Reclaiming Individuality in the Age of AI

One of the fascinating feature of Drucker's time was that he lived at the cusp of business and technology. Business philosophy was at its prime, classic age; unfortunately, technology (highly mechanized, then) was still in its nascent stage. The digital age had not yet been perceived, or conceived, or even a gossiped of, for imagination's sake. The drift was far from the opportunities which entrepreneurs and business students could identify, let alone speculate. Neither were there instruments to properly identify, collate, correlate and analyse data for predictive use. Despite the foregoing challenges, what remained powerful in the hands of the fathers of management was the art of thinking independently and profuse creativity, which later gave birth to the digital technologies. In this essay, I shall expatiate – based on my student experience, thus far -- the uniqueness of human individuality and sense of self, despite the pervasive, exponential conflicts brought about by human-robotics interaction.

Leadership, Culture and Talent

I'm an international student at University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Originally, I'm from Zimbabwe. I'm doing my 3rd year in Accounting. I was privileged to be exposed to some computer science in my 2nd year module called INFORMATICS 100. It was my first time to learn computer programming. Personally, I consider myself a self-crowned introvert. Naturally, I'm a sluggard; before I move on a course of action, I like to take in all available information. Our traditional African culture is built on such tenets. Our slowness to adapt to new technologies and robotics use is largely caused by attitude than resources. According to PwC, Africa is set to be disrupted in more ways than it anticipates, however, this offers Africa a unique opportunity compared to other continents because its solution models haven't been used anywhere else[1].

Peter Drucker posits that management is the art of getting things done. That is, the configuration of resources in planning, organizing, leading and controlling. African problems are unique, so are its solutions. Interactive robots and drones are a plus, for example, in delivering (by air) and administering therapy and drugs such as ARVs to patients in remote areas of Africa - which would otherwise take long to reach the destination due to poor road network or absence of it all. Furthermore, upon delivery, electronic payment of items can be done on the drone, before it dispenses the medication. Conversely, new blood samples can easily be sent back to satellite clinics for examination to identify outbreak of diseases like Ebola in West Africa and respond timeously. Thus, African culture and attitude has already been shaken in the way we used to buy and transport precious items. To remain relevant, the African face must change attitude and embrace new technologies. Technology comes in succession, and work best in

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[1] PwC, "Disrupting Africa: Riding the wave pf digital revolution" https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/technology/publications/disrupting-africa--riding-the-wave-of-the-digital-revolution.html?_e_pi_=7%2CPAGE_ID10%2C7390208913 . Retrieved 19 June, 2018

bundles. The above example encapsulates/integrates previously stand-alone industries such as Health, Transport, and Banking in delivering a modern solution to a traditional problem. An ordinary African, must fight for financial inclusion by having a bank account and/or to be on mobile phone payment platform like M-PESA or Ecocash in Kenya and Zimbabwe respectively, for the "internet of things" to function perfectly.

The 21 Century is a confluence of socio-economic problems. On talent, it is imperative that an employee and his/her working environment be primed for multiskilling. The World Economic Forum predict future workplace skills such a communication, creativity and emotional intelligence (EI) will be more important than ever in the next five years[2]. As such, an employee ought to have a bundle of these skills together with digital fitness to remain relevant especially in fast evolving industries such as FinTech. Traditional education entails mere accumulation of knowledge. People often spend the rest of their careers utilizing less than 20% of what they learnt at university. Their income earning activity for life will be capped within the less-than-20% knowledge utilization. And thus, real economic growth is impaired, especially in Africa which is predicted to have an exponential population growth and huge economic dependency on the working few to sustain the aging population.

The future-relevant employee or student must equip himself/herself with what I call *regenerative skills* such as critical thinking, 'learning to learn' and adaptability in changing circumstances. Drucker, in his book, *The End of Economic Man*, describes an employee without pervasive skills as an economic man: one who only does what he is told, never initiative, and subsequently demotivated to face the challenges of the day[3]. By and large, Africa is on a stepping stone. If, for example, early childhood education shifts to learn coding and problem simulation. In the long run, this piques interest and an urge to address problems which they grew up in and have better knowledge of using their computer muscles. Again, using the health example, knowledge of Predictive Analytics (PA), an arm of Machine learning, can help raise an alarm of the occurrence and spread of a disease by correlating similar reported symptoms of patients coming from a single location. Technically, the phenomena is known as Pattern recognition and is concerned with identifying patterns in data. In addition, PA helps to quickly establish the causal relationship and/or likelihood of a disease to a geographical area, as was seen in the Ebola outbreak.

