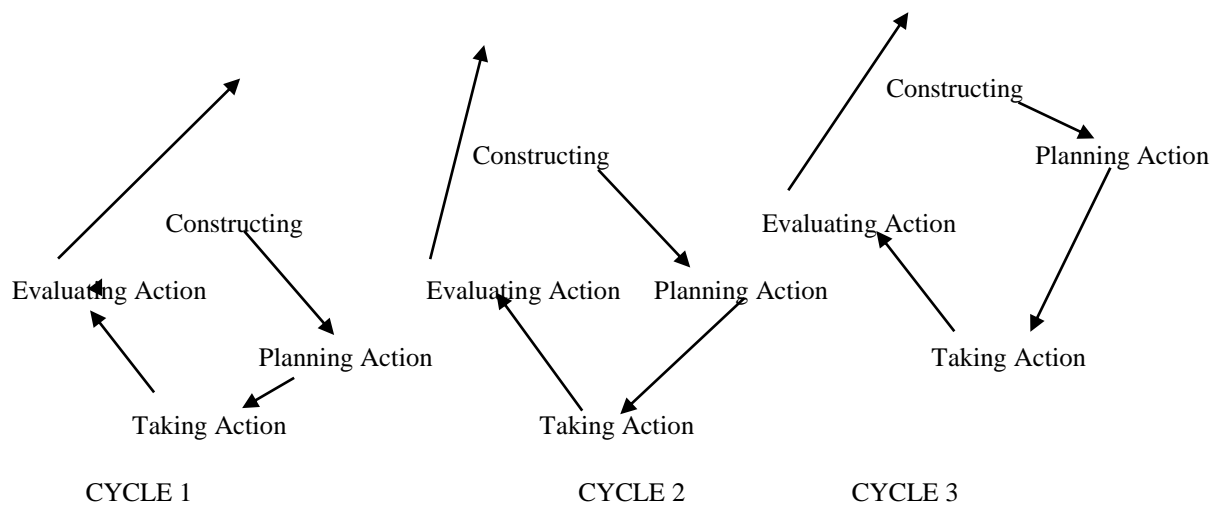


Fig 3.1: Spiral of action research cycles

Source: Coghlan (2019:11)

A more detailed explanation of my plan, including the iterations, will be discussed in this chapter.

3.4 Research Design

My view is that good research is designed to fit the situation and the purpose. Therefore, my research approach employs a collaborative design that involves engaging managers as research participants to create a process with particular reference to our organisation's internal context and practices (Bogna, Raineri and Dell, 2020). I recognise that an appropriate research design is significant and delivers good research outcomes. Therefore, the research was carefully designed to ensure the presence of rigour and achievement of the research outcomes. The sample size, data collection methods, data analysis, participants' knowledge and skills, and different data sources were deeply considered to ensure that the research process was rigorous and that the research effort and outcomes were reliable. Furthermore, in designing the research, I considered the need to match theory with practice and promote collaborative research.

3.4.1 Sample and Selection of Research Participants

Qualitative inquiry allows smaller sampling sizes (Antonellis and Berry, 2017). My sample is a relatively small size, and the goal is to seek meaning from the spoken words of each participant to obtain sense. I defined the eligibility criteria. Fifteen (15) participants were selected. I considered the nature of the research problem and the organisation's circumstances and determined that the sample of fifteen was adequate. I decided on participants using the Purposive Sampling technique, which enabled me to deliberately identify and select participants to provide the much-needed information (Taherdoost, 2016). I had a clear idea of what sample units were needed and approached potential sample members to verify their eligibility based on my set criteria. What was uppermost in my mind was taking a sample that would truly represent the population. Participants were selected based on age, years of experience, and gender. Other inclusion criteria were a reasonable literacy level, a good first degree, ten years' experience as a senior manager, good knowledge of Microsoft Word and similar IT infrastructure, and informed consent.

I gave the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and the Participant Consent Forms to each participant. Participants were allowed seven (7) days to read the information and ask questions if there was anything that they did not understand before signing the Consent Form.

At the outset, I had a picture and an understanding of the roles of participants in this collaborative action research. Of course, I expected that roles might overlap, but I indicated the essential roles of each research participant, which are summarised in Appendix 9.

I recognise that as an insider and a senior participant, it is essential that my presence does not pose a constraint on the ability of the research participants to

participate actively. My research framework recognised this, and I ensured that it was built on a democratic foundation to make it possible to collaborate effectively and achieve set objectives.

Coghlan (2019) suggests that it is critical to protect the identity of the research participants. I considered it very important to protect the identity of the research participants in fulfilling the promise I made in the Participants Information Sheet (PIS). I observed strict confidentiality to provide participants with the confidence to discuss their experiences and observations openly.

I note that although I have issues of pre-understanding to contend with, I planned to act as objectively as possible to not interfere unnecessarily with the expressions of the lived experiences of the research participants and distort meaning-making and sense-making.

3.4.2 Ethics

“Action research, whether conducted in an academic or organisational setting, is bound by ethical codes and standards” (Antonellis and Berry, 2017:45). Ethical considerations are imperative for qualitative research, particularly for a participatory action research inquiry. Although I had a good knowledge of the company’s Ethics Code, I sought the advice of senior colleagues and managers on any ethical codes the company follows for research, if any, and the protection of research participants. There was none.

I deployed the use of informed consent forms. I informed the Board of Directors and Management of my project. I provided them with a proposal, not simply my thesis proposal, but a write up to explain the project and educate them on the ramifications of the research. The idea was to get them to understand and appreciate the benefits derivable from the study. It was also an opportunity to explain my research's core and thesis segments. I explained the ethical issues

involved in the research and that due regard would be given to ethics in line with my commitment as detailed in my PIS and other documents. The board approved my request to conduct the action research study using the company as my practice, including granting access to company information. Also, I obtained consent from each participant to share data, but I was mindful of each participant's interest and the need to ensure that sharing data did not lead to a breach of privacy. I stressed that participation was voluntary and that withdrawal from the research was allowed without any sanctions. Research participants were encouraged to read the Participant Information Sheet carefully. I explained what to do to avoid any breach of laws and confidentiality. Measures were put in place to ensure collected data were secured through encryption and secure location, password-protected access, coded information, etc. The Consent Form was signed after explaining the processes and the details on the Participant Information Sheet.

I am conscious that the research participants are 'subjective' human beings with respective feelings, emotions, motivations, views, and perspectives based on distinctive backgrounds and contexts. I, therefore, accorded respect to and recognised different kinds of knowledge of the participants in the research and planned on how to minimise or eliminate the impact of subjectivity.

3.4.3 Politics of my Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participation in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process or project is voluntary and is not coercive. This is one of the foundations of the ethics of PAR. However, it is also essential that, as a democratic process, the voices of the research participants should be heard. Therefore, I designed the research to indicate the 'I' and the 'We' appropriately and when I needed to express my voice as the researcher. In designing the research, I took into cognisance of the

arguments by Livingston and Perkins (2018) that PAR focuses on defined priorities and processes planned and strives for equality of power among the researchers and the researched.

Having stated these, I recognised that in a typical AR process such as this research, political issues and challenges should be anticipated, and a plan to sort these should be put in place. I am conversant with the inter-level dynamics within the organisation and the political cleavages. These have been considered in designing the data collection processes and the research questions.

Since participatory action research, especially involving action geared towards change, sometimes meets some resistance of some sort and politics fuelled mainly by the fear of losing control, power and positions, I planned to make every endeavour to douse tensions and be transparent with my plan and the processes.

3.4.4 My Assumptions

Academic research requires that the researcher identifies and explains the limitations and assumptions of the research project. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), an assumption is necessary for research and should not be taken for granted. They surmised that pursuing a research project without assumptions would be pointless. A statement of my assumptions formed the foundation upon which my study rests. An explicit assumption statement would prevent any misunderstandings of the material bearing on the research problem. I thought some issues in the research process were out of my control, including the seriousness of the participants and their commitment to work assiduously and honestly. I have assumed that the participants would provide truthful responses. Also, I thought that if the organisation used my suggestions in the final written research report, it would witness improvements in its strategic decision-making

and record good progress. Furthermore, I assumed that the research participants might bring a certain level of bias to the research project; therefore, I planned to ensure deep self-reflections to reduce any possible biases (Coghlan, 2019) and encourage the research participants to do the same thing. I planned to engage the research participants and a knowledgeable colleague with experience in data organisation to review the data to ensure they were valid and not corrupted.

3.4.5 Philosophical Paradigms

Research paradigm refers to people's philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge, namely, people's beliefs about the world; these impact the research design and procedures (Al-Ababneh, 2020). It is appropriate for research of this kind to consider, in the beginning, the research paradigm adopted because it influences the research approach. I believed that the expression of the research philosophy would enable the reader and other stakeholders, including the research participants, to understand and appreciate my perspective and the thrust of the research.

In choosing the research paradigm, I reminded myself of one of my goals: to disseminate the research results that could be applied in similar situations to solve problems. So, it was necessary to create a standard and define it so that other readers could come to the same conclusions, using the empirical paradigm as a basis. In other words, the effort was to achieve a situation where the research, associated events and its outcomes would be described, interpreted and explained to obtain shared meanings with others who have different backgrounds and ideas, which may have different views about what is real or what exists.

I chose the subjectivist ontology, and ontological assumption informed my choice of epistemology. My ontological view is that people act and change the

reality of their world collectively. In PAR, the system is fluid, emergent and evolves (Coghlan, 2019), and I have taken the approach founded on the belief that the notions of reality are not fixed. So, research participants are factors in becoming and constructing the world. Therefore, actions can engender change through a defined approach to solving the problem I identified with this project. I recognise that established power structures could be broken in acting, reflecting and solving the problem to create a new 'world' or reality for the organisation. Therefore, the research participants and I planned to collaboratively present views to establish the new reality, understanding that our view of the world of our organisation and how it is created would impact how we live in it or run it.

I identified some contextual factors that influenced the choice of paradigms, namely the ontological approach and the epistemology regarding issues and activities in our organisation. I also considered the perspectives of other stakeholders within the organisation as necessary (Bogna, Raineri and Dell 2020). An ontological view is that individuals can change their lives due to reflections and creativity (Peralta, 2017). It follows that employees, especially research participants, can enable changes in realities regarding the organisation and should, therefore, be catalysts in the shift that may take place during and within the cycles of research.

My objective informs my PAR's epistemology of interpretivism. "Interpretivism philosophy considers the situation in each business as unique and differs from other situations" (Al-Ababneh, 2020:80). So, the context and circumstances of MTI Plc were significant considerations in the choice of methodology and methods of carrying out this research as reality and knowledge are influenced by the employees or people within the organisation or environment. Therefore,

a participatory epistemology is significant to collaborative research efforts (Peralta, 2017).

The social constructionist philosophy which I adopted underlines the deep involvement of participants with lived experiences and the relevance of their collective views and opinions on the subject of my research. The choice of social constructionism is with understanding the ‘world’ and working and securing subjective meanings of employees' experiences, especially the research participants. According to Darisman, Hilman, and Homa (2016:150), the Social Construction of Reality is “a social process through action and interaction in which the individual (or group of individuals) creates continuously a reality that is owned and experienced together subjectively”. My job was to extract substances from the employees’ lived experiences about the subject matter of this research and extract themes necessary for the interpretation of phenomena, and address the research questions.

3.4.6 The Need to Match Theory with Practice

Theory informs practice, and practice impacts theory, especially action research. Action research facilitates the connection between theory and practice, understanding that practice and theory are linked. Action research is a means to create professional knowledge, which draws on theory while drawing on the practice. Although I am an insider researcher, I plan to learn more from the lived experiences and perspectives of the research participants and, in the process, apply my knowledge of the theory of action research. With the literature review, significant insights have been brought to bear on the design of this research, and theory provided ideas for practice. I planned to apply theoretical knowledge in what would be found and in learning and action.

3.4.7 Reviews of the Research Questions

Like most research approaches, action research requires that we formulate research questions in advance. Because this study is an action research project, the research questions are questions about the ‘action’. It is essential to recognise the argument by Brownhill, Ungarova, and Bipazhanova (2017) that the quality of the research question is of fundamental importance as ‘poorly conceived or constructed questions will likely create problems that may affect all subsequent stages of the study. To establish the content validity of the research questions and achieve quality, I shared the research questions with colleagues and participants and requested them to critique the questions.

The research questions have helped to provide a structure for the study. It is necessary to re-emphasise that the research questions played considerable roles in guiding the decision on the research methodology (Kross and Giust, 2019). Therefore, I decided to go the extra mile to ensure that my research questions were not ambiguous and related to the subject of the study.

As I went on with further literature review and closer considerations of the scope and context of the research, as well considerations in designing the action research cycles, new and better questions were needed. According to Kross and Giust (2018), structuring research questions is necessary and having the main question followed by sub-questions that address parts of the main would be appropriate. They should not be considered to be out of place. I have drafted sub-questions to clarify further issues on the transformation of the leadership culture and, in particular, the questions that address the efforts to secure the DAC elements and which helped, to a large extent, in designing the research cycles. The questions have also helped to drill down the examination of the leadership culture and provided additional clarity.

The research questions are shown below:

- a. What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc?
- b. How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the strategic decision-making process of the organisation?
- c. What is the paradigm or standard of the cultural web of the organisation?
- d. How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?
- e. How should we coordinate work so that all fit together and achieve Alignment?
- f. How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective?

3.4.8 Data collection and Methods

Data collection was designed to occur over a period, and the methods comprised a review of documents, questionnaires/surveys, observations, interviews and focus groups, stakeholders' meetings and workshops. The research participants needed to be involved in the design of some of the processes to secure their commitment, ensure they understood the process, took part ownership of the process and put me in good stead to manage any political issues that might arise. I asked the research participants to choose days to make our collection for the week, and they believed Thursdays or Fridays to be suitable days. We discussed our methods of collection and talked about our ways of storage. We anticipated that we might encounter a few difficulties in the form of resistance, and I planned to engage appropriately to avoid such incidents.

Data collection was designed and planned to be applied within a constructionist paradigm, thus enabling the research participants' world views. Key elements of the research design, including the methods and data collection processes, are now discussed.

3.4.8.1 Pre-Steps

According to Coghlan (2019), pre-steps involve collecting existing data for knowledge generation about the context and purpose of the organisation. Pardede (2018) referred to pre-steps as processes leading to data collection before conducting the intervention. I designed participation as part of the overall research design to get the research participants involved in all stages of the pre-steps. Because action research is messy and ongoing, it was challenging to determine the starting point and boundaries for the action research cycles. After further literature reviews, I separated the pre-steps from the action research cycles. The pre-steps were designed to help answer the first research question: 'What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc?' and expose the cultural web.

The pre-steps planned included an examination of the cultural web of MTI Plc. The primary purpose of the cultural web analysis was to investigate the organisation and its systems to determine the standard and expose any weaknesses in the culture of MTI Plc. I designed this process to necessitate the development of relevant themes.

Also, as part of the pre-steps, document reviews include minutes of stakeholders' meetings and the questionnaire. There were two reports of the Interim Management Committee to the Board of Directors. There are also minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors and Board Committees with details of decision-making connections between the Board Committees and the

Board of Directors. The objective of the critical review was to determine who took the decisions, how the strategic decision-making process was organised and the final decisions.

3.4.8.2 My Action Research Cycles

In action research, a key feature is the linking of ‘action’ and ‘research’, involving applying and testing ideas in practice to introduce change and create knowledge simultaneously (Coghlan, 2019). Doing these involves cycles of actions and iterations, which lead to outcomes. According to Coghlan (2019), multiple action research cycles co-occur in any action research project involving action and reflection. I designed this action research project to ensure that the research participants and I continuously examine constructing, planning action, taking action and evaluating action. I explained the benefits of doing this to the research participants.

Because of the flexibility offered by action research and the latitude to decide how to design and implement the action research cycles and the PAR process generally, I created three action research cycles, each on the three critical levels of Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC) which inevitably engenders the leadership outcomes and positively influences the leadership strategy and business strategy in ways that ignite processes to achieve both strategic and operational goals.

In the action research cycles, I decided that it would help to adopt and be conscious at all times of the general empirical method suggested by Coghlan (2019) by being authentic, attentive to data being generated, enquiring intelligently, making reasonable judgements in the process and be responsible in making decisions and taking action. Therefore, the research was designed to follow the general empirical method.

Each action research cycle was designed as a precursor to the next cycle and intended to help achieve the quality of output of the research (Coghlan, 2019).

My selected methodology through the participatory action research meant that I needed to design the cycles to guide my learning and those of the research participants and make our work rigorous. I made every endeavour to create cycles relevant and specific to my context. I decided to engage the research participants in the identification and determination of the beginning and end of each cycle

3.4.8.3 Cycles of Action and the AR Process

In consultation with the research participants, I adopted the following stages of the action research cycle described and recommended by several authors, including Coghlan (2019).

3.4.8.3.1 Constructing

According to Coghlan (2019:111), “when you construct, you are naming it, and by naming it, you are laying the foundation for designing and enacting the action research cycles in the present tense”. As part of illuminating the constructing process, I explained in chapter one how the problem was selected within the context of MTI Plc. In choosing the issue, I was mindful of the necessity for data and how easy it would be to collect and organise data on the subject. I was also conscious of any ethical and political issues in constructing. I have considered the research context and the fussy and dynamic nature of action research in delimiting the four stages. Appropriate activities and actions have been considered to ensure that the processes are covered to deliver the goals.

I selected the issue in constructing, examined the context, reviewed the literature, and formulated the research questions.

3.4.8.3.2 Planning the action

The critical question is: ‘How do we go about implementing the action research cycles I have designed in a planned way?’ This stage included details on logistics for conducting the research or the stage, sources of data, method of collecting data, when data would be collected, who will collect the data, the analysis of data, the success criteria in respect of each intervention, the action (intervention) and identification of the situations. So, this stage covers planning the action. The next stage (‘Taking Action’) involves facilitating the change.

We planned to collect data at different levels and stages (including the pre-steps) to determine levels and standards of leadership outcomes of Direction, Alignment and Commitment and analyse them to answer the research questions and any other concerns that might crop up during the interventions. Action has been planned to collect data, analyse them at each action research cycle stage, and use the results to transform the leadership culture. I defined roles and agreed on times and venues. These were done collaboratively with the research participants.

3.4.8.3.3 Taking the action

This involved implementing our plan collaboratively and collectively discussing feedback on the intervention outcomes in each action research cycle. It includes putting plans into practice and trying them out. Observations will be made during implementation, and these will be useful for reflections and constructing the next cycle.

3.4.8.3.4 Evaluating

We planned to evaluate and examine the outcomes of our actions to determine if constructing was right and if we were diligent in taking the actions to ensure they were taken appropriately, and view and determine findings that would help plan the next cycle. We planned to make sense of our interventions and determine if improvements occurred in the leadership culture and the strategic decision-making process following the intervention. We planned to use surveys, focus groups, stakeholders' meetings, and other methods to evaluate our actions and results.

3.4.8.4 Progressive Steps

To implement the action research process in each cycle, I designed the research to follow specific steps, namely:

1. Identification of the issue.
2. Undertake further literature review on the problem area to better understand the theory and other insights on the issue.
3. Plan for data collection and analysis, involving determining the type and sources of data to be collected, the action to be implemented; the method of data collection to be employed, when the data would be collected, participants to collect the data, the analysis technique to be used; and the success criteria of the intended outcomes of the research.
4. Take actions which were the specific changes to be implemented to achieve the intended outcome on the DAC element for each action research cycle and, in the end, the leadership culture.

5. Evaluate to see if our interventions resulted in the intended outcome and determine the success factors and any problems.
6. Plan for the subsequent cycle.
7. Conclude and make recommendations at the end of the third cycle.

3.4.8.5 Collecting Data During Each Cycle

Building on the insights provided by McGuire and Palus (2018) and other authors, we planned our focus on the journey through the successive steps of Shared Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC). Because AR is dynamic, flexible, and contextual, we planned to tweak our processes as we went on to perfect our AR process and close any gaps in implementation. In addition, we planned to learn and refine learning to gather as much information as possible.

Selected methods of data collection were:

3.4.8.5.1 Focus Group

Focus groups offer learning opportunities and reshaping of thoughts – bringing those of the research participants to complement my ideas and perspectives as a dynamic method in qualitative research (Kumer and Urbanc, 2020). I, as the facilitator, set semi-structured questions. However, some questions might be developed as follow-ups to comments and responses from participants.

Initially, two focus groups were planned, but because of the need to change beliefs and old assumptions, which I considered fundamental to the change process, we decided to arrange one more focus group session to discuss and deal with the real issues relating to Alignment and Commitment. This was also with the view of sustaining the tempo of awareness of the benefits of the intended change. According to McGuire and Rhodes (2009), by creating awareness of the

leadership culture development or transformation process, employees become actively and positively involved in it as their way of operating. In other words, the more often an employee can achieve that alternative state of experience, the closer he gets to internalising the ideas and will be on the path to achieving a more significant outcome

3.4.8.5.2 Interviews

Part of our plan was to use the interviews to secure the concurrence of the key leaders. The interviews were planned to cover individual self-examination and testing out where leaders stood on the issue of a shared sense of what is suitable for the organisation and an understanding of worldview as the competitive environment had become complex and needed a new way of leadership. It was also for genuine truth-telling and to give a sense of the time required for change. The interviews were designed to sensitise the leadership team to see the need to secure positive DAC outcomes and work towards creating or redefining itself as a leadership team for change. The interviews were also designed as processes of learning for all.

3.4.8.5.3 Observations

We planned to observe practices and how employees aligned with the new idea and assumptions during formal and informal sessions. We agreed on two months of observations during each research cycle. We planned to leverage the information collected in a cycle to create our plan for the subsequent cycle.

3.4.8.5.4 Questionnaire/Survey

The first questionnaire was designed to secure information on the leadership culture in the organisation, how the participants felt and their views on how

leadership impacted the strategic decision-making process. In constructing the questionnaire, its first section (Part A) consisted of open-ended questions. Initially, I chose a five-point Likert scale in Part B, but following the observation that this is qualitative research, I discarded the five-point Likert scale and retained Part B questions because of their usefulness.

