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EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION OF UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined effective leadership for influencing behaviour of employees in universities in Nigeria. It established that effective leadership motivates the employees in Nigerian universities. Providing effective leadership which motivates workforce in order to facilitate the employees' performance is a crucial responsibility of the leader towards achieving the set objectives of the university. The paper posited that transformational leadership approach is suitable for universities because it encourages creativity and innovation and takes cognizance that the leader in addition to performing administrative roles maintains a role as a professional in education. It was suggested that leader relate with employees in order to understand their motives, drives and impulses to motivate.

Keywords: Effective Leadership, Motivation, University, Employees.

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INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is a key factor to influencing behavior of employees in universities towards achievement of the goals of the institutions. The objectives of an educational institution are unique. Universities are expected to develop personal capacity of individuals and inculcate accepted values and beliefs (FRN, 2014). Therefore, it is a crucial responsibility of leaders in universities to motivate employees in the educational institutions. It is important that the leader in the university provides encouragement in various forms to facilitate the performance of the employees. Babalola and Ayeni (2009) pointed out that the motivation of people depends on the strength of their motives, needs drives or impulses. Nwafor (1998) opined that the primary purpose of leaders in the administration of universities is to coordinate funds, materials and

employees in order to provide efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system. Chiemeka-Unogu (2018) affirmed that the main role of an administrator is to provide leadership that ensures the efficient performance of all sub-units of an organization. She added that the leader provides motivation to the work force towards achieving the objectives of the organization.

Universities are facing challenges in fulfilling the goals of providing and improving the quality of education and demonstrating their contribution to national development. Universities are responsible for carrying out researches and the production of high level manpower needed to drive the Nigerian economy. Identified challenges of inadequate funding, mismanagement of funds, improper use of university assets, sex for marks and inflation of cost of contracts are recurring and manifesting in the quality of graduates being churned from the universities. It is believed that the quality of education provided by universities over the years has been declining. In order to achieve these tasks, the universities need transformational and dynamic leaders. Nwafor (1998) added that leaders would have to work with people and be able to inspire them to achieve the stated objectives of the university. Soludo in Ololube (2017) reiterated that leadership is a key to human and institutional improvement, growth and transformation.

Concept of Leadership

Leadership deals with the art of coordination and motivating or stimulating individual workers and groups to achieve organizational goals (Oluwuo in Nnabuo et al., 2005). A leader in the university is an administrator who directs the activities of a group of workers in the faculties, departments, units and motivates them towards achieving institutional objectives. Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) defined leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts towards goal setting and achievement. While drawing a comparison between leadership and management, Kotler (1990) noted that leadership is motivating and inspiring, and that it energises people to overcome obstacles and satisfy human needs.

Bush and West-Burnham (1994) were of the view that leadership in educational institutions differs from other areas. They pointed out professionalism, dual role model of leadership, importance of mission/value and educational values as the differentiating factors. The employees in the university system can be widely categorized into academic and non-academic staff as known in Nigerian parlance. The academic are mostly professionals and professionals are expected to have a degree of autonomy in carrying out their operations. A leader in the university could face difficulties in managing a set of professionals. A leader in the university besides performing administrative responsibilities also maintains a role as professional in education. The dual role of a leader in the university could serve as an advantage to be exploited as it provides an understanding of what motivates those working with him.

Leaders in Nigerian universities can be identified as Vice-chancellors, Deans of Faculties Directors and Heads of Departments. These officers work with the employees of the university to achieve the stated goals of the university. A leader using a leadership style that does not fit the needs of the employee is likely to frustrate the employee and decrease the employee's motivation (Naile & Selesho, 2014). Effective leadership will involve applying the appropriate leadership skills and abilities to influence the behavior of the workers towards accomplishment of the objectives of setting up an institution (Chiemeka- Unogu, 2018). An effective leader is one that is visionary with the ability to provide momentum and direction for the employees as a team and as individuals. He articulates the goals of the university and pursues it with unrelenting passion.

The leader in the university system must realize that tasks can be appropriately delegated to the followers in the faculties, departments and directorates. Employees need to understand the purpose and directions of activities for the overall success of the university. Excellent communication is required for a leader to effectively motivate his followers to maintain productivity. A leader is expected to display confidence by being assertive and maintaining positive demeanour despite difficulties to motivate employees. Being honest is an integral aspect of effective leadership. The employees must believe and be comfortable that the leader must follow through his words with actions.

