



INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN STAFF

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ABSTRACT

This research examined influence of leadership styles on employee learning. A total number of two hundred and fifty five (255) participants took part in the study and this includes 134 (51.9%) males and 121 (46.9%) females, academic and non-academic staff from five faculties of the University of Ibadan. Structured questionnaires were employed for data collection. Four hypotheses were stated and tested with a 2x2 ANOVA and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that employee learning under high or low transformational leadership style was not significantly different [$F(1,254) = 0.12; P > .05$]. While transactional leadership style had a significant main influence on employee learning [$F(1,254) = 7.96; P < .01$]. The result also revealed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles had no significant interaction influence on employee learning [$F(1,254) = 0.01; P > .05$]. Gender and academic qualification did not also jointly or independently influence employee learning. In conclusion, the study showed that, transactional leadership can positively enhance employee learning and innovative orientation which is an important factor that leads to project or organizational success and performance. Therefore, leaders must carefully adopt leadership styles that are transactional in nature as it has the capacity to bring about a culture of learning amongst employees. It was then recommended that some other contextual factors such as ethnicity, religion, level of exposure, etc might be found relevant in employee learning.

Key words: Leadership style, Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Employee learning

INTRODUCTION

Employee learning is a process whose goal is to improve the development of the organization by means of new initiatives (technological, productive or commercial) (Cross & Baird, 2000). To Cross and colleague, employee learning requires a move from simply putting more knowledge into databases to leveraging the many ways that knowledge can migrate into an organization and impact business performance. It establishes a link between the organization and the environment which allows a proactive behaviour rather than a reactive one. Leadership role is fundamental in the development of employee learning. To maintain viability and flourish in the new knowledge economy, employees must have effective learning processes (Hannah & Lester, 2009). In this context, one of the greatest challenges for leadership in organizations is how to create the proper conditions that encourage, develop, and sustain employee learning and innovation. Employee learning has been defined in various ways, but a central aspect of most definitions is collective learning by members of the organization (Yukl, 2009). Vera and Crossan (2004) have linked leadership behaviours to employee learning.

Little has been said in the literature concerning influence of leadership styles on employee learning. Hence, this study examines influence of leadership styles (transactional and transformational) on employee learning among university of Ibadan staff.

Leadership is one of the most discussed and debated topics in the social sciences (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Bass, 1990; Bennis, 2007). Research on leadership began with a search for heritable attributes that differentiated leaders from followers and explained individuals' effectiveness as leaders. Leadership is one of the fundamental driving forces for improving organizational effectiveness. Leaders are the key decision-makers that determine the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products and services, and the delivery of value to organizational stakeholders. Therefore, they constitute the potent sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Zhu, Chew & Spangler, 2005).

According to Armstrong (2009) leadership is the ability to persuade others willingly to behave differently. Leadership deals with change, inspiration, motivation and influence. It influences

by providing purpose, direction and motivation while operating to accomplish vision and improving the organization (Chowwen, 2013). Leadership style is the pattern of behaviours engaged in by the leader when dealing with employees. Depending on the vision and goals of organizations and situational factors, managers adopt different leadership styles. The most effective leader integrates two or more styles regularly, switching to the one most appropriate in a given situation (Chowwen, 2013).

Bass (1985,1990) views transformational leadership as augmenting transactional leadership. Transformational leadership is associated with motivating, inspiring, and broadening the interests of associates. It is characterized by leader behaviors aimed at raising associates' consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of achieving them. It also motivates associates to transcend their own immediate self-interest for the sake of the mission and the vision of the organization. Therefore, transformational leadership describes the characteristics of leaders who are most effective in navigating turbulent circumstances and facilitating dramatic organizational change (Trautmann, Maher, & Motley, 2007). Moreover, employees find transformational leaders spurring in them a sense of satisfaction, willingness to apply extra effort and effectiveness.