There is an end of cycle survey for each cycle to elicit responses and views on the action implementation and outcomes and determine whether or not the overall success criterion had been met regarding the main subject or issue in the cycle. Again, an invitation and consent form were sent to each participant. The final survey extended to the overall outcomes of DAC.

3.4.8.5 Stakeholders' Meeting

Following a decision to review the initial research report and, as agreed with the research participants, we redesigned the research to include a stakeholders' meeting, presenting an opportunity to educate further, explain issues, and discuss pertinent issues. It was also designed to elicit comments on outcomes of implementations and to sustain awareness of the project and the change process.

3.4.8.6 Triangulated Data Collection Plan

We planned data source triangulation to test the validity of our data generation processes and help understand data collected through the convergence of data from different sources. The nature of the research subject demanded other sources to validate the data generated and claims in the research. I considered various sources or data collection methods, which might appear excessive. Still, I was convinced of the need to utilise them to derive the benefits inherent in effective triangulation. I was also confident that triangulation would enable me to examine the research phenomenon and cross-verify data from different

sources, test consistency in the participants' views and accounts, and other information or data from documents and records.

3.4.9 Organizing and Analysing the data

We planned to organise the initial data sets and determine the next steps, namely analysing relevant data from the collected mass, which were stored securely and encrypted to avoid unauthorised access and maintain privacy and confidentiality of information.

I decided to employ the template analysis method. The key attraction is that the style is flexible regarding the format of the template and encourages the development of themes more extensively, especially about the research questions. I planned to read the transcribed data extensively to understand them before coding them. The idea was to find what the data represents in ways that will help to understand the research questions.

3.4.10 Sharing Knowledge

I recognise that a knowledge-centric organisation delivers on its mandate through knowledge production and sharing. The knowledge-sharing process was designed to aid participation and learning interaction and a learning strategy that could help participants collaborate during the research, especially the data gathering cycles, to acquire new knowledge and solve the problem (Dwiyanti, 2017). I determined a need to engage key management staff and leaders through different events, including stakeholders' meetings and interviews, to understand the value of sharing knowledge and acting on available knowledge to generate further knowledge and relevant data towards achieving data-driven decisions.

3.4.11 Reflections

Regarding the action research cycles, apart from the four steps of constructing, planning, taking action and evaluation at the end of the cycle, we planned to reflect on how the action research project was going and my methodological and other processes. I planned to inquire into each of the four main steps, asking and determining how these steps were conducted to ensure the construction is appropriate, that execution is good and, therefore, shape how we will run subsequent steps.

3.4.12 Validity

Ethical standards, trustworthiness and quality are critical elements in establishing validity and rigour. I knew that it would be imperative for me to present the basis of my decisions during this study to judge my account's validity. My influences are very critical in establishing truth in this project. It is not that my influence of some sort will not impact the process, but the test is its appropriateness. I am mindful of this, and insights from the literature reviewed, including an extensive reading of cases, made it clear that there was a need to design the research to infuse validity.

Different principles have been developed to help form the basis for establishing validity. I considered some of the principles which I find relevant in the study, and Ozano et al. (2020:1139) stated the principles as follows:

- “1. Integrate and achieve a balance between research and action for the mutual benefit of all members of the research team
2. Involve systems development through a cyclical and iterative process
3. Build on strengths and resources in the research team

4. Facilitate collaborative, equitable partnerships in all research phases and cycles, empower research participants and share power in the process to attend to any inequalities
5. Promote co-learning and capacity building among all members of the research team
6. Disseminate findings and knowledge gained to all members of the research team.”

3.4.13 My Main Author Role

I constantly reminded myself that although there were research participants who were my co-researchers, I was the researcher responsible for this research. I, therefore, would take ultimate responsibility for all choices made. I designed controls to ensure that the research process was delivered as designed and intended. As I stated earlier, I considered collaboration with the research participants paramount in executing our plans, but I firmly established my leadership role, and I passed this message across to the research participants

3.4.14 How I plan to deal with Challenges in the Research Process

I expected that there would be a few challenges, such as delays and the absence of a few participants due to some work emergencies, which might be engendered by the need to travel at short notice. Therefore, I anticipated some of these challenges in the planning schedules. Nevertheless, I prepared for them to meet deadlines, secure needed data, and participate in other processes such as data analysis and reflections.

There are ‘political’ factions in the organisation. Even though virtually all staff supported the research effort, I envisaged that some political issues or challenges might crop up. In a research of this kind that involves change, I

expect some resistance when the change process unfolds. Resistance might come from those who initially supported the project, when their power base is affected and when some feel threatened by their future in the organisation. The research is designed to accommodate views in these regards and manage any resistance to avoid a setback. I planned to stand back from my person as a part of the organisation's culture and, as much as possible, remain reasonably objective, especially in my judgements and decisions., to avoid the challenge of pre-understanding and other issues which might breed bias and pose a challenge. I planned to deploy my first-person reflective skills in addressing any bias in good time.

3.4.15 Challenge of my Assumptions

Under the section on validity above, I discussed how I would deal with any bias and how I planned to encourage the research participants to be as objective as possible and avoid sticking to any assumptions that might affect quality and validity. I have my pre-understanding to contend with, along with stated and unstated assumptions that go with it. I planned to deal with the premise assumptions (Coghlan, 2019), through reflections and any other means and by making the intervention intensely collaborative.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has showcased the methodology and methods of data generation, analysis, and planning of my research. I anchored the research on a foundation of subjective philosophical paradigms, namely subjective ontology and social constructionist epistemology. These have an affinity for qualitative research, which is my methodological approach. The research methodology is action research, and I exposed in this chapter the fundamental principles and elements of the action research process employed in the research. My choice of action

research is participatory action research, which guarantees collaboration with research participants and provides the opportunity for participants to be inclusively involved in the research process. Data generation methods include focus groups, interviews, participant observation, questionnaires/surveys, historical documents and information, stakeholders' meetings, etc. The research is designed to guarantee the confidentiality of the identity of the data provider and the observation of all ethics protocols as stated in the PIS. I made some assumptions but would make every effort to make the process less cumbersome, avoid stress, manage risks, and avoid challenges.

In collaboration with the research participants, I designed the action research cycles to create an opportunity for learning and knowing-in-action. The critical understanding is that this chapter sets the foundation and the tone as to how I, in concert with the research participants, would go about the research process to provide answers to the research questions and achieve set outcomes

In the next chapter, I will discuss how the research participants and I collected data and how various data were analysed to engender relevant themes and aid the interpretation of findings, founded on the methodology and methods discussed in this chapter.

4 CHAPTER 4 - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three provided information on the research methodology and the methods used to answer the research questions to achieve the study's objectives. It provided the rationale and described the procedure I followed, namely, relating the processes and providing the research work plan, with a close consideration of the research context.

The primary role of this chapter is to explain how data was collected using the methodology and methods explained in chapter three, to ensure accuracy and provide content for data analysis. In addition, it explains the specific steps and the application of the methods employed in collecting and analysing data to facilitate examining how the leadership culture impacted the strategic decision-making process in MTI Plc and how to transform the leadership culture. It offers a more informed strategy for data collection and analysis and the development of themes that encapsulate the study's objectives.

In addition, the nature of the action research project engendered the need to discuss ethical issues and other challenges in the process. Finally, the chapter discusses how the research participants and I made sense of the data collected and how data collection was triangulated to evidence quality and rigour, followed by appropriate recommendations.

The goal of the data analysis was to seek meaning from the experiences of each participant and respondent, as expressed by the participant, to obtain a sense of the problem I identified, namely the impact of the leadership culture on the strategic decision-making process of MTI Plc.

To help in realising the aims and objectives of the study, I produced the research questions, namely:

- a. What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc?
- b. How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the organisation's strategic decision-making process?
- c. What is the paradigm or standard of the cultural web of the organisation?
- d. How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?
- e. How should we coordinate work to fit together and achieve Alignment?
- f. How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective?

According to Coghlan (2019), data generation is intervention, and data comes through engagement with others in the action research cycle. The solution involved implementing a leadership culture transformation, using participatory action research (PAR) approach to collect data through a focus group, interviews, pre-existing documents, and stakeholders' meetings. I implemented the research design, which I discussed in chapter three, through four action research stages: constructing, planning, acting, and evaluating. (Coghlan, 2019; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) In each cycle, I adopted and engaged in the empirical method of experiencing, understanding, judging and taking action (Coghlan, 2019).

4.2 Data Collection

We collected data from the focus group, documents and records, including minutes and historical documents, observations, a questionnaire, one-on-one

interviews, and surveys. In addition, field notes and journals supported the data collection process. In this chapter, I have discussed data collection methods and processes during the Pre-steps and each of the three action research cycles.

Although the research participants were involved in data collection, I shared the results with all of the research participants. The research participants and I reflected on the results, and our knowledge and experience with the data enabled us to engage in the sense-making process. During data collection, a lot of data and information were collected. At each stage, the research participants and I debated and agreed on the threshold and when we believed it was necessary to stop the process. Again, the general empirical method employed helped us make judgements, determine relevance, and make informed decisions on each activity. I went through the mass of data to identify those relevant to the study and concentrate on these. However, I ensured that no data was destroyed as I might need to revisit the data sets, especially during data analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis

Also, in this chapter, I have discussed data analysis and how research participants and I analysed data. I chose the template analysis method, a form of thematic analysis, because of the research goals. I consider the template analysis method appropriate in exploring participants' lived experiences and thought patterns across the data set, especially regarding perspectives, behaviours and practices of leaders and leadership, and socially constructed meanings in MTI Plc. Template analysis is appropriate and relevant to PAR with collaboration and group work. It is considered suitable for analysing qualitative data, especially data from a small sample size such as the one of the research.

In some segments, data analysis took place as we collected data. The research participants were extensively involved in data analysis as they were in data collection, except that my role as the researcher was well asserted throughout the process. We met at regular intervals as a research team to review our activities and ensure our agreed procedures and methodology were followed. Working together helped forge agreements and justifications, especially regarding coding, codes, and themes.

4.3.1 Coding and determination of themes

The research participants and I worked collaboratively in data analysis, including coding and determining themes. This was done, to, among other reasons, assure code reliability. Clark and Braun (2021:39) argued that “Researcher subjectivity is conceptualised as ‘bias’, a potential threat to coding reliability. This threat is managed through the use of multiple coders, measuring the level of ‘agreement’ between coders, with the assumption that a high level of agreement equals reliable code and determining final coding through consensus”. Also, according to Clark and Braun (2018:108), “..themes can perhaps be usefully thought of as key characters in the story we are telling about the data (rather than collection pots into which we place everything that was said about a particular data domain). Each theme has an ‘essence’ or core concept that underpins and unites the observations...” Therefore, themes should be derived from data with meanings that inform the research questions. Themes should not necessarily be determined by the frequency of their appearance within the data but should provide a reasonable degree of interpretation and data integration. Accordingly, I considered themes as phenomena or phrases that capture meaning in the texts. Each theme was organised around a central concept, which captured the participants' views and exposed or highlighted shared senses.

In the analysis of data, we adopted the following steps:

1. Familiarisation – we read the texts several times and familiarised ourselves with the text
2. Coding – We coded the texts, formed categories, and developed the coding template.
3. Generating themes – as part of coding and building the coding template, we identified themes.
4. Reviewing themes – We reviewed the themes to establish relevant ones that had value in our interpretation of phenomena towards answering the research questions.
5. Defining and naming themes – We defined and named the final themes.

Coding was to find codes and themes relevant to the research goals and questions. I considered the second objective of creating knowledge, which substantially emanates from developing concepts out of codes and themes. Therefore, I took a deep interest in reading repeatedly and picking out themes. I tried to “move towards the voices of participants” (Creswell, 2015:160) because these are part of the foundations of data collection and analysis and achievement of the research outcomes.

The research participants and I started by highlighting statements and phrases that we believed contributed to our understanding of how the statements and phrases fit into the goals and objectives of the research and their relevance in answering the research questions. Then, we came up with shorthand labels to describe the relevant contents. In other words, as a preliminary step, we identified and marked sections of the data that were relevant to the research

questions and segments of the transcribed texts that related to the topic, aims of the research and the research questions.

We created categories by assembling data that go together. We were careful not to have several codes with the same meaning or synonyms to make our coding template unwieldy and efficient. We analysed data to allow the audit trail to support our interpretations and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). We coded all relevant segments of each data set and went through the iterative process of developing the coding template up to the final template.

As coding went on, we modified the template to include new relevant codes or remove any redundant code or a code that had no material relevance to the goals and objectives of the research and the research questions. In addition, we developed statements of themes that provided the title and meaning of each theme on the summary sheet. We agreed on the final template after our team was convinced that nothing in the texts was left unturned or unexamined and thus decided that our final coding template was adequate.

4.4 Research Participants

As I stated in chapter three, my sample has a relatively small size, and the goal was to seek meaning from the spoken words of each participant. Fifteen (15) participants were selected. Also, in chapter three, I discussed the eligibility criteria and actions taken to ensure the selections were appropriate and fit for data collection and analysis in particular and the research process as a whole. I got them to participate intimately in the discussions, especially the focus group discussions and stakeholders' meetings. I encouraged them to engage in interpretations and shaping of meanings of certain phenomena. I made every endeavour to boost the participation of the research participants by helping to

improve their skills and learning capacity during sessions and meetings I had with them. As I stated in chapter three, I emphasised at every stage the distinction between me as the researcher and the roles of the research participants.

4.5 My Action Research Stages

4.5.1 Pre-Steps

In chapter three, I explained the reasons for including pre-steps in the research design, one of which is to lay a good foundation, seek an understanding of the context of the project (Coghlan, 2019) and answer the questions, namely ‘What are the cultural issues present and driving change?’, ‘What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc’, and ‘How does the organisation’s leadership culture impact the strategic decision-making process? It was essential to collect data and assess the forces and issues and their impact on the organisation’s strategic decision-making process and the organisation as a whole. These details helped define our focus. The pre-steps enabled me to answer the questions. The data sources in the steps are the cultural web, historical documents and minutes of meetings.

Chapter three discussed the pre-steps and why I separated them from the action research cycles. I grouped the first questionnaire, the cultural web of MTI Plc, and reviewed documents as pre-steps.

4.5.1.1 Collecting Initial Data Using a Questionnaire and a Survey

Regarding the questionnaire, the questions focused on securing the information on the kind of leadership culture in the organisation, identifying relevant themes and how the leadership culture impacted the strategic decision-making process.

All research protocols were observed, and details are discussed later in this chapter on Ethics.

4.5.1.2 Examination of the Cultural Web

The primary purpose of the cultural web analysis was to investigate the organisation's current culture and its systems to determine the standard and expose any weaknesses in the culture of MTI Plc. I considered it critical to understand the organisation's leadership strategy and culture. The research participants and I undertook an examination of the cultural web of MTI Plc. We accessed a mass of documents on the vision, mission statements, policies and practices as source materials which enabled us to construct the cultural web and examine its elements. No single document represented the cultural web, but we reconstructed it based on my previous knowledge of the mechanics and insights from a further literature review. I must mention that we were guided by the need to be objective and reasonable in our judgement and decision-making on what made up the cultural web and in populating contents of the elements, which, in any case, represented accounts of lived experiences of the research participants and information from other sources. We engaged in a group discussion on the cultural web. We kept journals to record our observations and findings as we examined the different elements of the cultural web and interacted with stakeholders. The journal entries and our reflection notes were typed out and ready for analysis. We also audio-recorded some sessions, which were subsequently transcribed for analysis. We investigated the various elements of the paradigm, which are discussed below:

4.5.1.2.1 Cultural Web Element One – 'Stories'

Although the research participants and I have been in the organisation's employment, we took the view that it was better for us to take a detached

picture of the cultural web and, therefore, relied on comments and responses of others and reviewed these against the knowledge we possessed. Consequently, we explored the ‘stories’ about MTI Plc, i.e. its history and culture, and recorded our findings in our journals.

4.5.1.2.2 Cultural Web Element Two – ‘Symbols’

Several elements constituted ‘Symbols’, but we restricted our discussions to critical symbols, facilitating the extraction of vital, relevant themes. Participants and I discussed the following symbols: logos, offices, cars, titles, and language. Status car differentiated staff and provided a picture of the hierarchy within the organisation. The status is also associated with arranging offices as to whether it should be an open-plan office or an enclosed office and the office floor occupied or located. There are job titles and indications of how staff promotions were organised in the company and those who could not be promoted beyond a certain level in the organisation. Symbols also related to organisational branding and how the corporate environment was arranged, which were part of the organisation’s culture and influenced the leadership culture.

4.5.1.2.3 Cultural Web Element Three – ‘Power Structures’

This relates to the assumptions and beliefs of the organisational leaders about what is essential and how they design, manipulate and exploit the power structures within the organisation. From the audio-recorded and transcribed discussions, the power structures exposed the kind of leadership and powers that existed in the organisation.

4.5.1.2.4 Cultural Web Element Four – ‘Organisational Structures’

Under this element, participants and I examined and discussed the organisation's power relationships, which defined part of the hierarchy that informed the leadership culture. The organogram of the organisation depicted the relationships and the lines of authority.

4.5.1.2.5 Cultural Web Element Five – ‘Control Systems’

The ‘Control Systems’ of the organisation, such as performance measurements and rewards, were discussed and examined. These helped to illuminate the importance of controls by leaders and how they engaged with others, rewards, and how sanctions were applied.

4.5.1.2.6 Cultural Web Element Six – ‘Rituals and Routines’

The research participants and I examined the ‘Rituals and Routines’ of the Cultural Web of the organisation, namely the usual ways of doing things and how employees related to each other. Further literature review on the cultural web helped us immensely, and it was pleasing to see theory in practice

4.5.1.2.7 Summary of the Cultural Web - the ‘Paradigm’

In summary, we investigated the cultural web and the cultural paradigm of MTI Plc. And although we had been part of the business for several years, the examination was very insightful. We undertook reflective activities, and reflection notes helped us develop suggestions. I understood that some details and assumptions would not be reflected on the cultural web, but taking a cue from Coghlan (2019), I engaged in premise reflections on the unwritten

assumptions and beliefs, details of which are recorded in my journal/reflective note.

4.5.1.3 Review of Minutes of Meetings and Other Documents

4.5.1.3.1 Minutes of Stakeholders' Meeting of March 21, 2017

Minutes of the Stakeholders' Meeting of 21 March 2017 were reviewed. The meeting was not arranged as part of the research process. However, the minutes revealed leadership culture and strategic decision-making issues and thus provided relevant data for analysis in this project.

4.5.1.3.2 Reports of the Interim Management Committee

We reviewed two reports of the Interim Management Committee to the Board of Directors of MTI Plc. It is essential to mention that these reports were not produced for the study, but they provided good data. The first report was issued and was presented on 4 February 2018, broken down into 'Preamble', 'IMC Meetings', 'Milestones Achieved', 'Challenges' and 'Recommendations'. The second report was dated 19 April 2018,

4.5.1.3.3 Minutes of Other Meetings

I took the minutes' book of the organisation, having secured the approval of the CEO, who directed the Company Secretary to grant us access. The minutes' book included minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors and Board Committees. The objective of the critical view was to determine who took the decisions, how the strategic decision-making process was organised and the final decisions. Our findings are contained in our journals and field notes.

4.5.1.4 Analysis of Data from the Pre-steps

4.5.1.4.1 The Cultural Web

The journal entries and our reflection notes were typed out and ready for analysis. We also audio-recorded some sessions, which were subsequently transcribed for analysis. Finally, we analysed the various elements of the paradigm shown hereunder:

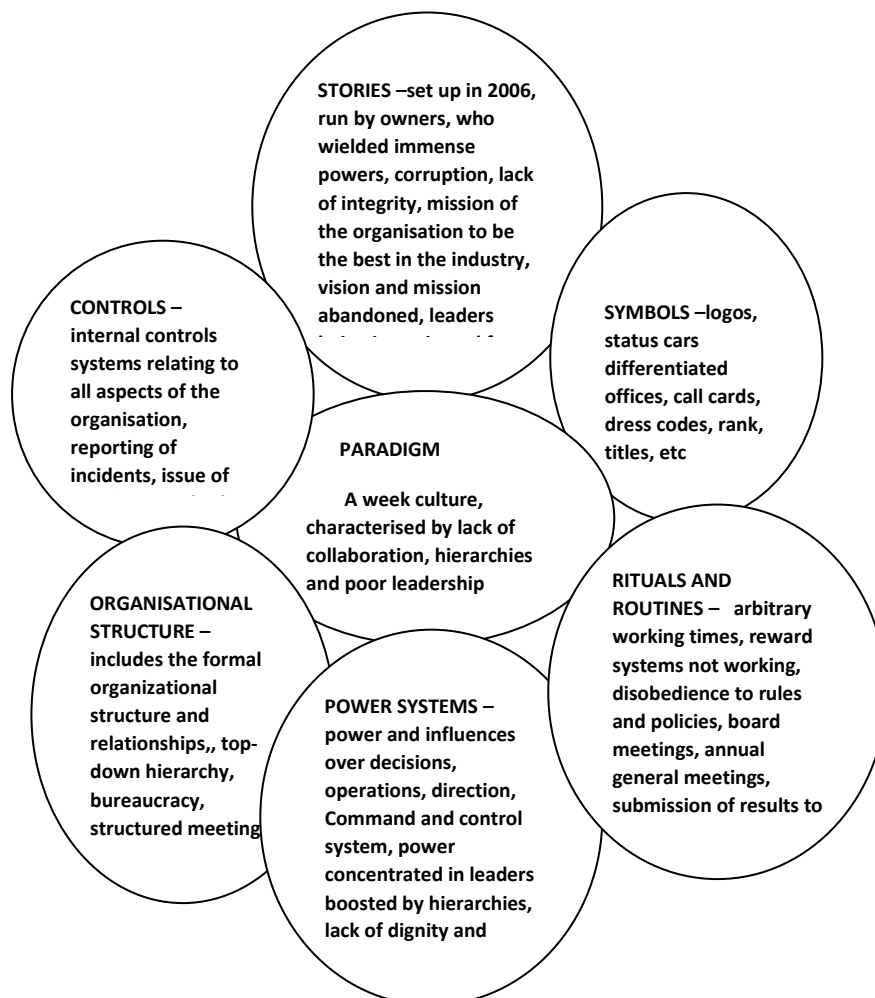


Figure 4.1: Culture Web of the Organisation

Source: Johnson (2007), infused with details seen in the organisation

Table 4.1: Final Coding Template from Analysis of the Cultural Web (Pre-Step)

| Element | Theme | Meaning/Description/Relevant research question |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Stories | organisational change | The organisational change relates to the need to undergo positive changes to the organisation's culture – Research questions 4, 5 and 6 |
| Stories | Leadership Change | Change in the leadership team and leadership configuration from a strongly hierarchical organisation with enormous powers to the CEO to a collaborative leadership – Research questions 4,5 and 6 |
| Stories | Abuse of power | Leaders who wielded enormous power abused the powers flagrantly – Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| Power Structures | Autocratic Leadership | Leadership style was autocratic, and decision-making rested with the CEO and a few members of the senior leadership team – Research questions 1,2 and 3 |
| Organisation Structures | Hierarchical and Top Heavy | The organisation is heavily hierarchical, with higher-level control, especially with the CEO. The organogram of the organisation depicts the relationships and pictures the concentration of powers informed by the hierarchy, which is top-heavy. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |

4.5.1.4.1.1 Themes from the examination of the Cultural Web

a. Organisational change

The main story here relates to several failed organisational changes which were not organised transparently but with self-interest as the primary influencer of such changes.

b. Leadership Change

There have been leadership changes without realising the goals. But, again, it was believed and known in the organisation that the fundamental leadership problems embedded in the solid hierarchical organisation with enormous powers to the CEO meant that the CEO decided on the thrust and nature of the changes, which failed severally.

c. Abuse of Power

This is linked to the other themes identified. The story was that those few who wielded enormous power abused the powers flagrantly.

d. Autocratic Leadership

Participants and I identified the leadership style as autocratic, and decision-making rested with the CEO and a few senior leadership team members and was, therefore, not a collaborative decision-making process.

e. Hierarchical and Top Heavy

All the participants agreed that the organisation was heavily hierarchical, with control at higher levels. The organogram of the organisation depicts the relationships and pictures the concentration of powers informed by the hierarchy. It was also agreed that the structure was top-heavy.

