



CRITICAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES FOR ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to provide a comprehensive analysis on the critical leadership and management competencies for organizational effectiveness. The researcher used purposive sampling. The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were transcriptions of respondents from face to face interview and focused group discussion. Data were analyzed in a descriptive framework using content analytical technique. The critical leadership competencies identified included strategic thinking, influence, collaboration, persuasive communication and team leadership. The five identified critical management competencies included: result orientation, people and organizational development, commercial orientation, knowledge of market environment and customer focus. A policy of continuous education or professional development would be needed to enhance the acquisition of leadership and management competencies. Capacity development in the areas of competition, effective use of resources, dealing with regulators, response to business uncertainty and strategy of business continuity is much needed in organizational effectiveness.

Key Words: Leadership and Management, Organisational Effectiveness

Introduction:

Leadership and management are broadly stimulating and profound discourse within the business environment because the concepts of management and leadership are synonymous in their use. Though leadership and management may have separate functions, their implications for business organisations cannot be under estimated. Within literature and business environment many scholars have alluded to both business failure and success to leadership and management in terms of competencies. The appropriate understanding and exhibition of leadership and management competencies by business executives can influence organisational effectiveness. This paper seeks to analyse critical leadership and management competencies needed for organisational effectiveness.

Review of Literature:

Leadership competencies refer to the specific behaviors, skills, and abilities that enable individuals to influence others towards the accomplishment of organizational goals. According to the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), leadership competencies can be categorized into three domains: Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization (Gentry et al., 2007). Leading self encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. Leading others involves competencies such as communication, empathy, and team-building. Lastly, Leading the Organization focuses on strategic thinking, change management, and innovation. Leadership and management competencies; are essential for organizational effectiveness in today's complex and rapidly changing business environment. Effective leaders possess emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, communication skills, and adaptability, enabling them to inspire and guide their teams towards success. On the other hand, effective managers excel in planning and organizing, decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, ensuring operational efficiency and achievement of organizational goals. By understanding and cultivating these competencies, organizations can enhance their overall performance, adapt to market dynamics, and maintain a competitive edge. This calls for capacity development on leadership and management competencies.

Canadian International Agency (2000) defines capacity development as the approaches, strategies and methodologies used to improve performance at the individual organizational sector levels. The agenda for capacity development is to fundamentally achieve change and transformation at the level of the individual worker and the organization as a whole. This requires long term investment, continuous learning and adaptation of business operations to mitigate environmental threats. UNDP (2008) defines capacity development as the process through which individual organization and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. This implies that capacity development takes place at three levels: individual, organizational and society. In capacity development there is retention and strengthening ability to drive development that leads to a good change. Though capacity development is meant

to achieve a good change and organizational effectiveness the World Bank Institute identifies a practical problem activities associated to capacity development activities. It highlights that:

“Most effort and capacity building remain fragmented, making it difficult to capture cross - sectional influence and draw general conclusions. Many capacity development activities are not funded on rigorous needs assessment and do not include appropriate sequencing of measures aimed at institutional or organizational change and individual skills building. What is a more comprehensive and sustained approach, one that builds permanent capacity to manage sectors and deliver services. Finally, better tools are needed to track, monitor and evaluate capacity building effort”

This assertion by the World Bank Institute portrays that many capacity development efforts do not end in individual skills building or organizational change as intended because most of such organizational activities are fragmented and not based on needs assessment. This therefore calls for careful needs assessment and planning before strategizing for capacity development. Canadian International Development Agency (2008) identifies levels at which capacity can be developed: Individual, Organizational and Sectorial and the Enabling Environment levels. Individuals are seen as social and organizational actors because their skills are harness to achieve performance and organizational goals. Therefore, capacity development at the individual level must be planned in a way that can benefit and facilitates that achievement of organizational goals. Investment in capacity development at the individual becomes unbeneficial if it does not translate into good change of organization. The organizational level of capacity development covers changes in organizational structures, resources, processes and leadership management tactics. This capacity development at this level is determined by how organizational structure constraint or support effectiveness.

The sectorial level of capacity development centers on improvement of invests results through sector policies and strategy which is achieved through sector policies and strategy. The enabling environment level of capacity development is to ensure an equal playground for all to achieve through sound policies, commitment, stable economy and fair equitable distribution of state resources. Morgan (1998) highlights strategies for capacity development. He identifies them as follows: eliminate inappropriate capacity, making better use of existing capacity, strengthening up existing capacity, providing climate of innovation and creativity of capacities and creating new capacities.

