ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH LEADERSHIP SKILLS

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Abstract

Productivity is of much concern in many organizations including educational organizations. How to enhance productivity has therefore become one of the major tasks of educational leaders. This paper is an exploration on enhancing productivity in educational organizations through leadership skills. Leadership skills are skills a leader use when organizing other people to reach a shared goal. Productivity was seen as the measure of organizational output influenced by leadership skills possessed by a leadership. Several leadership skills were identified by different scholars to enhance productivity. Some of these leadership skills include: trust and confidence in top leadership, effective communication, intelligence, maturity, strong motivation, respect for others, friendliness, dedication, integrity among others. It was recommended among others that educational organizations should ensure trust and confidence in top leadership in order to ensure employees' satisfaction towards maximum productivity in organizations; educational leaders should imbibe the skill of effective communication so as to enable effective and free flow of information leading to better understanding of role expectations of the employees thereby leading to effective achievement of organizational productivity and that educational leaders should be good motivators so as to motivate and encourage people to make them feel very important members of the team in order to put in their best contributions toward enhancing productivity in educational organizations.

Keywords: Leadership, leadership skills, productivity, educational organization

Introduction

In an economic climate characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, organizational productivity plays a more central role in determining success. There are many factors that impinge upon employees in their daily execution of duties that may affect productivity. Over the past years, researchers have discovered that productivity is affected by relatively few influencers, and employees are, generally, cognizant of what those influencers are (Armstrong, 2016, Clawson & Newburg, 2015).

For centuries the corporate world has been obsessed with leaders, and with identification of the characteristics required for effective leadership. In more recent times the area of leadership has been studied more extensively than almost any other aspect of human behaviour (Sethibe & Steyn, 2016). Leadership has been defined focusing on traits, skills, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationship and as an occupation of an administrative position (Yukl, 2012). Kruse (2013) defined leadership as a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal. Little is however understood about which leadership behaviour influence employees the most and how leadership skill leads to improved productivity.

An appropriate leadership skill may pave way to delivering successful plans for fulfilling the long-term goals and organizational productivity (Terry, 2017). Deep (2017) maintains that the productivity levels of employees among other factors largely depend upon the leadership skills adopted by corporate leaders. Leadership skills are skills you use when organizing other people to reach a shared goal. Leadership skills in today's world are therefore an increasingly complex and a popular organizational dynamic to work upon. Different leadership skills are appropriate in distinct situations. If a leader lacks effective leadership skills irrespective of available resources for organizational utilization, it may negatively affect productivity in organizations.

The importance of leadership skills in any organization especially educational organizations cannot be overemphasized. Leadership is a major element that sets successful and unsuccessful organizations apart. It plays central role in offering direction and purpose towards achieving goals of the organization. The move of a substantial number of leadership researchers to studying new types of skills and other investigations of the leadership skills of managers opened opportunities for further research on managers' leadership skills and productivity in organizations especially educational organizations. Research has revealed that there are different leadership skills such as patience, reliability, active listening, empathy among others which managers have adopted to enable them offer proper guidance to subordinates towards the achievement of organizational goals (Asemah, 2010). Though it is believed that these are applied separately depending on the prevailing circumstance(s) within a school setting, some managers adopt and misapply leadership skills that make the staff's work more difficult in terms of liaising between the manager and staff.

Scholars have undertaken research on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational productivity (Sethibe and Steyn 2016, Puni, Ofei & Okoe 2014) and leadership style and employee performance (Rizki, Armanu, Surachman & Rofiaty, 2017, Mitchel & Palmer 2010). However, it appears that not much has been done on leadership skills and productivity in educational organizations. This paper seeks to explore managers (school administrators) leadership skills and productivity in the educational organizations. The paper presentation proceeds as follows: conceptual clarification; theoretical underpinning, manager's leadership skills and productivity in organization. The final part of the paper provides a conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification
The concepts of leadership, leadership skills and productivity shall be clarified in this section.

Leadership

There is generally no consensus as to the definition of leadership. This is because everybody defines it from his own perspectives based on the objectives of the individuals or organizations. A leader is the most influential person in an organization who provides direction, guides group activities and ensures that group objectives are attained. The function of leadership pervades all organization. A good leader therefore is one who is capable of persuading other to move enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals. Allan and Robert (2010) defined leadership as a process where one person exerts social influence over the members of a group. A leader then, is a person with power over others who exercise the power for the purpose of influencing their behavior.