There have been a significant number of leadership researches in studying new types since the 1980's (Bass, 1985; Eagly et al., 2003). The paper will view transformational and transactional leadership styles. Transformational leadership can be defined as the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes, beliefs and values of followers to a point where the goals of an organization and the vision of the leader are internalized and followers achieve performances beyond expectations. Bass 1985 stated that transformational leadership involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of followers. Transformational leadership can be defined as the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes, and values of followers to point where the goals and vision of an organization are internalized and followers achieve performances beyond expectations (Bass, 1985; Gomes, 2014)

Transformational Leadership is a type of leadership in which the leader broadens and elevates followers' interest and stirs followers to look beyond their own interests for the good of others. Transformational leaders lead by mentoring and empowering their followers and encouraging them to develop their full potential to contribute more capably to their organization. Under the transformational leadership, leaders are encouraged to transform the loyalties and behaviours of employees (Heidments & Liik, 2014). Transformational leadership encourages creativity and innovation. It allows the employees to set individual goals and work towards its achievement while at the same time motivating them to do more beyond their capabilities to achieve institutions goal by the leader maintaining open communication channels. The changing context of university education highlights the inadequacy of traditional leadership approaches in Universities. In the past two decades, emphasis seems to have shifted to transformational leadership style. For the universities, the adaptive concept of transformational leadership approach is perceived to match the changing nature of university education. The approach seems better to be able to meet the challenges.

Alqatawenah (2018) pointed out that, transformational leaders achieve superior results by applying the dimensions of transformational leadership namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Idealized Influence

The leader attends to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by providing encouragement through keeping the communication channel open and serving as a role model. The leader is able to gain the respect and admiration of his followers so that the followers imitate the leader (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006).

Inspirational Motivation

The transformational leader clearly presents the vision of the organization in a manner that is appealing and inspiring to the followers. He provides purpose and meaning to the followers, work and communicates high expectations that the followers are willing to invest their efforts. The leader promotes team spirit, enthusiasm and optimism about the future in the followers causing them to believe in their abilities.

Intellectual Stimulation

A transformational leader challenges followers to be innovative and creative thereby encouraging the followers to challenge the existing state of things to higher levels of performance. They nurture followers to think independently about things and develop new ideas on their jobs. Al-Jarodi (2010) noted that the transformational leader raises and upgrades followers to make them more aware, innovative and creative.

Individual Consideration

Individualised consideration involves the leaders providing support, encouragement and mentoring to the followers. The transformational leader pays attention to the individual needs of the followers for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Onuselegu in Anyamele and Ukaigwe (2015) pointed out that transformational leaders in educational institutions achieve transformational leadership by observing three fundamental tasks. The tasks are discussed below:

Helping Staff Develop and Maintain a Collaborative, Professional School Culture

Transformational leaders create and maintain good school culture and encourage collective responsibility and continuous improvement in the school system. A transformational leader in the universities identifies and articulates a vision, fosters the acceptance of group goals and conveys high performance expectations. The leader sets good example for the employees to follow. The followers become consistent with the value exposed by the leader.

Fostering Teacher Development

The lecturers' motivation for development is enhanced when goals are internalized for professional growth. This process is facilitated when they are strongly committed to the university mission.

Helping Teachers Solve Problem More Effectively

Transformational leadership is valued because it stimulates lecturers to engage in new activities and put an extra effort. When leaders give employees a role in solving extraordinary school improvement problems, they should make sure goals are explicit and ambitious but not unrealistic. Transformational leaders believe that when employees work as a team they produce higher results by working smarter.

Lunenburg and Orstein (2012) identified four elements to show how transformational leadership works in educational setting:

- **Creativity:** Transformational leaders are proactive. They produce new ideas and expose their staff to achieve effectiveness in the teaching and learning process.
- **Goals:** Leaders in the universities have predetermined goals which they expect to be achieved. The transformational specify the goals in a manner to be understood by the employees in which the different tasks are carried out for the goals to be attained.
- **Vision:** Transformational leaders create a strategic vision that energises and unify their staff. They communicate the vision with emotional appeal that captivates their staff and stakeholders.
- **Commitment:** School managers build commitment in their staff by involving them in the creation of the vision. The transformational leader gets the commitment of the employees in achieving the goals since they were part of creating the vision.

In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership appeals to subordinates' self-interest by establishing exchange relationships with them. Transactional leaders use reward and punishments to gain compliance from followers and accept goals, structure and the culture of existing problems. It involves managing in the more conventional sense of clarifying subordinate responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives and correcting them for failing to meet objectives. The concept of transactional was introduced by Max Weber. Transactional leadership was defined by Max Weber as a leader who earns leadership through rules and regulations, strict discipline and systematic control (Kabeyi, 2018).

