Influence of Organizational Leadership on Organizational Learning in Private Chartered Universities in Kenya

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Abstract: Organizations are facing many challenges due to multiplicity of factors such as globalization and the resulting intensification of competition within organizations. This calls for a reexamination of organizational leadership and its response to the increasing competitive world. It also implies that organizations need to introduce robust organizational communication between leaders and subordinates in an institutionally supported and coherent package combined with high reliance on technology-based systems. The objective of this study was therefore to determine the influence of organizational leadership on organizational learning among private universities in Kenya. The study reviewed the theories of organizational learning focusing mainly on the human capital theory, contingency theory, and institution theory as well the empirical literature relevant to the study. The study adopted descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches because it ensures complete description of the situation, making sure that there is minimum bias in the collection of data. The target population for the study was obtained from 18 private charted Universities authorized to offer higher education in Kenya, through purposive sampling. The sample population was made up of a total of 180 respondents, comprising 10 participants in the rank of senior managers from each of the 18 chartered Kenyan Private Universities. Data was collected through interview schedules and drop and pick questionnaires and analysed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics. A response of 87% was obtained. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was carried out to ascertain the extent of the relationship between the variables. The study revealed that in private chartered universities in Kenya, organizational leadership is a valid antecedent since the variable had significant positive relationship with organization learning.

Keywords: Organizational Leadership, Organizational Communication, Organizational Learning, Private Universities, Stratified Sampling

1. Introduction

Transformational leadership lies in the leader's ability to inspire trust, loyalty, and admiration in followers, who then subordinate their individual interests to the wellbeing of the group. Rather than analyzing and controlling specific transactions with the followers by using rules, directions and incentives, transformational leadership focuses on intangible qualities such as vision, shared values, and ideas in order to build relationships, give larger meaning to separate activities, and provide common grounds in order to enlist followers in the change process [1].

Transaction leadership is defined as the style of leadership that heightens consciousness of collective interest among members of the organization and assist in achieving collective goals [2]. Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership in that the transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development. Transactional leaders exchange things of value with subordinates to advance their own and their subordinates' agendas. Transactional leaders are influential because it is in the best interest of subordinates for them to do what the leader wants [3].

In an organizational learning context, transformational leadership is believed to be the most suitable leadership style [4-6]. Transformational leadership suggests that such leaders

are ready to transform their organization based on environmental changes and challenges by raising their followers' aspirations and activating their higher-order values. It is suggested that followers who have identified with the leader and his or her mission/vision, will feel better about their work, and will perform beyond expectations believe that the occurrence of organizational learning requires intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and self-confidence among organizational members, so that transformational leadership promotes the existence of organizational learning [7].

Transformational leadership is a vital enabler of organizational learning. This leadership style heightens the consciousness of collective interest among an organization's members and helps them to achieve their collective goals [8]. In addition, this leadership style enables organizational learning to occur by promoting change and innovation, inspiring a shared vision, enabling employees to act, modeling their actions and creating continuous opportunities to learn [8]. Organizational learning requires employees to experiment, to take risks and to take up opportunities to learn from mistakes which learning will only occur if the employees are supported by their leaders' goals. In addition, leaders need to share their values, interests, hopes and dreams to uplift employee motivation and to gain a better future for their own and for their organization's future [9]. Sharing of values, interests, hopes and dreams is believed to create an emotional attachment to values, aspirations, and priorities by followers. Thus in transformational leadership, followers develop feelings of identity with the leader and the team that is being led [10].

Transformational leaders inspire employees and can create a perception among employees that they are being taken seriously, listened to and valued as members of the organization. In order to cope with continuous changes in the work environment, the inspiring of employees and the creation of feelings of respect between employees is needed [11]. In addition, transformational leadership stimulates employee participation by creating a work environment where employees feel free and have the capability to seek out innovative approaches to performing their jobs. Freedom to perform a job is important because employees produce more creative work when they perceive that they have greater personal control over how to accomplish given tasks [12]. Transformational leadership guides and motivates a common vision of the organization and encourages good communication networks and a spirit of trust, enabling transmission and sharing of knowledge and generation of knowledge slack [13-15].