Transactional leadership is characterized by leader behaviours aimed at monitoring and controlling employees and describes attempts to obtain followers' agreement to perform tasks required to achieve work unit outcomes based on social exchange. It is composed of behaviours associated with constructive and corrective transactions. The constructive style is named contingent reward and the corrective style is labeled active management-by-exception. These two core behaviors are associated with "management" functions in organizations (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Statement of Problem

Organizations conducting business in the global environment are faced with significant competition. The search for competitive advantage has led to changes in organizations. Employee learning and individual creative abilities and their use in organizations are critical factors that have contributed to management successes in the past, and will continue to do so in the future (Ethem & Emir, 2009). The leadership approach and the prevailing organizational culture within an organization have been found to influence learning (Ethem & Emir, 2009). However, there is dearth of literature on the influence of leadership styles on employee learning.

This study is an attempt to fill such gap in knowledge.

Literature Review

Neo Charismatic Theory: (Transformational Leadership)

The category to which the theory of transformational leadership belongs has been referred to as "neo charismatic theory" (House & Aditya, 1997) or "the new leadership theories" (Bryman, 1993). House and Aditya (1997) described four ordinary characteristics of these theories; firstly, the achievement of exceptional performance by leaders. Secondly, certain leaders can induce high levels of motivation, trust and commitment among followers. Thirdly, some leaders demonstrated symbolic or emotional aspects to appeal. Finally, leader's vision influenced followers such as increasing their self-esteem, motivation and identification. Based on previous studies such as Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership has four concepts which are as follows: idealized influence leadership, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and Individualize consideration. Furthermore, Yu, Leithwood, and Jantzi (2002) found a significant influence of transformational leadership on commitment to organizational change. In earlier stage, that is the sense of urgency, transformational leadership is significant to ensure the buy-in among the employees (Jalil, 2011).

Assumptions

- Long term strategic planning

- Clear objectives
- Clear vision
- Leading by example – walk the walk
- Efficiency of systems and processes

Bass (1985, 1996) built upon Burns's (1978) original idea of transforming leadership. He began empirically by examining the theory and calling his revised theory "transformational leadership". However, there is an important distinction in that Burns's theory focused more on social reform by moral elevation of followers, values and needs, while Bass's transformational leadership focused more on attaining practical organizational objectives (Yukl 2010).

Transactional leadership Theory

Transactional leader's behaviours refer to activities that help clarify expectations for direct reports, achieved desired rewards and avoid punishments and help facilitate desired outcomes (Avolio and Bass, 1988). Transactional leader behaviours commonly comprise: (i) contingent reward (ii) management by exception- active (iii) management by exception-passive. Bass (1985) indicated that transactional leaders prefer operating within the current system or culture, tend to avoid risk and rely on organizational rewards and punishments to motivate employee performance. He describes transactional leaders as cost benefit oriented, where they focus on rewarding efforts and ensuring that behaviours are up to expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The transactional leader often uses management by exception, working on the principle that if something is operating as expected then it does not need attention. In the Leadership vs. Management Spectrum, transactional leadership is very much towards the management end of the scale. It relies strongly on principle of "rational man" and reaction to rewards and punishment. Although transformational and transactional leader behaviours are distinct, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Employee Learning Theories and Approaches

According to DeSario (1994), training or employee learning "refers to learning experiences designed to enhance the short-term and/or long-term job performance of individual employees". In this respect, training or learning is viewed as part of an on-going developmental process. Training or learning needs to be linked with the organizational mission.

The natures of the training in organizations have changed over the recent decades. Traditionally, training was considered to be job-focused, limited to the technical skills and abilities needed by employees to perform specific tasks. As such, it was differentiated from education, which was considered to be broader in scope, more oriented toward a range of future jobs and generally provided by institutions of higher learning. Traditionally, individuals obtained their education first and subsequently received training in the work environment. Recently, the distinction among training, education, and development has become blurred (Van Wart, Cayer, and Cook, 1993). As public organizations find themselves needing to help employees learn about new technologies and skills, training, in many instances, has begun to look like what has traditionally been called education.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory was propounded by Bandura. Social learning theory underscores the indispensability of surveying and modeling people's behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions. It is a theory that concentrates on learning by way of observation and modeling. The social learning theory emanated from behaviourism and today it has some ideas of cognitivists and consequently it is given another name which is social cognitive learning. Social learning theory also focuses on environmental and cognitive factors that interact in order to impact human learning and behavior. It opined that individual learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 2006).

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested:

1. Transformational leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning.
2. Transactional leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning.
3. Transformational and transactional leadership style will have significant interaction influence on employee learning.
4. Gender and academic qualification will jointly and independently predict employee learning significantly.

METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted ex-post facto research design using cross-sectional method. The justification for this was predicted on the fact that the phenomenon of interest had taken place within the participants prior to conducting the study and the research did not manipulate any of the variables of interest. The independent variables for the study were leadership style and organizational culture while the dependent variables were employee learning and employee innovation. The socio-demographic factors of interest in the study were age, sex, marital status, job status, educational qualification, type of employment, years spent in the organization and staff type (Academic or Non-academic).

Participants

The research drew three hundred and fifty (350) participants from both academic and non-academic staff in five faculties of the University of Ibadan. The respondents for the study were selected using multi-stage sampling technique. The use of this sampling technique is predicated on the fact that it allows sampling in stages using smaller sampling unit at each stage. The participants cut across different ages, gender, job status, level of education and years of experience.

Descriptive statistics showed that age distribution for the sampled population ranges between 18 to 61 years with the mean or average age at 37 years. Sex distribution showed that 134 (51.9%) males and 121 (46.9%) females were represented in the sampled population indicating that more males than females were represented in the population. Job status indicated 103 (39.9%) Junior staff, 56 (21.7%) mid-level staff and 96 (37.2%) senior staff. Also, 37.6% and 61.2% of the population were both single and married respectively while the others are either separated or widowed. Educational qualification indicated 32 (12.4%) OND, 35 (13.6%) HND, 60 (23.3%) BSC, and 75 (29.1%) MBA/MSC/MED while 21.7% are holders of PhD and above. This shows that more of the sampled populace has higher educational qualification than others. The population showed permanent employees accounting for 84.1% while contracts staffs are 14.3% of the population size. Moreover, years spent in the organization indicates that 16.3% have spent less than 1 year, 40.3% have spent up to 5years, 12% 10years and below, 13.2% 15years and below while 9.7% have spent above 16 years.

Instruments

Questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from participants. The questionnaires were divided into five sections (A to E) with each section tapping the variables of interest. The descriptions of the questionnaires are outlined below.

Section A: Socio-Demographic Information

This section tapped relevant socio-demographic information of the participants, which consist of age, sex, marital status, job status, educational qualification, type of employment, years spent in the organization, and academic / non-academic staff.

Section B: Leadership Style

Leadership style was measured with Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). It is a 21-item questionnaire with a Cronbach alpha of

0.79. A Cronbach alpha of 0.86 was obtained with the present population. The scale has two sub-scales: 1) transformational leadership style, and 2) transactional leadership style. It is a 5-point likert instrument anchored at "1" by "Once in a while", and at "5" by "always" with a possible total of 105 (e.g. I am satisfied when others meet agreed-upon standards). Respondents who scored above or within the mean in either transformational or transactional leadership style was considered high in such sub-scale while those who scored below the mean were said to be low on such sub-scale.

Section C:Employee Learning

Employee learning was measured with a 17-item scale adapted from organizational learning questionnaire, developed by Susana, José and Camilo (2006). It is a 5-point likert scale. The scale has three subscales of learning 1) Acquisition (internal and external) 7-items, 2) Distribution, 5-items, and 3) Interpretation, 5-items. The instrument was scored at "1" by "Completely agree" and at "5" by "completely disagree". The reliability coefficients obtained for the scales in the present study were: acquisition (.81), distribution (.95), and interpretation (.93). Developers of the scale established cronbach of: acquisition (.84), distribution (.77), and interpretation (.82). Respondents who scored above or within the mean were regarded high on learning while those who scored below the mean were regarded low on learning.

Procedure

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure. Different sampling techniques were used at different point of the selection of the participants at the University Faculties, and Departments. The purposive sampling method was used to select the academic and non-academic staff because the meet the criteria for participation in the study. Simple random sampling was used in selecting the University Faculties and Departments to ensure representativeness.

Statistical Analyses

In order to ascertain how significant the differences were, hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were tested with the aid of 2X2 ANOVA. Hypothesis 4 was analyzed using Multiple Regression Analysis. All analyses was carried out using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20.0.

Results

Hypothesis One: Transformational leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning.

Hypothesis Two: Transactional leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning.