4.5.1.4.2 Review and Analysis of Documents and Questionnaire (Pre-Step)

We analysed the contents of documents relevant to the subject of the research. Also, we analysed the responses to the questionnaire. We found structures and administration systems that depicted the organisation structure, the hierarchies and inter-relationships. Also, we verified the decision-making processes and the minutes, which revealed decisions and resolutions. Because some of the documents contained specific materials, we coded and identified themes to distil critical issues. I reviewed the company's Articles of Association and Corporate Governance Policies, including the Strategic Planning Policy, to determine the authority, powers and thresholds for strategic decision-making about several issues.

Table 4.2: Final Coding template from documents and questionnaire

| Theme | Meaning/Description/Research questions |
|--|--|
| Lack of commitment of employees | Employees were not committed to the organisation's goals due to leadership practices that demotivated them (employees). Research questions 1 and 3 |
| Lack of Transparency | Leadership practices are devoid of transparency. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| Leadership Incompetence | The leadership was not competent and did not possess the required skills. Research questions 1, 2, and 3 |
| Poor communication with employees and lack of teamwork | Leadership worked in silos and did not communicate with employees regularly and systematically, thereby avoiding teamwork. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |

4.5.1.4.2.1 Themes from the analysis of documents and the questionnaire

Following the review of documents and analysis of the field notes, which went through strands of coding and categorisation, the following themes emerged:

a. Lack of commitment of employees due to the attitudes of organisational leaders

Minutes of management meetings, minutes of negotiations with the labour unions and other reports were filled with issues of lack of commitment and motivation of employees. In a particular case, the union leader stated that lack of attention and adherence to rules and policies of the organisation, especially those related to promotions and rewards, demotivated employees.

b. Lack of Transparency

I recorded incidents of leadership practices devoid of transparency in the field notes. An example was the purchase of a parcel of land for the erection of a telecom mast, which was found to be a transaction organised and completed without the involvement of the procurement department. As recorded in one of the management reports from investigations, it turned out that the property belonged to the organisation's Chief Executive Officer.

c. Leadership incompetence

Minutes of Board meetings and reports were replete with comments on the organisation's failure, partly due to leadership incompetence. For example, in a report by the Management Committee in 2011, it was stated that management failed to discharge their duties competently. The point on leadership incompetence was buttressed by Mrs D during the one-on-one interview with the following statements in lines 27-30 of the transcribed text: "There needs to

be a new Board to direct the affairs and pursue other ways of doing the right thing including recalibrating the decision-making process which has led the organisation to lose not only key staff but also lost huge businesses”.

d. Poor communication with employees and lack of teamwork

Employees were not carried along, and teamwork was absent. This is evident in many of the reports of the internal audit department, especially its report of June 2015, which covered a long period, as well as the minutes of the Stakeholders meeting of 21st March 2017, an extract of which is contained in Appendix 8

In table 4.3 below, I have summarised the themes from all stages of the pre-steps, which form the bedrock of the information on the problems of the leadership culture as it existed before the research. Unlike in the action research cycles, which mirror the transformation process, the issues diagnosed need to be dealt with to ensure that the leadership culture transformation is very productive and result-oriented. It was discovered that the hierarchical nature of the organisation was an antithesis to the effective functioning of the leadership culture. Unless the organisation structure is reviewed to make it amenable to the effective functioning of the leadership culture, gains made through raising the standards of DAC as leadership outcomes will come to nothing. Most of these issues are sticky and have been somewhat entrenched in the organisation. Therefore, they are long term issues that go beyond the thesis project and which the leadership change team should handle. Some of the issues have been dealt with in the research, especially during the implementation of actions during the intervention. Still, actions must be implemented to deal with these issues thoroughly. I have indicated action points against each issue in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Final Coding template for Pre-Steps and Action Points

| Theme | Issue/Problem | Action Points |
|--|--|--|
| organisational change | The organisational change relates to the need to undergo positive changes to the organisation's culture (Research questions 4,5 and 6) | There should be organisational changes, including the organisation structure to a vertical, collaborative structure, which will aid distributed decision-making in the organisation |
| Leadership Change | Change in the leadership team and leadership configuration from a hierarchical organisation with enormous powers to the CEO to a collaborative leadership (Research questions 4,5 and 6) | There should be a leadership culture change. There should also be a change in the leadership team to bring in a new team that will run the new leadership without the baggage of the dysfunctional hierarchical leadership culture |
| Autocratic leadership and abuse of power | Leaders who wielded enormous power abused the powers flagrantly (Research questions 1, 2 and 3) | Enthroned a new leadership and implement policies and controls with powers distributed across the organisation with the view of avoiding any abuse of power |
| Lack of Transparency | Leadership practices are devoid of transparency. | The organisation should review and enforce policies to ensure |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | (Research questions 1, 2 and 3) | there is adherence to transparency |
| Poor communication with employees and lack of teamwork | Leadership worked in silos and did not communicate with employees regularly and systematically, thereby avoiding teamwork. (Research questions 1, 2 and 3) | Build teams and encourage team building and strengthen the systems of communication with employees |
| Lack of competence and absence of training | No leadership competencies and failure to undergo training. (Research questions 1, 2 and 3) | The organisation should design and implement a new leadership development programme. It should regularly develop leaders and team them with new leadership practices, including international best practices in leadership. |

4.5.1.5 Action Research Cycles and Methods

This section introduces the interventions and other methods of data collection which followed the pre-steps. Details of activities and actions are contained in areas under each action research cycle.

The project comprises multiple research cycles. I have considered the drive to transform and attain each element of the DAC as the primary steps considered under Action Research Cycle One (Direction), Action Research Cycle Two

(Alignment), and Action Research Cycle Three (Commitment). I designed these cycles of the project, and I was mindful of the fluid nature of action research. I employed flexibility and discretion in designing the cycles to present the study in simple ways to aid an intimate understanding of the stages of the transformation that are intended to help identify how the leadership culture impacts the strategic decision-making process by looking at the data and issues diagnosed at the pre-step level and the problems diagnosed at the end of the transformation. Although I have named each a cycle, they represent cycles within a cycle.

With the decision to review this study extensively, I went back to the drawing board and undertook more literature reviews, especially on action research projects within different contexts. Following these, the research participants and I agreed that it was necessary to have more focus group and interview sessions depending on findings at each stage of the cycles to enrich data and explain fully and more conveniently the structure of action research cycles, the issues bordering on the subject of the research, and the basis of action plans, implementation and evaluations.

I conducted individual interviews. After further research and articulation of needful stages and issues in the action research cycles, I found it imperative to organise additional interviews. The interviews were conducted in 2019 and 2020. Seven (7) semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted over several months in phases. I could have merged the interview sessions, but I considered the nature of the issues and the dynamics of the leadership culture in setting each interview session. I chose to be flexible in dealing with new problems that might arise from responses and used the opportunity to clarify issues. I asked brief questions to motivate interviewees and not stress them with long, convoluted questions. All I desired was to secure responses and data that

would enable me to address my research questions. The use of interviews helped understand similar issues related to strategic decision-making and behaviours of leaders. The semi-structured interviews helped me get a deeper understanding of strategic decisions and the impact of the leadership culture. Participants were asked to talk about some decisions they took part in or observed, how the decisions were made, and why it was made. This provided a reasonable understanding of the strategic decision-making process in the organisation. I asked for the participants' consent to record the interviews. Sometimes, I approached some participants to ask questions following deep reflections. I shared interview transcripts with participants to represent their ideas and confirm my understanding and recording accuracy.

Table 4.4 below details the interviews, areas covered and purposes that were tailored and designed to help answer the research questions.

Table 4.4: Schedule of Interviews

| Phase | Information Collected/Areas covered | Purpose |
|---------------|---|---|
| 1st Interview | Interview to obtain background information on the leadership culture, the cultural web and leadership practices in the organisation | To obtain baseline data and other details, especially on the issues about the leadership culture in the organisation. |
| 2nd Interview | Interview on policies, rules, decision-making processes, authority | To cross-reference and validate information secured from documents |

| | | |
|---------------|--|--|
| | limits, etc. | and record and obtain new information on the exercise of authority and decision-making |
| 3rd Interview | Interview on challenges faced in the organisation – how the leadership culture under the Dependent hierarchical structure is exploited in the organisation | To understand any challenges and issues faced in the strategic decision-making process directly engendered by the leadership culture |
| 4th Interview | Interview on readiness for the project and change | To determine the extent of the interviewees' readiness and understanding of the project and its benefits, including DAC. These extended to interviews of the CEO and other key officers. |
| 5th Interview | Interview on beliefs and assumptions, results of interventions and learning outcomes, etc. | Gain further insights into the belief systems and practices and insights from the intervention and transformation to the |

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| | | next level, i.e. the Independent Leadership Culture logic and what participants learnt. |
| 6th Interview | Interview on learning outcomes and development | To gain insights into the participants' learning outcomes and self-development |
| 7th Interview | Interview on research outcomes | To seek opinions and facts on actions taken and outcomes |

Journals were used in cycles one, two and three. Each participant kept a diary. Details of each were discussed and typed, and each participant had the opportunity of reading notes. They provided a rich source of data. The research journal offered me the chance to review and check the data quality. In addition, the journal was used to record my reflections, insights, questions for further exploration, and experiences in applying the lessons from literature and on sites and during sessions and interviews to guide the transformation in myself, my colleagues, etc. My journal entries have been preserved in their raw form without any revision.

I observed both formal and informal meetings and took notes of events. I took a deep interest in informal, casual meetings when I found that a lot was going on during the meetings and gatherings. A lot of information was revealed and volunteered at these meetings. I considered that even if these meetings were informal, they could form the basis for further action and cycles during data

gathering. The big challenge with observation was timing. We reflected on the information collected from my observation after each session. The data collected enabled us to evaluate the appropriateness of the intervention implementation. We did the same with data collected through other methods, especially interviews and focus groups.

There were surveys at the end of each cycle. They assisted in eliciting responses and views on the action implementation and outcomes and determining whether the overall success criteria had been met in respect of the main subject or issue in the relevant cycle. Again, an invitation and a consent form were sent to each participant. Protocols were observed, and they were requested to return their responses directly to me or by mail within one week. Again, thankfully, all respondents returned the completed questionnaire. The last extended to the overall outcomes of DAC.

One stakeholders' meeting was organised in the course of the research in November 2020. The session was audio-recorded and transcribed. I supervised and facilitated the meeting designed to educate the stakeholders, update them on the study, and act as an awareness instrument. Details are discussed in cycle three.

I organised a workshop/training programme after securing the approval of the CEO. The workshop was organised in cycle three to educate participants and other stakeholders on the transformation of the leadership culture, explain the implementation process and provide a platform for learning by participants, among others described in cycle 3.

Regarding focus group sessions, I, as the facilitator, utilised semi-structured questions that formed the basis of the group questions. However, some questions were developed as follow-ups to comments and responses from

participants. The group sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Before starting, I explained the subject of the discussions, the ground rules and other details necessary to ensure participants were comfortable and free to express themselves. We agreed that code names should be used for participants rather than real names. A focus group session took place in each of the three cycles.

The first action research cycle's planned outcome was the achievement of Direction. This relates to the research question: 'How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?' The second action research cycle involved 'Alignment' with the propelling question: 'How should we coordinate our work to achieve alignment so that all employees' work would fit together?' Finally, the third stage involved 'Commitment' with the key question: 'How should we achieve commitment to the collective?'

As I stated in chapter three, and because of the flexibility offered by action research and the latitude to decide how to design and implement the action research cycles and the PAR process generally, I created three action research cycles, each on the three critical levels of Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC) which inevitably engenders the leadership outcomes.

The following discussions expose the data generation activities during these levels through the action research cycles.

4.5.1.5.1 Action Research Cycle 1

In cycle 1, to achieve Direction, we engaged in discussions to reach agreements on the direction through mutual influence and compromise (McGuire and Palus, 2018). Without an agreement on direction, the effort to change leadership beliefs might be to no avail. Therefore, Cycle One (1) was to organise processes

to explain and achieve shared direction on transforming the leadership culture to the Independent Leadership Culture standard. We followed the stages of action research of constructing, planning, taking action and evaluating. Activities in each set are explained hereunder.

4.5.1.5.1.1 Constructing

As stated earlier, Direction means an agreement in the organisation on overall goals, namely what members are trying to achieve together. The desire was for members to understand the organisation's success and agree on what they aim to accomplish.

In constructing the issue, the research participants and I agreed that the issue was to seek to answer the research question on how to achieve a shared direction, having read literature on the leadership culture and understanding the ramifications of DAC and how the various elements could be investigated and improved towards attaining a higher leadership culture standard and leadership outcomes. We looked closely at the context and considered the peculiar circumstances of MTI Plc in constructing the direction to be achieved. We needed to construct this issue effectively and efficiently and articulate the practical and theoretical foundations of actions to be taken. We formulated and drew up the focus group and interview questions, leveraging and closely considering the research questions developed in earlier chapters. In setting the theoretical foundation, I defined and explained shared direction to get the research participants to understand our trajectory and bear in mind, throughout the cycle, the meaning of what we were pursuing and our objectives.

Also, in constructing, we considered the ethical and political issues and the methods most appropriate in collecting data, especially about the need to fit the purpose for which Direction should be achieved.

4.5.1.5.1.2 Planning

In planning, we looked at the dimensions of direction. We contextualised it to put us in good stead to use appropriate methods to collect, review and analyse data and use the results of data analysis for proper actions. We considered the research objectives and what the organisation should be aiming to accomplish together. Data collection methods included focus group sessions, interviews, observations, and surveys. We agreed to administer a survey to understand our success level as part of the post-action data collection at each stage. Action Research Cycle 1 was planned to take place in two months. Although I had obtained the approval and the consent of the Board of Directors, I decided that it was necessary to inform the CEO of this stage and secure the leadership team's commitment. His response was, "We have given you approval with the expectation that you would do all necessary to help us make this company a sustainable business".

Our examination of the current Dependent hierarchical leadership structure as part of the pre-step efforts provided complete insights and data into the planning action research cycle 1. I reflected on our planning process and the details.

4.5.1.5.1.2.1 Focus Group

The idea canvassed at the focus group session was to transform the hierarchical, conformance-based leadership culture into a process-centred organisation with a collaborative culture to improve the process, effectiveness, and integrity of the organisational strategic decision-making process. Participants were told that it was critical to achieve shared direction and change in beliefs and assumptions, which impacted a strong leadership culture. The literature review provided the foundation for articulating the focus group questions targeted at the shared direction. Before starting, I explained the subject of the discussions, the ground

rules and other details necessary to ensure participants were comfortable and free to express themselves. We agreed that code names should be used for participants rather than real names. I, as the facilitator, utilised semi-structured questions, which formed the basis of the group questions. However, some questions were developed as follow-ups to comments and responses from participants. The group sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The first focus group session was also meant to fully motivate the participants to express their lived experiences. Other purposes were establishing a baseline of data, framing the first steps towards the transformation, and creating awareness of the project. The participants voiced out stoutly, and this was not surprising. As some of them stated, they had bottled their anger over the situation in the organisation and were waiting for an opportunity to voice out. Instead, they welcomed the opportunity and agreed that there was a need to be united in work by a common goal - a shared direction for the organisation to move forward. Data were collected using audio recording and note-taking done manually in a journal. I recorded some side talks, which seemed unimportant, but I thought it was necessary to record them, and I found value in some of the comments. One of my observations was that some participants did not participate actively in the initial stages. When I reflected on events, I realised that it was necessary to change my strategy and get everybody to participate actively and closely.

While lamenting the challenges with the current leadership culture and how it impacted the strategic decision-making process, participants agreed that it would be possible to shift its structure from a traditional hierarchy — a command - and - control structure — to a flat, customer-focused process - centred organisation, but the fear lied in getting senior managers and those who constituted the leadership under the current structure to see the need to

transform. The critical question was, ‘How far is our current leadership culture from one that can lead to improvements in the strategic decision-making process?’

During the focus group, it was agreed that the transformation effort was a new call to action for a new identity of leadership and leadership practices, with new leadership beliefs, assumptions and mindsets. I mentioned that the new leadership culture would generate leadership practices capable of changing the leadership culture positively. We discussed whether the change should be incremental, occurring gradually or a quantum leap. These helped in shaping interview questions. It was generally agreed that change comes hard as several efforts were made in the past. So, the nagging question by some of the attendees was, ‘Why would this be different?’ I explained that achieving a shared direction was the foundation for making a difference and setting the stage for a transformation. Participants strongly agreed with the need for a commonly held organisational direction. They also decided that we should put our shared success above our individual successes. The focus group was designed and planned to negotiate and agree on a shared direction. The design was informed by insights and ideas from the broad literature review.

4.5.1.5.1.2.2 Interviews

Interviews were planned and held in cycle one. The first set of interviews was held on 4 February 2019. The purposes of the interviews are detailed in table 4.1 above.

Although the focus group, among other things, helped to sensitise stakeholders on shared Direction, I used the interviews to secure the concurrence of the key leaders. The interviews began with individual self-examination and testing out where leaders stood on the issue of a shared sense of what is suitable for the

organisation and an understanding of worldview as the competitive environment had become complex and needed a new way of leadership. It was also genuine truth-telling and to give a sense of the time required for change. The interviews were designed to sensitise the leadership team to see the need to secure positive DAC outcomes and work towards creating or redefining itself as a leadership team for change. The extensive literature review helped, and insights gained on the key issues relating to direction helped frame the interview questions. The interviews were also designed as a process of learning for all. I took time to engage with the CEO, who controlled the majority. It was difficult, but we proceeded after administering consent and other protocols once I got him to participate in the interview. At the end of the interview, I was pleased to get a new convert. It became clear that we were heading rightly. I informed the research participants appropriately.

I chose to be flexible in dealing with new issues that might arise from responses and used the opportunity to clarify issues. I asked brief questions to motivate interviewees, as all I desired was to secure responses and data that would enable me to address my research questions.

The use of interviews helped understand similar issues related to strategic decision-making and behaviours of leaders. The semi-structured interviews helped me get a deeper understanding of strategic decisions and the impact of the leadership culture. Participants were asked to talk about the processes of some decisions they took part in or observed. I arranged and conducted some interviews to ask questions following deep reflections. I shared interview transcripts with participants to ensure I represented them and their ideas correctly. It was generally agreed that there was an urgent need for shared direction and change in how the leadership team acted.

The research questions provided the basis of and guided the interviews. I recorded interviews with those who agreed. Only two of the participants did not give consent to recording the interviews. Also, I took notes manually during the interviews. Finally, I reflected on the interviews and events, which helped plan cycles 2 and 3.

4.5.1.5.1.2.3 Observation

I observed both formal and informal meetings and took notes of events. I took a deep interest in informal, casual meetings when I found that a lot was going on during the meetings and gatherings. A lot of information was revealed and volunteered at these meetings. I considered that even if these meetings were informal, they could form the basis for further action and cycles during data gathering. Thankfully, I found that quite a lot of information and data I gathered during observations of these informal gatherings were relevant and reliable. One of the benefits I derived from conducting observations was gathering data about leadership decision-making. I recorded my comments in the form of field notes. It is interesting to note that the observation allowed me to focus on virtually everything in the meetings, unlike in previous meetings, which were not targets of my observation. The upshot was that it afforded me the opportunity of seeing the organisation from my perspective as a researcher and observe its leadership actions. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was very oppressive. Other directors more or less red-stamped the decisions of the CEO. Also, I heard statements like, “As agreed, we will proceed with the undertaking”. No further explanations were given, and it did not appear that these were collective decisions. This was one of the cases of the leadership culture delivered in a dysfunctional non-collaborative fashion. The research participants also observed activities and events.

The informal observation took place virtually all the time. The formal observations were planned after the focus group sessions and the initial interviews. Observation enabled us to see critical leadership practices and strategic decision-making issues. Of course, as insiders, the research participants and I knew the strategic decision-making pitfalls. Still, it was pretty revealing with a deeper concentration on observing practices and reflecting on them. We recorded our experiences of the observations, one of which indicated a general acceptance of the need for shared direction.

4.5.1.5.1.3 Data Analysis in action research cycle 1

Texts were transcribed and analysed. Then, we went through the stages mentioned above in section 4.3.1 of this chapter. Shown hereunder is the final coding template for action research cycle one.