Problem statement

Kenyan Private Universities have faced challenges in the recent decades such as reduction of employment rate of university graduates, deficit in terms quality staff, insufficient research, labor turnover followed by increasing competition and market-orientation activities among others [39]. Effectively, Kenyan Private Universities must formulate strategies to attract larger student enrolments; collaborate with the private sector and development partners so as to be self-sufficient [25]. Therefore is need to explore ways of reversing and addressing the above challenges through sound responses, to meet the best HRM practices for private universities to remain competitive [40]. The objective of this study was therefore to examine the influence of organizational leadership on organization learning in Private Chartered Universities in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Contingency theory include the relations between organizational setting and leadership style; highlighting leaders' effectiveness in different contexts [43]. The leader-member relations scale measures how followers view leaders according to loyalty and trust. The power position scale measures the level of authority to punish or reward followers. The task structure scale measures the ambiguity or clarity level of tasks [44].

Contingency theory states that an appropriate match must be made between organizational factors and the environment while on the other hand the theory has broadened the scope of leadership understanding from a focus on a single, best type of leadership to emphasizing the importance of leader's style and the demands of different situation. Fiedler's contingency theory contends that there is no single leadership style that works for all employees [17]. A contingent leader effectively applies his own leadership style to the right situation. The optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation, there is no 'one best way' for leadership; it depends on the situation at hand [33]. Explanations are given as to how contingent factors such as technology, culture, organizational structure and the external environment influence the design and functions of the organizations [41]. It suggests that no leader is equally effective in all situations and thus organizations should consider leaders in optimal situations according to their leadership style [18]. Further, there are situational-contingent factors that affect a leader's ability to lead such as; nature of the task, leader's personality and make-up of the group being led; this determines effectiveness of leadership [19]. Contingency theory thus emphasizes that performance of the organization is determined by how the group receives the leader, the task involved and whether the leader can exert control over the group [32].

One major criticism of contingency theory is that it didn't allow for flexibility in leaders. Fielder believed that because our natural leadership style is fixed, the most effective way to handle situations is to change the leader. Behavioural theories also ignore the importance role the situational factors play in determining the effectiveness of individual leader [42]. In relation to this study the major challenge for the leader is thus to balance their orientation on the task, employee and the teams and to raise the follower aspiration to achieve organizational vision, encourage good communication and spirit of trust to acquire, share, and exploit information and knowledge for the benefit of the organization. The nature and

process of learning may vary in different situations and cultures. Culture is seen to be determined by managers and leaders to influence the organizational learning processes in an organization as well as being a frame of thinking for all organizational members [45].

Leadership has the utmost effect on behavioural and cognitive changes, in fact it is the ultimate significant stage of the learning process in organization [43, 44, 46].

Institutional Theory was founded by two prominent Austrians living in exile; the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern. Institutional theory gives insight for further understanding of the influence of HRMP on organizational learning. Authors of institutional theory argue that conformity to social expectations contributes to organizational success [47]. The theory looks at the role played by social influence and pressure for social conformity in shaping the organizational actions. Institutions influence resource decisions since economic choices are constrained by technological, information and human limits. Institutional theory studies the process by which activities or items become institutionalized or embedded in institutions as accepted practice and indicates their role in the institutions [48]. This theory focuses on the process by which structures including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines are communicated to organizational employees for social behavior. Institutional view holds that institutionalized activities are strongly endorsed by the firm's prevailing culture through communication between leaders and subordinates [49, 50].

3. Methodology

The study adopted cross-sectional descriptive survey research design to ascertain the effect of HRMP on organization learning in Private Universities in Kenya. The design was suitable for the proposed study because it attempts to determine current status of the phenomenon. Previous study affirm that surveys are useful in describing the opinions, beliefs and knowledge of certain phenomena in society [23]. The study design was cross-sectional descriptive survey since data was collected at one particular time across the 18 private chartered universities in Kenya [14]. The research design is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or a group. Specifically it is concerned with specific predictions, with narrations of facts and characteristics concerning individual or situations, [15]. The research design aimed at providing an accurate and valid representation of the factors or variables that pertain or are relevant to the research question. This kind of research is more structured.