Hypothesis Three: Transformational and transactional leadership style will have significant interaction influence on employee learning.

Table 1: Summary of 2x2 ANOVA Showing the Influence of Transformational Leadership Style and Transactional Leadership Style on Employee Learning.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Transformational L.S	15.05	1	15.05	.12	>.05
Transactional L.S	975.04	1	975.04	7.96	<.01
Transform*Transact	.96	1	.96	.01	>.05
Error	31114.78	254	122.50		
Total	32998.53	257			

*P<.05, **P<.01, LS=Leadership Style, Transform= Transformational, Transact: Transactional

Hypothesis one which states that transformational leadership will have significant influence on employee learning was not confirmed [F (1, 254) = 0.12; P>.05]. This implied that, there was no significant difference between employees under low or high transformational leadership style.

Hypothesis two which stated that, transactional leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning was confirmed [F (1, 254) = 7.96; P< .01]. It was revealed from the above table that transactional leadership had a significant main effect on employee learning. Observation of the mean scores shows that employees under high transactional leaders were more apt to learn (x = 38.61) than employees under low transformational leaders (x = 33.16).

Hypothesis three which stated that, transformational and transactional leadership styles will have significant interaction influence on employee learning was rejected [F (1,254) = 0.01; P>.05].

Hypothesis Four

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis using Gender and Academic Qualification to Predict Employee Learning.

Employee Learning	β	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
Gender	.08	1.26	>.05				
				.08	.01	.85	>.05
Academic Qualification	-.01	-.08	>.05				

Hypothesis four which states that gender and academic qualification will jointly and independently influence employee learning was not supported. [R² = .01, F(2, 253)= .85; P>.05]. This implies that gender and academic qualification did not jointly and independently predict employee learning.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Hypothesis one which states that transformational leadership will have significant influence on employee learning was not confirmed. This contradicts the findings that, employee creativity will flourish when a supervisor provides transformational leadership (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Shin & Zhou, 2003) and when employees have a learning orientation (Redmond, Mumford & Teach, 1993). Transformational leaders may have long-term and far-reaching positive effects on the organization and its performance when compared to transactional leaders whose influence is limited by the terms of the contract with their followers. Transformational leaders attempt to elevate the conduct and aspirations of the employees, transforming both the followers and the leader to a higher level of performance and consciousness thereby encouraging an atmosphere of innovation.

Hypothesis two which stated that, transactional leadership style will have significant main influence on employee learning was confirmed. This finding is in line with the findings of Vera & Crossan (2004) who linked leadership behaviors and employee learning, by suggesting that transactional leaders stimulate exploration and exploitation. Transactional leaders facilitate learning that reinforces existing practices.

Hypothesis three which stated that, transformational and transactional leadership styles will have significant interaction influence on employee learning was rejected. This contradicts Bass (1985) who indicated that transactional leaders prefer operating within the current system or culture, tend to avoid risk and rely on organizational rewards and punishments to motivate employee performance. These rewards are distributed by the leader based on performance as described in a formal contract. The relationship expires as



defined in the terms of the contract or quickly diminishes if promised rewards are delayed or not delivered. Rewards may be positive or negative and need not be monetary. The influence of transactional leaders is dependent on their ability to provide rewards and does not encourage employee learning sustainably.

Hypothesis four states that gender and academic qualification will jointly and independently influence employee learning and innovation. This hypothesis was not supported implying that employee learning and innovation depends more on the style of leadership and the prevailing organizational culture than gender type or academic qualification of the employee. This is as supported by Cummings & Oldham (1997) who found that the quality of leader-follower relationship is positively related to employee learning and resulting creative performance.

In conclusion, the study shows that transactional leadership can positively enhance employee learning and innovative orientation which is an important factor that leads to project or organizational success and performance. Leaders must carefully adopt leadership styles that are transactional in nature as it has the capacity to bring about a culture of learning among employees. It was then recommended that some other contextual factors such as ethnicity, religion, level of exposure, etc might be found more relevant in employee learning.

The study has limitations in that it aggregates both teaching and non-teaching staffs without independently analyzing and comparing them. Future research could independently analyze and compare the variables between teaching and non-teaching staffs. Further limitation is that the research covers only a single federal institution in the country. The scope can be extended to other tertiary institutions in the country in future research

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