Table 4.5: Final Coding template for Cycle 1

| Theme | Meaning/Description/Research question |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Vision and Mission | The vision and mission statements of the organisation, which were more or less unnoticed in the organisation - Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| Lack of coordination of roles | Roles were not adequately articulated and defined - Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| Lack of confidence in the system | Employees lost confidence in the organisation and its leaders and were no longer motivated - Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| Absence of a shared direction | Members were not united by a common goal |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| | and worked in silos - Research questions 1, 2 and 3 |
| The need for change | There is a desire for change. Research question 4 |

4.5.1.5.1.3.1 Themes from the Action Research Cycle 1

I have reproduced quotes in their raw forms without redrafting the statements to present them in the participants' voices.

a. Vision and Mission

The Vision and Missions statements of the organisation had become somewhat stale, and most of the employees could not, without reading them in documents, recall them. During the interview, Mr AD said: ‘Do we still have these statements? I cannot even recite them, but you don’t blame me. I can say that most of the employees have forgotten about the vision and mission statements.’

b. Lack of Coordination of Roles

In the field notes, I recorded incidents of leadership practices that were not in tandem with the ways roles were defined and assigned. Coordination was absent. These are reflected in the failure to follow due process. One of the participants (Miss SH) said: “Everybody is working like there is no central unit to coordinate what people are doing for the organisation’s good. I feel frustrated. When will this change?”

c. Lack of Confidence in the system

Participants noted that leadership imposed their views on the rest of the employees or managers rather than adopting a collaborative, participative

approach to decision-making. In the transcribed text of the focus group, I quote one of the participants, Mr BO, who said: “I do not understand whether we are still running a company. I have lost confidence in the organisation and its leaders”. Other participants echoed this view. Mrs OY, another participant, said: “So by the time you come up with your views, no one motivates you to act positively. You are simply frustrated”.

d. Absence of Shared Direction

Decisions were informed by self-interest, and a common direction is absent in the organisation's interest. I quote Mr KE from the transcribed text of the focus group: “So your suggestions are not taken because it does not meet the expectations of the leader whose self-interest dictates how he decides. So, we are not on the same page, and the same frustrations are faced by most of our colleagues. So, where is the shared direction? There is none. Thank you”.

e. The need for change

Participants discussed their concerns regarding how leadership is practised and how they manage the organisation. It was agreed that the organisation failed to meet its goals over several years despite several attempts to turn it around. One participant, Mr KE, stated, and I quote from the text: “Thank you for explaining the issues and coming up with very relevant questions. The truth is that we did not focus on leaders in our past attempts. There is an urgent need to either change them or change the way they control and run the company”. Mr KE was roundly supported by most of the participants, who also expressed the urgency of change.

4.5.1.5.1.4 Taking Action

We articulated direction to get leaders and other organisational members to understand and practice it. Meetings were held to discuss the shared direction and agree on the direction desired and what members should be aiming to accomplish together. Teamwork was emphasised. There was an improvement in the quality of meetings and the frequency of interactions among organisational members. Management and staff retreats were planned, and one was held. Job descriptions and roles were adequately defined, and employees were taken through the process to understand their roles better.

The vision of the organisation was re-stated and discussed. It was an opportunity to remind members of the vision and mission statements of the organisation. Members committed to working and being united by a common direction. For a considerable time, we preached shared direction, which was stressed at the slightest opportunity. We produced banners and boards that boldly stated the benefits of shared direction. The slogan on shared direction became a tagline for every email in the organisation. The second interview was, among other things, a soundboard for testing out our implementation actions.

4.5.1.5.1.5 Evaluation/Survey

We conducted an evaluation and a survey at the end of cycle one. The survey form is in Appendix 10. The survey questions included: ‘To what extent do you agree that employees should be aiming to accomplish together? To what extent do you believe we now have a clear vision of what the organisation needs to achieve in the future?’ Do you believe that following the start of this project and what you observed, the organisational goals guide critical decisions?’ and ‘Presently, are you satisfied that a common direction unites work?’ Do you believe there are changes in employee (including leaders) mindsets? The survey

questions were designed with ratings on a scale of 1-5, with five being the highest. The survey results indicated a strong and improved shared direction that was virtually non-existent before the project commenced. Therefore, we took the threshold of 16 as the total score as the minimum for a strong Direction as canvassed by the Centre for Creative Leadership. The result of our survey indicated a total score of 18.

The purpose was to collect data to determine how the intervention in cycle one fared, based on the stakeholders' views on whether Shared Direction had been achieved and whether or not they genuinely committed to work united by a common organisational goal. It was also to indicate whether they agreed that the work of each individual should be well-coordinated with the work of others and that shared success should transcend individual success. We evaluated to determine how successful we were with data collection and analysis in action research cycle one, regarding our plan, including the methodological process and theoretical underpinnings. We employed the general empirical method, which enabled us to evaluate at every stage and ensure the process was effective and efficient, rigorous and without bias.

Participants made suggestions and comments on their experiences and observations, which we considered in planning the next cycle. One of them was the need for education and sustenance of awareness of the project and its benefits to enable stakeholders to internalise them.

4.5.1.5.2 Action Research Cycle 2

Alignment relates to coordinating work within the organisation and integrating the different aspects of the work to fit together in service of the shared direction achieved in cycle one. Alignment produces the correct configuration of beliefs

and talent in the systems, structure, and processes that would enable our organisation to head in the direction (McGuire and Palus, 2018; Ozcan, 2021). When collective leadership shares leadership practices, such alignment becomes a powerful force for change. According to McGuire and Rhodes (2009), McGuire and Palus (2018), and Ozcan (2021), the alignment would be achieved through discussions and negotiations among the stakeholders, including the leaders and other employees. The critical question at this stage was ‘Does the organisation have the structure and talent that will engender the proper alignment?’

4.5.1.5.2.1 Constructing

The research participants and I agreed that the issue was how to achieve alignment. We read literature on alignment, and I explained it thoroughly to the research participants. As we did with constructing the case of shared direction, we looked closely at the context and considered the peculiar circumstances of MTI Plc in constructing alignment. I formulated and drew up the focus group and interview questions

In constructing, we considered the ethical and political issues and the most appropriate methods for collecting data, especially the need to fit the purpose for which alignment should be achieved. Then, having internalised the general empirical method elements, we were guided accordingly towards negotiating and achieving ‘Alignment’. In this regard, I reminded the research participants of the need for us to constantly pay attention to our experience, understanding, reasonableness in our judgement and the need to take responsible actions in negotiating alignment.

4.5.1.5.2.2 Planning

In planning, we considered and reviewed appropriate methods to collect, review and analyse data and use the results of data analysis for proper actions. Fourteen (14) research participants covered all aspects of the cycle. One focus group session was undertaken, and two semi-structured interviews and a short survey at the end of the cycle were employed in obtaining data. We noted that there could be political challenges and that efforts should be made to avoid any untoward issues.

In this cycle, we addressed alignment and planned to explain it during and through the research methods, especially the interviews and the focus group session, collecting data. However, even with the results of the first cycle and the achievement of shared direction, the issues of the correct configuration of beliefs and talent in the systems, structure, and processes assumptions, and alignment of beliefs and practices, were challenging at the beginning of the planning process. Therefore, as part of the planning, I engaged in further literature reviews on the key issues relating to the leadership culture and alignment as a component of DAC to secure insights necessary for planning and action. These helped in no small way to collect data.

4.5.1.5.2.2.1 Focus Group

As the facilitator, I presented the questions which formed the basis of the discussions and comments during the focus group session. I framed questions based on practical and theoretical foundations of alignment. In addition, I took the time to explain the meaning and ramifications of alignment in detail, which was the focus of the discussions.

Because of the importance of the need to change beliefs and old assumptions, which I considered fundamental to the change process, the group discussed the

real issues relating to alignment, on the strength of the agreement to operate as a collective in a shared direction as secured in cycle one. Participants agreed that it was necessary to produce the correct configuration of beliefs. The session discussed the state of alignment, how to coordinate work within the organisation, and how to integrate the different aspects of the work so that it fits together. Participants agreed that there was a shortage of expertise within the organisation and that assignments were not aligned and managed effectively. There was a need to build the right talent in systems and processes in the organisation. All acknowledged the need to improve and clarify the formal or informal processes for making strategic decisions and accomplishing work.

Although questions were framed in advance, they were primarily unstructured. I provided flexibility, and because of the nature of the subject of the research and expectations in participants' minds, they discussed issues relating to achieving better leadership and strategic decision-making beyond examining alignment. They discussed the benefits they had seen with shared direction and signs of a better decision-making process observed, and a few changes in leaders' attitudes and how they related to them. It was agreed that there was still a long way to go. The coding of transcribed texts revealed shared direction, collaborative decision-making, etc.

I was pleased to find that the message resonated with virtually all the participants. One of the participants said that once the shared direction was agreed upon, they became focused on the outcome. The focus group session was audio-recorded and transcribed.

4.5.1.5.2.2 Interviews

I proceeded with the interviews as planned; they included a few critical leaders. Their voices were strong on issues in the organisation, including the CEO and

the President of the staff union. As noted earlier, the staff union was instrumental in driving processes involving staff. The purpose was further to discuss their expectations and perspectives on the new idea and explain the thrust of this cycle, achieve alignment, coordinate work and integrate systems within the organisation, and complete the correct configuration of beliefs and practices.

As with the focus group session, interviewees brought up issues on transforming the leadership culture. Again, I used the opportunity to ask questions on developments in the organisation following the start of the project, especially after the commitments to shared direction.

During the interview with the CEO, he committed to supporting the project and getting other members to help it. In the beginning, it was evident that the CEO was not 100% on board, as he tried to control how the new system would be designed. It was a case of not wanting to relinquish power at the onset. However, after the interview, he found the need to support this project. The interviews were audio-recording, and I took notes manually, which were recorded in my journal.

4.5.1.5.2.3 Data Analysis in action research cycle 2

Table 4.6: Final Coding template for Cycle 2

| Theme | Meaning/Description/Research question |
|-------------------------|--|
| No coordination of work | The work of employees is not coordinated, and they are not working as a team - Research questions 4 and 5 |
| Alignment of Work | The work of employees is not aligned to enable organisational purposes to be achieved - Research questions |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | 4, 5 and 6 |
| Shared direction | Employees share in the direction and vision of the organisation. Research question 4 |
| Strategic decision-making | The process of arriving at strategic decisions in the organisation. Research questions 1 and 2 |

4.5.1.5.2.3.1 Themes from the Action Research Cycle 2

a. No coordination of work

Participants in the focus group agreed that work was not coordinated. Combined work did not fit together. Employees performed different roles and functions in the organisation, but these were not coordinated effectively. The work of one employee is not coordinated with the work of others. It was understood that a sense of teamwork was developing across all units and departments. However, it was agreed that there was a long way to go. One of the participants, Mr ZI, said: We work as if we do not have leaders. Everybody does whatever he likes. How do you expect this to help the organisation? The owners have waited for a long time to develop a solution". Mr TA supported Mr ZI and stated that the question as to whether work was coordinated was apt. He said: "We work and go home. We set budgets, and there is no control, and nobody knows really what his colleague is doing. It's not really that we don't know what is going on with work, but there is no coordination. It wasn't like this when I joined this company several years ago. I think leaders and others should also be blamed for not speaking out".

b. Alignment of work

Participants were unanimous in saying that work was not aligned across the organisation. There were duplications of roles, and the job descriptions were not professionally established. Participants were convinced that, by and large, the un-collaborative organisation structure impacted negatively on work and created the situation where work is not aligned across the organisation. A participant, Mr KO, stated: “As I said during the first focus group some months ago, the organisation structure is a problem. I agree with those who said that leadership in this organisation is a problem. Some of us have spoken about the alignment of roles. No organisation will succeed without properly aligning work”. Another participant, Mr TO, surmised: “we need concerted efforts and teambuilding. Without aligning work, we are not close to achieving organisational goals.”

c. Shared direction

Participants stated that there was evidence of a sense of direction among employees. This was attributed to the focus group and other sessions, which allowed employees to participate and appreciate the need to change their beliefs and practices and have shared thoughts and direction for the organisation. For example, a participant, Mr MA, said: “Thank God this project started. We all now reason together and hope for a better future. I cannot forget the phrase “shared direction”, which was discussed in the focus group some time ago and which flashes through boards and our emails. It has given us hope.” Other participants agreed with those who expressed thanks for infusing shared direction and charting the course of the employees and the organisation.

d. Strategic decision-making process

From the responses, it was clear that the strategic decision-making process had been discussed in-house with suggestions for improving it. Still, according to

Mr KO, “it remained to be seen how strategic thrusts and goals of the organisation would be driven to achieve organisational goals”. He continued: “I have said it before that we cannot plan against competition because we do not think through our strategies and do not involve managers in the strategic decision-making process”. Also, Mrs OY reiterated her points and stated during the focus group session thus: “Yes, I have been involved in leadership strategic decision making, but the results were abysmal because the right processes were not followed. Thank you”. Another participant, Mr TO, during the focus group in action research cycle two, said that he had seen signs of improvement in the ways leaders organised the strategic decision-making process but that more efforts should be made to rejuvenate the process thoroughly.

4.5.1.5.2.4 Taking Action

Having diagnosed the issues, we set out to implement actions towards remedying the situation to achieve alignment of work and coordinate work to ensure they fit together. Job descriptions were revisited and reviewed. Employees were advised of the boundaries of their roles. Terms of reference were established and issued to committees. A talent hunt was discussed. The solution to talent development will take some time, but efforts commenced. Internal training programmes were planned to address some skills gaps across the organisation. Managers were officially entrusted with responsibilities to coordinate work within their areas of responsibility and align work effectively. I noted that some of these actions would take time beyond this thesis project. However, appropriate recommendations have been made.

4.5.1.5.2.5 Evaluation

We surveyed to determine the extent of the success of Alignment. Some of the survey questions on assessing the situation following implementation of actions

included: ‘Is work aligned across the organisation?’ ‘Do you believe that the work of individual employees fits together?’ ‘Are you satisfied now that different roles and functions in the organisation are coordinated effectively?’

The survey result was very encouraging; the outcome met the success criterion; it achieved a total score of 16. However, survey results were one thing, but the sustainability of the practices was another. Therefore, I decided to embark on a further literature review to gain insights into sustaining the Alignment.

Also, we evaluated our activities in cycle two about data collection and analysis. We found that we constructed the issue appropriately, and no significant issues in our methodological process. Our plans worked as designed, but it was evident that we made some wrong assumptions. We thought that we would achieve Alignment without any issues believing that since we got on successfully with direction, it would be a *fait accompli*. It took a lot of explaining and arguments for the message to resonate among some participants/interviewees. These interventions helped set a good state for implementing actions designed to address gaps and improve alignment. We reflected on the processes and our activities during cycle two. We found that research participants learned new knowledge regarding research and methodological approaches and management of corporate politics, among others.

4.5.1.5.3 Action Research Cycle Three

Commitment means mutual responsibility for the organisation when people are making the success of the collective a personal priority. If commitment is strong, members feel responsible for the success and well-being of the organisation. In achieving commitment, getting the leadership team and the whole organisation on board with the new ideas and practices is essential. They

must believe and devote faithfully and firmly to the direction set by the new vision (independent leadership culture) and strategy.

4.5.1.5.3.1 Constructing

At this stage, the issue was how to get organisational members to take the achievement of organisational goals as a personal priority. There is the need to trust each other, share responsibility and be committed to the organisation. We recognised following the pre-step investigations that commitment was weak because members put their interests ahead of the organisation's interests and contributed when it was easy to do so or when they had something to gain.

Having reviewed the literature on the leadership culture and understood the leadership outcome of commitment, I explained it to the research participants. I encouraged them to read the literature, especially the ones from McGuire and Palus (2018), Ozcan (2021), McGuire and Rhodes (2009) and write-ups by the Centre for Creative Leadership. As we did with constructing Direction and Alignment, we looked closely at the context. We considered the peculiar circumstances of MTI Plc in constructing Commitment, including the political dimensions, ethics and the theoretical foundation of actions to be taken. Finally, I formulated and drew up the focus group and interview questions.

4.5.1.5.3.2 Planning

In planning, we looked at the dimensions of Commitment. Then, we contextualised it to put us in good stead to use appropriate methods to collect, review and analyse data and use the results of data analysis for proper actions. Our considerations included looking at how people were committed to the organisation, how employees were dedicated and how trust was built to accomplish the organisation's work. As agreed initially, we were guided by the general empirical method. So, we paid attention to actions that should be taken

to secure commitment, and in this process, we considered options available to us on data collection methods. Finally, we chose the methods we deemed most appropriate.

Our planning was somewhat an easy process as we leveraged the benefits of our planning in cycles one and two. Initially, we planned the cycle and agreed that interviews, a focus group, a stakeholders' meeting, and an end of cycle survey would be sufficient data collection methods. Based on the need to improve the capability of the managers and, prepare them for leadership under the new leadership culture, evaluate the benefits for self and the organisation (McGuire and Palus (2018), we planned a workshop/training programme, which was also used in securing information from participants. Three interviews were conducted, and they were audio-recorded and transcribed. The stakeholders' meeting was planned to provide the opportunity to consider the benefits, educate the stakeholders, and as a learning process.

4.5.1.5.3.2.1 Focus Group

The last focus group session comprised twelve (12) participants, and it was for sense-making and meaning-making and reflections on our data collection activities. Initially, I organised what I thought was the last focus group, but subsequent planning and actions meant that I had to embark on another focus group. I prepared and discussed the focus group questions. I facilitated the session, which lasted two hours and thirty minutes. Participation was interesting. It presented the opportunity for sense-making and a review of our activities. The session was audio-recorded and transcribed.

4.5.1.5.3.2.2 Workshop/Training

It was agreed that to drill down the imperative of shifting beliefs and assumptions and the benefits of the new idea and learn its implementation's

intricacies, we should start with individual development for the leadership team and, after that, with the managers and supervisors. This was intended to help get them ready for implementation, evaluate the benefits and secure commitment at all levels. At the end of the workshop/training programme, we surveyed to determine the outcome of the development programme, including a satisfaction survey and survey on the commitment to the new leadership culture. The survey also acted as evaluation material for our intervention. Results of the surveys were recorded and ready for analysis.

4.5.1.5.3.2.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted. Questions were semi-structured and aimed to obtain interviewees' views on commitment, how commitment could be improved, their readiness, and their impressions about the journey. The transcripts of the interviews were read and analysed to identify codes and themes.

4.5.1.5.3.2.4 Stakeholders' Meeting of November 2020

Following a decision to review the initial research report and, as agreed with the research participants, we held a stakeholders' meeting when we found the need to educate further, explain issues, and discuss pertinent issues. The session also involved the discussions of DAC elements, and I made efforts to respond satisfactorily to all questions asked at the meeting.

We organised the stakeholders' meeting after obtaining approval from the organisation's leadership. In November 2020, I again explained the complexities and challenges of the leadership culture and the benefits of a DAC based on the collaborative and distributed strategic decision-making process. Stakeholders were updated on the project. It presented an opportunity to seek their commitment and prepare them for the sustainability of the new ideas, beliefs and practices and change of mindsets. It was also an opportunity to sell the

project. Stakeholders expressed their readiness to sustain the new ways of leadership – beliefs and practices and ensure that the new leadership culture worked. Suggestions included a review of the organisation structure to make it vertical, process-based and design it to avoid the vagaries of a command-and-control system, which had encouraged the leadership to behave in ways that impacted the strategic decision-making process, among other things.

Key leaders of the organisation participated and made valuable contributions. In addition, the meeting was audio-recorded and transcribed.

4.5.1.5.3.2.5 Observation

We observed that employees started working together and transformed their leadership culture to the next level. As a result, they began to produce, through their actions, new beliefs and assumptions, direction, alignment, and commitment as outcomes. Still, these were not as extensive as expected because the organisation structure remained hierarchical, which meant that some of the systems of the Dependent Leadership culture were still working against the new thrust.

One of the issues was figuring out new roles and determining new requirements that employees at all levels should meet with shifting roles to more leading than managing roles. Observation notes were made.

Table 4.7: Final Coding template for Cycle 3

| Theme | Meaning/Description/Research question |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Commitment to change | Readiness to embrace change. Research questions 4, 5 and 6 |
| Collaborative decision-making | Decision-making through collaboration and |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | teamwork. Research questions 4, 5 and 6 |
| Teamwork | Employees and leaders working as a team - Research questions 5 and 6 |
| New culture and beliefs | Acceptance of new culture, beliefs and ways of performing work, including behaviours - Research questions 5 and 6 |
| New leadership practices | Belief in the leadership change process and commitment to it. Research questions 4, 5 and 6 |
| Loyalty of leadership | Loyalty to the organisation transcends self-interest. Research question 6 |

4.5.1.5.3.2.6 Themes from Action Research Cycle 3

The template above shows the themes from field notes and transcribed text from the focus group session and other methods. These are discussed hereunder.

a. Commitment to change

During the last focus group session, participants mentioned that commitment to change beliefs and practices was evident and expressed their happiness over this development. Mr AD said: “It is heart-warming for me. I can see progress. I thought this change wasn’t possible. With this commitment to our company, I am excited.” Several other participants supported the views expressed by Mr AD. Our observation notes recorded practices bordering on a new thrust and a sense of commitment among employees and leaders.

b. Collaborative decision-making

The end of cycle survey and the stakeholders' meeting texts indicated that more employees had become involved in decision-making and that the process laid down in the organisation's policy was being followed. Mr MA said: "leaders have surprised us. They have demonstrated that it is possible to change ways of doing things. We are now invited to meetings to participate in the decision-making process".

c. Teamwork

I observed teamwork in practice. During the focus group and the last set of interviews, the fact was stated that teamwork had reappeared after several years of working in silos. The interviews and discussions with leaders also buttressed that collaboration had become a watchword in the organisation. A participant, Mr DO, said: We now work as a team. This was the situation I met when I joined the company several years ago. Another participant, Mrs D, said: We now feel like one united family, coordinating our work, working as a team and helping each other. I will encourage the few who are still sceptical about the leaders' attitudes to build trust and move on to help our company." Yet another participant, Mr OK, in support of the views expressed by Mr DO and Mrs D, said: With teamwork which I am happy to say now works, we will go places."

d. New culture and beliefs

The participants were unanimous in stating that although some significant developments, including changes in attitudes and beliefs, had taken place for the organisation's good, it was still necessary to drive the process to the highest level. Miss SH said: "We like what we are seeing now, which we never thought would happen in this organisation, but we want you to encourage our leaders to

introduce full change; they should employ new persons who will occupy new key positions because I know this change will bring new developments”.

e. New leadership practices

From observations, as evidenced in the field notes/journals, leaders had changed their attitudes and practices and engaged employees collaboratively. Mr DO observed thus: “It would appear that leaders are now willing to go the extra lime in transforming and changing their behaviours. They are not giving up controls and power, but I am happy they show good ways and are now encouraging us to participate in the organisation”.