How to Develop Capacity for Leadership and Management Competencies:

Morgan (1998) defines capacity as the emergent combination for attributes that enables a human system to create development value. The strategy to develop leadership and management competencies should be suitable. Harris (2000) juxtaposes that capacity building concerns creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning. This implies that capacity development is achieved through collaboration between superordinate and subordinates as well as mutual learning. Memon and Simkims (2006) identify that to develop leadership and management capacity; it demands conducting series of monthly workshops to develop the leadership and management skills and competence for improving on the results achievement. They identify associated research studies as another means of developing leadership and management capacity which aids in understanding the relationship which frames both leadership and management roles.

Continuous higher education builds capacity as the educatee is endowed with necessary skills and capabilities for organizational progress. Strategic capacity development results in changes in organizational collaboration and alliance, culture, learning and innovation, policy and standards, processes and systems, strategy, structure and technology of the entire organization. A change in the way an organization deals with other organization and institutions, change in attitude, practices and behavior as the results of new acquisition of skills, knowledge and ideas with application of new technology impact on organizational performance and effectiveness.

The UNDP suggests capacity development in two key areas: functional and technical capacities for leadership and management competencies with the third one relating to behavioral capacities. The functional capacities relate to management capacities needed to formulate, implement and review strategies. The technical capacities cover specific areas of expertise and practice in thematic areas like small business training. Behavioral capacities raise the awareness for individuals to cause shifts in culture and attitude, and by so doing prompts changes in strategy, policies and culture in an organization.

Research Methodology:

The research design for the study was a quasi – experimental using qualitative approach. The study considered leadership and management in twenty five selected private basic educational institutions capturing the knowledge gap of the critical contributions of leadership and management. The researcher used proportionate stratified sampling to select twenty five private basic schools from the sixteen education directorate in the Accra Metropolis and purposive sampling was used for selecting the one hundred (100) school administrators.

The study used extensively primary and secondary data. Primary data were transcriptions of respondents from the face to face interview and the focused group discussions. Secondary data included

documentary material in and out of the educational institutions. Data were analyzed in a descriptive framework using content analytical technique and descriptive statistics.

Empirical Results:

Critical Leadership Competencies for Organizational Effectiveness:

Influence and collaboration is leadership competency. Organizational effectiveness is achieved through leadership competency of collaboration and influencing the whole working environment. Leadership must have the skills to coordinate and collaborate with all organizational activities. The competency to influence and collaborate with all stakeholders of an organization is critical for a leadership of organization. Interviewee 25 stressed that:

“Leaders must have ability to influence the people they work with it helps you to get the loyalty of the people to give their best”

A competency of collaboration and influence on organizational workforce ignites employee loyalty which leads to organizational effectiveness. The influence and collaboration emanate from the leaders’ experience, charisma and knowledge in leading others. Interviewee 26 highlighted:

“..... the leaders power of influence is based on his charisma and knowledge and life style..... if it is good your people agree with you willingly.....”

Strategic thinking is a leadership competency. The skill and ability to think in the long term and develop a strategic action plan set the direction of organizations development agenda. Strategic thinking that sets direction facilitates the quick implementation and achievement of objectives and goals.

“ I do a lot of strategic thinking for my school because we need to achieve our goals as scheduled..... long term strategy and short term strategy determine what we should do or should not”.

Developing others is a leadership competency. Organizational leadership develops others for succession, business continuity, competition and higher productivity though the cost of development may be high.

“..... for the sake of succession and my school continuity to stand competition, I invest enough in developing my teachers so that they can perform.....” (Interviewee 33)

The leader’s ability to competently impact employee development drives organizations effectiveness. Developing others entails a lot depending on employee previous experience, previous knowledge and previous competence. Interviewee 26 added:

“Sometimes you do not get the adequately trained teacher for the job so you have to employ a bit qualified and develop them because their education and previous experience may not be enough to contribute to the achievements of the school objectives.....”

Persuasive communication is a leadership competency. The leaders’ ability to communicate persuasively empowers the vision in the eyes of the employee and the desire to let it happen. Persuasive communicator explains the objective and the exact ways for realizing those set objectives.

“... if your money is small to motivate the teachers to work effectively you must have power to share your ideas persuasively so that they be inspired to go along with you.....”

Persuasive communication becomes a motivating factor that drives dedication and handwork for goals realization. Persuasive communication aids to get attention of employees to stand by and work towards the accomplishment of business objectives whether short or long term.

