

Principle-Centred Leadership Styles: Panacea for Sustainable Employee Productivity in Organizations

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study focused on types of leadership styles and the effects on employee productivity. Leadership is the ability to use power effectively and responsibly, the ability to comprehend that human beings have different situations, ability to inspire, create a conducive environment and arouse motivation, for enhanced employee productivity. The broad objective of this paper is to examine the concept of principle-centered leadership styles, with emphasis on the relevance of various leadership styles in sustainable employee productivity in organizations. A descriptive approach was adopted from secondary source of data. The study employed theoretical models that highlight 'Great man' and 'Trait theories', Contingency-Situational theories, to 'Transformational leadership theory. The paper touches on autocratic, democratic and free-rein (laissez-faire) leadership styles. The findings from the study revealed that, there is no one leadership style that fits all occasions, but the styles merge into a continuum, rather than boxes. However, employees seem to be more satisfied under the leadership of a transformational leader. The paper concludes that any leadership style adopted should be one that create suitable and conducive work environment, that will enable employee achieve organizational goals and increase productivity easily. The recommendations of this study, among others, are that any leadership style adopted should incorporate continuous process improvement, which entails continuously searching for better ways of doing things. This could be in the form of large dramatic changes, resulting from new technologies, innovative and small incremental changes and maintaining and building on the performance standards, already in existence, through earlier innovations in the organization.

Keywords: Leadership styles, employee productivity and organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership means different things to different authors. The definition or perception of leadership by academics and practitioners tend to diverge. Leadership is defined as influence, that is, the art or process of influencing people, so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically, towards the achievement of group (organizational goal). Koontz, O'donnell and Wehrich [1, 2], state that leaders act as facilitating and inspiring agents in a group, in order to accomplish organization goals. This concept can go beyond the willingness to carry out assigned duties, to willingness to discharge assigned duties with zeal and confidence. Optimum performance or capacity utilization is directly linked to good leadership skills. Another way of defining leadership, which has been aptly qualified as managerial leadership, sees leadership as, the process of directing and influencing the task-related activities of group members [3]. He established that there are four important implications of his definition of leadership,

which are as follows, people employers or followers, power, influence and values. Leadership involves the unequal distribution of power between leaders and the led. Power is defined as the ability to extent influence. Succinctly stated, influence is to change the attitude or behavior of individuals or groups. Influence however, is any actions or examples of behavior that cause a change in attitude or behavior of another person or group.

Leadership therefore, entails the use of influence to achieve or direct group behavior in a number of ways. This includes getting employees to make what will be of benefits to groups/corporate interest. Leadership is the ability to use power effectively and responsibly, the ability to comprehend that human beings have different situations, ability to inspire and ability to create/develop a conducive environment and to arouse motivation. This is why Cole [4] sees leadership as "a dynamic process at work in a group, whereby one individual over a particular period

of time, and in a particular organization context, influences the other group members to commit themselves freely, to the achievement of groups' tasks or goals. From the above definition, it can be deduced that leadership is a dynamic process; it entails the use of influence and motivation, directed at accomplishing organizational goals. In essence, leaders set directions for the followers, they see what lies ahead, they visualize what needed to be achieved and they inspire and encourage the followers.

Arguably, there should be a relationship, between leadership and productivity, when a leader is confronted with a problem the leadership style portrays the image of the organization, just like an individual is made up of a set assumption and norms, governing the organization values, activities and goals. Leaders develop a source of measures and goals, through which an organization meets up to its demands. An organization characterized by weak organizational culture, lack work commitment, usually has inefficiency and low morale, pervade the entire organization. Generally, good leadership style is an assertion to organizational productivity. In addition, if leadership style is designed in such a great manner that will be crucial and to impact positively on the human life, it is no doubt that employee productivity must be ensured.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership Styles

The basic leadership styles available to leaders in the world of work are as follows;

Autocratic Leadership Style: The leader using this style commands and expects compliance. He is dogmatic, positive, overbearing and leads by the power to withhold or give rewards and punishment. He uses fear, threats and intimidation to get things done. McGregor [5] describes him as Theory X manager, who is tough and supports tight control. The autocratic leader can be benevolent or exploitative. Benevolent autocratic leader, listen to their subordinates but still take their own decisions. Exploitative autocrats, do not listen to their subordinates, they make the decisions and issue out instructions to their subordinates [6, 1].

