

# SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP STYLES FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

C MARA<sup>1</sup> and T MUSHAYI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Johannesburg, Tel: +27 72 270 2291; Email: [cmara@uj.ac.za](mailto:cmara@uj.ac.za)

<sup>2</sup>University of Namibia, Tel: +264 81 643 1980; Email: [tapfuma11@gmail.com](mailto:tapfuma11@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

Developing nations such as Namibia enjoy equal access to trade opportunities but are also vulnerable to the competitive threats of global trade. Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), widespread internet usage and access to international funding grant the country passage into rapid interconnectivity, and both social and economic networks. Global trade would be impossible without transport networks, the vital link in moving merchandise along the value chain. Nearly 90% of the world's merchandise is transported by sea, and this has given rise to a highly competitive maritime industry where seaport efficiency can greatly enhance a country's participation in global trade. Marine trade in Namibia reflects the same statistics. Namibia Ports Authority (Namport), a state-owned enterprise (SOE) tasked to manage two major ports in Namibia, competes with ports along the coastline of southern Africa. In this highly competitive industry, a more efficient port may attract more international trade, and Namibian ports are ideally situated to compete with South African ports, often criticised for performing poorly compared to world ports. At the same time SOEs such as the Namport, are afflicted by growing debt, dysfunctional management and leadership, failure to deliver and overall inefficiency. Furthermore, leadership in SOE's faces the dichotomy of political interference in operational and administrative decisions and competitive strategies. Amidst all these challenges, capable leadership is pivotal in the extent to which SOEs meet their operational and strategic objectives. This theoretical paper therefore investigates the literature, asking whether a leader's emotional intelligence and leadership style may contribute to operational efficiency.

**Keywords:** State owned enterprise, leadership, emotional intelligence, management, Namibia, seaports, globalization.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership may be a differentiating element in the success or failure of modern-day organisations that must remain competitive in highly rivalrous global markets (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2019). In fact, global trade calls for leaders who excel at harnessing their individual, as well as collective strengths and capabilities to build an organisation fit to compete and outperform their rivals in their quest to create stakeholder value (Gamble, Peteraf & Thompson, 2021).

Whether an organisation is private, public or a private-public partnership (PPP), leaders in any organisation face largely similar challenges, including setting direction to achieve performance goals and benchmarks, better relationships with stakeholders, sustainable value creation as well as commitment among followers (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2019).

Exemplary leaders may have the unique ability to achieve their goals by optimising their unique capabilities, emotional intelligence, and leadership styles (Goleman, 2015; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2019).

Both leaders and managers are needed in the maritime transportation industry, and around the world different models are used to manage or lead stakeholders in this industry. Such stakeholders may include shipping lines, freight handlers, seaport authorities, and transportation entities, all involved in the movement of merchandise, 90% of which is by sea (Tijan, Jović, Jardas & Gulić, 2019; Sakyi, Darku & Immurana, 2021). As sea transportation lies at the heart of global trade, and seaports are among the most vital entities in sea transportation (Sakyi *et al.*, 2021), we focused this research on seaports, with a particular emphasis on leadership in seaport authorities. While seaports may be solely owned by the government or a Public Private Partnership (PPP), (Quintano, Mazzocchi & Rocca, 2019), the ownership model followed may possibly impact leadership styles and the emotional intelligences employed by seaport leaders.,

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Adopting Kalio's (2019) definition of globalisation for the purposes of this paper, we will refer to globalisation as all the actions contained in forging global relations, including trade, social and economic exchange. Due to rapid globalisation, country and even continental boundaries are blurred, and the world is integrating into a single economy, open to developed, developing and emerging economies for participation (Gamble *et al.*, 2021). Global competition lays bare the weaknesses in open economies, and in developing countries where, although trade opportunities abound, management and leadership capacity, abilities, and expertise, coupled with a dysfunctional government, impairs the country's ability to compete and participate successfully in the global economy (Daft, 2015).

In this highly competitive external environment, each organisation has its internal capabilities, such as knowledge and expertise, and a strong and dynamic leadership team to fight this global competition (Mara, 2019). However, weak leadership may impair an organisation's competitive ability and thus its ability to meet its objectives in the highly competitive global space (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2019).