Indeed, robots can't obliterate the human value either at home, workplace or at school. Automation, the environment for robots, is possible and is still advancing at an exponential rate. However, an extra human will be needed in the automation age to turn ON/ OFF the button of a machine and assure they are working as prescribed. Drucker's golden key of a

[2] World Economic Forum, New Vision For Education. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_New_Visio... Retrieved 19 June, 2018
3   Drucker, The End of Economic Man, New York: The John Day Company , 1939.

human centered management remains crucial. For example, control, a pillar of management can't be completely given up to robots. Otherwise, they will work "off grid" especially in adaptive-algorithm environments, that allows robots to learn and implements its conclusions on their own without human approval. Facebook (FB) has been leading the use of AI in its newsfeeds. For example, based on a person's series of likes and dislikes, the algorithm is able spew "Suggested friends, Likes or Pages" based on historical data analysis of user's preference. This is commonly known as Machine learning. Generically, this method has deficiencies in many aspects: a person's mood on a particular day or time is difficult, if not impossible, to predict. And, further imposition of its conclusion is more likely to lead to further stress or depression on the end user of the service; because, our choices and preferences are, to a greater extent, governed by available freedom, values and beliefs. Thus, such an approach stifle freedom of choice subsequently causes mental problems such as chronic obsession and mental inertia. In addition, us millennials are still navigating the world to find our authentic identities and "wholesome character". Since we spend more time on social media than any other generation, our choices on content we view end up more stunted or irrational because "Facebook knows better what we 'like'!".

Considering the above, our youth choices can be improved and made innate human feelings on social media if tech companies can aggressively conscientise users that control buttons such as "view less" exist and can be easily seen. For example, the "view less" button is only available on Facebook when the service is used via PC. Unfortunately, most millennials in Africa use FB via smartphones.

Leadership drives the direction and pace of a generation. Disruptive Technologies hit the world few years ago, and they are here to stay. Leadership approaches must be adjusted prospectively to cater for new changes in the way corporate leaders lead their employees. Besides, defining leadership as doing the right things, Drucker insisted that a chosen leadership style should be a motivator to employees. Authoritative and *laissez faire* leadership styles carry most disadvantages when employees interact frequently with robots. Authoritarian style, for instance, is too commanding. It diminishes the creative and mobile spirit that buttress the roots of AI. It dictates what, how, and when to do an activity. Little creativity is thus left on the employee in using robots to their efficiency and effectiveness. On the other hand, the *laissez faire* creates a 'do what you think' atmosphere. It therefore leaves an employee with unrestricted freedom to use robots to his/her liking, which usually falls in the trap of unproductivity. Moreover, if the unrestricted freedom is passed on to robots, likewise, planned, intended requests can be blown to the wind and robots can execute unnecessary, unplanned course of operation especially in Unsupervised Deep Learning[4] environments.

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[4] These are environments in which data sets aren't labeled and are sorted according to similarities or differences. The system can behave in any way it 'feels' appropriate in the circumstance.

New Roles And Responsibilities Of Institutions And Their Management

Over and above, tech changes face at every turn. And is mainly propelled by creativity and reasoning. Inferably, a hybrid, dynamic leadership style such as Democratic is necessarily because it is guided, it manages the results not the inputs. For example, most Silicon Valley tech companies have been researching and implementing an open-door approach to their employees to collaborate with robots and improve workflow and time it takes to develop a new product [5]. Employers now manage their employees by specific deliverables. Throughput level (the time it takes in the whole production of a services/product) is entirely planned and controlled by the employee. This jibes with what Drucker termed decades ago as Management By Objectives (MBO), a result-oriented approach to improve work.

"Failure to integrate robots in the work field is a tragedy of the new millennium. In the same vain, a plan never executed is equally bad as a plan that was never conceived. " – My quotes

Institutions and Management Responsibilities

The phrase AI was first termed by John McCarthy in 1956[6]. It gained popularity in recent years because of massive availability of business and personal data on the internet. This trend is commonly known as Big Data. Human approach to solve world problems is one legged without AI. Through AI, complex data can be sifted timeously, respond accurately and new tasks can be assigned to the same system. For us humans, these computations consume time. In practice, working alongside AI and Robot Process Automation, we are recalling the early principles of management of delegation to work. Drucker defines delegation as assigning work to lower levels in the organisation, while the manager retains ultimate accountability and responsibility for the work done.

It's tempting to delegate all tasks to AI processes because they perform other tasks we fail to do. But in practice it's not possible. We as humans are unique in every sense. We have been accountable and responsible for every little action we did from the moment we realized what is good and bad. AI can't retain or distinguish between this primordial moral obligation. In Law, a human being is mirrored by the term 'natural person' because he/she is deemed conscious of his/her actions and can sue or be sued in any case. For example, in space, where human laws aren't enforced, a slight landing error of a spaceship can cost NASA billions of dollars. Failure in the landing programmed code can be traced back to a programmer on earth and he/she can be sued for negligence. No charges can be laid against the robots, *per se.* This ethical compass or

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5   Technology products are highly characterized by short product life cycle. It has become a strategic competitive advantage for any FinTech company to release a service and plough as many profits possible before a competitor replicates the model/process.

6   Margaret Rouse http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/AI Retrieved 12 December 2016

framework that defines us as humans shall continue to proliferate and can't be replicated by AIs.