At the end of action research cycle three, the end of process survey indicated that a new leadership culture had emerged. Mr YE stated during the final interview as follows: “There is an appreciable change in the ways leaders handled issues. For example, you asked questions on strategic decision-making. I can tell you that we are now consulted, and our meetings are better. This is a positive development; we are all encouraged and motivated. We thank God”. Also, during the interview, the CEO, in response to a question, said:” I have seen the movement and benefits in what you have helped us to introduce. I have no option but to key into the process and do whatever will move the company forward as long as I am convinced that it is the right thing to do in the company’s interest”.

f. Loyalty of leadership

Participants agreed that leaders were devoting a lot more time to the company's activities. Mr KE stated during the last focus group session that “self-interest has been subdued. We no longer suffer or have processes affected by our leaders’ self-interest. The CEO is now more supportive and wants us to succeed”.

4.5.1.5.3.3 Taking Action

The actions we took were aimed at achieving commitment. Therefore, implementing actions to transform the organisation's leadership culture is recommended in this report. The recommended action will deal with the issues diagnosed during the pre-steps, which are fundamental in the discussions regarding the leadership culture and in designing an overall action plan which takes a view of the future beyond my thesis action research.

In taking actions towards improving commitment, we agreed on what we should be doing to accomplish individual and group tasks together. We set up group priorities to help us focus on the most critical work. Management issued policies and guidelines to ensure that each employee's work was well coordinated with the work of others and that employees were clear about how their tasks fit into the work of others as one family. We emphasised the statement "Make the organisation's success as a priority" and had it pasted on board across offices. We organised training programmes for individuals and teams. The conditions and terms of employment had been virtually stagnant for a couple of years. Marginal increases were approved, and some employees were promoted. Long-term strategies such as developing a motivating pension scheme were made. We also encouraged management to organise long service awards and establish an employee share scheme that should help secure long-term commitment to the growth and profitability of the organisation. Most of these actions arose from insights and suggestions during interviews, the focus group session, stakeholders' meetings and insights from literature and applications in other similar organisations.

4.5.1.5.3.4 Evaluation

The end of cycle surveys aimed to determine the outcomes and successes of our plans and expected results. Questions included ‘Are you satisfied or convinced that employees are now committed to the organisation?’ ‘Are you and your colleagues giving the effort needed for the organisation to succeed?’, Are employees dedicated to the organisation even when facing challenges? Do the employees trust one another to accomplish the work of the organisation?

Also, the purpose of the evaluation was to determine how successful we were with data collection and analysis regarding our plan, including the methodological process and theoretical underpinnings. It was also with the view of judging from the comments and reactions of participants on the process. I have drawn from the literature reviewed in chapter two of this study.

The last focus group provided the basis for sense-making, meaning-making and further reflections. The survey at the end helped immensely in the evaluation process. The research participants and I reviewed and discussed lessons learnt and noted the details for future activities.

The evaluation was also aimed at judging from the comments and reactions of participants on how the intervention was conducted. We constructed surveys that were administered in the three action research cycles. It was also designed to present an opportunity for respondents to make any suggestions and comments on their experiences and observations, which we believed might assist us in planning the next cycle and other processes towards transforming into the Independent Leadership Culture, including what might affect the course of our journey on the project. The respondents agreed that the project was necessary and needed to commit to its implementation and sustainability.

It is safe to state that while they worked collaboratively to generate data using the action research stages of constructing, planning, taking action and evaluating action, they were mindful of the motivation I preached for their learning and development, which greatly assisted the research process. They began to question their assumptions about leadership and leadership practices and how the command-and-control, hierarchical leadership culture generally affected organisational processes. Following my push for them to engage in literature reviews, they engaged in reading. They found a strong relationship between theory and practice and that action and theory are linked closely and support each other in action research. Interestingly, some research participants viewed their participation as a mentoring process.

There is evidence of changes following the interventions. The themes/findings from the pre-steps indicate the situation regarding the organisation's leadership culture before the interventions in action research cycles 1, 2 and 3. The interventions have changed the leadership culture and a simultaneous positive change in the strategic decision-making process, as corroborated by the research participants during the last focus group session.

The improvements should encourage the organisation to take further measures to transform the leadership culture to the highest leadership culture logic, namely the Independent Leadership Culture standard. This may, however, take some time to actualise.

4.6 Sense-Making

According to Will and Pies (2018), sometimes sense-making could be based on emotions and not based on objectivity. In this regard, sense-making may become dysfunctional. I provided the opportunity for sense-making about data

by research participants, but I also recognised the impact of emotions on our data collection and analysis initiatives.

Towards the final meeting, in preparation for the focus group session, I sensitised participants as to the need to think thoroughly and give meaning to the issues that border on the data collection and analysis exercises and do this objectively. A key question is ‘How did we (i.e. the action research team) make sense of our experiences and the events during data collection?’ We discussed and critiqued the lessons learnt and our data collection and analysis actions. We employed the general empirical method (Coghlan, 2019), which provided the opportunity for us to make sense of what we were doing at every stage and act with the view of achieving the best outcomes, devoid of bias and the impact of subjectivity. During reflections, I realised that it was imperative to consistently apply the general empirical method to avoid having our pre-understanding, premise assumptions, longstanding beliefs, and traditions affect our views of the process and data collected.

During the data analysis, I sought to make sense of the data, especially the concepts and opinions of participants. The coding process and analysis generally afforded me the opportunity of making sense of the issues, devoid of emotions. I figured that the engagement of research participants in sense-making helped to secure the commitment and loyalty of the participants

I read the transcribed data severally and carefully to find and understand the meaning ascribed to words and phrases in the participant's statements. As I stated above, I picked out themes and concepts from a transcription of the participants' statements. But how much meaning of the concepts and themes represented the true meaning as intended or expressed by the participants, which traditionally and in reality represent the situation being explained? Sense-

making was designed to provide an answer to this question. Participants' experiences and meanings form part of any qualitative research study (Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares and Tomicic, 2017). The several steps and re-reading of the texts were attempts at finding meaning in the participants' statements. I consistently remained open to the meaning in the words of the participants and avoided biases in order not to colour the meanings. Part of the strategy for meaning-making was the involvement of research participants in reviewing transcribed texts and in reading and verifying codes, as well as close participation in the second and last focus group sessions, which were aimed at clarifying points and issues and distilling meanings from analysis and development of themes, among other things.

4.7 Reflections

With regards to the action research cycles, apart from the four steps of constructing, planning, taking action and evaluation, I also needed to construct, plan, take action and evaluate how the thesis action research was going and what I was learning, namely my reflection cycle about my thesis project. Therefore, I enquired into each of the four main steps, asking and determining how these steps were being conducted to ensure that the construction was appropriate and that execution was good and, therefore, shaping how we ran subsequent steps. I took extensive reflection notes, and the research participants also kept reflection notes. The reflection notes were handy at various stages of the research process.

4.8 Triangulated Data Collection

The nature of the subject of this research demanded the use of different sources to validate the data generated and claims in this research. I employed various sources

or data collection methods in the pre-steps and during the interventions, some of which might appear excessive. Still, I was convinced of the need to utilise them to derive the benefits inherent in effective triangulation. I was also confident that triangulation would enable me to look at the research phenomenon.

Triangulation has enabled me to cross-verify data from different sources and test consistency in the views and accounts of the participants and other information or data from documents and records. Using various data methods to examine phenomena to generate data to address research questions also helped widen my understanding of the research participants. Also, I found that triangulation helped explain various aspects of the issues.

Other themes that emerged from work on data from documents, including minutes, indicated similarities. They reinforced those that emerged from the analysis of notes from other data sources. Themes from the focus group session data and participants' statements or arguments also supported the evidence obtained from different data sources. For example, from the focus group session, analysis of transcribed data revealed the absence of collaboration and participation evidenced in the participants' statements, indicated in the various themes above. Other outcomes helped strengthen the validity of analysed data and boosted the credibility of the process and confidence in the results. Field notes from historical documents reviewed revealed evidence supporting the views expressed by participants, some of whom did not have the privilege of perusing the papers.

The data triangulation matrix below depicts the different data sources for each research question. It has helped me check and showcase that planned data collection covered all aspects and research questions.

Table: 4.8: Triangulation Matrix

| Research Question | Data Sources 1 (Pre-Steps) | Data Sources 2 (Action Research Cycles - Interventions) |
|---|---|---|
| What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc? What is the cultural paradigm? | Minutes of meetings Historical documents & the Cultural Web, Questionnaire | Observations, Stakeholders' meetings, interviews, and focus group |
| How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the organisation's strategic decision-making process? | Historical documents and records, surveys, cultural web, minutes of meetings | Interviews, focus groups, observations and Stakeholders' meeting |
| How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process? | Literature review | Interviews and focus groups |
| How should we coordinate work so that all fit together and achieve Alignment? | Literature review | Interviews, focus groups, and stakeholders' meeting |
| How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective? | Literature reviews | Interviews, focus groups, and stakeholders' meeting |

4.9 Validity

PAR approaches have been debated as to whether there is rigour or not. Indeed, there are rigour and ethical standards in action research and these impact the

validity of reports. As I stated in chapter three, I knew that I needed to present the basis of the decisions I made during the conduct of the study to facilitate judgement of the validity of my account. I made sure no one knew that I was observing meetings and events to put employees in a situation where they pretended or behaved to input a different meaning to phenomena and affect validity. Research participants were also involved in observations. I ensured they understood the significance of carrying out the assignment objectively and without any actions that might lead the observed to behave differently. It was somewhat challenging to achieve this as planned during the action research cycles. I found it challenging to maintain my role as a detached observer, and I had to examine my roles from time to time as role conflict became a problem.

I constantly reminded research participants that several things or dimensions might influence the validity of the research. First, we needed to be watchful and attentive regarding events other than those we anticipated during the planning, as the circumstances might colour our sense of judgment. Second, our motives might influence our working life, especially in the organisation. Third, we might be affected by actions or statements of our colleagues; we should, therefore, exercise independent judgement based on what we would believe to be facts. Fourth is the way we perceive situations and interpret events. We might misinterpret representations by others and give a different meaning to them.

I, as the researcher, expressed my voice, but I also realised that my emotions and bias could colour my 'voice'. Therefore, occasionally, I questioned my stance along with the representations of the others. I engaged in the reflexive practice, and critical reflection throughout the process to as much as possible avoid any elements relating to my voice that might affect the validity of my account. My critical review allowed me to think widely about what might be the truth and what would be accepted as the truth.

The research participants and I were reflexive in data analysis. Collaboration and our close engagement in the data analysis process ensured that all issues in the process of analysis of data, including the reviews of initial coding templates to ensure the themes were relevant to the goals and the research questions, were closely managed, and thus ensured that our outcomes were valid and reasonable.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

The Board approved all research processes of MTI Plc. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. In addition to explaining ethics and what is involved regarding ethics in PAR, I issued guidelines on ethics in writing.

I made certain ethical principles were adhered to throughout the data collection process. I recognised that the PAR process involves the observation of ethical principles. While I applied the general ethical principles, I was particular about the University of Liverpool's guidelines on Ethics. Therefore, I managed the issues of consent, anonymity, confidentiality, power-sharing with the research participants, risk management, how data would be organised, honesty of purpose and dedication to the research process. I reminded the research participants a couple of times that they had the right to withdraw.

4.11 My Main Author Role

I constantly reminded myself that although there were research participants who were my co-researchers, I was the researcher. Therefore, I had responsibility for the research, and I took ultimate responsibility for all choices made. I had a broad view of the research and ethically exerted control to ensure that the data collection and analysis processes were delivered as designed and planned. I kept a journal where I recorded the results of my reflections. I ensured participants'

voices were heard. I considered collaboration with the research participants paramount in delivering our plans. Still, I firmly established my leading role, and I did not hesitate to pass this message on to the research participants.

4.12 Challenges in the research process

A few challenges, such as delays due to work emergencies, engendered the need to travel at short notice. I anticipated some of these challenges in the planning schedule, and I prepared to meet deadlines and secure needed data. However, some results of my reflections created the need to take further actions to improve the quality of data already gathered at the early stages. I was challenged by the vast data collected, and I had to organise the data to determine the most relevant and needed. However, I did not discard other data to avoid endangering the prospect of using them subsequently.

There were political factions in the organisation. Even though virtually all staff supported the research effort, some staff who believed some presented minor challenges with access to details sometimes did not cooperate with arrangements and activities relating to collecting data. I tried to stand back from my person as a part of the organisation's culture. Although I committed to dealing with the process objectively, I had to revisit my actions, especially after reflections, which caused some delays. Some of the research participants confirmed that pre-understanding took hold of them but agreed that my continued stress of dealing with the processes faithfully, honestly and objectively helped by reminding them of the need to remain detached. There was also the challenge of assuming that we knew the organisation initially, but we overcame this with reflections and further literature reviews. Initially, I thought that I learned a lot about the organisation, which affected the drafting and contents of my initial interview questions. My first-person reflective skills

helped address these in good time. This undoubtedly supports the view that reflection should begin at the outset of the research effort. Initially, my preconceived notions of the top leaders affected my ability to see them objectively. Again my reflective skills helped.

4.13 Recommendations

In this chapter, I enumerated action points following data analysis from the pre-steps. These are fundamental action points and aim to deal with the sticky issues evident from the examinations at the pre-steps stages. In the light of my experiences and those of the research participants and outcomes of actions, the organisation should, on a sustainable basis, invigorate DAC and make leadership happen in the organisation by doing the following, among others:

- a. Pay attention to whether leadership is happening.
- b. Consistently look for evidence of DAC.
- c. Pay attention to outcomes and determine where more is needed. The processes and interactions producing the desired levels of direction, alignment, and commitment will be seen, and efforts will be made to close any gaps if due attention is paid.
- d. Make more leadership happen.
- e. Create leadership processes and ensure they are present at all times
- f. Ensure there are leadership skills in-house to enable employees to participate actively in leadership processes
- g. When leadership processes no longer seem to be producing the needed Direction, Alignment, and Commitment, explore new ones.
- h. Improve and strengthen the shared direction

- i. Meet more regularly to prioritise work
- j. Put clear accountability structures in place
- k. Match employees with projects that they are most enthusiastic about while still assuring that all the projects are adequately resourced
- l. Continually deepen and broaden skills and abilities.

4.14 Summary

This chapter detailed the data collection and analysis initiatives and processes and the data sources for this research. These included interviews, questionnaires, observations, stakeholders' meetings, documents, focus group sessions, surveys, workshops, etc. Based on set criteria and as contained in the Ethical Approval Form of the University of Liverpool, I selected the research participants. I developed the plan for data collection, which included obtaining consent and observing other protocols, ensuring that selected participants were ready and encouraging them to be committed to the process, including brief meetings and coaching participants on the job ahead. Next, we went through the three action research cycles and used the various data collection tools as appropriate. Finally, it became necessary to triangulate and validate the data collected. The last focus group was organised to clarify issues and questions and help with sense-making and sense-giving to achieve a common purpose and meaning regarding the data collected.

I found it beneficial to continue to review literature, and I found this productive and helpful. The research participants and I kept research journals, which served as reflection logs. Reflection-in-action helped improve the quantity and quality of data, while reflection-on-action helped enhance knowledge and learning. As a strategy aimed at improving collaboration, building trust, improving team

spirit and validating data, we shared data, albeit with a commitment to observe protocols and ethics, especially confidentiality and privacy. I made sure that the exercise was well communicated. Still, I was careful to indicate that while it was meant to help introduce changes in the organisation's interest, it was also an academic project. I evaluated the data collection exercise and the outcomes collaboratively with the research participants.

Some aspects of data analysis took place as we collected data. We endeavoured to discover critical issues and meanings in the data collected during data analysis, which enabled us to determine courses of action to deal with identified problems and close gaps. Recorded details were transcribed. Field and observation notes were reviewed. The transcribed data were read repeatedly to develop codes and categorisations, which helped identify themes within the transcribed data.

The next chapter will provide an account of the actionable knowledge developed through the thesis and the use of intervention as an action research process, especially in this chapter. Also, it will discuss the contribution of this research to practice, manager development, and the company's development through the application of actionable knowledge.

5 CHAPTER 5 - LEARNING, PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT AND REFLECTIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four explained how data was collected using the methodology and methods explained in chapter three to ensure accuracy and provide content for data analysis. In addition, it explained the specific steps and the application of the methods employed in collecting and analysing data to provide the results, followed by appropriate recommendations

This chapter accounts for the actionable knowledge developed through the various interventions, including reflections, and how learning and practice development emerged. The nature and role of this chapter expose the need to articulate the outcomes in scholarship and practice development and the company. It mirrors my research journey as a scholar-practitioner, my knowledge of the company and how these and other relationships influenced the research. It is, therefore, essential to communicate these in the various sections of this chapter.

It pinpoints how evidence from the field of practice related to academic knowledge and insights from reviewed literature and how reflections based on feedback from the intervention actions and theories helped, especially as knowledge creation involves feedback between theory and the outcomes of interventions. It discusses knowledge generation and development and how the various undertakings during the research helped me better understand MTI Plc. This chapter also discusses how I challenged my assumptions and considered the duality of my roles and engagement in a balancing act regarding established organisational roles and my researcher role. There were significant learning outcomes and changes in employees' perspectives due to learning and new

understanding made possible by the interventions in the study, which are explained. Furthermore, it discusses how I met my objectives and considers if some things or processes could have been done differently to help future research planning. Finally, this chapter discusses reflections in light of my experience, thoughts on methodological choice and research design, and ideas from professional, organisational, and scholarly perspectives that provided feedback.

My research journey progressed with delivering outcomes and dealing with challenges to ensure that the results led to achieving the aims and objectives. I considered my roles critically and the developments of my scholarly practice, the research participants and the organisation. Action and research impacted practice, and the application of theory helped in practice development. I challenged my assumptions and endeavoured to avoid bias through the practice of interiority and authenticity (Coghlan, 2019). Learning was a significant consideration, and I emphasised this to research participants. Also, I emphasised that the development of our practice was imperative, and we paid due attention to this. I engaged in extensive reflections, especially regarding my thesis action research and core action research, to better understand my practice, solve the research problem, and introduce change. As a result, the study has enabled me to understand my organisation better. Furthermore, finding new knowledge and insights into the leadership culture is revealing and heart-warming.

I set out on an ideological and philosophical assumption of what constituted reality. I had some beliefs that impacted my actions and view of things, having extensive pre-understanding. Theory taught me that knowing in action research often took place through experience, observation, conceptualisation and action. These were the foundations that provided opportunities for knowledge generation in the study. The epistemological foundation informed the need for

employment or application of the general empirical method, which involved moving from understanding to action and experience by being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in my actions, judgements and decisions while conducting the action research cycles.

In the following sections, I discussed knowledge generation and development, assumptions that influenced my positions, the application of the results of the data analysis and how the outcomes are applied to our practice and my learning, and those of the research participants. In addition, I discussed other engagements, including reflections which impacted my scholarship positively.

5.2 Knowledge Generation and Development

I got into the research with some knowledge of the organisation and theory, touching on the research subject, including the principles of action research, but I gained good knowledge through the study and knowing in action. My reflections, sense-making and shared interpretations have helped to illuminate my understanding of MTI Plc and exposed me to extensive theoretical insights and the process of matching theory with practice. Theory informs practice, and practice aids theory development (Coghlan, 2019). According to Ulvik, Riese, and Roness (2018), action research is a means to create professional knowledge, which draws on theory while drawing on the practice.

During the research, to develop my scholarship of practice and learning, I deliberately paid close attention to what was going on and thus educated myself appropriately (Ramsey, 2014). I found it essential to bridge the gap between the knowledge of theoretical concepts and the extent to which the concepts are applied. It was a learning point for the research participants and me. I worked collaboratively with the research participants to advance knowledge and, at the

same time, grow our organisational practice. I took on board Coghlan's (2019) treatise on interiority, which enabled me to derive knowledge by repeatedly questioning my experience, picking theories that answered questions starring me in the face, and making reasonable judgements in terms of the upshots of the process of knowing. I found value in the suggestion by Coghlan (2019) that interiority as a process enables practitioners to attend to data and hold both practical action and learning and theory as complimentary. So, with interiority, I had self-awareness throughout the stages of the action research cycles. I considered every information and material with an objective mind, helped by my practice of interiority. According to Coghlan (2019:63), "Interiority calls for self-knowledge of how you see, think, judge, imagine, remember, criticise, evaluate, conclude, etc. Understanding the activity of human activity is the main characteristic of interiority".

5.3 Challenge of Assumptions

In generating knowledge and developing my practice, I made assumptions. Assumptions strongly influence approach and decision-making. Several assumptions guided the development of the research approach. First, academic research requires that the researcher identify and explain the research project's limitations and assumptions. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), an assumption is essential in research. Second, I considered issues in the research process out of my control, including the seriousness of the participants and their commitment to work assiduously and honestly. I encouraged participants to respond and participate truthfully and provide accurate information. Also, I assumed that if the organisation used my suggestions in the final written research report, it would witness improvements in its strategic decision-making and record good progress. I assumed that research participants would be

committed and learn from their participation in the research process. Furthermore, I assumed that the research participants might bring a certain level of bias to the research project; therefore, I got them to engage in deep self-reflections to, among other things, reduce any possible biases (Coghlan, 2019; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). Finally, I engaged the research participants, and a knowledgeable colleague who had experience in data organisation reviewed the data to ensure validity.