It could be seen that leadership emphasizes behavioural pattern that unites a group with its goals through interpersonal influence central to the group action. McCall (2010) defined leadership as the art of inducing or influencing others to work willingly with zeal towards the achievement of goals. McCall further maintain that leadership calls for making decisions that will facilitate good interpersonal relations as the subordinates and supperordinates interact so that they understand each other's needs and role expectations and move together towards goal achievement. Okwori and Ede (2012) on the other hand defined leadership as the behaviour of a leader functioning vis-à-vis members of a group in an endeavour to facilitate the solution of group problems.

From the definitions above, it can be deduced that: (1) All leaders have influence (2) They provide direction (3) They help in the achievement of group goals. Leaders characteristically induce or inspire others to achieve. Leadership occurs within a specific situation (Eghe, 2011). In the social setting like educational institution there is a person, a position and a situation. A reviewed of literatures on leadership from the work of Nwachuku (2010) and Eghe (2010) indicated that leadership entails a focus of group process, a set of personality characteristics, the act of inducing compliance, the exercise of influence, an act or behavior, a form of persuasion, an instrument of goal achievement, an effect of interaction, a differential role, and the initiation of structure. It is really very difficult to attempt a definition of leadership, or in other words it is difficult to define what makes certain persons to be leaders. Eghe (2010) has rightly stated that, "indeed, I have never observed any leader or any statement of followers that acceptably expressed why they followed". However, people be more influenced to follow a leader who leader who demonstrates good leadership skills.

Theoretical Underpinning

Action centered leadership theory was employed as the theoretical framework of the study. One theory that provides a good starting point for studying leadership is the functional or Action-centered leadership theory. It was developed by John Adair and published in 1973. Adair observes successful leaders in the military context and looked at the functions performed by the leaders. That is why it is also referred to as the functional leadership theory.

Adair identified three sets of needs that an effective leader has to balance.

Task: the actions that you take to achieve a goal.

Team: your actions at the group level, to encourage effective teamwork and group cohesion.

Figure 1 – John Adair's Action Centered Leadership Model.
Source: Adapted from MindTools - Essential leadership skills for an excellent career, 2021

The shaded areas of the interlocking circles show that each area relies on one or both of the others for success. So, to be an effective leader, you must balance your skills and actions across all three areas of responsibility. The responsibility of the leader is to achieve the task, develop individuals and build the team. Adair describes the leader's responsibilities for each of the different areas. These responsibilities are presented in tabular form as follows:

Task	Teams	Individuals
Achieve objectives of the work group.	Maintain morale and team Spirit	Meet the needs of the individual members of the tem
Define group task	Cohesiveness of the group	Attend to personal problems
Planning the work	Setting standards and maintaining them	Give praise
Allocation of resources	Communicating with the group	Reconcile conflicts between the group and individuals.
Organization of duties and responsibilities	Training the group	Train the individuals.
Monitoring performance	Appointment of sub-leaders	
Reviewing progress		

Source: Adapted from Shafiu, Manaf and Muslim (2019)

The action by the leader in any area of need may affect one or both of the other areas of need. The ideal position is where complete integration of the three areas is achieved. Shafiu, et al., (2019) maintain that in any work group, the most effective leader is the person who sees that the task needs, the needs of the group and those of the individual are all adequately met.

This theory focuses attention not on the personality of the leader, nor on the man or woman in the job, but on the functions and skills of leadership. The functional theory views

leadership in terms of how the leaders behaviour affects, and is affected by, the group of followers. This theory concentrates on the nature of the group, the followers or subordinates. The functional theory believes that the skills of leadership can be learnt, developed and perfected. It is not begged down on the issue of the appointed leader versus the emerged leader. It is necessary to analyse the role of the leader and the functions and responsibility of leadership to understand the process of leadership. According to Shafiu, et al., (2019), these functions require different emphasis in different situations according to the nature of the group. Shafiu, et al., therefore highlights general list of 14 functions performed by skillful leaders in all organization to include:

1. Setting agreeing and communicating objectives
2. Providing suitable equipment, resources and environment to enable people to meet their objectives
3. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing performance, appraisal of groups and individual
4. Giving feedback
5. Setting standards or attitude, behavior and performance
6. Solving problems, both operational and human administering rewards and punishments wherever necessary, dealing with grievances and discipline
7. Organizing and harmonizing resources
8. Ensuring inwards flows of materials
9. Ensuring that deadlines for outputs are met
10. Taking effective decisions
11. Developing the capabilities and performance of the group and its members
12. Developing the efficiency and effectiveness of the group and its output
13. Figurehead and representative roles inside and outside the department
14. Parenting role

Effective leaders are effective managers. The industrial society in America developed a system of leadership-training, based on the work of Adair for helping managers to develop and improve their ability as leaders to enhance productivity in organizations. The three-circle approach used by Adair also explains the close relationship between leadership and management. Building the team and satisfying individual needs would include application of effective leadership skills. Krus (2013) avers that effective leaders are those who understand their functions and know how to effectively apply their l

Leadership Skills

The concept of skill comes from the field of psychology, where it is widely used to explain human development across different domains. Boyatzis and Kolb (2015) described skill as an integrated transaction between the person and the environment. Skills are integrated routines combining knowledge and ability with a perceived environmental domain of application. It is important to consider that skills do not reach their full capacity; but instead, they are gradually developed through practice in a real-life context. The concept of skill is best suited to describe specific abilities of a leader relevant to his or her organization.

Individual leaders' experiences vary and consequently leaders develop different skills. In this connection, McLaughlin (2014) opine that leadership skills are the strengths and abilities individuals demonstrate that help them oversee processes, guide initiatives and

steer their employees toward the achievement of goals. Leadership skills are an essential component in positioning executives or educational leaders to make thoughtful decisions about their organization's mission and goals, and properly allocate resources to achieve those directives. McLaughlin (2014) highlights valuable leadership skills to include the ability to delegate, inspire and communicate effectively. Other leadership skills include honesty, confidence, commitment and creativity.

In organizations the question of what makes a good leader or in other words, *what are leadership skills* is widely debated. Skillsyouneed (2021) stated that it is clear that the ability to lead effectively relies on a number of key skills, but also that different leaders have very different characteristics and styles. There is, in fact, no one right way to lead in all circumstances and one of the main skills of good leaders is their flexibility and ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Leadership skills are highly sought by employers as they involve dealing with people in such a way as to motivate, enthuse and build respect. Whether or not leadership itself can be taught, there is no question that there are a number of core skills that most good leaders have.

Leadership skills are skills a leader use when organizing other people to reach a shared mission and goal. Leadership skills require you to motivate others to complete a series of tasks, often according to a schedule. Leadership is not just one skill but rather a combination of several different skills working together. Okwori and Ede (2012) identified trust and confidence in top leadership, effective communication by leadership, high intelligence, maturity, strong motivation and respect for people as good leadership skills. Other examples of leadership skills that make a strong leader as indicated by Indeed Editorial Team (2021) include: decisiveness, integrity, relationship building (a team building), problem-solving, dependability and ability to mentor.

Leadership skills can also be referred to characteristics a leader possesses to effectively influence his or her subordinate to accomplish the educational objectives in a preplanned way (Bua, 2021). To function effectively requires that the leader be a person of impressive qualities. These characteristics make him or her to be endeared to members of the organization. Puni, et al., (2014) list top ten leadership skills which include: honesty, ability to delegate, communication, sense of humor, confidence, commitment, positive attitude, creativity, intuition and ability inspire. Sethibe and Steyn (2016) also listed top ten (10) characteristics of a good leader to be: communication, delegating, trustworthiness, creativity, feedback, responsibility, commitment and flexibility, conflict management, motivation and positive attitude.

Furthermore, Unachukwu and Okorji (2014) specified that a leader can function effectively in his leadership roles when he or she has the following skills: vision, courage, humility, tact, always learning, modesty, friendly, integrity, dedication, intelligence and good communication skills. Bua (2021) maintained that in order to influence attitudes of educational employees toward maximum performance and greater productivity, an educational leader must possess if not all most of the above mentioned skills. This is because studies have found that one of the organizational climatic factors that impinged on employees' productivity in organization is leadership skills of corporate leaders (McCall, 2010; O'clan, 2012 & Batt, 2013). It is important organizational leaders should possess good leadership skills to enhance organizational productivity.