The study also utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches that were ideal in collection of data through the instruments of questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative research approach was relevant to the study as it enhanced the collection of numeric data from a large number of respondents. Quantitative data analysis was used to determine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to explore the problem and develop a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon then followed in a systematic manner to describe and test relationships and examine the cause and effect among variables.

Purposive sampling was used to sample respondents on the basis of their first-hand insight of the influence of HRMP on organization learning in Kenya's Private Universities. The respondents took into account the office of: The Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics & Research), Deputy Vice Chancellor (Finance &Planning), Registrar (Administration), Registrar (Academics), Dean of Post Graduate Studies, Dean of Students, Human Resource Manager, Finance Officer, and University Librarian. The aforementioned offices were targeted because the managers were the policy formulators/implementers and resource allocators and were also the ones that were in charge of human resource function in the universities. The primary data was collected using a semi-structured, structured and unstructured questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. A questionnaire is a data collection tool, designed by the researcher and whose main purpose is to communicate to the respondents what is intended and to elicit desired responses in terms of empirical data from the respondents in order to achieve research objectives [19]. A standardized questionnaire was developed that captured the variables under study, for the independent variables, a modified questionnaire was used [20, 21]. This aided the researcher to generate data on the study variables. Both closed and open-ended structured questionnaires were used in line with the study objectives.

4. Results and Discussions

Descriptive results for each of the indicators of employee organizational leadership were analyzed and presented as in the table 1. On whether the leaders actively lead by example in the gradual process of evolving the norms and behaviors of a learning culture, 43.6 percent of the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 3.96 and the standard deviation of 1.171; and that 37.8% of the respondents disagreed on the statement that leadership in the institution encouraged employees to take up opportunities to learn from mistakes as illustrated by a mean of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 1.219. The study findings also indicated that 59.0% of the respondents agreed that leaders in the institutions constantly communicate change to its employees and involve them in the change transition process as indicated by a mean of 3.99 and the standard deviation was 0.933

On the statement that leadership in the organization is generally considered to encourage teamwork, consensus and participation 51.9% of the respondents agreed as illustrated by a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.166; as to whether leaders in the institution invested in technologies that enabled transmission and sharing of knowledge, 60.3% of the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 3.90 and

a standard deviation of 1.002. A total of 47.4% of the respondents were in agreement that leaders in the institution reward those who are predisposed to bringing about change, to aid in the diffusion of new learning as illustrated by a mean of 3.96 and the standard deviation of 1.062. A further 41.7% of the respondents were also in agreement as to whether leaders exchange things of value with subordinates for them to do what the leaders with the results having achieved a mean of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 1.136. Overall from the measurements, we can conclude that indicators used to operationalize the variables had an approximate mean of 3.9557. This meant that most respondents agreed.

The interviews conducted indicated that employees were fairly satisfied with leadership style practiced in the universities. The study established that employee participation in decision making was evident through representation in various committees where decisions on matters affecting their institutions are addressed. The interviews also clearly showed that the management constantly communicated change to employees through their respective heads of departments. The management conducted staff appraisals and generally employees in the institutions were encouraged to upgrade their skills. The management had put forums where staff could network and share their ideas. These findings on the favorable aspects on organizational leadership are consistent with previous findings which established that leadership enables organization learning to occur by promoting change and innovation, inspiring a shared vision, enabling employees to act, modeling their actions and creating continuous opportunities to learn [17].

***Table 1.** Descriptive Results for Influence of Organizational Leadership on Organizational Learning.*

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
Leaders actively lead by example in the gradual process of evolving the norms and behaviours of a learning culture	5 (3.2)	20 (12.8)	20 (12.8)	43 (27.6)	68 (43.6)	3.96	1.171
The leadership in the institution encourages employees to take up opportunities to learn from mistakes	40 (25.6)	59 (37.8)	13 (8.3)	38 (24.4)	6 (3.8)	2.43	1.219
Leaders constantly communicate change to its employees and involve them in the change transmission process	4 (2.6)	13 (8.3)	5 (3.2)	92 (59.0)	42 (26.9)	3.99	0.933
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to encourage teamwork, consensus and participation	12 (7.7)	14 (9.0)	2 (1.3)	81 (51.9)	47 (30.1)	3.88	1.166
Top leaders in the institution invests in technologies that enable transmission and sharing of knowledge	7 (4.5)	13 (8.3)	5 (3.2)	94 (60.3)	37 (23.7)	3.90	1.002
Leaders in the institution reward those who are predisposed to bringing about change, to aid in the diffusion of new learning	6 (3.8)	15 (9.6)	10 (6.4)	74 (47.4)	51 (32.7)	3.96	1.062
The leaders exchange things of value with subordinates for them to do leaders desires	7 (4.5)	18 (11.5)	11 (7.1)	65 (41.7)	55 (35.3)	3.92	1.136
Overall						3.72	0.103