Kabeyi (2018) remarked that transactional leaders are willing to give something to the followers including a raise, promotion, new responsibilities or desired change of duties. A transactional leader clarifies and lays emphasis on goals and objectives, tasks, performances, organizational rewards and consequences of laxities. Transactional leaders motivate subordinates by appealing to their personal desires. Transactional leadership can be effective in motivating followers which may not be sustained (Northhouse, 2016; Kabeyi, 2018). Bass and Avolio (1990) stated that transactional leaders understand employees' needs and make provision to meet the needs through the reward given to such employees for his and her hard work and contributions towards the completion and success of the assigned duties.

Dimensions of transactional form of leadership style are contingent rewards, active management by exception, passive management by exception and laissez faire:

- **Contingent Rewards:** This shows the leader will be ready to render any assistance in exchange for the subordinate's efforts. The transactional leader provides various kinds of rewards in exchange for mutually agreed upon goal accomplishment. The goals must be linked to a specific reward which can range from monetary bonus to material gain. It is the leaders role to clarifies the expectations and the goals, as well as to provide the resources for the subordinates to assist in the performance. Such leaders will only be satisfied when their expectations are met accordingly. Rewards are used for the achievement of desired outcomes.
- **Active Management by Exception:** The leader plays active role by monitoring the subordinates while they work on the objectives. The leader focuses on watching for deviations from expectations and steps in to take corrective measure. The active

management by exception style assists in identifying situation where mistakes could have been made before it occurs.

- **Passive Management by Exception:** The passive management by exception style leader intervene only when objectives are not met by the subordinates. The subordinates have the power to conduct work as they like but the leader would intervene or introduce a punishment if standards are not met.
- **Laissez Faire:** The leader gives ample freedom for the subordinates. The objectives would come from the leader but the subordinates take charge of decision-making involved in setting up the processes. The subordinates take full responsibility in the performance of their duties, however, the group lacks direction.

Concept of Motivation

Motivation is a very essential tool which a leader in the university can utilize to maintain productivity and support the advancement of the institution. Bush and West-Burnham (1994) defined motivation as individual differences with regard to priorities, attitudes and aspects of lifestyle that people seek to fulfill in work. According to Lawal (1993), motivation refers to an inner state that energises, activates or moves and directs or channels behavior towards goals. Hoy and Miskel (2008) defined motivation as complex forces, drives, needs, tensions, stress or mechanism that starts and maintain activity towards the achievement of personal goals. Motivation is employed by leadership in universities to maintain behaviour geared at fulfilling personal objectives, which impacts on job performance. Madumere-Obike et al. (2013) observed that without adequate motivation of lecturers, the goals of education could never be achieved.

Effective Leadership and Motivation of Employees

A leader must possess the right leadership traits to influence motivation. An effective leader must have a thorough knowledge of motivational factors for others. He must understand the basic needs of employees. He must ensure that his subordinates are encouraged and trained in a manner that meets the needs of the university (Chiemeka-Unogu, 2018). A leader in the university must be self-motivated before he can effectively motivate employees working with him. In other words, the leader must understand what his personal needs and drives towards the achievement of the university goals and harmonise his personal goals with the goals of the institution.

The leader in a university must have a basic understanding of human behavior. It is pertinent that the leader creates right atmosphere for motivating others. He should consistently make clear goals. An open communication should exist between the leader and followers to hear their suggestions, ideas, problems and issues. Performance issues and their work should be regularly discussed to provide an insight into the needs and drives of the employees. It rests on the leaders to find out what motivates the employees. In doing so, the leader is able to know their personal goals, aspirations and interests: and show interest in their jobs.

The leader should help employees develop new skills needed for their present jobs employees and motivate by giving them skills for future roles. Effective leaders find out what motivate their best people by getting to know what desires will drive each team member. Providing the resources employees need to do their work help in encouraging exceptionally performance.

An effective leader ascertains and provides information for the employees to make the right decision and the equipment needed for the job. The leader must believe in the employees and actively involve them in planning their jobs and setting targets to motivate them. Praise and compliment to employees boost the morale of employees.

CONCLUSION

Effective leadership is very crucial for motivating employees in the universities. Leaders need be self-motivated to effectively motivate the employees in the universities. It is important that the leaders understand the needs and drives of individual employee by keeping open line of communication to elicit information on work performance which impacts on productivity. Transformational leadership approach seems to produce level of motivation required for achievement of the overall stated objectives of the university.

Suggestions

From the foregoing, it is suggested that:

- The leader relates with the employees with the aim to understand their motives, drives and impulses. It is intended to enable the leader use them to stimulate each individual towards achieving the universities objectives;
- A leader in the university should adopt the transformational leadership approach which fits the needs of the employees and to maintain their roles as professionals for the accomplishment of the objectives of setting up the university.

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