Although AI is a simulation of human intelligence, AI Self Awareness application do not exist. Awareness is a critical factor of personal and energy management[7]. As a student, I must point out that much brain retention of knowledge occurs when my body energy levels are high and fresh. When I study outside my high-energy times – around 4-7pm - I'm more likely than not to glide over small details and re-read the same content the following day for clearer understanding. Eventually, I dropped off that study habit because it wasted time. Nowadays, I opt for a laser-eye focus (of the mind) and high energy levels for a study spawn with instant comprehension. Comparatively, I can now study for 3 hours (taking 30minutes breaks) during my high-energy times and thereafter listen to soul soothing gospel music during my 'low' times. It is noteworthy that robots do not have the super abilities of self-awareness to regulate their daily performance as humans do. Drucker also emphasize that "management is about human beings. Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their strengths effective and their weakness irrelevant. Weaknesses, as depicted by my 'low times', are then channeled towards other interests and do not affect my mood or pace of understanding when I return to my study times[8].

Our innate qualities of self-awareness and empathy isn't transferable to robots. Trevis Bradberry considers self-awareness and emotional regulation as critical leadership skills[9]. Experts in Psychology, too, consider both qualities indispensable to human existence and form part of Emotional Intelligence (EI) – a personal bundle of skills to manage one's and others' emotions to connect, create and improve long lasting human relations[10]. Regardless of future changes, humans remain leaders of other people, products and, in this case, of automated processes. (**The 3Ps**).

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[7] According to HBR, Energy Management is a new concept that is set to overtake, in importance, the traditional time management concept in work-study environment. It allows individuals to work when they are most efficient. This is especially true for us millennials who have 'quirky' work ethics and interests, compared to Gen X and Y. We are viewed as young people who work when we need to and can't work without half of our attention being glued to social media platforms.

8 Peter F. Drucker, The Essential Drucker, 2001) HarperCollins Publishers Inc. 20-21

9 Trevis Bradbeery https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-you-need-emotional-intelligence-dr-travis-bradberry Retrieved 6 Feb 2017

10 Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence, Bantam Books, 1995.

Reclamation of individuality

The explosion of Big Data and internet has also yielded problems such as fake news. Availability of too much information on media is now problematic for some users to distinguish between authentic and false information. The spectrum ranges from day to day economic, political, religious and social news. AI Internet Softwares on phones and PCs are beneficial to us individuals for aiding decision making when surfing the internet. They help select when, and what to consume; track the source and reliability of any news available on the internet and helps in sharing authentic news. On this wise, the human value and dignity is preserved in AI age because our societal values of sharing, doing good and living in harmony are/will be practiced consistently. In South Africa, for example, a new act called Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) is now in full force. It was enacted to protect persons' private information, which is now held by most business servers. For instance, if valuable information leaks to the public, the business is held liable regardless of the manner it leaked[11]. IT departments are now fast turning into responsibility centers. Not only are they creating internet products but are also responsible for safeguarding the personal data they analysed and used to develop product based on diverse customer preferences. Drucker's precepts of accountability and responsibility are relevant in contemporary management but are simply applied in different contexts.

Institutions

Drucker's account of hierarchy and authority in businesses have, to some extent, fast faded into remote history. This has been caused by growing importance of service sectors over manufacturing. Most management theories development during the glory times of the manufacturing sector need to be re-considered in light of modernity. Definitely, Robot Processes Automation (RPA)[12] will change work design, workflow, and workplace. Dr. James Manyika, Director of McKinsey Global Institute, argues for non-hierarchical structures when humans work in conjunction with robots[13].

Similarly, Google has introduced mobile offices. Employees no long work in closed door offices. The seniors and interns work next to each other. This is to enhance collaboration, creativity, team work and value through sharing expertise. In effect, the human spirit continues to flourish

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[11] If informations leaks through hacking, the business is liable because of negligence of not maintaining proper controls and firewalls over its servers.

12 It is the use of software with AI and Machine Learning Abilities to handle high-volume, repeatable tasks that previously required humans to perform. Benefits are it automate manual processes, reduce human error and save money on labour. (Definition source www.internetofthingsagenda.techtarget.com)

13 James Manyika and Kevin Sneader "AI, automation, and the future of work: Ten things to solve for" https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-organizations-and-work/ai-automation-and-the-future-of-work-ten-things-to-solve-for?_e_pi_=7%2CPAGE_ID10%2C9068002366

even alongside AI as the core human activities such as communication and emotional attachment are present. In the book, *The Essential Drucker,* Drucker defines management as the "integration of people in a common venture, [and it is] deeply embedded in culture." Drucker concludes that the internal processes created by big companies is what makes them remain innovative. Thus, traditional management roles and responsibilities of issuing edicts and "lone mowering" lower levels, will to be narrowed, if not replaced, by that of giving guidance to work procedures and instilling company-wide values.

In conclusion, some of Drucker's contributions have been buried under the sands of time. This is largely due to changing circumstances. However, most for his work continue to have a principle, futuristic, and influential value to modern management of institutions, workplace and individuals. Building on his value, solutions to modern challenges are easy to derive and apply because they have been largely tried and tested during the peek of the manufacturing sector. On an individual level, this essay summarized the pros and cons of working with robots. In all cases, however, the human value wasn't erased. Perhaps in future more conflicting issues will arise, but as of now individuality, sense of self, empathy, concrete attachment remains in the power of humans.

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