I deployed the general empirical method and taught the research participants the rudiments during some of our organised learning sessions. We engaged in reflections-in-action and in reflexivity to deliver validity. Regarding the staff, I assumed and planned for resistance by some staff and leaders. I had to rework my strategies to deal with the uncooperative attitude of some of the leaders who were afraid to lose power.

Also, I challenged my assumptions with the practice of interiority. I considered issues at every stage of the action research cycles and felt that my decisions rested on me. The weight of obligation and its thought pushed me to be painstaking in making decisions and thus achieve good quality, validity and solid development of my practice and achievement of the research goals.

5.4 Duality of my role and my challenges

Coghlan (2019) points out that the dynamics of conducting action research in my organisation come with issues and challenges. He identified the researcher's contextual pre-understanding, role duality and negotiating access. During the research, I kept reminding myself of the two key questions which were posed by Coghlan (2019:77): "How do you build on the closeness that you have to the organisation and maintain distance?" and "How do you balance the potential

dilemmas and tugs between your established organisational roles and your researcher role?” To address these questions and achieve the expected outcomes of the research and achieve validity, I engaged in the general empirical method by paying close attention to my experiences in the process, securing a deep understanding of phenomena, be intelligent by viewing critically the evidence I was presented with.

I needed to question my pre-understanding. Questioning my pre-understanding also enabled me to stand back and not allow my organisation's knowledge to colour the research process, including data and stakeholders' views. I questioned my assumptions. My approach was to enquire in the present tense

It was a bit challenging extricating myself from my roles as a member of staff and a senior employee. Therefore, I had to contend with the issue of the duality of roles, including my membership in standing and ad-hoc committees of the organisation. However, I was reflexive in my approach to maintaining credibility, maintaining a good relationship between all stakeholders, and running the research course conveniently and devoid of any tensions.

I had no issues with direct access due mainly to the senior position I occupied in the organisation. However, the research participants and I had a few challenges with secondary access, especially in departments and units that were not under my control.

5.5 Learning as a critical process in the research

I paid attention to every detail and what went on around us during the research and our interaction with stakeholders to get the best out of practice as learning points. In addition, the application of the general empirical method helped our understanding and reflections. Therefore, attention was a critical process in the

scholarship of practice (Ramsey, 2014). The focus was on the learning that I undertook as a scholar-practitioner within the action research project centred on MTI Plc. Although I had extensive knowledge of practices in the organisation, my work on this study involved a significant amount of learning. I endeavoured to understand my learning journey, and I relied on my field notes in articulating my learning processes and outcomes, even though I could tell the story of what I learned and the process since it was still fresh in my memory

I relied on the research participants to collaborate on my learning story. In telling the story, I reflected extensively and separated the wheat from the chaff to deliver a quality learning story and articulate the points clearly. I was also mindful of bias and considered the details reflexively. Borrowing the insights from Ramsey (2014), I paid close attention to what was going on, which helped a great deal in developing my scholarship.

5.6 What research participants learned during the action research process

One of the implications of participants' learning from this intervention is the need for communication, collaboration, team building and commitment to working collaboratively and following laid down procedures. One of the learning points for research participants was the need to take the organisation's decision-making and leadership behaviour seriously. There was learning in participation, thinking about the problem together, and addressing the issues regarding the leadership culture and the organisation's strategic decision-making process.

During the second focus group, which was planned to distil meanings, sense-making and review, research participants expressed their delight in participating. They surmised that they found the focus group sessions

illuminating and the reflective process insightful. Participants said that they gained from participating in this project. I encouraged the research participants to keep learning journals and to read the contents from time to time during the research and after concluding the action research cycles.

5.7 Change in Perspectives

With this project, employees have new perspectives, especially perspectives on practices, new beliefs and assumptions about leadership and collaboration at work. Most, if not all, were fixated on the hierarchical structure and thought it was the rule. They began to question old beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours, especially after the interventions. They were excited about achieving a shared direction and the commitment exhibited by employees, including leaders. The results achieved from the interventions, particularly in how perspectives changed, show that the leadership culture can be transformed. So, it was evident that DAC could be transformed as a leadership outcome for the organisation's good (McGuire and Palus (2018)). The participants' world changed, and reality thus moved, crediting the facts regarding subjectivist ontology and social constructionism.

The leadership team's commitment to change and transformation of the leadership culture was sufficient to help secure employee enthusiasm about the intervention.

5.8 Meeting my objectives

In chapter one of this report, I set the study's objectives. I worked hard to ensure the research design was good and that the data collection and analysis methods were suitable to ensure that the objectives were realised. The objectives were:

- a. Evaluate or assess the leadership culture in the organisation
- b. Identify the main factors impacting the leadership culture in the organisation
- c. Identify how the leadership culture impacts the strategic decision-making process
- d. Formulate recommendations on improving the leadership culture to achieve excellent strategic decision-making processes
- e. Create knowledge and encourage the leadership and others in the organisation to introduce changes in the organisation

From insights gained during the action research cycles and responses and comments of participants and other stakeholders, it is evident that the objectives have been realised. The factors that impacted the leadership and how the leadership culture impacted the organisation's strategic decision-making process were prominent in the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data collected. During focus group sessions, one-on-one interviews, and the stakeholders' meetings, the views and comments show how the leadership culture impacted the strategic decision-making process. As a result, appropriate recommendations have been made. This has led to the set-up of an implementation committee that will, among other things, review the organisation structure, introduce policies, and design a system that would ensure the sustainability of the change programme. In addition, new knowledge and new methods of doing things have emerged due to the intervention.

The first-person research implication of the intervention is that it helped meet my objective to deepen understanding and provide professional development for my practice. The second-person essence was met by deepening knowledge and

providing improved day-to-day practice for the research participants and practical solutions and organisational learning for MTI Plc. Expressions of surprise on new understandings and gratitude for improved practices abound. In addition, the organisation is enjoying improved leadership outcomes due to the practical implementation of the measures addressed in the research. Another objective of knowledge creation relates to benefit in terms of applying the findings of this research. Action research is contextual, and this is true, but there are no hard lines regarding the applicability of action research project findings, including the actionable knowledge generated.

Participants believed that the project has led to incremental change. It was mentioned that the project had sensitised employees and that employees were happy to see that the leaders did not hijack the project. Participants believed that the desired objectives of the change were met.

5.9 What could have been done better or differently?

The unfortunate situation in the organisation had, for a long time, engendered poor motivation and high staff turnover. I should have recognised or considered this in planning and executing the project as some of the selected participants left the organisation. Fortunately, I conducted the first focus group session and the one-on-one interviews before the resignations. Thankfully, those who left the organisation with a rich story and experience of the issues in the organisation responded with the belief that the information needed was vital and might help the organisation move forward and benefit their current endeavours.

I should have arranged to engage with the staff union president earlier. This would have helped bridge the communication and commitment gap, especially regarding achieving shared direction in the first action research cycle.

5.10 Reflections in the light of my experience

According to Riel and Lepori (2014:1), “Action research is a form of deep enquiry into one’s practice which involves acting to address issues or problems, followed by a systematic process for learning from that action. This definition and explanation of action research capture the essence of action research and its reflective process. Because of the criticality of reflection, I encouraged participants to reflect as active learning from or in the action research process is difficult to come by without reflection. I reflected deeply throughout the study, and my reflections provided tremendous feedback. Some critical questions arose, and these included: What have we learnt? How could we improve our practice by changing the leadership culture to enhance the strategic decision-making process? These helped in further work involving planning and action.

I engaged in reflections as an ongoing, iterative process of thinking, acting, and reflecting. It provided me with opportunities to reflect on my experience during the study, combining professional work experiences and theoretical knowledge on action research from prior courses and extensive literature review on the subject of the study with my work and investigations. I took the process of reflection as a critical process in the research and a learning process. I saw reflection as a process for reviewing past actions and decisions and as an ongoing assessment method of reflective practice, which enabled me to review activities and learn in various ways. Thus, the practice of reflecting on the past to better the future produced benefits (De Stricker, 2014).

My reflections focused on the assumptions upon which the action research (AR) cycles rested: content, process, and premise assumptions of the intervention (Coghlan, 2019). I also reflected on methodological issues to show how I incorporated quality in the AR process.

I took note of what I was learning at every stage, including evaluating to determine whether or not actions were in line with plans and engaged in deep reflections to gain understanding and new knowledge to enable me to attain the objectives and purpose of my thesis action research. My learning points were recorded in my learning journal. Thus, I learned, re-learned and continued to learn to solve the research problem.

The reflections formed the fulcrum of my meta-learning and the focus of my thesis geared towards generating actionable knowledge. I learnt that the design and construction must fit and that there was a need to control the process to ensure that quality was derived. With reflection on the process, I engaged in learning through self-evaluation. With premise assumptions, I found that attitudes and assumptions that were unstated impacted leadership views and readiness for change in the organisation. Finally, I applied theory to practice and, in the process, demonstrated my understanding of the theory and its application.

In my reflection, I kept asking the questions: ‘Are the results and the issues arising from the data gathering processes evidence of the patterns about the research subject and goals as planned?’ Are the participants honest and faithfully committed to this project? These questions and others helped me design and redesign processes and closely observed events to ensure expected outcomes were delivered, minimised participants’ biases, and ensured that participants were protected and motivated to commit to the project.

5.10.1 Reflection on methodological choice and research design

The participatory action research embedded in this insider action research was appropriate. It rhymed with the philosophical paradigms I chose and helped utilise the participants' lived experiences to explain phenomena and issues

bordering on the research problem. The methodology adopted was an imperative approach. It led me to conduct the research comfortably. The situation required collaboration with research participants and others. The participatory action research proved to be the instrument needed to drive the research process, including change and transformation of the leadership culture to improve the organisation's strategic decision-making process.

The research methodology also helped develop the research framework and thus aligned with the proposition of Coghlan and Shani (2018), namely considering context, quality of relationships, quality of the action research process, the action research cycles, and the dual outcomes of the research closely. The methodology also afforded the opportunity of applying theory to practice and thus aligns with the key elements of action research embedded in the study, namely 'action' and 'research.'

Therefore, action research as my methodology has helped to satisfy the purpose of the study, including rigour, validity and credibility of the process, reflection and reflexivity, knowledge creation and collaboration.

Reflecting on the processes involved in this study, the knowledge I gained from this project has personal, professional applications and scholarly dimensions. I was always conscious that I needed to divorce the core action research objective from the thesis objective to deliver on my academic responsibility to the university. But my deep reflections reverberated on both ends. I can confidently state that the meta-learning in the process assisted in no small way in improving processes in the study and helping me impart knowledge to others. Results of reflections regularly sent me back to literature reviews. I did not see this as a pressure point; instead, I was excited at the prospects of reading further literature to not only improve my knowledge of the issues on the project but to

understand the processes better and use the theoretical foundations to adapt and improve systems within the action research cycles.

When I reflected on how best to secure the cooperation of the research participants, I considered that it was better to engage them closely and constructively without losing control of the process. And this worked very well. I found that a great deal of learning came out of action and doing. I had more than enough thoughts to process and learned new things from reflections during and after the event. With incremental knowledge from reflections and further learning, my focus became more sharpened on the benefits of using action research to study my organisation and transform its leadership culture and improve the strategic decision-making process.

5.10.2 Reflections and Contexts

I viewed reflections from professional, organisational, and scholarly perspectives.

5.10.2.1 Professional Context and Practice

To realise the objectives of my research, I needed to learn more about the issues, primarily through further literature reviews and critical reflection to, among other things, develop new knowledge. Therefore, the reflection was a vital instrument of the research on my organisation. The crucial point in this context is that reflection has helped me utilise evidence and the study results to ramp up expertise and professional skills in my practice. Outcomes of my learning through reflection have widened my perspectives on my personal development, the organisation and the wider community. A critical insight following reflection was the need for training, mainly to deal with the issue of ignorance of the consequences of actions and practices of the leadership. The training identified includes getting leaders to know and understand the

consequences of their actions on the organisation and their responsibilities and liabilities as provided in the law. From this study, I gained more insights into managing research participants. Also, I learned that it was necessary to consult relevant stakeholders without losing my independence of thought and action to develop and implement plans to achieve results. Admittedly, I received excellent and valuable advice from some leaders on managing organisational relations, especially inter-level dynamics and politics (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Nevertheless, the insights gained in managing participants and other stakeholders have gone into my knowledge base and would help in my future endeavours.

5.10.2.2 The Organisational Context

Reflection covered understanding the intricacies relating to the persons and forces and the dynamics of change in the organisation. Severally, I recalled the argument by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) that it is essential in the process of change to understand the inter-level dynamics, including the political and other forces in the organisation. I had been involved in the organisation, and I understood the dynamics. Still, I was surprised to find issues and details intended to truncate change, which I did not know were part of the organisational dynamics. A key result of reflection was knowing that it was imperative to involve leaders and other employees in discussing and planning the change process.

5.11 Change in my scholarly practice

When I commenced this study, I had two objectives: to change the leadership culture to improve the organisation's strategic decision-making process and create knowledge. Reflections provided me with the opportunity to realise my goals. This project and my insights have enabled me to develop ways and means

of my scholarly practice. I can confirm that I improved on my identity as a professional researcher, which was not the case before I embarked on this study.

5.12 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed knowledge generation, learning, practice development, reflections, actions taken to ensure outcomes' validity, and avoidance of bias. I have also discussed my research journey, my scholarship of practice, and second-person and third-person learning and development. The research participants and I reflected extensively. The reflections viewed outcomes from the professional, organisational and scholarly contexts. They helped to reveal changes in professional practice, improvement in skills, relationships, leadership culture and behaviours, and the outcomes of scholarly inquiry. As a result of reflections, research participants learnt a lot about issues in the organisation and ways of improving practices. For me, reflections enabled me as the researcher to read more, learn more and use new knowledge to improve processes in the organisation. I discussed my practice of interiority and how this, coupled with applying the general empirical method, helped me challenge my assumptions, deal with my biases and those of the research participants, and achieve quality and validity. Through reflections, I determined that it was necessary to engage leaders closely to sensitise them on the vital issue of change regarding their beliefs and practices, namely the leadership culture.

In the light of the findings in this action research inquiry, I will conclude this thesis in the next chapter by summarising the main actions and results, how the findings helped to bridge the research gap identified in previous chapters, the contributions of this research to existing literature, the limitations of the study and the path to future interventions.

6 CHAPTER 6 - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I presented the research problem, the background, the context of the research, aims and objectives, the research questions which guided the research, and the scope and the need and justification of the research. Chapter two discussed the review of scholarly articles and how the insights provided understanding and helped develop the methodology and determine the appropriate research methods. Chapter three presented the methodology and methods, including the research design, built mainly with insights from reviewed articles, the aims and objectives and the research questions. Chapter four discussed the data collection methods and processes and the steps to analyse collected data to ensure quality and validity. Finally, learning, practice development, the overall improvement in scholarship and an opportunity to reflect on the processes and actions were discussed in chapter five.

The roles of this chapter are to present a summary of the previous chapters, including the main findings of the thesis and recommendations, and explain the study's contributions to academic bodies of literature and its implications for practice development. Furthermore, it discusses the need for change in the organisation and approaches to change. Although chapter four presented recommendations based on the research outcomes, I aggregated the facts and details exposed in previous chapters and made further recommendations. In addition, this chapter answers the question 'Did the project engender the desired changes and outcomes?' Finally, limitations of the study as feedback for future research are articulated, with evidence of the basis of my conclusions and judgements.

The project was conceptualised to determine and understand the leadership culture's circumstances and its impact on the strategic decision-making process in MTI Plc, a telecom infrastructure company, quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange and subject to the rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission Nigeria. The Company's operations started in 2002 and grew steadily by building capacities and harnessing local expertise, international skills and critical partnerships in its industry. As a result, it created a solid and distinctive reputation for quality. Decision-making was supposed to be taken to advance the company's cause, meet the requirements of transparency and ethics, and avoid conflicts of interests and any interests that might adversely affect the decision-making process. In the company, there are formal decision-making processes, but it is established that some critical decisions were taken without regard to the formalities established.

The organisation's culture supports a hierarchical structure that gives the board and the management team much power. Most employees were excluded from the strategic decision-making process due to the hierarchical nature of the organisation's structure and the dependent leadership structure, which is, more or less, a command-and-control type of structure. Sometimes, this led to a one-sided view on strategic issues and, consequently, a compromised decision-making process by leaders who exhibited behaviours and practices encapsulated in the leadership culture that adversely impacted strategic decision-making.

I followed through with the action research process, guided by definitions and expressions in various literature, especially the definition presented by Coghlan (2019). I developed the aims and objectives of the research and defined the scope within the context of MTI Plc. I reviewed literature extensively to build on my theoretical knowledge in the subject area and develop a sound conceptual framework for the study. Finally, I applied some of the insights from the

literature in researching the situation and delivering the project. The process of matching theory with practice helped make it possible to undertake the action research project and realise the outcomes, using analysed data to answer the research questions. I was guided by Ulvik, Riese, and Roness (2018), who argued that action research creates professional knowledge and draws on theory while drawing on the practice.

The project rests on the social constructionist philosophy in the form of constructing reality socially, as pinpointed by Darisman, Hilman, and Homa (2016:150), who defined Social Construction of Reality as “a social process through action and interaction in which the individual (or group of individuals) creates continuously a reality that is owned and experienced together subjectively.” With this philosophy, I drew and secured information from persons who had lived experiences of the issues under investigation and created a community of practice through collaboration and active participation built on trust, commitment, confidentiality, honesty and respect. I developed criteria for selecting the research participants and selected fifteen (15) employees who met the requirements.

In chapter 3, I discussed the research methodology and data collection methods. Also, I discussed the roles of politics and ethics and how I planned to manage these. Chapter 4 addressed the management of ethics and politics and the challenges faced during the research. I detailed the participatory action research approach and the action research cycles, including the pre-steps and the four stages of each of the action research cycles during which the interventions were made. Finally, I discussed reflections and how we used the general empirical method (Coghlan, 2019) and interiority in helping to achieve quality and validity. We read data collected severally and coded transcribed data from different sources, which were triangulated. Through coding, using the template

analysis method, we collaboratively identified relevant themes and developed coding templates for the pre-steps and each of the three action research cycles. These were summarised in chapter 4, with recommendations for implementing our findings which are long-term in nature.

As stated in this report, this research has contributed to change in organisational practices, participants' identities, and contributions to knowledge through learning and action. I related findings to the literature review (in chapter two of this report and ongoing literature reviews) to the data collected, including the collection tools and data analysis. In doing this, a reference to the research questions was considered paramount.

The interventions helped determine the commitment to change. The need to achieve validity helped avoid the researcher's bias, which, according to Will and Pies (2018), might make the process dysfunctional and lose objectivity. In addition, there was a need to avoid misconceptions by research participants and achieve meaning-making, which will assure the organisation and its stakeholders of the study's credibility. Finally, as in all action research projects, this study considered taking action was deemed to be critical.

I found that a lack of knowledge of current management and board dynamics trends contributed to the sustenance of the traditional leadership culture, which was antithetical to growth, development, and innovation. During the interviews, one of the organisational leaders was quick to say that a lack of continuous training and exposure contributed to the current leadership practice. The leadership had no idea about the benefits of a leadership culture based on collaboration and inclusiveness. He surmised that on reflection, he noted that the organisation tended to achieve significant milestones when there was a pooling of resources and knowledge.

6.2 The methodology of the research

In pursuing this project, I chose the methodology considered appropriate to help secure data that would enable me to provide answers to the research questions, which were developed as part of the reference point for delivering the project's outcomes. In choosing the methodology, I was mindful of the critical factors of action, learning and research outcomes. In designing the methodology and methods, I was mindful of the fact that action research involves actions founded on doing and active collaboration with the research participants, as succinctly expressed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Coghlan (2019), namely that the research participants and I had the benefit of the experience. The expected outcomes meant that I had to choose an appropriate and effective method to deliver the outcomes. Although I considered and chose a necessary and result-oriented methodology, I considered the research participants' knowledge and skills in selecting them. It was pleasing to observe the benefits and results enabled by the knowledge and skill levels of the participants. To improve the research participants' understanding, I encouraged them to keep reflecting and learning journals and read further literature. Reading additional literature helped match theory with practice and improve research participants' skills and perceptions, as evidenced in their comments stated in this report. I found the methods employed helpful in collecting data and, to a great extent, in setting the stage for analysis of the data collected. I maintained a research journal/log, which was a powerful instrument of my research, and it provided tremendous benefits in knowledge creation, further action and improvement of the research process. The research participants and I had reflection-on-action and reflection within each cycle.

6.3 Data

I organised interviews, focus group sessions and stakeholders' meetings, and administered a questionnaire and surveys. Documents and historical records were reviewed. In gathering data, I divided the sections into pre-steps (involving examination of the cultural web, administering the questionnaire and reviewing historical documents) and the intervention stage involving the action research cycles. I undertook participant observation, which, thankfully, was insightful. Every endeavour was made to manage the data collection and analysis processes. I recognised that I had the ultimate responsibility for confidentiality, anonymity and security of data; therefore, I made sure that although I committed through the ethical process to safeguard data and identity and sought the consent of participants, I impressed it upon the research participants to share in the responsibility of confidentiality. Overall, I am confident that the needful was done in this regard. It was imperative to ensure that due consideration of ethical issues was given. Data from different sources were coded and categorised, and through template analysis, themes emerged from analysed data.

6.4 Outcomes

The organisational outcomes summarised below have been enabled through the interventions of training and sensitisation. They are short-term wins and are emerging. These interventions and outcomes are evidenced by participants' generally comments on changes and outcomes. "Mr YE, in lines 26-29 of the one-on-one interview, stated: "I will say that before things were not so organised and because of this the process that we started, we have been able to understand some things. We have been able to put some things in place to make sure that we manage this place better than what it was before". Mr YE also

stated during the same interview in lines 31-40 thus: “In terms of collaboration; there was no complete collaboration between various departments before; people do things haphazardly. But right now, after we started this process, we were able to give some of the departments some training. They now function better than before; they collaborate and synergise with other departments better than they used to do before. And then we find out that some of the employees that are at the last cadre maybe junior now they have that boldness to express their concerns and some of those in the middle now collaborate more with people at the senior level, and the same thing also with senior management to the board of directors. I think now we have better collaboration between all the levels,” Mrs D said in lines 229-232 of the transcribed text of the second focus group discussion: “Transparency is there, and everything they are doing is being aligned. They are communicating to the directors, and at the same time, they are communicating to the subordinates. If they are doing that, everything will work well”. It must be emphasised that this study, including fieldwork, has taken a couple of years. In the process, employees and leaders had the opportunity to work with me in collaboration, ask questions, and see the need and the gains of positive change. Therefore, it is not surprising that they began to engage in activities that would engender some of the expected outcomes.