While profitability decisions may be a major driving force behind efficiency in privately run maritime operations, that may not be the case in PPP's or SOE's. However, competitive pressure is prevalent in every port operation, regardless of structure (Bichou, 2021; Quintano *et al.*, 2019). Still, efficient seaport services are worthy of pursuit, as they may generate social and economic wealth by creating employment, government revenue in the form of taxation, tourism, and the supply of hard currency (COMCEC, 2015).

This paper investigates and report on the various leadership styles, and their usefulness under various conditions. We address two objectives with this paper, the first being to explore leadership theories and styles by probing academic literature on the concepts. As a second objective, we recommend the way forward based on our findings.

Few research articles focus on leadership styles, leader Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and its potential impact on the competitive success of seaports. In the southern African context, very few articles have been published investigating South African and Namibian ports (Ojadi & Walters, 2015). Thus, the research problem for this paper is that there is a

gap in the literature about leadership styles and leader EQ and how these may enhance the competitive abilities of Namport.

This paper therefore proceeds with a literature review on a variety of constructs we deemed important to satisfy the stated objectives. We use Namport in this context, as the sole Ports Agency in Namibia, being concerned with seaport management. The content of this paper represents the constructivist approach applied to make recommendations to Namibian policy makers, as well as researchers and academics worldwide who take an interest in maritime research.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review section contains recent literature that is relevant to the constructs being investigated, which are leadership, emotional intelligence, globalisation, and seaport authorities. The literature review section provides a comparative analysis of transactional leadership style and transformational leadership style. Transactional leadership style is currently being practiced at Namport and transformational leadership is being given as the most viable alternative. EQ is a significant skill leaders need to be effective and to be successful (Aldaswari, 2020).

#### **3.1 Leadership Styles**

Transactional leadership tend to identify the expectations of the followers and respond by establishing a close link between effort and reward (Şirin, Özge & Fatma, 2018). Its foundation is the conditional reward-based exchange relationship between the leader and their followers (Sirin *et al*, 2018). Gamble *et al.* (2021) posit that power is given to the leader to evaluate, train and correct subordinates when performance needs to be improved and to reward followers when required outcomes are achieved. In addition to rewards in recognition of acceptable behavior, transactional leaders use punishment for unacceptable behavior (Sirin *et al.*, 2013). Leaders and followers enter an agreement on what the followers will receive upon achieving the negotiated level of performance (Brahim, Ridic & Jukic, 2015).

This system of rewards and penalties does not offer much inspiration and motivation to employees to go beyond what is rewarded or punished and with limited motivation, followers of a transactional leader may develop a tendency to do the minimum to avoid punishment (Brahim *et al*, 2015). Sirin *et al.* (2018) posit that transactional leaders are less interested in the followers' characteristics, such as for instance, their entrepreneurial and innovative attributes, and more in the exchange with them. Transactional leadership works better where a leader has power to reward or punish, and without such power, the leader's position and ability to influence followers is compromised. Often, this is the case in public sector organisations (Sirin *et al*, 2018). Gigol (2021) has found that leadership has a strong influence over whether employees engage in unethical behaviour, which may benefit their organisation, but may be to the disadvantage of society. Gigol was supported by other authors such as Cheng, Wei and Lin (2019) and Wang (2019).

Transformational leaders by contrast build a connection with their followers or subordinates, influence them, become their role model, sincerely encourages them to work beyond their performance to jointly work towards the organisation's targets by acting with team spirit, follow change and development, and keep the organisation energetic within the competitive environment (Wang, 2019). Transformational leaders achieve this by developing a working environment that inspires trust, reliability, organisational

commitment, and shared governance (Frixou, Charalambous, Galanis, Kaitelidou & Sapountzi, 2020). Such leaders therefore provide support and encouragement to followers, assist their development by promoting growth opportunities, and show trust and respect for the followers (Brahim *et al.*, 2015).

