

The power of management and technology in shaping human life

By Besmira Selimi

From my childhood, and later to my life as student, I faced a variety of experiences that have each time moulded me into something new, and helped me discover parts of me that I did not know of existing. Maybe because of the part of Europe in which I live, the poor economic state, and the lack of opportunities, for a period of time I grew to harbour relatively negative perspectives of the world surrounding me. In my last year of undergrad studies, I delved into a medium form of depression. Transitioning from a go-get-it person to one developing only negative outlooks of life was a big shock, not only to me, but to my friends and family, too. However, as most of life philosophies suggest, you need to touch the bottom, in order to learn something completely new and be able to continue fearless towards the unknown.

There are countless possibilities whether online, through consultants, or through self-help books that confer feasible ideas on how to start being productive and achieve your potential. Since I can remember myself of being self-conscious of my aspirations, I know I have always been interested in anthropology, human psychology and above all education. It has been interesting reading and learning how human mind accepts the pre-existing norms of society, how it interacts with other minds and its environment, and how it can develop ways of transcending the limitations set by someone, or by itself. It was during this time of depression that I came across Peter Drucker's writings and other authors who wrote on education and self-improvement. Although my experiences in official institutions have not been that extensive, during my undergrad studies I engaged in some activities and was able to observe the behaviour of people in different levels of the social ladder. These observations allow you to broaden your perspective, and provide you with enough data to understand the key components that lead to the success or failure of a management in an environment.

Management as a way to human efficiency

As someone born and raised in a small community, noticing what is possibly going wrong with a certain situation by a simple observation has been relatively easy. Certainly, there are institutions that work perfectly fine and provide productivity, as well as institutions that misuse their power and consequently are not productive. Fortunately, I have been able to be a part of each scenario. However, shouldn't one first get acquainted with a type of management that had been successful so to comprehend the errors in another type? Quiet reflection as Drucker would say, does help in identifying effective action. In my case, the example of a successful management played the institution of family, or more precisely, my own family. Living in an extended family, with four siblings, parents, and grandparents, you realize from early childhood that life can be quite challenging if it is lax in adequate discipline and management. You also understand that efficiency and management is learnt through proper education in the

early years of an individual's life. My father, an electrical engineer and the breadwinner, and my mother a housewife and a tailor, worked in a very synchronized manner that eased the management of the household immensely.

Wouldn't one believe that sustaining a family with a monthly income of less than \$500 would be a difficult process? Indeed, sometimes it was so. The time we were living all together was marked by the idea that everyone is responsible for a set of obligations. We were expected to finish our daily chores that were related to the household. This included engaging ourselves in the little garden we had near our house where we grew vegetables and fruits for our own consumption, and at the same time helping in the house maintenance. The rest of the time, we were encouraged to spend our time studying and mastering our hobbies and skills. During the summer, my parents encouraged us to work daily for three hours a day in a workshop that my father opened for the reparation of computers on order. Was the idea of kids working to earn money notorious back in the days in my community? It certainly was. Still, I can say that it helped me a lot, as besides financial independence, it taught me new skills in addition to what interested me, which included writing and literature. And we know that every skill we acquire doubles our odds of success. However, beyond financial education, I remember getting also educated on the effect that order, discipline, and honesty can have in the life an individual. By sharing with us knowledge that they had learned with experience and instilling in us a useful mind-set, my parents were able to have me and my siblings finish college, all with honours.

In this way, I learned that we were living by a system that was very efficient and got the most and the best out of everyone. We had actually put into action *the power of habit*. While keystone habits during my childhood assisted the family functioning, it also helped me recognize valuable patterns of behaviour that helped me succeed in my academic journey. We were instilled an idea that while you contribute for the general improvement of a condition, you are at the same time contributing to your own self-improvement. Doesn't Peter Drucker say that: *The most effective leadership and management is when you do not think in terms of 'I'?* Indeed, you understand that to create trust and to get a task done and a goal accomplished, you have to think in terms of 'we,' in terms of collaboration and contribution.