Democratic or Participative Leadership Style: This one consults with subordinate and encourages them to participate and make a contribution. This type of leader ranges from the person who does not take action without subordinate's concurrence, to the one who makes decisions but consults with subordinates before doing so. McGregor describes the democratic leader as Theory Y manager, who is benevolent, participative, and bickering in self control.

Free-Rein (benevolent or Laissez-faire) Style: The leader employs power very little, if at all, and gives subordinates a high degree of independence in their operations. Such leader depends largely in subordinates

to set their goals and determine the means to achieve them. They see their role as one of facilitating the operations of followers by furnishing them with information and acting primarily, as a contest with the group's external environment.

Drivers of Leadership Style

There are basically two factors disposing leaders to the leadership styles to use; these are:

Task orientation (Boss Central): The leader gains satisfaction from seeing tasks performed and grants little degree of freedom to subordinates.

Person-Orientation (Subordinate Centre): This is oriented essentially towards achieving good interpersonal relations and attaining a position of personal prominence and acceptance.

Determinants of Effective Leadership Styles

Leaders employ different styles not because of their personality attributes but also because of various situational factors and the interactions between leaders and group members. The effective leadership style is that which moves subordinates, to consistently greater effect, resulting to higher productivity. The critical determinants of leadership styles that will lead to greater productivity in public enterprises are:

Position Power: The degree to which the power of a leader's position, as distinct from other power sources (e.g) personality, expertise, etc), enables a leader, to get subordinate, to act in a desired direction, it draws from organizational authority and is directly related to good followership.

Task Structure. The extent to which tasks can be clearly defined and employees held responsible for them. If tasks are clear and structural (rather than vague and un-structural), the quality of performance can be easily controlled and subordinates held definitely responsible for performance.

Leader-Member Relations: The extent to which subordinates like and trust a leader. From the leader's stand point, the last is the most important consideration, since the first two are often enterprise-controlled and its effectiveness depends on the "favourableness situation" (i.e the degree to which a given situation enables a leader to exert influence over a group).

The implication on leadership style adaptation is that; If position power is weak, task structure unclear and leader-member relations are moderately poor, the situations are unfavourable for the leader and the most effective style is the task-oriented style. If position is strong, the task structure clear and leader-member relations good, the situation is favourable for the leader and the task-oriented style again is the most effective. If

the situation is moderately unfavourable or favourable, then is the relationship-oriented style the most effective.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Review of the leadership literature shows an evolving series of school of thought from 'Great man' and 'Trait theories', to 'Transformational leadership theory'. Great man theory was based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities, and destined to lead. This theory was later expanded by some researchers by identifying the key characteristics/traits of successful leaders. Such traits include persistent, self-confidence, dependable, tolerant of stress, willingness to assume responsibility, creativity, persuasive etc [7, 8]. It was believed that these critical leadership traits could be isolated and that people with such traits could then be recruited, selected and installed into leadership positions. After several years of research, researchers discovered that no consistent traits could be identified and most of the traits studies were inconclusive. Also, some of the traits were hard to measure (e.g. honesty, loyalty, diligence or integrity). Thus, new approach and theory in the field of leadership had to be found. The Behavioural School came up afterwards and focused on human relationship, along with output and performance. One of the researchers in the Behavioral school of thought was McGregor [5] who proposed Theory X and Y. Theory X believes that average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it, if possible, while theory Y believe that the expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is, as natural as, play or rest, and the average human being under proper conditions, learns not only to accept but to seek responsibility. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid [9], is another form of Behavioral School of thought, which believe that, team management is a high concern for most employee and production and is the most effective type of leadership behavior. As observed by researchers, behavioral theories may help managers develop certain leadership behaviours but give little guidance, as to what constitute effective leadership in different situations.