Regardless of leadership style, leaders are in a powerful position to influence their subordinates positively, in a manner that encourages them to use their collective competencies to achieve the organisations objectives (Wilson-Prangleya & Olivier, 2016). Regrettably, public sector leaders in Africa are not well-regarded by the public for their ability to encourage ethical conduct among their followers or subordinates (Yeboah-Assiamah, Asamoah, Bawole & Buabeng, 2015). Subordinates shadow the leaders' signals and resort to similar unethical practices and behaviours modeled by the leaders, and despite the existence of government units created for reporting ethical violations, these behaviours tend to go unreported (Weinberg, 2014). In fact, it is more likely that employees would mirror the unethical behaviours of unethical leaders and feel a sense of affinity to their organisation (Gigol, 2021). In contrast though, Hassan, Wright and Yukl (2014), report that subordinates who shadow the ethical conduct displayed by ethical leaders, tend to be more willing to report, and refrain from, wrongdoing. The examples displayed by ethical leaders seem to have greater impact on the ethical conduct of followers, much more than government structures erected to encourage reporting (Hassan *et al.*, 2014). With the overabundance of such examples in developing African nations Yeboah-Assiamah *et al.* (2015) lament the large gap that remains in our knowledge on how unethical leadership encourage unethical follower conduct, as many of such studies have been penned by authors in the developed world.

### 3.2 Namibia Ports Authority Leadership

Namport as an SOE has got a hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership structure (Amakali, 2017). The Board at Namport is the custodian of the business strategy and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) executes the strategy (Haimbili, 2018). The Board at Namport is appointed by the line Minister of Works and Transport and the CEO reports to the Board (Amakali, 2017). This arrangement brings in political influence in the manner Namport is managed and led. Haimbili (2018) further stipulates that corporate governance becomes a problem at Namport as stipulations of King 111 apply realistically to organisations with private sector characteristics and not public sector organisations. The governance structure at Namport makes it difficult for the Board chairperson or the CEO to be transformational leaders. Transactional leadership can only be ideal for the top-down approach at Namport. Baskarada, Watson & Cromarty (2017) posit that transactional leadership favours closed cultures, mechanistic structures and formal systems and procedures.

Transformational leadership can directly be linked to port efficiency and port effectiveness. Tamunomiebi and Okwudiri (2021) state that transformational leadership can build a formidable team in an organisation as the leader motivates followers beyond expectation by transforming their attitudes, beliefs, and values as opposed to simply gaining compliance. Transformational leadership as well can lead to port efficiency as it emphasises inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and motivating followers (Baskarada *et al.*, 2017). Ramadhanti, Singh & Kularajasingham (2021) assert that transformational leadership contributes to higher employee enthusiasm levels and the employees become conscious of the value of task outcomes, sacrificing their self-interests for the company's sake.

Namport employees have a collaborative role to play in ensuring the transformation of the company towards efficiency. Employees are the spearhead of the company in carrying out company operations (Sujatmiko, Lumbanraja & Absah, 2019). Robbins (2016) emphasises the importance of employee ability which is the capacity of an individual to do various tasks in a job. Employee ability is in the form of intellectual ability which is the capacity to carry out a variety of cognitive tasks as well as physical ability which is the capacity to carry out physical actions (Robbins, 2019). Osei (2015) emphasises that the dimension of workforce competence consists of social interaction between employees, strategic training and development activities, and adaption to change by employees. Sitorus and Soesatyo (2014) argue that organisational efficiency is enhanced by self-development of employees and effective organisational communication.

### 3.3 Emotional Intelligence

Considering that a leader's conduct, whether ethical or unethical, has such a widespread impact on followers, it stands to reason that leaders who can understand and control their own feelings, should be able to inspire similar conduct among followers (Gigol, 2021). People with high EQ are aware of their feelings and actions, as well as the effect of these on their followers (Hassan *et al.*, 2014). Emotionally intelligent leaders also tend to display transformational leadership tendencies, in the sense that they focus on the good of the entire organisation (Yeboah-Assiamah *et al.*, 2015).