Management as a hindrance to human efficiency

Again, I have witnessed cases where poor management led to failure of releasing and leveraging the human potential, in my own country and more recently, in the USA. Isn't this is just a proof that management, wherever it might be, in Serbia, a developing country, or in the U.S., one of the leading economies of the world, plays a decisive role in the way people utilize their energy? Last summer, I decided to do the Work&Travel program, and visit the United States. During my stay there, I worked in a resort. Within a month's stay, it was apparent that the resort wasn't being managed properly. The manager employed a method of favouritism based not on merit but on personal relations. This had devastating effects on the workers because when they understood

that their effort in finishing their duty properly was not valued, they eventually gave up on the idea of doing a good job. Instead, the prevalent idea was that you had to flatter and try to build good personal relations with the manager in order to receive either bonuses, or less work. Drucker summarizes this situation very well when he says that *'Most of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to get their work done.'* Failure to provide an environment where fair-share and fair play are equally balanced can lead to the inability of utilizing the resources that you have in your disposal and that would be among biggest obstacles in a management.

While in the U.S., cases like this might not be popular, in my home country, which is more or less, corrupted in each of its aspects, these cases are familiar. My high school can be a case on point. I noticed that most of the people complain about the low quality of education in our schools but none stops to see and reflect from where that low quality emanates. While the idea of cause-and-effect permeates nearly everything, why was it omitted from discussion in this case? Why didn't it serve as a means of finding the root problem of the school management? Again, by observation I learned that the headmaster of the school is elected based on his political affiliation, regardless of his past experience in management, and regardless of the fact that he might not be fit for the position. In turn, the headmaster chooses the teachers based on nepotism or again, political affiliation. There are no qualification requirements, nor examinations held to rank the teachers applying for the job. So, when the teacher is not qualified enough, he virtually is not able to teach students the required knowledge for a future successful academic career. Whence, the quality of students finishing high school keeps declining, and they end up starting their undergrad studies underequipped. The same students try to finish college with the intention of coming back and getting a job in one of the schools, without any consideration on how they are contributing to the improvement of the education, which is so important. It is vain to complain about a low-quality school staff, when no one cares about the improvement and growth of their own consciousness on the importance of knowledge and education. On knowledge, Drucker says that it has power, and it controls access to opportunity and advancement. Wasn't this idea quiet literal in my community? While I also deem education to be one of the most relevant aspects of human development, I see that the youth in my community is rarely provided with the right one, and this halts the possibility of using our potential to make our communities better dwelling places. Misuse of power and of knowledge is one of the main hindrances to our personal and communal growth, and yet although so visible, we fail to see it.

It's already present, let's use it.

Surely, from the human potential, the most valuable asset is the human mind. We have seen the power of the human mind as it has allowed us to evolve in a fast-paced and unprecedented manner. The nature of man is to resist change as soon as it achieves a state of conformity. However, did this inclination to homogeneity and fret from the unknown stop humans from pursuing knowledge and facilitating human life? It surely did not. As we know from history, there have been several points when the human

development reached its pinnacle, such as the invention of the printing machine, electricity, or the industrial revolution. Every discovery that man made, served as a way of extending his abilities to do something else. As an example, the invention of car is an extension to the human feet. It allows man to travel distances in the same way as feet do but faster and with less effort. However, every technological extension is accompanied by the effect of amputating something else. Therefore, while cars have eased our lives, they have made a walking culture rather obsolete, which in turn makes countries develop in different manners. Not to mention that the over-extended use of cars has been among some of the major causes of obesity and an unhealthy lifestyle. Similar to these points is AI. While the automation of jobs with the advancement of AI systems is already taking place in most of the developed economies, we have still much to see of its effects. However, because the AIs are relatively unpredictable in their development, it is rather unclear when they will reach their highest point or if there will be a high point.

