



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Managerial errors: A brake on the performance of higher education, university, scientific research and innovation institutions in Lumumbaville

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Abstract

Leading a public institution requires human, organizational and managerial qualities. A leader who does not possess them risks at any time experiencing serious difficulties in managing their staff. Thus, managers who confuse leadership with authority often maintain poor relationships with their employees. This results in the departure and/or demotivation of the latter. This happens because workers in both public and private companies do not accept poor management. This article examines the managerial errors that hinder the performance and development of Higher Education, University, Scientific Research and Innovation institutions in Lumumbaville in Sankuru, Democratic Republic of Congo. We identify deficient managerial practices, such as lack of leadership, ineffective communication and the absence of clear strategies.

Keywords: Managerial errors; Performance; Leadership; Higher Education; Innovation

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo faces significant challenges in the management of its public institutions, often characterized by resistance to change. This resistance, whether cultural, structural or individual, can stem from various factors including fear of authority, deeply rooted habits and rigid organizational structures.

Managerial errors are a scourge for public institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo in general and in Sankuru Province in particular, particularly within the Ministry of Higher Education, University, Scientific Research and Innovation. Institutions whose mission is research, training and innovation often encounter management obstacles that hinder their effectiveness and success. Lack of coordination and ineffective communication are all elements that hinder the performance of these institutions.

Under these conditions, it is crucial for a manager to recognize and avoid certain managerial errors that can hinder progress and compromise the effectiveness of a higher education institution. Enlightened and adaptable leadership is essential to manage through the turbulence of change (Astolfi, 2012).

This article explores common errors that managers can make, while proposing strategies to avoid them by focusing on communication, stakeholder engagement and training. It is possible to transform resistance into a vector of innovation and sustainable development.

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1.1. Problem statement

From all the above, the problem of this article is as follows: What are the managerial errors that a manager must avoid to overcome resistance and effectively lead a higher education institution?

1.2. Hypothesis

As a hypothesis, we presume that the adoption of managerial practices by managers such as transparent communication, stakeholder involvement and continuous training would be important levers to reduce resistance to change and improve organizational effectiveness. It should be noted that success in business management depends both on appropriate managerial approaches and on the ability to engage employees and stakeholders in a transformation process.

1.3. Objective

The objective of this article is to understand the dynamics of resistance to change in a Higher and University Education Institution in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to identify managerial errors to avoid to ensure its effectiveness and performance.

1.4. Theoretical framework

1.4.1. Managerial errors

Managerial errors are defined as ineffective or inappropriate choices, decisions or actions that have negative consequences on the performance of an organization (Marneuse, 2021). They can result from a poor assessment of the situation, poor communication, a lack of clear strategy or a lack of training and competence of managers. These errors can hinder the educational process, reduce the quality of training, compromise innovation and also reduce the reputation of the institution.

1.4.2. Performance

Performance is a concept that allows any organization to measure itself against its environment. Thus, it is useful to present the indicators used by organizations in their performance analysis (Nsaman & Atshwel, 2007). Performance can be defined in management at three levels:

- **Action:** performance designates simultaneously the results and the actions implemented to achieve them, that is to say it is a process;
- **Result of the action:** performance then corresponds to a result measured by indicators and positioned in relation to a referent which can be endogenous or exogenous;
- **Success:** performance refers to a positive result and representations of success specific to each individual and each establishment.

To better explain this concept, we will retain this definition by Bourguignon, cited by Nsaman & Atshwel (2007), because it brings together the three senses listed above and explicitly recognizes its polysemous character. Thus, it can be defined as the achievement of organizational objectives, regardless of the nature and variety of these objectives. This achievement can be understood in the strict sense (result, outcome, etc.) or in the broad sense of the process that leads to the result as action. Performance measurement is then carried out on three axes: relevance (the relationship between the initial objectives and the resources acquired to achieve them), effectiveness (achievement of the set objectives) and efficiency (the way of achieving the objectives but in record time and at lower cost). Hence, we can say that performance is the better-better or the better-more, that is to say beyond the targeted objectives (Daillard, 2002).

1.4.3. Leadership

Leadership is the ability to influence a group in order to achieve common goals, by mobilizing people around a vision, coordinating actions and promoting the motivation of team members (Cakpo, 2005).

Commonly, management style involves several forms of leadership, namely:

- Autocratic leadership where the leader decides alone,
- Democratic or participatory leadership
- Laissez-faire leadership
- Transformational leadership

- Situational leadership
- Charismatic leadership.