Miles and Scott (2019) discussed the five dimensions of EQ, which are self-regulation, self-awareness, internal motivation, empathy, and advanced social skills. Transformational leaders, with evolved EQ, may inspire genuine change in their organisations, through their followers or subordinates (Frixou, Charalambous, Galanis,

Kaitelidou & Sapountzi-Krepia, 2020). These traits are typically noted in leaders who adopt the transformational or transactional approaches. Israa (2020) in his study of leadership and EQ concludes that there is a positive relationship between EQ and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been linked with emotional intelligence as effective leadership requires various characteristics in the leaders such as dynamism, self-confidence, inspiration, and emotional intelligence (Frixou *et al.*, 2020).

### 3.4 The Importance and Role of Port Authorities in Sea Transportation

According to Mlambo (2021), seaports are a primary conduit of international trade and are central to the growth of the global economy. Over 90% of international trade in African countries is done via the sea, making ports and their locality vital for the facilitation of global trade (Sok, 2016). Seaports therefore connect the global economy and play an important role in country and regional economic growth (Tijan, Jovic, Panjako & Zgali, 2021).

Many concerns have been raised about poor port efficiency and resultant low competitiveness, pointing to inadequate organisational and institutional structures, inefficient port operations and services, gaps in governance and regulatory frameworks, and a range of procedural and administrative bottlenecks (Ojadi & Walters, 2015). This lack in proficiency has resulted in costly delays for port users and other stakeholders, such as shipowners, freight forwarders and other maritime professionals (Mlambo, 2021). Costly delays may come in the form of slow container handling and long ship turnaround times (Tijan *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, African ports are reported to be dilapidated, lacking

essential infrastructure, are congested, and fail to match global trends and standards (Mlambo, 2021).

Volumes of documents are necessary in the import and export of merchandise during its progression along the value chain from seller to buyer (Rodrigue, 2017). These documents need to meet compliance standards when crossing country borders, take time and are costly to generate, prepare and submit (COMCEC, 2017). In a comparison between Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country ports and sub-Saharan ports, Tijan *et al.*, 2021 found that documentary compliance costs \$25 on average at OECD ports, and \$284 on average in sub-Saharan ports. OECD country ports need on average 3,4 hours to process documents, while sub-Saharan ports need on average 98 hours for it (Tijan *et al.*, 2021). The average time spent in the more efficient ports is 0,99 days, while in African ports it is two days (Mlambo, 2021). Port management and leadership were highlighted as one reason (PwC, 2018). By contrast, the “Single Window concept, a global system that standardizes, harmonises, and streamlines import/export related documents, using electronic processing, may infinitely reduce the time and costs related to cross-border trade (World Customs Organisation, 2019).

Port authorities have the key role of port governance, which refers to the interactions between the public and private sectors (PwC, 2018). While there are many models around the world ranging from autonomous ports that operate commercially, to the more common structure of a port authority, there is still uncertainty about the role of the port, and the extent of its reach (Mlambo, 2021). Another option is the landlord structure, where the port authority owns the basic infrastructure but delegates the managerial and financial responsibility of for instance, the terminals, to other commercial operators (COMCEC, 2015). In sub-Saharan Africa, the port authority model is preferred, based on the investment required from central government and the needs of the stakeholders (Tijan *et al.*, 2021). The role of port authorities traditionally has centred on the development and improvement of port operations, infrastructure, development, and maintenance, as well as marketing and managing ports facilities (Rodrigue, 2017). However, this role has evolved and now needs seaports to constantly striving to stay efficient, profitable, and competitive (Agatic & Kolanovic, 2020).

Many of the mentioned challenges that plague these port authorities can be linked to poor management and leadership and this evolving role of port authorities demands an evolving management and leadership style (Mlambo, 2021). Evolved leaders are theorized to inspire transformation to meet such future demands (Frixou *et al.*, 2020). In addition to the call to digitize technology, the increased flow of cargo demands larger vessels, and therefore larger port facilities, cargo handling equipment and related logistics (Bichou, 2021). Digital technologies at sea and the other new challenges mentioned, requires of port authorities to employ adequately qualified port officials. Surveys conducted in Brazil, India, South Korea, China, and the United Kingdom indicated that there is a skill shortage in port operations and management. Therefore, a new breed of port professionals, managers, and leaders, is now needed with the right skills in port finance, operations, logistics, management, and technology (COMCEC, 2017).