Productivity

Productivity is a ratio to measure how well an organization converts input resources (labor, materials, machines, money) into goods and services (Tokarčíková, 2013). Okereke and Daniel (2010) define productivity as the increased functional and organizational performance, including quality, while Batt (2013) claims that productivity is that which people can produce with the least effort. Nda and Fard (2013) describe employee productivity as the measure of output per unit of input economically. Rohan and Madhumita (2012) adopted a different view and see employee productivity as the log of net sales over total employees.

In another dimension, Haenisch (2012) illustrates three definitions which relate to productivity: (1) is output/input, in other words, is a measure of efficiency; (2) is a composition of effectiveness and efficiency; and (3) whatever makes the organization function better. It is important to note and of particular interest in this research, whereby the context of the research is grounded on the leadership skills to defined productivity as the measure of how well organization achieves maximum output through the influence of leadership skills by organizational leaders to achieve the goals of organizations. Leadership skills are, by no means, exhaustive, but research provides significant information that it is somewhat influential to organizational productivity.

Leadership Skills and Organizational Productivity

Leadership skills are ways in which leaders interact or behave towards members of their team to achieve objectives. Various leadership skills have been recognized by scholars as mentioned above in this research and the list was inexhaustible. However, the skills that are of most concern to this research are those advanced by Okwori and Ede (2012) and Unachukwu and Okorji (2014). These are:

1. **Trust and Confidence in Top Leadership:** Trust and confidence in top leadership is the single most reliable predictor of employee satisfaction in an organization. This means subordinates can only show satisfaction in an organization and productivity may improve when the leader shows a lot of trust and confidence in their leadership. The staff will have trust and confidence in such leadership which is/are indices of job satisfaction and increased productivity.

2. **Effective Communication:** Effective communication by leadership in three critical areas is the key to winning organizational trust and confidence to enhance productivity: (1) helping employees understand the school or company's overall business strategy (2) helping employees understanding how they contribute to achieving key business objectives and (3) sharing information with employees on both how the company is doing and how an employee's overall division is doing relative to strategic business objective. In nutshell, you must be trustworthy and you have to be able to communicate a vision of where the organization needs to go. By this way organizational productivity may be enhanced.

3. **High Intelligence:** For a leader to be effective and increase productivity in an organization, he must be highly intelligent. Every leader must strive to achieve these qualities as this is what will distinguish the leaders. Knowledge of problem solving technique is attributes of intelligence. Being able solve problems may lead to greater productivity in organizations.

4. **Maturity:** Leaders must as a necessity have a sense of maturity, both in terms of age and experience. He must be able to exercise his power or authority in a mature manner.

Exercise of authority and power involves two individuals, "superior" and the other "subordinate". To be able to obtain obedience, leaders must be able to induce their

5. **Strong Motivation:** A good leader is a motivator. He encourages people and attempts to make them feel very important members of the team. He learns to delegate as many responsibilities to his subordinates. This method of participative leadership is a clear source of motivation to the subordinates. If the workforce is empowered in this way they feel significant and become part of the organization and productivity level increases.

6. **Respect for Other People:** An effective leadership is the one that has great respect for people. It must demonstrate that it has the interest of the people at heart. Decisions are centered around men and since leadership revolves around men, it must be personal, active and most of all fair. This will go a long way in determining the level of response to the leader in order to enhance productivity in an organization.

7. **Courage:** A leader who has courage in this context does not fear risk taking in decisions that would move the organization forward. A good leader should have courage to challenge and objectively criticize practices that retard the growth of the organization. In addition, a good leader with courage is not afraid of failure rather he/she is bold and strong to take a step in adventure.

8. **Friendly:** A good leader is a friend to all but not too attached to any especially the subordinates (followers]. The leader listens to others and does not dominate discussions. He tries to empathize where necessary so that abuse of opportunity will be reduced by members of the organization.