2. Methodology

It is obvious that obtaining fair and logical results is strongly correlated with the working method adopted. Scientific disciplines are always based on hypotheses, develop methods, carry out experiments and produce results. In the field of social sciences, it is often more interesting to combine practice with theory because experience has shown that the gap between these two concepts is considerable, so much so that some agree that "when it comes to managing a Higher and University Education institution in the DRC, reality is found in the field."

2.1. Population and sample

For data collection, we opted for semi-structured interviews with staff working in these Higher and University Education institutions. An interview form was established beforehand with open questions which sometimes offer the possibility for respondents to express themselves freely on the subject discussed. The interviews were carried out for 5 months, from April to August 2025, with active agents working at the University Patrice Emery Lumumba, the Higher Pedagogical Institute and the Higher Institute of Medical Techniques (all in Lumumbaville).

Table 1 Target of the survey

N°	Institution	Number of respondents
1	Université Patrice Emery Lumumba	33
2	Institut Supérieur Pédagogique	45
3	Institut Supérieur des Techniques Médicales	42
Total		120

Source: Field surveys

The population of our study consists of agents from three public institutions of Higher Education, University, Scientific Research and Innovation working in Lumumbaville. Given the difficulty of obtaining the actual number of agents, we drew a simple random sample of 120 agents with the desired degree of precision.

2.2. Data collection methods and techniques

To carry out this study, we used the following methods and techniques:

- **The analytical method** was used to carry out a study on the survey results in order to carry out analyzes and comments worthy of scientific work.
- **The statistical method** helped us in data collection, tabular presentation and interpretation of results.
- **The observation technique** allowed us to observe certain attitudes of agents at work to provide additional information that the other techniques did not allow us to obtain.
- **The documentary technique** helped us consult written documents relating to a research field. It allowed us to exploit books, dissertations, reports, and other unpublished documents related to our research.
- **The structured interview technique** consisted of verbally asking questions on a stereotype questionnaire and noting the answers provided. This technique allowed us to know the level of conception of agents working in Higher, University and Scientific Research Education in Lumumbaville on the impact of Lean management.

3. Results

3.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The above table shows that the subjects of our survey are predominantly male, representing 62.5% compared to 37.5% female. It should also be noted that the most represented education level is higher education with 75%. This situation shows that agents working in this sector have a high level, as they are graduates. Regarding the grade of respondents, it can be seen that Scientific Staff and Administrative, Technical and Manual Staff were more interested in responding to

our concerns, with 60 respondents (50%) and 54 respondents (45%) respectively. Regarding career seniority, 65% of our respondents have between 6 and 15 years of seniority in these public institutions of the State.

Table 2 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

N°	Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	75	62.5
		Female	45	37.5
		Total	120	100
2	Education level	Secondary	24	20
		Higher	90	75
		Postgraduate	6	5
		Total	120	100
3	Grade	Academic staff	6	5
		Scientific staff	60	50
		Administrative, Technical and Manual staff	54	45
		Total	120	100
4	Seniority	1-5 years	15	12.5
		6-10 years	30	25
		11-15 years	54	45
		16-20 years	21	17.5
		Total	120	100

Source: Our investigations

3.2. Survey results on managerial errors

Table 3 Distribution of respondents according to managerial errors to avoid in Higher, University, Scientific Research and Innovation institutions in Lumumbaville

N°	Managerial errors to avoid	Number	%
1	Divide and rule	102	85
2	Increasing stress on employees	96	80
3	Not recognizing one's weaknesses	62	51.7
4	Being disorganized	78	65
5	Being unproactive	75	62.5
6	Too direct management style	69	57.5
7	Not passing on know-how to employees	89	74.1
8	Not listening to or considering employees	108	90
9	Poor communication with employees	72	60
10	Favoritism, nepotism or unequal treatment	101	84.1
11	Too many meetings / too few decisions	81	67.5
12	Harmful practices to keep power	84	70

13	Not managing emotions	64	53.3
14	Not clarifying roles and responsibilities of employees	69	57.5
15	Daily micro-management	90	75

Source: Our investigations

The summary table above indicates the managerial errors observed in managers and which may constitute a brake on the management and performance of Higher Education, University, Scientific Research and Innovation Institutions in the DRC in general and those of Lumumbaville in particular.

Observation of this table tells us that the majority of managers want to divide to impose their authority, with 102 respondents (85%). Those who seek to increase stress in the workplace also obtained 96 respondents (80%). Among respondents, 62 (51.7%) said that managers do not recognize their weaknesses, while others are even proactive, with 98 respondents (83.3%).