### 3.5 Global Trade and Country Competitiveness

Global trade can serve as a powerful engine of growth and development, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (UN.org, 2021). The importance of global trade to domestic economies has increased exponentially with some open economies enjoying newfound success through

international trade (Sok, 2016). Globalisation links the world through a multitude of concepts that interconnect us socially, politically, and economically (Rodrigue, 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted global trade (UN.org 2021), causing a contraction in 2020 with widespread lockdowns that triggered a collapse in demand and significant disruptions to global production networks (UN.org., 2021). The World Trade Organisation (2021) highlights that in 2020 the value of global trade in nominal dollar terms fell by 9.6% while global GDP fell by 3.3 %. The Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted factory output, disrupted travel, and depressed demand worldwide (UN.org, 2021). However, today's hyper-connected global economy characterized by deep trade links has made the world more vulnerable to shocks, but also more resilient to them when they strike (WTO, 2021). Another challenge to global trade has been the rising transport costs, which put negative pressure on imports and exports (Brodzicki, 2022). The knock-on effect of rising transport costs is seen in aggravated disruptions in the global value chain, causes reduced supply of goods and services, increased demand, especially since the world is recovering from Covid-19 (WTO, 2021). At the same time, the emerging world post-Covid-19, is already characterised by new demand patterns in travel and shopping, which implies heightened demand for merchandise, larger vessels, which in turn requires bigger port facilities, management, and leadership efforts to benefit from the increased demand (McKinsey, 2021).

### 3.6 Namibia Ports Authority

Namport is an SOE established to oversee and manage Namibia's commercial seaports, the Port of Walvis Bay, and the Port of Luderitz (Namport, 2017). Namport facilitates general vessel traffic, container cargo handling and cross-border cargo import/export (Namport, 2018). The Port of Walvis Bay is Namibia's largest commercial port receiving up to 2 500 vessel calls annually and handles about five million tonnes of cargo (Amakali, 2017). The Port of Walvis Bay serves its landlocked neighbours, being Zimbabwe, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Botswana (Amakali, 2017; Namport, 2018).

Amakali (2017) argues that port governance is one of the core pillars of any authority with the aim to boost port performance. A board of directors provides general oversight and direction in the governance of the authority, but the Namibian government is a shareholder (Namport, 2022). The Namport executive is responsible for detailed planning and implementation of objectives and policies as determined by the board of directors. In 2019, the new container terminal at the Port of Walvis Bay was inaugurated and operationalized (Namport, 2022). This development increased throughput capacity to 750.000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent) per annum. Also, Namport has embarked on a digitalization programme, and this acceleration towards becoming a digital workplace was done through the Port Automated Project, which focused on key technologies (Namport, 2022).

The absence of a national ports policy has paved the way for political interference in the governance of Namport (Amakali, 2017). While there are only two ports in the country, they appear to operate as monopolies, and compete, instead of cooperating (Mlambo, 2021). Namport appears to have an ever-expanding model of excessive recruitment, leading to a threateningly high wage bill (over 50% of the revenue), which is accompanied by equally high operating expenditure bills (Amakali, 2017). Despite appearing to be overstaffed, Namport stakeholders experience several bottlenecks in service delivery, due to limitations in current infrastructure (Mlambo, 2021). This has caused major shipping lines to re-route some of their transshipment volumes to neighbouring ports, citing channel width limitations (Namport, 2022). Namport management (2022) also admits that its and

Communication Technology (ICT) implementation strategy is falling behind schedule, which has hindered the authority from being a full automated workplace. Lack of innovation and advanced technological systems such as modern port ICT systems has also prevented the authority from offering automated terminal and gate processes (Amakali, 2017).

Rather than sacrifice business opportunities in favour of neighbouring ports, Namport is in the ideal position to compete with some of the major South African ports, such as Durban and Cape Town due to the continued poor performance of the latter (Mlambo, 2021). Bichou (2021) found that Durban is one of the costly ports in the world for its users, in terms of cargo levies, slow turnaround times, local road congestion and time lags in related rail services. The aspects of escalating cost and time delays were also highlighted by Tijan *et al.* (2021), pointing to the magnitude of the problem and the size of the opportunity for Namport (Mlambo, 2021).

