

THE IMPACT OF LEARNING- GOAL ORIENTATION ON LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE IN AN ORGANISATION

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Abstract

The focus of every organization is goal achievement which consequently yields to maximization of shareholders' wealth. Sometimes, the goal achievement becomes a challenge due to incompetency of the leaders/managers who do not realize the importance of career development or on the job training coupled with little or no support from the management. This paper therefore investigated the impact of learning goal orientation (LGO) on leadership competence (LC) in an organization. Secondary source played the role of data elicitation through journals, texts, internet and some informed observations. Literature was reviewed on conceptual, theoretical and empirical frameworks as related to the study variables of learning goal orientation as the independent variable and leadership competence as the dependent variable. The result indicated significant relationship between learning goal orientation and leadership competence. Leaders who practice career development are more successful and can withstand organizational challenges. Better options were made in form of recommendations; Individuals are advised to imbibe LGO in order to excel in their dealings especially as leaders. Organizations irrespective of the cost and or time are to support their staff career development as this will enhance productivity.

Keywords: *Learning goal orientation, Leadership, Competence, Organization, Achievement.*

Background to the Study

In contemporary African societies and the third world in particular, it is saddening to note that leadership, which should be service to humanity is being regarded as an avenue to accumulate wealth, intimidate people and show up. The Federal Republic of Nigeria like any other country in the world today is beset with one type of problem or the other (Ella, 2014) problems affecting development in particular include, leadership tussles and inappropriate application of leadership styles. Governance issues that are becoming insurmountable have often lead to grand corruptions, job redundant, job loss, insincerity, revolution, strike actions and acts of terrorism coupled with leadership knowledge in competencies.

Achievement in school or at work involves pursuing both learning and performance (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001; Harackiewicz, Pintrich, Barron, Eloit, & Thrash, 2002). For example, teachers expect students to learn and achieve good grades, while supervisors expect subordinates to develop on-the-job skills and perform well in their roles. Leadership can be linked to the rudder of a ship or the steering that makes it a critical concept which may be misunderstood. The leader operates in an environment that exposes it to challenges and situations which, if not prepared for will obviously deter the attainment of leadership goals, vision and objectives. Leadership issues are diverse. Several theories have emerged to explain as well as help to give direction to leadership. A competent leader must be associated with learning goal orientation, have adequate mental ability with formal mentoring that will enable him mentor his protégé for organizational goal achievement.

Despite the challenges and benefits associated with leadership, most organizations still do not imbibe with career development of their staff especially those who pilot the affairs of the companies. Some complain of cost of embarking on such career development. Some lay emphasis that the employees are graduates who have already been trained while others see mentoring and learning as time consuming.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of learning-goal orientation on leadership competence in any organization.

Specifically, the study is to;

1. Investigate the effect of individual learning-goal orientation on leadership competence in any organization.
2. Evaluate the extent learning goal orientation can affect job seeking
3. Make necessary recommendations based on the findings from the study.

Literature Review

Reviews in this section are made of conceptual, theoretical and empirical studies relating to the study variables as indicated below;

Conceptual framework on leadership

Adejimi (2005) defines a leader as one who guides, directs the activities of others called followers. He asserts that a leader must be a good manager as well as an individual who is able to effectively coordinate the activities of defined objectives within the limits of available resources. A leader must possess the ability to create in the followers the necessary enthusiasm/ motivation to put in every necessary effort to deliver on set goals. Leadership especially in some organizations in Nigeria

passing through challenges of consolidation, minimum capital base requirements with intense competition must be firm and has to do with the management of people with clearly defined goals or objectives with proper directing and monitoring of activities.

Leadership is pervasive in humane affairs and specifically for the pursuit of societal development as well as corporate goals but effective leader is elusive (Erigbe & Kabuoh, 2014). Indeed every individual by his action could demonstrate his ability to lead if given the opportunity as leadership is borne out of a mixer of factors or circumstances. According to Ikupolati in Fanimu (2012: 35), a leader is

'...one who has the capacity to influence, inspire,
Motivate and mobilize others to pursue a common
goal while Maintaining commitment, confidence and
courage'

Learning-Goal orientation and Leadership Competence

Goal orientation refers to the goals pursued by individual in achievement situations and is a motivational variable that affects the allocation of effort during learning (Fisher and Ford 1998) Goal orientation can be classified into two categories: (a) learning (task or mastery) goal orientation and (b) performance (ego/social) goal orientation (Farr, Hofmann, and Ringenbach 1993). A leader who is aspiring to excel in his job functions no doubt must leverage over goal orientation to enhance his leadership competence.

Learning goal orientation refers to a desire to increase one's competence by developing new skills and mastering new situations. Individuals with high learning goal orientation focus on increasing their learning and /or task competence, seeking challenges and persisting in the case of failure (Dweck and Legget, 1988). Those with learning orientations have adaptive response patterns that lead to positive outcomes and they also have a strong motivation for competence development and challenging tasks that foster learning (Dweck, 1986). Learning goal orientation has been linked to increase use of obstacles as learning cues that allow the individual to analyse and vary strategies (Godshalk and Sosik, 2003). Such learning cues especially for competent leaders result in higher levels of expectations for success in the face of obstacles.