Table 6.1: Contextual Research Outcomes

| Outcomes | Details |
|-------------------------|--|
| Organisational Outcomes | <p>New work practices are emerging</p> <p>New leadership inclinations – new leadership culture emerging</p> <p>Determined and worked on forces against change</p> <p>Introduced teamwork and collaboration</p> |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | <p>Organisational learning as part of new practice</p> <p>Work on the organisation structure is ongoing</p> <p>A new internal campaign to win over employees has begun</p> <p>A programme to internalise the core values and the mission statement has begun</p> <p>A new corporate governance framework has been developed, awaiting board approval</p> <p>Some leaders have left the organisation – opted to retire to pave the way for others</p> |
| <p>Scholarly Outcomes</p> | <p>New insights and matching theory with practice</p> <p>New knowledge in research techniques</p> <p>Transfer of learning</p> |
| <p>Professional Outcomes</p> | <p>New identity for me as a scholar-practitioner</p> <p>Improvement in skills and knowledge of areas hitherto unknown</p> <p>New learning strategy</p> <p>New adaptive expertise</p> <p>Personal development</p> <p>I became a reflective practitioner.</p> |

Table 6.2: Participants' Learning Outcomes

| |
|--|
| Outcomes |
| New learning skills |
| New knowledge |
| Reflective and evaluation skills developed |
| New partnerships and relationships with colleagues |
| Improvement in identity |
| Practice improvement |

6.5 Research Questions and Outcomes

The table below (Table 6.3) conveys the information on the research questions and how they were answered in the sections indicated against them.

Table 6.3: Research Questions Connection to Outcomes

| Research Question | Outcome/Answer |
|---|---|
| What kind of leadership culture exists in MTI Plc? | Leadership culture is characterised by the arbitrary use of power by the leadership; self-interest based; coloured by malpractices; supported by a hierarchical structure; uncollaborative and dysfunctional leadership culture; a 'command and control structure, undistributed decision-making process (4.5.1.4; and 4.5.1.5.1) |
| How does the leadership culture of MTI Plc affect or impact the | Lack of adherence to due process; lack of collaborative decision-making; imposition of |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>strategic decision-making process of the organisation?</p> | <p>decisions; hierarchical structure; lack of transparency; and no respect for rules and procedure (4.5.1.4, 4.5.1.5.1 and 4.5.1.5.2)</p> |
| <p>What is the paradigm or standard of the cultural web of the organisation?</p> | <p>A weak culture paradigm that influenced the leadership culture; exposed by the themes in 4.5.1.4</p> |
| <p>How should we achieve a shared direction as a critical component of the leadership culture process?</p> | <p>By reaching an agreement on the direction through discussion, mutual influence, and compromise, which was enabled through the focus group and stakeholders' meetings (4.5.1.5.1)</p> |
| <p>How should we coordinate work so that all fit together and achieve Alignment?</p> | <p>Through an alignment of beliefs, practices and achieving teamwork, which was pursued during the action research cycles through agreements and negotiations at focus group sessions and stakeholders' meetings and agreements expressed during interviews (4.5.1.5.2)</p> |
| <p>How should we achieve commitment to the organisation's goals and maintain the collective?</p> | <p>Through securing commitments from stakeholders who were convinced after initial interventions in action research cycles 1 and 2 that the interventions had engendered positive changes in the organization and individuals (4.5.1.5.3)</p> |

6.6 Connection of outcomes with the reviewed literature

I viewed how the data results related to the expositions in the literature review. It is generally acknowledged that a connection between the research results and the work of other researchers would ensure the credibility and relevance of the action research study. One of the goals of action research was to determine if there was a connection or why the research findings were not connected to the problem(s). After analysing data, I found that data represented views expressed in various literature. Data analysed revealed that the organisation's hierarchy provided power to leaders.

Aravopoulou and Malone (2016) argued that decision-making was essential. The views of organisational leaders and the leadership systems could significantly impact the organisational decision-making processes and plans. Participants' statements and observations buttressed and established these statements' validity in the literature. Participants observed that the leadership culture practice, most of the time, necessitated the delay in making decisions when the leader(s) found or sensed that the decision was not going to benefit them. Participants' statements in the transcribed texts of the first focus group session and the second focus group session are replete with comments congruent with the views in the reviewed literature.

Insights from the literature reviewed indicate that it is necessary for leadership to shift from the tradition of control and regulations to collaborative leadership involving teamwork. The participant's statement in the transcribed text of this report supported this point. These also connect with the "dark side of leadership", which negatively impacted the decision-making process, as

Eckhaus (2017). Abou-Moghli (2016) argued that organisational leaders were responsible for ensuring that the organisational strategic trust was achieved against the circumstances of the business, especially the environment and processes. From the study, it was evident that organisational leaders, through their actions, impacted the decision-making processes negatively. Participants' comments, especially Mr KE's first focus group session (in lines 240-246 of the transcribed text), are instructive. These brought to mind the views of Truong et al. (2014), who argued that some influences on the decision-making process might impact decision outcome and concluded that many factors might affect decision-making, including the personality and interests of the leader as a decision-maker.

On the organisation structure, it is imperative to stress the point made by McGuire and Rhodes (2009) and Ozcan (2021) that it was necessary to develop and put in place a collaborative organisational structure that would engender a leadership culture that would guarantee efficiency in processes, including the decision-making processes. Participants believed that there was a need to tweak the system to make it more collaborative and appropriately aligned to help achieve efficient strategic decision-making processes. In lines 36-41 of the interview with Mr KO, he said: "It is the organisation structure that is the problem. I agree wholeheartedly with those who say that organisational structure is the problem. In a couple of instances, I have challenged how the decisions were taken by the Chief Executive Officer, who behaves as if he has the powers to take decisions alone. Sometimes, I suffered as a result. Unfortunately, no other person came to my rescue, but I continued to voice out".

6.7 Knowledge Gained

Through this project, I assisted research participants in building capacities in knowledge and skills as attested to by the research participants, especially during the second focus group session and the final one-on-one interviews. For instance, in lines 86-87 of the transcribed text of an interview, the respondent (Mrs D) said: “Thank you, sir. Oh yes. I have gained a lot from reflection. They are good, and I am happy I participated”. In lines 343-347 of the transcribed text of the second focus group session, Mr YE said: “I want to say that I have gained a lot from what we have been doing through these processes. At least we have been able to itemise all those issues related to the company to identify the problems, and then we have been able to proffer solutions to some of the problems. So I have gained a lot through these processes”. In lines 68-69 of the one-on-one interview with “Mr KO, he said, “Yes, we have learnt a lot from what you are doing, and that change must come now or else, we will have no company”.

The project has assisted participants and others in improving their existing strengths, gaining confidence, and transforming their identities. Part of the learning outcomes for participants was the use of reflection and research processes, especially data collection and data analysis, which were virtually unknown phenomena to the research participants before commencing the research. The research participants considered this a significant learning outcome, and I feel happy with the result. Also, I learned from the research participants and other insights from data collection and analysis. Undoubtedly, my status and identity as a researcher have improved, and, quite happily, I applied action research theories to action.

6.8 Evidence of improved practice

From the research outcomes, changes in a few practice areas are noticeable. Comments by research participants validate these. Although planned change intended to be long term has not occurred, some positive changes are evident. For the research participants, the evidence is represented adequately in their comments in this chapter. There are new work practices. A new leadership culture is emerging, and leaders and employees are determined and are working on forces against change. Part of the improved practice involved closer attention and an emphasis on teamwork and collaboration. Organisational learning is now part of the practice as training is viewed differently, and programmes are planned. It is agreed that there is a need to tweak the organisation structure to make it less hierarchical. This is part of the development process being initiated by management and has been brought to the board's attention. A new internal campaign to win over the employees has begun. A programme to internalise the core values and the mission statement has started. A new corporate governance framework has been developed. Some leaders have left the organisation and opted to retire early. There is new knowledge in research techniques and transfer of knowledge and learning practices to others within the organisation.

There is no doubt that change at an organisational level requires change by an individual. From my interaction with the leaders, especially during and after the second focus group session, leaders have begun to change and foster a culture to change themselves. Leaders have committed to and are working to accelerate the much-needed change. A new approach to doing things in the organisation is emerging. Some managers serve as role models and have begun to guide other employees, shaping the culture's norms and relating to others. The emerging

leadership culture should determine how the organisation will set and achieve its goals and long-term viability (McGuire and Palus, 2018).

6.9 Did the project engender the desired changes and outcomes?

Participants believed that the project has led to incremental change. It was mentioned that the project had sensitised employees and that employees were happy to see that leaders did not hijack the project leaders. According to Taylor et al. (2016), assessments of the outcomes of an action research project are necessary to answer the research questions. Therefore, we conducted evaluations of our actions and the results at different stages of the research. As a result, the project engendered the desired change, some of which are explained in summary in this chapter.

I recognised that different participants would view success differently and from different viewpoints. Still, every effort was made through the reflection sessions and the last focus group session to find a commonality in meaning and perspectives.

Moulineux (2018) argued that readiness should be a significant consideration in planning change. The organisation's readiness and its leaders' and employees' readiness for change were essential considerations. It became evident after the focus group and the stakeholders' meetings, as pointed out in chapter four. The last cycle was geared towards getting assurances as to the readiness of organisational leaders for change. There were demands for change during the focus group session and earlier individual interviews. For example, in lines 257-264 of the transcribed text of the first focus group session, Mr KE stated: "What should we do; what should be done? Though some have mentioned things that they think should be done. But in our specific cases, do we think it is possible to

change the system? If it is possible to change the system, what should we do to get to where we believe; it is not theory now, based on our experience. What should be done to achieve the goals that we have in our strategies, and how can we move our organisation forward? So we quickly deal with that, and then we close". During fieldwork, employees who knew about the project constantly demanded that change follow the project. Having received assurances from the leadership, I was confident that all were on board with the need to change the leadership culture in the organisation. Molineux (2018) stated that it is essential to get the leadership engaged constructively in the change process; otherwise, it will fail.

6.10 The need for long term change

From the results, the issues were summarised in chapter 5. Having identified these as the core of the problems, how should we implement them to achieve the desired change? In addition, there are other pertinent questions: Are the conditions necessary for change present? What form should the implementation take?

In looking at the leadership culture change, I exposed the participants to the culture web. I explained how it could be used to organise a gap analysis of the organisation's leadership culture and other cultural elements. It was easy to determine that all the stakeholders wanted was change and that it did not matter to them the channel as long as whatever strategy was adopted would bring about the desired change. Participants expressed their satisfaction with the idea that the shift envisaged would positively change the leadership culture and positively impact the strategic decision-making process. However, it was evident from the results of data analysis in chapter four of this report that the

organisation's leadership culture was dysfunctional and adversely impacted the strategic decision-making process.

What will amount to successful change? This study has x-rayed the leadership culture practice and exposed the issues which call for change to help in improving the strategic decision-making process. It is pleasing to note that the action research process employed in this study exposed all leadership culture influences and insights to the extent that virtually everyone became a change enthusiast. In working to expose the fine details and issues, I was conscious of the need to encourage participation and collaboration and adopt a systems approach which, as argued by Molineux (2018), helped to produce the desired result or outcome.

6.11 Readiness for change

As stated in chapter four of this report, during the first focus group, participants said that there was a need to change the way the leadership conducted the strategic decision-making process in the organisation. To further bolster the point about readiness for change, a participant, Mr YE, stated in lines 305-307 of the second focus group thus: "The answer is yes; strong yes. We are ready for the change, and we can get that change if we all collaborate and put all these things we are talking about into use, not just saying it but put it in practice this time around". In lines 79-83 of the one-on-one interview (with Mrs D) she said: "... as a leader, I am ready for change. I know my colleagues are ready for change. We can't wait. We are tired of the situation, and the company is going down every day. We have seen what you are doing and the discussions with us on how the company can go forward, which is fresh on our minds". Participants have several other statements supporting change during the interviews and the focus group sessions.

6.12 Approaches to Change

How should we approach change in the organisation? The critical advantage is that I work with the organisation and will be involved in change while pursuing my thesis objective. From the fieldwork and insights from data collection, I sensed that all stakeholders needed to be involved in change.

According to McGuire and Rhodes (2009:25), persons involved in leadership change seriously commit to and generate change. Also, according to McGuire and Rhodes (2009:31), change means “ - creative new leadership beliefs and mindsets and the new orders of leadership practice.....”. There should also be a unity of purpose, and leadership should be collective in driving direction, alignment of processes and commitment on the part of the leadership and the employees. It was essential to get the leadership to trust and self-reorientate, which involved imbibing new attitudes and discarding old attitudes, behaviours and beliefs (Higgins and Bourne, 2018). During the fieldwork and interviews, it was argued that the change might be resisted. Still, as stated earlier, the leadership had been engaged constructively to press home the urgency of change and survival of the organisation. Following discussions around the subject of resistance, the stakeholders’ meetings and further focus group sessions were held as part of sharing knowledge, dealing with resistance to change, learning and action towards change.

Implementing the change programme was considered a critical part of the core action research project, and our organisation could take specific actions to implement my recommendations. Therefore, it was agreed to set up a project implementation committee during the research, of which I am a member. In addition, the organisation has planned training programmes to educate employees on the new thrust.

A planned change process has been considered to address the leadership culture problem. The goal is to transform the leadership culture. McGuire and Palus (2018) pointed out that change in the leadership culture should be gradual. And views at the different fora and information obtained indicated that it should be gradual. Culture takes time to change. The planned change process involves moving from one stage to another (Coghlan, 2019).

Coghlan (2019) articulated the quest to plan a sustainable change. Therefore, in framing the change or transformation of the leadership culture in MTI Plc, it has been recognised that there could be a failure to sustain commitment and alignment across levels of adaption. In addition, there could be emergent issues such as political issues, employee turnover or loss of change champions, lack of resources and impact of regulations or other externalities.

What needs to change? This is a critical question. Here, the themes from the action research cycles are central. Develop new relationships, change the organisation structure to make it vertical rather than horizontal, build governance policies and adopt new processes. The primary focus was on the cultural aspects, the foundation of research. A learning programme was developed, and all employees were encouraged to participate in training programmes to prepare them for the change. The training contents did not exclude politics and how to deal with resistance to change. There was a need to review the terms and conditions of service of employees to stem the tide of resignations. The change has been designed to recognise the first-person, second-person and third-person perspectives. In the second person, the organisation learned to change and is being restructured to meet the challenges of the new thrust. For the third person, there will be a significant impact on services delivery to customers and clients

6.13 Further Recommendations

This research shows that some measures will have to be taken to achieve complete or extensive change. The insights from the literature reviewed corroborated by the study's outcomes indicate necessary actions and areas where actions are required. The research participants and others had also made suggestions, even when I did not solicit such. This shows the anxieties and concerns of the employees and their quest for change without further delay. In lines 57-65 of the transcribed text of the second focus group, a participant, Mr KO, said: “Yes, I think it is essential that before the leaders can take decisions, they should also consult the other categories of people, especially with the issue of their profession, those who can give you the insight of some of the business strategies you need. At times in an organisation, like in this organisation, when the director wants to make a decision, you can call on the project manager for some technical advice which I believe as a technical person will give you the insight into what you need. Then you can put them together and come up with an excellent decision,”. Mrs D said during the second focus group session in lines 92-95: “The leaders must find a way to involve the employee in a way that anything they do, they will communicate down the line. They will have 100% participation when there is sincerity in whatever they are doing”.

It was also recommended that transparency and good corporate governance be practised in the organisation. A participant, Mrs D, said in lines 154-161 of the transcribed text of the second focus group session, thus: “What should be done is to put processes in place and to make sure that people are responsible for their actions. They should be sure that people are accountable and ready to take responsibility. They should make sure that they don’t just employ anybody. Integrity is very key. You cannot have people learn integrity; it has to be 100%.

If you don't have it, you don't have it. So how to recruit; you recruit well, and we must also train them so that even when we employ them, we keep giving them our culture to know that what we stand for must be followed”.

There were suggestions about training for organisational leaders by Mr KO, as evidenced in lines 182-186 of the transcribed text of the second focus group session. On change of structure of the organisation, Mr YE recommended changes as captured in lines 213-222 of the transcribed text of the second focus group session. Participants, especially Mr YE, also dwelt on the need for teamwork, as captured in lines 287-300 of the transcribed text of the second focus group session. During the one-on-one interview with Mrs D, she said (in lines 26-31 of transcribed text):” Thank you very much. The organisation structure, cultural elements and systems of governance will have to be overhauled. There needs to be a new board to direct the affairs and pursue other ways of doing the right thing, including recalibrating the decision-making process which has led the organisation to lose not only crucial staff but also lost huge businesses.”. In lines 62-65 of the transcribed text of the interview with Mr YE, he suggested: “In my view, there should be total change; total overhauling of the leadership. The change should also go down to employees at all levels. There should be no delay in the change. We need to do it now”.

Although a few short-term gains have been made due to changes in leadership practices following training and sensitisation, a well-crafted implementation plan would help. Although this project is intended to satisfy my doctoral thesis objective, it also aims to improve the leadership culture practice in our organisation. Therefore, the organisation should benefit from taking advantage of the insights gained and the recommendations that should necessitate the development of an action plan and how the plan will be implemented.

6.14 Limitations

As I stated earlier in chapter five of this report, the main limitation was the exit of a few of the selected research participants. However, this did not present a significant challenge as they continued to help, except that the benefit of nearness was lost. There were also delays in accessing some documents in some departments, but these were resolved. Overall, this did not impact significantly on data collection and other processes.

6.15 Conclusion and further interventions

The results of this research are insightful. The project was anchored on determining the leadership culture before the intervention and implementing actions during the action research cycles and the situation following the interventions and transformation of the leadership culture using the conceptual framework developed based on deep insights from the literature reviewed. The idea was to compare how the leadership culture impacted the organisation's strategic decision-making at the beginning of the research and how it impacted the strategic decision-making after the interventions and actions were implemented, showcasing the levels and standard of impact at each point and reaching a valid conclusion. From the research, there is abundant evidence that a leadership culture informed or determined or influenced by a hierarchical structure, devoid of collaboration and effective team building and teamwork, impacted the strategic decision-making process. The impact following the interventions is evident, and comments by research participants evidence this. The end survey results corroborated the new thrust and change in the leadership culture, new beliefs and leadership practices, and improved strategic decision-making process, which is now undertaken collaboratively and in line with established rules. It is imperative to mention that the leaders are committed to

its new practices and decision-making system. Benefits have been derived from improving DAC and the organisation's leadership culture.

6.16 Evidence of the basis of my conclusions and judgements

The Cultural Web examination exposed the organisation's culture and indicated that it was weak, which inevitably impacted its leadership culture. The knowledge derived from the action research cycles, especially implementation outcomes, presents evidence. Responses by research participants and other stakeholders form the foundation for the evidence supporting judgements and decisions I have made. Thankfully, throughout the research process, especially the action research cycles, I employed the general empirical method, which enabled me to make reasoned decisions and be attentive to my experience. I engaged in challenging my assumptions and in reflective and reflexive actions, which helped provide validity and improve the quality of my processes and outcomes. Therefore, I am confident in the evidence which formed the basis of my judgements and suggestions. Significant steps can be taken to improve the situation further from the intervention results. The new thrust is result-oriented and can transform the organisation significantly and make it sustainable.

As an insider researcher, the study allowed me to see how leaders and other employees judged their day-to-day activities much more closely. The action research project enabled me to transcend my professional and working knowledge of the organisation. It was exciting and rewarding to apply and see the workings of theoretical knowledge and the insights from the literature review in chapter two and further literature reviews in the research. With these, I endeavoured to discover why certain practices and assumptions were sticky and upheld for several years and why it would have been impossible to change without close participatory research.

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Appendix 1- PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



RESEARCH ETHICS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. Introduction & Title of the Research Project

I am a student researcher from the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. I am researching the subject of leadership culture and how it impacts the organisational strategic decision-making process. The title of the research study is: **Examining the impact of the leadership culture on the organisational strategic decision-making process.**

This is an action research project. Action research is research initiated to solve an immediate organizational problem involving iterative processes led by individuals working with others in organisations to solve the identified problem and introduce change or improve organisational or best practice.

2. Invitation to participate in this study

You are invited to participate in this research study. Before you decide

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whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with others, if you wish. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. Thank you for reading this.

3. Research investigator: Nosike Agokei.

Address & contact details of the research investigator: 2, Obafemi Anibaba Street, Lekki Phase 1, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria. Telephone: +2348037758785.

Email: nosike.agokei@online.liverpool.ac.uk

4. What is the purpose of the study?

There are concerns by managers about the impact of the leadership culture on the Organisational strategic decision-making process. To what extent is the leadership culture dysfunctional and antithetic to the culture and objectives of Organisations?

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of leadership culture on the Organisational strategic decision-making process and, in the process, propose any changes that should be made to minimise the negative impact of leadership culture on the Organisational strategic decision-making process and make the process more productive and result-oriented.

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5. What is the period of review before consent is given?

The period of review for the participant before consent is given is seven (7) days. You will be required to sign the consent form.

6. What is the approximate period (length of time) of my participation?

The study will be conducted through one-on-one interviews which will not last more than twenty (20) minutes and completion of questionnaires which should not take more than fifteen (15) minutes to complete. Focused group discussions and observational study will also take place.

7. Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been chosen because as a senior manager with a sound degree you have related with organizational leaders on different fronts and participated in the organizational strategic decision-making processes. Moreover, you possess diverse experiences in strategic planning and decision making and plan implementation. I am confident that you have knowledge of at least ten years on leadership roles, skills, strategic planning and the roles of leaders in the strategic planning process, having held leadership positions in organizations. About fifteen (15) participants are taking part in this research project

8. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide not to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet. You can still withdraw at any time without any explanation or reason and without incurring any unpleasant consequences.

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9. What will happen to me if I take part?