The research sought to establish the intensity and direction of how organizational leadership influences organizational learning using the hypothesis that is stated below.

H_0: Organizational leadership does not influence organizational learning among private chartered universities in Kenya

To determine the relationship, the model $Y=\beta_0 + \beta_3 OL + \varepsilon$ was fitted.

The regression results were as shown in Table 2.

***Table 2.** Regression Results of Influence of Organizational Leadership on Organizational Learning.*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.781[a]	.609	.607	.37432

ANOVA[a]					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33.644	1	33.644	240.114	.000[b]
	Residual	21.578	154	.140		
	Total	55.222	155			

Coefficients[a]		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.886	.182		4.865	.000
	Organizational Leadership	.765	.049	.781	15.496	.000

The regression results in table 1 show that the effect of organizational leadership on organizational learning was significant (F (1, 154)=240.114, p=0.000<0.05). With R=0.781 and R^2=0.609, the model implies that about 78.1% of organizational learning changes were accounted for by organizational leadership, while a variation of 60.9% in

organizational learning was brought about by organizational leadership.

The F test was significant with a p value=0.000 which was less than the standard p value of 0.05 and this meant that the model was significant. From ANOVA, since p=0.000 and was lower than p=0.05 (p value 0.000<0.05), then the contribution of organizational leadership to organizational learning was significant, and the conclusion is that organizational leadership has a positive impact on organizational learning. The equation that was fitted for the model was $OLN = 0.886 + 0.765OL$.

The coefficient for organizational leadership (β) was also significant (β=0.765, t=15.496, p=0.000<0.05) indicating that organizational leadership increased organizational learning by about 0.765 units. Since p-value=0.000< 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between organizational leadership and organizational learning.

5. Conclusion

Regarding the aspect of leadership and organizational learning, the respondents agreed that leadership is very important for learning because leadership involves great influence. The study findings also established that the leaders in the organization actively lead by example in the gradual process of evolving the norms and behaviours of a learning culture. From the findings, it was also established that leaders do quite uphold employee development and staff involvement programmes as it's an important antecedent in organizational learning and that that the top management have put in place some strategies for staff development including study leave policy in the institutions which have been operationalized.

The study established that organizational leadership in private chartered universities in Kenya had influence on the issues of training policies, recognitions, rewards, employee participation and involvement amongst others which were means of employee empowerment. The findings of this study affirmed that the contribution of organizational leadership to organizational learning was significant, and that organizational leadership had a positive impact on organizational learning. On the other hand the respondents disagreed that that leadership in the institution encouraged employees to take up opportunities to learn from mistakes.

The study also affirmed that employees were given performance appraisal feedback and this was an indicator that organizational communication was evident. The findings of this study acknowledged that communication between organizational leaders and subordinates is an important enabler in organizational learning. It thus views effective information as enabler of building sense of corporate identity, teamwork, productivity, participation, improve retention and job satisfaction at work place; these conditions are necessary for organization learning to take place. These views were echoed by the respondents in the qualitative interviews. However the respondents disagreed that the institution

documented the deliberations of its seminars, workshops, conferences and training programs and circulated it to members.

The results of the study indicate that the private chartered universities have invested greatly on employees as indicated by the high emphasizes by management on development of human resource and team learning. From the researcher objective and the research questions the underlying objective of the study were achieved. Even though a lot has been done to ensure organizational learning improves, organizational learning still remains an area of concern. From the regression analysis, the study concludes that organizational leadership despite their level of influence on organizational learning is significant.

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