Consequently, Contingency-Situational theories were developed, to indicate that effective leadership styles to be used, is contingent upon certain variables, such as the situational factors, the characteristics of the people to be led, the nature of the task, the organization and other environmental variables, group member personalities and socio-cultural influences, and time required for making decisions [10-12]. Fielder's Contingency model [8], The Hersey-Blanchard model of leadership, Chris Argyris's Immaturity-Maturity Continuum [13], Adair's Action-Centred leadership model and Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum [14], are some of the major theories contributed towards this school of thought. Transactional theory refined Contingency-Situational theory, with much emphasis on the

importance of the relationship between leader and followers; focusing on the mutual benefits derived from a form of agreement between the leader and the followers, through which leader deliver such things as recognition, promotion or rewards, in returns of loyalty and commitment of the followers [10]. Transformational theory proposed by Burns [15], Burns and Stalker [16], cited in Koontz, [17] focuses on broadening follower's views towards transcending self-interest for the good of the group, increasing awareness about the issues of consequences and increasing the need for growth and self-actualization.

Theoretical Exposition

The Drives Leaders must not overlook

The drive to acquire scare resources that enhance the subordinates' feelings of well-being. Subordinates are delighted when this is fulfilled and are disillusioned when thwarted. It is relative and relational. The drive to bond the organization, association or department. When met, positive emotions like love and caring result and when not met, negative feelings of loveliness and anomie play out. The drive to comprehend, make sense of the world around and make a meaningful contribution. Such employees jump at jobs that challenge and enable them grow and learn. The drive to defend and create institutions that promote justice, clear goals and intentions that allow people to express security and confidence. The absence of these assurance and expectations will always generate fear and dissatisfaction.

Productivity

Productivity is defined as the output/input ratio within a time period with due consideration for quality. Thus: Decreasing outputs but maintaining the same outputs, or increasing outputs and decreasing inputs.

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Output}}{\text{Input}}$$

= Effectiveness and Efficiency in individual and enterprise performance.

Effectiveness = the achievement of objectives (the ends)

Efficiency = the achievement of objectives with the less amount of resources economy).

Accordingly, Productivity can be increased by:

- Increasing output with the same inputs or
- Decreasing outputs but maintaining the same outputs, or
- Increasing outputs and decreasing inputs.

How to Develop Leadership Skills

Leaders are everywhere and everyone can possess leadership qualities when they learn to take the lead instead of always following along. Good leaders

are made and not born. It is therefore possible for one to desire and be effective leader through endless process of self study, education, training and experience. There are certain things a leader must be, known and do, which are acquired through continual work and study. The basis of effective leadership is an honorable characters and selfless service to an organization. A good leader is someone who creates solutions and supports the staff under him. A good leader concentrates on who he is (i.e his believes and character), what he knows (i.e. his jobs tasks and human nature) A good leader must be trustworthy, and able to communicate his vision of the group or organization. Challenging situations have a way of bringing out leadership abilities in a person. In other words, to be a leader or to develop leadership skills, one must acquire some development experiences, which include taking assignments, having role models, working with people of diverse background, overcoming ideas that fail, taking formal course, challenging job experiences, even outside work and supervision of others. Leadership skills can also be developed by following the principles of leadership which include:

Be technically proficient: you must strive to know your job and be familiar with the tasks of your subordinates; Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions, in looking for ways to take your organization to greater heights, take actions and when things go wrong, accept the blame, lesson from your mistakes and move forward; Make sound and timely decisions: always use good problem solving, decision making and planning tools; Set the example: let your employees see what they are expected to do; Be their role model; Know your people and look out for their well-being; A good knowledge of human nature and sincerely caring is necessary; Develop a sense of responsibility in your workers, through the development of good character traits in employees. This is necessary to enable them carry out their professional responsibilities; Keep your workers informed: effective communication ability through empathic listening, is necessary to carry everyone (Senior and Junior) along. Effective communication is necessary to explore the full capabilities of your organization and develop team spirit that will enable the leader achieve the organizational goals. Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised and accomplished.