Payne, Youngcourt, & Beaubien, (2007) see goal orientation as peoples' goal preferences in achievement situations. Learning Goal orientation training is a process of developing one's cognitive self-regulation aimed at improving rather than demonstrating competences. This can enhance leadership competence hedging against inadequacies, ineffectiveness and inefficiency which eventually lead to job loss. Finding a re-employment after job loss is a complex and difficult task that requires extensive motivation and self-regulation. Losing one's job is a life event with far-reaching economic, psychological, and physical consequences (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009). Coping with job loss in terms of finding employment is a difficult task during which people are forced to cope with failure and disappointing experiences. Kanfar, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, (2001) posit that self- regulation during the dynamic process of searching for

and behaviours such as forming intentions, putting sustained effort into job search, coping with rejection, and persisting in the face of failure. These cognitions and behaviours have been found to increase the probability of reemployment (Kanfar et al., 2001).

The goal-orientation training program can be compared with choice making in job search which is a commonly used training program in employment counseling to help people making choices about what type of job to pursue. DeShon & Gillespie, (2005) suggest that goal orientation can be viewed both as a personality trait and as a personal preference that may be affected by situational characteristics. Trait goal orientation represents one's general goal preferences that are stable over time and across situations, whereas situational goal orientation represents specific goal preferences for the task and context at hand (Payne et al., 2007).

Empirical studies on Leadership competence

Schmidt & Hunter (2004) conducted a study on general mental ability in the world of work and found that people with high levels of general mental ability (GMA) are likely to acquire job knowledge more rapidly and be creative in their own behaviors and to stimulate others' creative behaviors. Nicholas (2010) in another dimension did a research on emotional intelligent and its relationship to transformational leadership and key project manager competences. Result indicated that all dependent measures of project managers competences associated with emotional intelligence (Communication (alpha=0.70); Teamwork (alpha 0.78); Attentiveness (alpha 0.68); Managing conflict (alpha 0.86) ranked between 0.68-0.86. This is good confirming that leadership & project manager's competences have significant relationship with emotional intelligence.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories abound such as the Human relations, Behavioral, Autocratic, Laissez-faire, Two Dimensional, Pat-Goal, Contingency (situational) theory of leadership. For the purpose of this study, we adopted the contingency and human relation theories as they are more relevant to the study.

Fielder's Contingency (Situational) Theory: The contingency theory posits that leadership is the product of situations. The argument is that leadership will differ in each situation. Fielder, cited in Agba (2009) asserted that the situation in which a leader finds him is more important than what he does or whom he is. What makes a leader successful or effective is the ability to appraise the situation and adopt the appropriate leadership style. Accordingly, a task situation should be favorable to the leader who is expected to own by possession expertise-based authority (leadership competence).

Likert Human Relations School of Thought: Likert (1981) examined four basic management styles of leadership and each style is conceptualized as a complete system.

System 1- Exploitative authoritative

System 2- Benevolent authoritative

System 3- Consultative leadership

System 4- participative leadership

The system 1 managers have little confidence in the subordinates to make decisions. To force the workers to execute their duties expectedly, various threats are imposed on them. There is downward communication that is associated with suspicion. Decisions are made at the top by the executives while orders are issued to the lower level staff. Systems 3&4 are in form of democratic settings. There is complete confidence and trust in the subordinates, consultation and participation are practicable, joint decisions are made, in case of urgency; decisions can be made by top managers and passed to all. Incentives are associated with achievements, there is both vertical and horizontal communication flows.

Likert postulates that human beings are basically good and in order to stimulate their performance, work should be humanized. Employees should be allowed to participate and take active role in decision making as it affect them.

Methodology

Secondary data was employed from texts, journals, internets and some informed observations. The study is a generalized one hence; no emphasis was placed on any organization as a study case. Review was done on conceptual, theoretical and empirical studies relating to the study variables which isLGO being the independent variable with LC as the dependent variable. Conclusion drawn and recommendations made based on the findings from the study.

Conclusion

Leadership is pervasive in humane affairs and specifically for the pursuit of societal development as well as corporate goals but effective leader is elusive. Goal orientation can be classified into two categories: (a) learning (task or mastery) goal orientation and (b) performance (ego/social) goal orientation (Farr, Hofmann, and Ringenbach 1993). Individuals with high learning goal orientation focus on increasing their learning and /or task competence, seeking challenges and persisting in the case of failure. People with high levels of GMA are likely to acquire job knowledge more rapidly and be creative in their own behaviors and to stimulate others' creative behaviors (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004).The study concludes that learning goal orientation is significantly related to leadership competence and those individuals who develop themselves by career development find it easier to cope with emerging situations; job replacement, creativity, shock absorbers and above all, effective leadership competences resulting to enhanced productivity. This is supported by Fielder's contingency theory that leadership is a product of situation.

Recommendations

From the above findings, some recommendations are made;

- (1) Career development should be a continuous process to keep a leader abreast to changing situations.
- (2) A leader who expects subordinates respects should be firm and possess all leadership qualities of being a team builder, leaving by example, carrying his followers along, energetic, integrity, job knowledge among others.
- (3) Organizations are to support their workers learning-goal orientation programmes as this will have positive consequences in the organizations' performance

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