I have explained the purpose of this research study and the reason you are being invited to participate. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire.

You may also be requested to agree to a follow-up interview. Therefore, apart from these, nothing will happen to you if you take part. There are no other commitments or obligations in relation to your participation. If you need any clarifications, please contact me.

10. Are there any risks or disadvantages in taking part?

Physical and psychological risks, if any, are expected to be transient. The process may involve the handling of sensitive information which may result in injury to participants through a breach of confidentiality and law and result in embarrassment, loss of employment, or criminal prosecution. Risks, if any, will be resolved quickly and effectively to minimize harm and appropriate steps will be taken to educate participants on what to do to avoid any breach. Breach of confidentiality of sensitive information poses a risk of harm, but protections such as restricted access (encrypted data storage, locked files,) will be put in place to minimize risk to participants. Also, I will incorporate appropriate data safety monitoring plan.

If you experience any physical distress, it would be the same as any experienced in normal everyday life. There are no disadvantages involved in taking part in this project.

However, if you experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of this research study, please contact me immediately.

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11. What is the data collection procedure for the study?

My primary data collection procedures will involve questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, observations. Secondary data collection is basically collecting data from documents, records and reports of others, especially those which relate to strategies, plans, decision making and reviews.

12. What measures are in place to secure data?

Collected data will be secured through encryption and secure location, password-protected access, anonymous information, coded information, etc.

13. What are the measures in place to ensure identities are not disclosed and de-identification?

Identifying information, such as names and addresses, will be removed as soon as the data are tabulated. Anonymity will be used to ensure that the identity of the participants is not disclosed. Participants may be asked not to sign their names.

14. Are there conflicts of interest?

Conflict of interest may arise because I am a researcher/manager. I will ensure that conflicts of interest do not adversely influence my professional judgment.

Every effort will be made to be transparent and I will take steps to manage any conflict(s) of interest effectively so as to ensure that it does not compromise the integrity of this study and great effort will be made to ensure that there is no undue influence. In spite of the potential conflict of interest, this research effort is different from my other professional undertakings or roles.

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15. Expenses and/or payments

I do not envisage that any expenses will come up, but where there are expenses relating to travel, refreshments etc, you will be eligible for reimbursement.

16. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There are no financial benefits for participating in this research project. Therefore, you will receive no payment for your participation. However, the benefits of the research which are expected to help introduce changes in the Organisation should engender improvements in leadership, including leadership development and the roles of leaders in Organisational strategic decision making. These are expected to lead to improved performances by Organisations with attendant benefits to the society as a whole.

17. What are your rights as a participant?

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You have the right to decide not to take part or subsequently withdraw from participating in the research project at any time.

18. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting me, Nosike Agokei on +2348037758785 or email: nosike.agokei@online.liverpool.ac.uk and I will make every effort to help.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk.

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When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher (Nosike Agokei) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

19. Will my participation be kept confidential?

Data and other information will be collected through discussions, observations, questionnaires and interviews, as well as official documents. Any data collected about you during the course of this research study will be kept confidential. Data sources will be anonymised and you will not be identified in any reports or publications. Any data collected may be used for future research but all data will be stored securely via relevant security processes and technologies.

Anonymised data will not allow any individuals to be identified or identifiable. Access to data will be strictly controlled and data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years.

20. What will happen if I want to stop taking part or withdraw from participation?

You can withdraw from participating in the research study. If you withdraw from the research study, we will destroy all your recorded or taped interviews and your name will be removed from all study files, but I may need to use all data and information collected to the date of your withdrawal. Otherwise, you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. As I would anonymise the results, please note that results may only be withdrawn prior to anonymisation.

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21. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If the research study stops earlier than planned for any reason and you are affected in any way, you will be informed appropriately and reasons will be explained.

22. What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant to achieving the research project's objectives?

The questionnaire and interviews will seek your opinions, your experiences and current practices in relation to the subject of this research study. Your views, opinions and experiences are needed and these are the things that this research study would be exploring through interviews, questionnaires and discussions.

23. What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research will be published and as stated earlier you will not be identified in any report.

24. What measures are in place to deal with a psychological state and referral?

Psychological states or feelings may occur when the participant is being interviewed or filling out a questionnaire. Adequate information will be provided to participants and there will be the presence of trained personnel who can respond to emergencies.

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25. Will criminality and abuse be reported and are there limits to confidentiality?

Measures are in place for managing abuse, employer policy non-compliance and any criminal activity that the research procedures might reveal. Although confidentiality will be provided, I will provide information if ordered by a court (such as in the case of a search warrant or subpoena) or if required by legislation to do so.

I will provide information if I feel I have a moral obligation to do so in certain cases, such as if a research participant discloses a criminal intent or puts others at risk.

Furthermore, I will disclose information in some circumstances in order to prevent serious harm to the participant or others.

26. Who can I contact you if I have further questions?

If you have further questions, please contact me (Nosike Agokei) via 2 Obafemi Anibaba Street, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos, Nigeria.

My telephone number is +2348037758785.

Email address is nosike.agokei@online.liverpool.ac.uk

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Appendix 2 - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Examining the impact of leadership culture on the Organisational strategic decision-making process

Researcher: Nosike Agokei

Please initial box

- I confirm that I have agreed to participate in a research project conducted by Nosike Agokei of the University of Liverpool with the above mentioned research project title
- I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 28 August 2017 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected and without any penalty. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
- I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications and the procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.
- I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee.
- I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for the purposes of this research study.
- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with

the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

- I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymised and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data. I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.
- I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during an interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I agree to take part in the above study.

| Participant Name | Date | Signature |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of Person taking consent | Date | Signature |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Student Researcher:

Name: Nosike Agokei

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Work Telephone: +2348037758785

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Work Address: University of Liverpool

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Appendix 3 - FIRST FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions:

1. Have you ever taken part in a Strategic Decision Making Process?
2. What is your particular experience with strategic decision-making in the organisation?
3. Has it been a collaborative process?
4. Could you give an idea of the percentage of cases where the decision was taken in a fashion that is not collaborative?
5. Do you think that it is possible to change the system?
6. What do you think should be done to achieve the goals that we have in our strategies and how can we move our Organisation forward?
7. Has the leadership culture impacted on employees' readiness to speak out?
8. What should be done to ensure that these persons can speak-out without any fear of victimisation?
9. What should be done about the Leadership Culture in the Organisation?
10. What should be done to enable the leaders to also do things that we expect them to do so that Leadership Culture can lead us to where we are going?
11. What should be done to change the system so that the strategic decision-making process can improve so to enable us in this Organisation to deliver the goal?

Appendix 4 - SECOND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions

1. Is it true really that other decisions are taken at other levels?
2. Do you think this idea of leaders taking decisions alone has affected the business, or has it helped the business?
3. It was said that in the organisation that there is a lack of direction and commitment by employees and that there is a lack of commitment because the leaders are not carrying them along. What are your views on this? What is your experience with this in this Organisation as one of the leaders?
4. What should be done about the leadership culture to ensure that the exercise of leadership culture encourages employees to be committed?
5. What is your experience regarding the exercise of the leadership culture within the organisation?
6. Many have said leaders were not transparent; is this true?
7. If it is true, what should be done?
8. What is your experience with a lack of transparency on the part of leaders?
9. In your view, how has the leadership culture impacted the strategic decision-making process in the Organisation?
10. What has been the impact of malpractices on the strategic decision-making process?

11. Do you think that organisational leaders need training?
12. Do you think that the organisation structure has encouraged leaders to exhibit the leadership culture that has created the problem we are investigating?
13. Based on your experience in this company, having seen the way the organisation structure has been run, do you think that the structure should be changed or do you think that the structure should remain the way it is?
14. Some employees have complained that there is no teamwork. Is this statement true?
15. We have been talking about change. Are you ready for the change in the situation we are examining?
16. Based on the interactions that you have had, do you think that employees need and are ready for a change?
17. Do you think that you have gained from your participation in the research?
18. Is there anything that we should have done differently?

Appendix 5 - THIRD FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Are you satisfied that we have achieved shared direction? If not, please explain and discuss.
2. What should we be aiming to achieve together?
3. Do you believe that we now have a clear vision of what the organisation needs to achieve in the future?
4. Would you say that our combined work now fits together?
5. Is our work now coordinated with the work of others in the organisation?
6. Do you believe that employees are now committed to the organisation?
7. Our employees now give needed effort for the organisation to succeed. Do you agree?
8. Do you believe that there is now a sense of trust among the employees?

Appendix 6 - QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: Narrative Response Questions

1. Have you taken part in the strategic decision-making process in the organisation?
2. Do you think that two or more decision-making processes exist in organisations?
3. If so, give more explanations and examples.
4. In the organisation, what percentage of decisions are regarded as strategic? What are the characteristics of a strategic decision?
5. Who is involved in the strategic decision-making process?
6. Have there been changes to the practice and approach to strategic decision-making over time? If yes, why were those changes introduced?
7. Have you ever spoken to leaders in the organisation to get their attention about real change through the leadership culture?
8. Have you found yourself among the many who say that for the organisation to survive and thrive, we must transform the culture?
9. Is the leadership in the organisation a coherent, united force for change?
10. As a manager in the organisation, do you believe that the culture of the organisation can help or hang the Organisation?
11. How would you characterise the leadership culture in the organisation?
12. How does leadership culture enhance or inhibit the operational implementation of the business strategy?

13. What does your senior leadership team need to do to awaken and energise development in the management team?
14. As a senior leader, would you stand up first to yourself and then to your team's culture in a change process?
15. What is the predominant stage or type of leadership culture in the organisation – autocratic, collaborative or a combination of both? If a combination of both, give a percentage of autocratic leadership and collaborative leadership in the combination.
16. To build the right level of talent to execute strategy, what stage of leadership culture do you have to have?
17. What guides the strategic decision-making process in the organisation?
18. How can the organisation be improved to make it a better place to work?
19. How would you define leadership in this organisation?
20. How would you characterise this organisation's management style?

SECTION B: Fixed Response Questions

Instructions: *Using the following scales, tick the phrase/rectangle that most accurately reflects your response to each of the statements. There are no right or wrong answers, so provide your immediate impressions.*

1. The senior leadership demonstrates behaviour consistent with sharing power and influence in creating collective leadership.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

2. The leadership team will not object to discussing a change in the leadership Culture for positive results.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3. The executive team engaged as both an enabler and a participant in change processes in the Organisation

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4. There is scope for managers to be involved in leadership issues that lie beyond their formal job.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5. Among your managers, there is a stronger feeling of empowerment than of disempowerment.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

6. The leadership culture is serving the long-term needs of the business and its internal Organisation.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

7. In the Organisation, there is an expectation among leaders that they will be formally required to account for those things that matter most.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8. In the Organisation, followers are expected to question their leaders

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

9. In the Organisation, power is shared throughout the Organisation.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. In the Organisation, people are rewarded for an excellent performance.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. In the organisation, leaders share decision making power with employees.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. There are teamwork and cooperation within the Organisation

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. Leaders have the right competencies

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. Leadership shares direction, alignment and commitment

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15. Productivity will increase if leaders are engaged in a participative decision-making process

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. It is easy to initiate new leadership beliefs and practices in the Organisation

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

17. The company pays attention to leadership development

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

18. The Organisation has the leadership talent needed to implement change

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

19. The work of the senior team is characterised by a strong leader who makes most operational decisions and expects compliance from team members

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

20. The team is closed and secretive and operates without transparency

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

21. The leadership team supports and reinforces a work environment.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

22. The top leadership team is collaborative

Strongly Agree

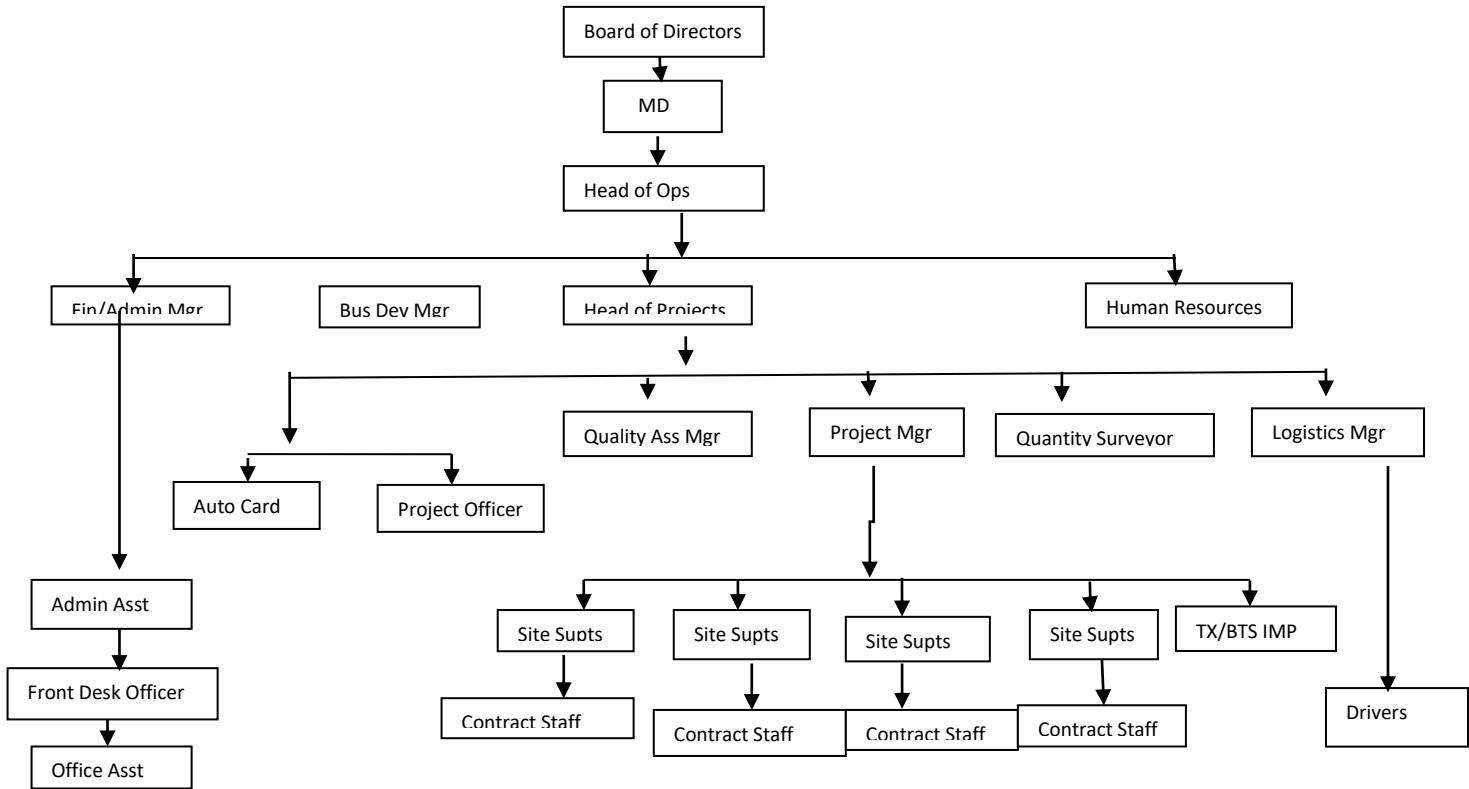
Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Appendix 7 - THE ORGANISATION CHART OF MTI



Appendix 8 – EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE THE STAKEHOLDERS’ MEETING

“a. INTRODUCTION

This meeting was called in furtherance of the stakeholders’ resolve to develop and expand requisite frameworks of cooperation and teamwork among STAKEHOLDERS of MTI Plc towards building activities necessary to move MTI Plc forward on the path of good business and profitability. In this regard, the stakeholders find it in their interests to address critical issues confronting MTI to proffer workable solutions achievable within a reasonable period and the limits of available resources.

b. COMMITMENTS & RESOLUTIONS

Following discussions at this meeting, the need to address the critical financial challenges facing MTI Plc was noted. Stakeholders were desirous and willing in good faith to give their maximum support and cooperation to work together as a team. Stakeholders expressed their desire to act cooperatively to establish strategies, projects and business models towards meeting the goals of the company. This cooperative action will focus attention on feasible means of sourcing funds to recapitalise MTI Plc, through planning and a consistent approach that will help attract potential investors.

To this end, the following resolutions were proposed and accordingly passed at the meeting: Stakeholders shall:

Facilitate collaborative work by identifying ways of meeting the strategic needs of MTI Plc;

Work together as a team to move MTI forward;

In good faith, take immediate steps to withdraw all cases instituted against each other or on behalf of either party or the company pending before any High Court of Justice and Alternative Dispute Resolution forum.

Hold further discussions on the modalities necessary for dealing with the Petition at the SEC, which was considered sensitive and should be handled carefully and satisfactorily in the interest of the company as a whole.

Make sacrifices and commitments that will translate into positive changes for MTI; take necessary steps to support the management of MTI to restructure and re-position MTI's business model to make MTI business compete favourably with other companies in the same sector of the economy; source for investors who are willing and available to take proper positions in the business in good faith;

Meet from time to time to further strategise on and evaluate progress made towards achieving the goal of resuscitating MTI.

Explore the feasibility and timing of securing resources funds from other sources, including present stakeholders of the company, pending arrival of any new investor, to enable the company to take advantage of any immediate opportunities that may crop up and meet outstanding obligations of the company.

Work with the management of the company to ensure that the company is NSE compliant to retain its quotation on the Nigerian Stock Exchange as well as comply with the regulations of other regulatory authorities”.

Appendix 9 – PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILES AND ROLES

| | Code Name | Roles |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Mr YE | Mr YE has worked for the company for 12 years in accounting and finance. He has no research experience but is proficient with data organisation and analysis. He was involved in data collection in all cycles; participated in planning, taking action, evaluation, reflections, etc., meaning-making in collaboration with other participants, engaged in coding and analysis, participated in focus group meetings and updating of research journals etc. |
| 2 | Mr KO | Mr KO has worked for 15 years, holding several positions with the organisation; engaged in data collection and analysis; participated in focus group meetings, and took part in all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 3 | Mr MA | Mr MA joined the organisation eleven years prior to the commencement of this research work; participated in data collection, analysis, including the processes or stages of template analysis, reflections and keeping of journals, etc. |
| 4 | Mr BO | Mr BO joined the organisation 13 years ago; has a rich background in data management; participated in data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings; took part in meetings of the research team. |
| 5 | Mr AD | He has been with the organisation for 18 years.; has a rich history of the company, including corporate politics; took part in many high-level meetings of the organisation; took part in data collection and analysis; and took part in all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 6 | Mr ZA | Mr ZA joined the organisation 12 years ago; he has held strategic positions and was involved in many strategy sessions of the company. He builds good networks within and outside the organisation; took part in data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings; took an active part in meetings and during the action research stages |
| 7 | Mrs OY | Mrs OY joined the organisation 15 years ago and has been exposed to |

| | | |
|----|---------|--|
| | | different areas of the organisation's endeavour, thus enabling her to gain insights into the workings of the political system and strategy, and other areas.; took part in data collection, analysis and all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 8 | Miss SH | Miss SH helped with data organisation and management; took part in the data collection and analysis processes; participated in focus group meetings and stakeholders meetings; took part in all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 9 | Mrs DO | Mrs DO joined the organisation 18 years ago; left the organisation after spending ten years, but re-joined the organisation as an executive director four years ago; took part in all stages of the research, including data collection and analysis, meetings, kept reflection journal and engaged collaboratively with other research participants and the researcher in data review and interpretation of findings. |
| 10 | Mrs D | Mrs D has engaged as an employee 17 years ago and has been consistent with delivering results in spite of the discouraging environment of work. She is enthusiastic and a thorough professional; took part in data collection and analysis, planning and implementation; engaged collaboratively with others and participated in all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 11 | Mr KE | Mr KE joined the organisation 13 years ago and has held strategic posts in the organisation; took part in data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings; kept a reflection journal and participated in meetings and all stages of the action research cycles. |
| 12 | Mr OK | Mr OK has been an employee (and now a senior employee) for over 11 years; took part in data collection and analysis and all stages of the action research cycles and meetings of the research team. |
| 13 | Mr ZI | Mr ZI was employed 15 years ago and has consistently performed; known as a high-flier, who has good knowledge of the business; took part in data collection and analysis; planning, taking action, evaluation of outcomes and |

| | | |
|----|-------|---|
| | | interpretation of findings. |
| 14 | Mr TA | Mr TA joined the organisation 20 years ago and knew the history of the business; has worked with CEOs of the organisation and has participated in strategy sessions and other meetings; took part in data collection and analysis, kept a reflection journal; took part in the interpretation of findings, and all stages of the action research cycle. |
| 15 | Mr TO | Mr TO joined the organisation as a junior employee 14 years ago and has performed excellently, took part in data collection and analysis, participated in meetings and all stages of the action research cycles. |

Appendix 10 – SURVEY FOAM

Direction, Alignment, and Commitment

Instructions: On a scale of 1-5, indicate the extent to which each of the following statements describes the way things stand right now in the group. The terms “we”, “our”, “everyone” and “people” in the statements refer to members of the group.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Descriptive | Slightly Descriptive | Moderately Descriptive | Greatly Descriptive | Completely Descriptive |

DIRECTION

We agree on what we should be aiming to accomplish together.

1 2 3 4 5

We have a clear vision of what the organisation needs to achieve in the future.

1 2 3 4 5

We have group goals that guide our key decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

Our work is united by a common direction.

1 2 3 4 5

TOTAL

ALIGNMENT

Our work is aligned across the group.

1 2 3 4 5

Although individuals take on different tasks in the group, our combined work fits together.

1 2 3 4 5

People who perform different roles or functions in the group coordinate their work effectively.

1 2 3 4 5

The work of each individual is well-coordinated with the work of others.

1 2 3 4 5

TOTAL

COMMITMENT

Employees are now committed to the organisation.

1 2 3 4 5

People give the effort needed for the organisation to succeed.

1 2 3 4 5

Employees are dedicated to the organisation even when we face setbacks.

1 2 3 4 5

We trust one another to accomplish the work of the organisation.

1 2 3 4 5

TOTAL

When we identify one or more low outcomes, we can begin exploring what factors may be contributing to these deficits. The criterion for deciding if an outcome is low is where a total score for one outcome is less than 16.