Team leadership is a leadership competency. Leaders of organizations must possess the ability of focusing and building effective groups in an organization with relevant alignment of skills capable enough to achieve business goals. The ability to focus, align and build teams or group empowers the principle of division of labor which makes people work effectively.

“..... my brother, you know school work is tedious and one person cannot do it all so I have set departments in the school with a leader each who sees to effective administration of work before I even come in..... that is why I am sitting here but teaching and learning is going on effectively”

Team leadership makes it possible to get the contribution of every employee expertise that are correctly positioned in teams or group. Team leadership ensures the adequate involvement and supervision of task.

Critical Management Competencies for Organizational Effectiveness:

Result orientation as management competency. The ability of management team to improve business results is crucial to the survival of organizations. Management with the skill of planning, controlling, managing and evaluation of human effort is done in order to achieve better results that maximize the interest of stakeholders and create good will for the organization. Interviewee 47 highlighted:

“...my school management is bent on achieving better result because if we don’t realize our objective we can’t be in business you know why? We have to make profit to develop the school we are surrounded by many other schools that are competing with us...”

Management concentrates on results for profitability and to meet competition in the business industry. The results achievement better the chances of developing the organization. As indicated by Interviewee 47,

proper planning, controlling, monitoring and coordinating employee efforts are the essential ingredients to achieving organizational goals. Therefore, essential skills in planning, effective control systems and adequate skills in appraisal procedures are needed to achieve a stated result.

People and organizational development is management competency. Employee development is necessary to drive organizational development. The management team must possess relevant competency to develop workers in the direction of organizational objectives and goals to facilitate growth of businesses. Without the competency to develop people to a desired standard to match the expected growth of an organization, business growth becomes a herculean task. Interviewee 86 asserted that:

“my school has come this far because I dedicate time to develop my teachers through conferences, seminars, workshops.....to give new knowledge and skill that makes them work effectively to better the school..... you see, what I am saying you know it involves money... I do it willingly.....”

Continuous professional development programs are organized for employees to increase in knowledge and skills in order to help them facilitate the delivery of duties and responsibilities soundly. Management therefore must have higher knowledge and skill to impact the subordinate performance. Ample time is needed by management to teach subordinates on the desired skills for desired results. The competency to develop organizational workforce is what actually leads to entire development of organizations.

Commercial orientation is a management competency. One relevant competency management team must possess is the ability to identify and seize business opportunities. This helps businesses to achieve productivity and profitability. Management team through this competency element, scan the environment and analyze factors that has the potential of elevating the organization to the next level.

“.....myself and other colleagues managing this school understand the business environment. I see opportunities and utilize it well to grow my school..... you see opportunities can give you a major business breakthrough”

If management has commercial orientation, business opportunities become a major point of growth and profitability.

Market knowledge is a management competency. Understanding the business environment is crucial to achieving effectiveness. Management must have the competency to strategize for competitive advantage, deal with suppliers and regulatory bodies, and supervising the business operations. The ability and skill to adequately handle customers is vital in driving the growth of businesses.

“We know what we are in for... I know my business environment so I am able to handle them well to avoid troubles...” (Interviewee 58)

Management understanding of its business environment aids in mitigating challenges capable of impeding on the progress of business operations.

Customer focus is a management competency. Management of organizations must possess the customer focus competency through serving and building value added relationship with customers to yield customer satisfaction and loyalty. Interviewee 37 asserted that:

“Our students are our customers so we treat them well. We do everything to make sure they will recommend our school to others”

The way management treat customers enhance customer commitment, loyalty and good will for a return service.

Summary and Conclusion:

The critical leadership competencies identified included strategic thinking, influence, collaboration, persuasive communication and team leadership. These competencies propel organizational effectiveness. It is necessary for leaders to be trained specifically on these competencies to drive progress of organizations which requires time and money. Each element of the competency demand special skills and knowledge to fully optimize its potentials. A policy of continuous education or professional development would be needed to enhance the acquisitions of these competencies. This will help organizational leaders to bridge the gap of leadership theory and practice. The five identified critical management competencies included: result orientation, people and organizational development, commercial orientation, knowledge of market environment and customer focus. These competencies demonstrated by the school administrators aided organizational effectiveness. However, to optimally utilize the potentials of above competencies further management training is needed. A careful incorporation and amalgamation of these leadership and management competencies into business operations would yield imaginable results. It is therefore imperative for business executives to exploit the benefits of the competencies to the advantage of businesses. Further explanation of the leadership and management functions would provide business organizations a template to lead and manage effectively.

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