A leader must have an entourage allowing them to organize their work well. In this case, 78 respondents (65%) affirmed that the managers of educational institutions in Lumumbaville are disorganized, which justifies that they are also proactive with 75 respondents (62.5%). Those who affirmed the adaptation of a too direct management style numbered 69 respondents (57.5%), while 89 respondents (74.1%) do not pass on their know-how to employees. Others affirmed that the objective of non-performance lies in the fact that 108 respondents (90%) do not want to listen to and/or consider their employees. This leads to those who confirmed that communication is not respected, with 72 respondents (60%).

It should be noted that of 100% of our survey population, 101 respondents (84.1%) affirm that several managers manage with favoritism, nepotism or unequal treatment when any advantage is available. And 81 respondents (67.5%) affirm that these managers convene many meetings to make few decisions. This leads us to affirm the existing weaknesses in our institutions. 70% of respondents affirm that many managers engage in harmful practices to keep their positions. While 64 respondents (53.3%) are not able to manage their emotions. Other respondents affirm that not clarifying the roles and responsibilities of employees also constitutes a brake on performance at the ESURSI level, with 69 respondents (57.5%) and finally, daily micro-management is also part of these errors committed by managers, with 90 respondents (75%).

4. Discussion

4.1. Critical analysis of managerial errors

In any organization, management is not only a question of method, but also of choice: decisions, priorities, communication and allocation of resources. Yet, even with good intentions, certain managerial errors end up permanently weakening the performance and internal work climate of ESURSI institutions in Lumumbaville. Carrying out a critical analysis of managerial errors to avoid makes it possible to understand not only what does not work but also why these dysfunctions appear (Diallo, 2024).

Indeed, a manager who knows how to motivate their troops, facilitate the integration of new members and introduce their employees to the basic principles of collective work does not need to be charismatic to lead their team. Among these errors listed above, we provide some critiques here to enable managers to be more effective in their management of public affairs:

- **Divide and rule:** often inclined to get closer to employees who share their opinions, the manager forgets that by acting in this way, they create clans within the administration and destroy all cohesion among the agents under their authority, as realities can sabotage work and compromise the achievement of set objectives.
- **Increasing stress on employees:** by maintaining constant pressure on their institution, the manager increases their employees' stress and limits their progress. Avoiding imposing continuous pressure on them and transmitting their own stress allows agents to find their bearings and adopt an adequate work rhythm.
- **Not recognizing one's weaknesses:** far from being infallible, the manager may encounter difficulties in carrying out a project or have shortcomings in a particular area. This is not reprehensible in itself insofar as these weaknesses give the manager a human dimension that brings them closer, paradoxically, to their employees. On the other hand, claiming perfection and demanding it from their team can only harm collective work, individual performance, employee motivation and finally, the manager's credibility. The latter often tries

to hide their weaknesses behind a surly attitude and pushed authoritarianism that dissuades their employees from challenging their decisions.