9. **Dedication:** It is expected that a good leader should be dedicated to his/her duties. The mission and vision of the organization should not be compromised at all. He/her should exhibit a high sense of responsibility for the followers to follow suit.

10. **Humility:** A good leader humbles himself/herself at all times by seeing other members as colleagues working as a tam rather than subjecting his followers and priding himself/herself as lord. He relates and recognizes them as partners.

11. **Modesty:** Another characteristic of a good leader is that of modesty. Modesty in this context is virtue whereby the leader does not always boast of what he/she has achieved personally but rather credits the success or praise to the group.

12. **Integrity:** A good leader must be a man or woman of transparent behaviour especially in relation to financial matters. High level of honesty is required for followers to trust their leafier. Integrity and transparency in financial dealings steers organizational productivity.

13. **Learner:** A good leader does not stop learning. He/she sees every activity as an opportunity to learn something new. By so doing, members of the organization are encouraged to consistently learn new innovations that improve the society.

14. **Tactfulness:** A good leader must use wisdom in dealing with members and other clients to the organization. He/she must be careful to say the right thing at the right time, being diplomatic and still implementingthe rules of the game. By so doing, members will be influenced to willingly submit to his/her will without coercion.

15. **Humility:** A good leader humbles himself/herself at all times by seeing other members as colleagues working as a team rather than subjugating his followers and priding himself/herself as lord. He relates and recognizes them as partners.

16. **Modesty:** Another characteristic of a good leader is that of modesty. Modesty in this context is a virtue whereby the leader does not always boast of what he/she has achieved personally but rather credits the success or praise to the group.
17. **Financial acumen:** He/she learns how to understand, interpret and use the numbers to improve his/her organization.
18. **Time Management:** He/she gets a handle on where he/she is wasting time and shift

19. **Collaboration:** He/she should improve relationships with peers and workers. He/she should always try to be a better partner, understand their goals and needs and learn to work together to help achieve each other's goals.
20. **Change leadership:** He/she should be more of a change catalyst and a champion of change. He/she should learn to implement and sustain change in his/her organization as change is capable of influencing organizational productivity.

Conclusion

A good leader is one who is able to motivate his followers/subordinates to put forth their best by learning what motivates them and using this same knowledge to direct their activities so as to enhance productivity in organizations. To be able to do this effectively, leaders must supervise in line with modern organization convention and culture, be self-discipline and imbibe good leadership skills to elicit members' cooperation towards maximum productivity. It neither and underestimation nor overstatement to declare that performance and productivity of both employees and the organization is a function of good leadership. Effective leadership skills are seen as imperative for enhancing organizational productivity and development.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of leadership skills and productivity above, the following recommendations were made:
1. Educational organizations should ensure trust and confidence in top leadership in order to ensure employees' satisfaction towards maximum productivity in organizations.
2. Educational leaders should imbibe the skill of effective communication so as to enable effective and free flow of information leading to better understanding of role expectations of the employees thereby leading to effective achievement of organizational productivity.
3. Educational leaders should be good motivators so as to motivate and encourage people to make them feel very important members of the team in order to put in their best contributions toward enhancing productivity in organizations.
4. Educational leaders should demonstrate respect for one another in the organization. This is because when people feel respected and recognized they actively involved in organizational activities, hence increase productivity.
5. Educational leaders should be modest in their dealings in the organization. They should try to credit the success or praise to the group. In this way organizational members may feel recognized and may be motivated to put in their best for maximum productivity.
6. Educational leaders should be tactful so that they will be able to use their wisdom in dealing with members and other clients to the organization. This will enable the leader

to influence members to willingly submit to his/her will without coercion to achieve organizational goals.

7. Educational organizational leaders should imbibe the spirit of humility at all times. The spirit of humility may able the leaders to relate and recognize organizational members as partners and this may lead to increase productivity in organizations.

8. Educational leaders should be dedicated to their duties. They should not compromise the organization's mission and vision at all. If the organizational leaders exhibit high

9. Educational leaders should be friendly with their followers. Being friendly with followers may enhance the cooperation between leaders and followers. As such, their participation in organizational activities may increase and consequently increase productivity.

10. Educational leaders should be change agents. They should always try to adapt and adopt change since change is inevitable and change at any time can affect productivity in organization.

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