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

How leadership styles are perceived may shed light on certain aspects previously unknown, and that may explain current port challenges and successes. A review of the literature illustrates large volumes of publications that point to the vital importance of improving port performance for the sake of offering better service to stakeholders, and the eventual savings that may accrue to all involved. While these are micro-level advantages of better performing ports, on a macro level, the literature is clear on the benefits that may befall a country through more efficient port operations. Africa's ideal location on the busiest maritime routes should put African ports in the best position to potentially benefit from maritime traffic, which facilitates global trade, economic development, and global competitiveness (WTO, 2021). For these opportunities to materialize, African countries need to prioritise the upgrade of their ports to improve trade competitiveness (PwC, 2018). How Namport leadership views these opportunities and their leadership style to transform the authority, may facilitate them to capitalize on these opportunities.

We have deliberately focused our discussion on port infrastructure, although seaports offer multifaceted services. Therefore, the chosen research setting was port challenges, and the question we asked was whether a particular leadership style may be helpful in overcoming such challenges and capitalize on opportunities created by neighbouring port inefficiencies. Literature has also proven that time is of the essence in cargo handling and container terminal efficiency, as well as road and rail access. Therefore, less congestion at the Namibian ports could be an ideal drawcard for users who are currently reported by literature to be dissatisfied with wasted time at regional competitor ports. This would require that Namport leadership have sufficient power to inspire transformational conduct and reward it accordingly, while still following high ethical standards.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study is a first of its kind, for its contribution to the literature on leadership's role in port performance. We have extensively studied recent literature and found a definitive gap in the literature to address the constructs of ports in Africa, leadership and the ability of the latter to improve port performance. The poor performance of South African ports creates growth opportunities for the two ports under the authority of Namport, being the port of Luderitz and Walvis Bay port.



Few of the articles found in the literature offered solutions to the inefficiency issues described and we could only criticize the neighbouring ports because the bulk of the literature was written from that perspective. This enabled us to point out weaknesses and potential gaps, which Namport leadership may use to capitalize on, for its own future growth. While there are many reports on SA ports no international research focuses on Namibian ports. This points to the lack of significance attached to Namibian ports, while the potential is not investigated by anyone.

Namport must adopt transformational leadership and must nurture transformational leaders for sustainable port efficiency. Northouse (2014) states that transformational leaders exhibit four characteristics which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealised influence is the behavior of leaders who inspire trust, admiration, and respect among a team (Northouse, 2014). The leader assumes the role of a role model and leads by example. Under inspirational motivation, the leader creates a vision, develops plausible strategies for achieving the vision, and communicates the vision to followers in a coherent way (Chou, 2015). By intellectual stimulation, leaders inspire employee creativity and innovativeness, encourage workers to question norms, and seek new approaches (Njogu, 2016). Through individualized consideration, leaders play the role of coaches and mentors, they show genuine concern of the needs and concerns of their subordinates (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014).

Namport can involve the private sector more into its operations and maintenance through entering PPP contracts. Management contracts will be ideal where private contractors are hired to manage a range of activities (World Bank Group, 2019). In this arrangement, the private sector will also have a management role and can put pressure on the port authority to enhance competitiveness through port development (Islamic Development Bank, 2019). Namport will benefit from a PPP as the private companies will bring leadership styles from the private sector into the management contract. Management contracts decrease political influence in port authorities, brings more transparency, and produces a comprehensive solid vision for the organisation (Idris, Kura & Bashir, 2013). Transformational leadership will be realistic for Namport if the private sector is involved more in the operation and management of the port authority.

In future we intend to interview Namport managers and employees to determine how (1) managers perceive their own leadership styles and how (2) employees perceive the leadership styles of managers. We intend to investigate whether Namport managers have a combination of optimal leader qualities and emotional intelligence to steer the ports authority toward a more globally competitive organisation, one that can see the opportunities left open in the southern African ports market.

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