- **Being disorganized:** this may seem aberrant to the academic authorities of Lumumbaville, yet poor time management, combined with poor team organization, is the primary scourge of managers. Indeed, when employees always complete their projects late, consult their managers a thousand times a day but only tell them about a problem or difficulty at the last minute, this reflects poor management on the part of the manager who must get a grip. In the end, they realize that they are doing all the work while their employees are not doing enough.
- **Being unproactive:** a manager who is content to apply their hierarchy's decisions to the letter, without knowing where they themselves are going, lacks conviction and this affects their team. Lacking motivation, employee productivity is low and the quality of their work also suffers. To remedy this, the manager must quickly build their own vision of the objectives to be achieved and design the means to deploy to achieve them within the set deadlines. By giving each of their employees one or more projects to lead, the manager reactivates their motivation and revives their interest in the work they do in order to achieve the objectives.
- **Too direct management style:** an overly authoritarian manager unknowingly kills employees' sense of initiative, frustrates their creativity and prevents them from flourishing. Not giving their team the latitude to innovate by imposing their own vision of things harms the evolution of their team's work, which stagnates, marks time and ends up, over time, moving backwards. In this case, the manager must be attentive to their employees and above all, remain accessible to their thoughts, remarks and suggestions and the ideas that help move the institution forward on all fronts.
- **Not passing on know-how to employees:** over time, any manager ends up knowing their employees' strengths and weaknesses by heart. So, when the team's results are always mediocre and no improvement is recorded in the way staff are managed, this means that this manager does not ensure the development of skills within their staff, which is very detrimental to their institution. To this end, the manager must closely monitor their employees, offer them training to improve their knowledge or increase their skills in order to help them progress.
- **Not listening to or considering employees:** refusing any initiative or suggestion from staff, confining themselves to their role as manager without accepting feedback, are all attitudes that isolate the manager and discredit them in the eyes of their employees who, unable to communicate with them, will address themselves directly to the hierarchy, which is likely to discredit them with their superiors.
- **Poor communication with employees:** even if the manager believes they communicate sufficiently with their staff, telephone conversations and emails do not exempt them from one-on-one meetings with each of their employees, not to mention collective meetings whose primary purpose is to transmit information to the entire team. Individual interviews allow the manager to review progress with each employee.
- **Favoritism, nepotism or unequal treatment:** for personal reasons, these practices have an advantage in affinities, the proximity of managers with certain members of their institution, but in reality this constitutes one of the serious errors committed by managers because it negatively affects the progress of the institution. Giving more opportunities to favorites, minimizing the errors of favorites and over-sanctioning others have consequences including loss of confidence and a feeling of injustice, reduces motivation while creating a conflictual climate among employees.
- **Too many meetings / too few decisions:** employees find themselves in a lean management situation, wasting their time participating in meetings that do not lead to any decision. This leads to discouragement and they end up considering meetings convened by the manager as noise.
- **Harmful practices to keep power:** the manager plays power games by focusing on the image of their leadership, unnecessary intimidation rather than the result expected by their staff. This creates a loss of confidence by looking for culprits rather than correcting their behavior.
- **Not managing emotions:** the manager reacts in the moment with anger, stress, discouragement, tensions become more personal and this results in the degradation of the social climate such as mistrust and demotivation. The institution can become less efficient because no staff wants to take risks.
- **Not clarifying the roles and responsibilities of employees:** when roles are not clearly defined, each agent understands in their own way and we no longer know who does what, who decides, who is responsible in the event of a problem or what the institution's priorities are. In this case, work becomes confused and depends largely on the feeling or experience of each staff member.
- **Daily micro-management:** the manager who constantly controls everything, checks each step, often corrects, asks for confirmations, imposes ways of doing things at all costs and decides each time in place of their employees falls into loss of autonomy because employees no longer learn to manage and decide in their task and this leads to a slowdown because each small action becomes a right of passage for the manager's authorization.

4.2. Interpretation of findings

The results reveal that the most frequent managerial errors are: not listening to employees (90%), divide and rule (85%), favoritism and nepotism (84.1%), increasing stress (80%), and daily micro-management (75%). These practices reflect an authoritarian and individualistic conception of management that destroys team cohesion, reduces motivation, and compromises institutional performance.

The high percentage of managers practicing division (85%) indicates a deliberate strategy to maintain control by creating rivalries rather than fostering collaboration. Similarly, the widespread favoritism (84.1%) suggests a systemic lack of fairness and transparency in human resource management.

The observation that 90% of managers do not listen to or consider their employees reveals a significant communication breakdown. This lack of consideration leads to disengagement, as employees feel undervalued and unheard.

Furthermore, the practice of daily micro-management (75%) demonstrates a lack of trust in employees' abilities, which paradoxically reduces their autonomy and initiative, creating a vicious cycle of dependency and inefficiency.

5. Conclusion

Currently, the manager of a Higher and University Education Institution must distinguish themselves through their dual role of guide and architect. The leader is today a leader, they are the one who walks at the front. They are there not only to guide their employees but also and above all to motivate them in order to encourage them to commit and excel. There is no leader without employees and there is no leadership except in a situation. An effective leader must play two main roles: the role of leader for which they give perspectives for the future, delegate their power and mobilize their subordinates, and the role of architect for which they prioritize issues related to their institution's project and reward and control systems. They must be dreamers in a certain way, but also men of action in the sense that they must make their dreams come true.

For their vision to be realized, the leader must reflect and improve their way of managing and amend the behaviors they wish to see deployed in their institution. To achieve this objective, there are strategies to put in place:

- **The leader must create a sense of mission** among their employees by stating the institution's vision for the future, its fundamental objectives and its culture. By encouraging employees to follow and support this path, they forge an identity that contains group cohesion and creates meaning and collective objectives.
- **The leader must create a sense of self-determination.** Employees must not consider themselves as simple pawns on a chessboard, but as actors capable of making choices. They must create a sense of impact, give employees the feeling of their importance.
- **They must emphasize the sense of competence,** so that everyone becomes aware of their progress and personal development. Hence, learning is a key element.
- **The leader must develop a sense of shared values,** assets of their institution for success, teamwork, sincerity, respect for the individual, delegation of power, continuous learning, openness to change and trust.

From all the above, it should be noted that a good manager is not one who never makes mistakes, but one who knows how to recognize them, learn from them and continuously adjust their posture. Your ability to unite, motivate and grow your team depends above all on your authenticity and sincere commitment to your employees.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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