Leadership Effectiveness and Enterprise Productivity

The main function of leadership style ought to clarify and set goals with subordinates, help them find out the best path for achieving the goals and remove obstacles on their way. Typically, in selecting a leadership style that will impact productivity, situational factors should be considered. Such factors include the characteristic of subordinates (their needs, abilities, self-esteem, etc) and the work environment, covering the task structure, the reward system and the

inter-personal relationship in the workplace. Typically, the leadership style that will result in the greatest boost to productivity will be as follows:

Supportive Leadership style entails that the leader gives attention to the needs of subordinates, shows concern for their well-beings and creates a pleasant work environment.

Participative Style allows subordinates to influence the decision of their superiors, thus raising motivation and increasing productivity. Instrumental Style delivers specific guidance and clarification of what is expected of the subordinates, based on aspects of planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling by the leader. Achievement-Oriented Style sets challenging goals, seeks performance improvement and have confidence that subordinates will achieve high goals. Leadership should align with human resource policies because the HR functions play a role in supporting and taking measures that make the vision and strategy of the organization become real.

Increasing Productivity through Leadership Style in Organizations

There is no one leadership style that fits all occasions, but the styles merge into a continuum, rather than boxes, the best location of the leader along this continuum, will be that location at which the leadership styles disposes the leader to: Seek knowledge of the environment;

Understand employees characteristics; Promote free flow of information (vertically, horizontally and diagonally); Create a learning organization (an organization that can adapt to change in the external environment through continuous renewal of its structures, processes and practices); Promote deliberate participation and foster a sense of contribution to the organization; Maintain a platform strategy; Involve subordinates in the design of the operations system; Create a culture that promotes teamwork, collaborating openness and friendship; Encourage sharing of best practices; Increase the transparency of all processes, emphasize their fairness; and Building trust, by being just and transparent, in granting rewards, assignments and other forms of recognition.

The Way Forward

As the leadership functions relate more pointedly, to leading in general and leadership in particular, the above leadership behaviours, are merging into two main leadership styles; the transactional and the transformational. Transactional leaders are leaders who exhibit the capacity and capability to identify what needs to be done to achieve goals, including clarifying roles and tasks, setting up an organization structure, rewarding performance and providing for the social needs of subordinates.

On the other hand, the transformational leadership style articulates a vision, inspires and motivate followers, defines organization culture and creates an environment, favourable for organizational change. They initiate innovation and change. However, the transformational leader seems to be more popular because his interest is on individual employee and how he intellectually stimulates them. The transformational leader realizes that he and the people he is leading are interacting members of a broad social system. He realizes that people are different and there is no average person. He knows that even though the same rules are made to govern people, as if they are alike, people are definitely unique, have different needs, ambition, attitude, desires for responsibility, levels of knowledge and skills, and different potentials. He adjust the general principle and concepts, to fit specific situations. He does not violate the dignity of the people, in order to achieve enterprise objectives. Employees are more satisfied under the leadership of a transformational leader. Their satisfaction and commitment leads to more organizational citizenship behavior, better job performance, more creative decisions and better organizational performance and productivity.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is the process of providing a suitable environment and influence people to strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of organizational goals. Leadership style used should be one that create suitable environment, coupled with good arrangement of work environment, that will enable employee achieve organizational goals and increase productivity easily. To this end, transactional and transformational leadership styles will increase the effort of subordinates by making satisfaction of their needs, creating effective performance and enhancing the subordinate environments, through coaching, monitoring, directing, supporting and rewarding.

Recommendations

- Leaders should endeavour to create a good working relationship between the subordinate and the team head.
- Leadership style in an organization should avoid any behavior that would have adverse effect on the employee.
- For continuous process improvement on their job, policy should be revealed, adopted, tested and followed up. Employees should be given adequate training from time to time, this will increase their skills and motivate productivity.
- A conducive work environment should be created by the leader and ensure that adequate technology and facilities, are available for employees to execute their job
- Finally, workers overall welfare should not be overlooked. A hungry man is an angry man.

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