Similarly, while AI has now been able to perform and facilitate a wide range of menial or cognitive jobs, the fear of human unemployment resulting from the automation of more than half of the job market is already well established among people. Nevertheless, while most of us focus on the job cuts that will occur in the lives of middle-class families in the near future due to automation, shouldn't we focus more on the extensions of job markets that will occur with the ever-progressing AI? Sure, markets such as logistics, car-driving, accounting, and so on will soon be replaced by robots, which will perform them in much faster and accurate ways but there will also be opened new markets to work on. We are already living in a world where most of the income sources are based on STEM jobs (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Humans are prone to adapting easily with the environment in which they live, so living in a future world where AI and automation would cover almost every sphere of life would also require people to adapt to it. This means that while new job markets are opened, and the majority are highly technologized, people would also focus on learning the skills that would be required for the acquisition of those job positions. This in turn would mean that new computer-based jobs, such as programming, coding, robotics engineering and so on would be available to the population. Moreover, there would be a high need of both interpreters and trainers of AI systems that would mediate between executives or leaders and tech pundits, or that would help train the AI systems become much more accurate and precise. Further, while across the Western countries, the number of older people has been increasing, there has been a relative decline in the natality, and the number of younger people. This has caused a great number of elderly to live their last days in undignified ways, either by ending up living alone, or in senior houses. With automation, a fraction of young population could pursue jobs related to nursing or healthcare.

Technology does not necessarily mean joblessness and the best example is the German province of Bavaria, a part of the world with a high level of technologization and automation, and with an unemployment rate of 2.3%, which is very low. AI is multifaceted, and whether we will ever achieve its full potential is still inconclusive.

However, haven't even the most advanced AI systems so far been based on complex algorithms and codes designed and written by man, and datasets taken from man's life and filtered and modified by man? Therefore, there will still be time until AI systems and learning machines will be intelligent enough to program or code themselves completely or supersede humans. Until then, the skills and aptitudes needed for the upcoming job markets are definitely not to be fret and instead of trying to prepare for a jobless future, we should instead be prepared for a technologized version of it, with new skill sets, and try to contribute to its improvement and betterment.

Humans and technology, a healthy combination

Human intelligence has been the main impetus that spurred the wheels of development and helped in the creation of every achievement of human civilization. Technology, be it simple or advanced, has also been a product of human intelligence. Using technology to augment and amplify the human intelligence can have the power to provide solutions to ease human life, moreover help it flourish like never before. There are many parts of the world that still have no access to some of the most basic things that we take for granted, and that struggle every day for survival. Technology, when created with noble intentions behind and when managed to be kept beneficial can be used to improve the lives of people who are suffering. Starting from the fundamental necessities of human existence which are water and food, technology can help people who are deprived of those necessities, especially those in the Third World countries. This is an indication that the development of technology and its even dissemination has still a long journey to make. By making these necessities accessible to those who mostly need them, we simply finish our obligation of helping our fellow human beings. Further, we can add education as an aspect of life, which can be improved through technology. Again, by making education more affordable and more distributed, even to fractions of the world that are still in the developing phase, we help unleash the whole human potential, be it physical or cognitive, and in turn contribute to the progress of economy and society in general. I may take as example a recent training organized by YouthBuild IT in my hometown. The training aimed teaching a group of young women how to code and provide them with work opportunities. After the completion of the training, more than half of the girls were equipped with new skills that made their breakthrough in the job market much easier, moreover contributed to the economy of the town. As time is passing, we are quickly moving into a more extreme version of the definition 'knowledge worker.' However, knowledge alone in this continuously changing world is not sufficient. To quote Peter Drucker *'Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes.'* We need to discover and learn efficient ways of governing, managing, and using that knowledge. A proverb in my culture says that: 'Spring cannot arrive with one flower only.' We can all identify ourselves with that one flower and feel as if our actions might not bring a difference in the world. Nevertheless, we need only begin with the end in mind. What is the future that we want for ourselves? Is it is one where time, knowledge and authority are used beneficially? If yes, we should

simply focus on our actions, no matter how small they are, and be consistent in our objectives. Success always comes from small wins.