REVIEW ARTICLE

A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE – CASE FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The need for excellence in the satisfaction of stakeholders to an organisation had gained momentum in the last three decades. Initial emphasis had been on manufacturing sectors but later emphasis extended to service sectors like higher education institutions. To achieve this excellence and achieve world class status, transformational leadership had been seen to triger organisational excellence. Studies on organisation excellence in higher education institution had been concentrated in foreign European, American, Asian and few African countries. The problems of inefficiency of higher education institutions in Nigeria are many. This article reviews previous researches on the impact of transformational leadership on organisational excellence. It thereby stated the implications of these impacts and how transformastional leadership can ensure organisational excellence in higher education institutions in Nigeria for them to become world class institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The indispensability of quality products had long been acknowledged by different groups over time (Peters and Waterman, 1982). This was sequel to the period of mass production and non-customisation of products. Frederick Winslow Taylor, with his scientific management movement, started efforts at improving quality through time and motion study. This was followed by statistical quality control which was primarily aimed at a precise and measurable method of product and service outputs. The concern of this earlier effort was on the measurement of and measures towards improving product quality (Patwardhan, 2007). However, the desire for quality improvement moved to provision of services. Efforts towards holistic improvement in the quality of products and operations led to the movement for excellence performances by organisation towards becoming World Class. The desire for organisational excellence was further encouraged through the establishment of excellence awards by countries and organisations. The pioneer awards were Deming Prize in Japan, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvements Act of 1987 in America and the European Foundation for Quality Management (MBNQA Act, 1987; EFQM, 2014). Other countries of the World also adapted these pioneering excellence awards systems by ensuring that organisations that

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operated in them display excellent performances for the benefit of all stakeholders (Klefsjö, *et al.*, 2008; Talwar, 2011). Higher education institutions were not excluded from this search for excellent performance. Dawei, *et al.* (2011) observed that shift in perception of excellence gained prominence in the last three decades in the field of management theory and practice. Lomas (2004) and Laurie and Lavigna (2010) underscored the impact of transformational leadership on organisational excellence while Kwiatkowski (1990) argued that the future of Polish universities could only be based on sound foundation of excellence with a view to being ahead of others. Thus, higher education institutions are expected to excel in their operations through transformational leadership. This is the main issue in this review.

Problem statement

Nigeria operates a three-tier level of educational system in form of basic, higher school and higher institutions (FME, 2014). While the basic component comprises the 9year compulsory education and the higher school of 3years is referred to as Senior Secondary School (SSS) on one hand, the higher education institutions (HEIs) on the other comprise monotechnics, polytechnics, colleges of education, universities etc. Abudugana, (2012) observed that higher education institutions in Nigeria are not currently attractive to both foreign and local staff and students as they used to be before. The study by Babalola (2007) observed that there was a

complete mismatch between the graduates produced through teaching in Nigerian higher education institutions and the societal needs for the graduates. Low level of performances of these higher education institutions in Nigeria over the years has resulted in no Nigerian HEI being among the first 1600 in the World University ranking in general and the first 18 in Africa to be particular (Web Ranking of Universities, 2014). This was not good for a country desirous of development and that was generally referred to as the giant of Africa. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) in Nigeria, in her comment on the reports of the presidential visitation panels to the Federal universities in Nigeria as at 2011 expressed dismay over poor leadership quality and low level of performance in the higher education institutions. The committee on needs assessment in Nigerian public Universities observed that the problems identified in Nigerian public universities were mere symptons; blaming it on the tripod of poor quality of leadership and governance; prioritisation of resource allocation as well as limited resources (ASUU, 2014). Due to strike and inefficiency in Nigerian higher education institutions, Nigerians now constitute a sizeable percentage of international education mobility (Olabisi, 2012) coupled with the penchant of Nigerians for foreign education (Gabriel, 2011). This has led to leakages in the Nigerian economy based on the observation of the former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and current Emir of Kano, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, that '…there are about 71,000 Nigerian Students in Ghana alone paying a billion US dollars annually as tuition fess". In 2009 only, Nigerians in UK paid $271m in tuition fees (Gabriel, 2011). These are some of the issues of concern for efficiency in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Research objectives

The primary objective of this research is to study the relationship between transformational leadership and organisations excellence with reference to the higher education institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the research objective is to review literature on the impact of transformational leadership on organisational excellence and its implications on higher education institutions in Nigeria.

Literature review

Introduction

The concept of organisational excellence will be discussed with special emphasis on its meaning and cores. Transformational leadership concept and cores will also be discussed. The impact of leadership on organisational excellence will also be examined.

Organisational Excellence

Organisational Excellence Defined

Organisations are primarily set up with the aim of achieving certain goals and objectives as excellently as possible. Their performances and achievements are expected to be excellent in this ever dynamic competitive world. They should do things rightly from the perspectives of all stakeholders - customers,

shareholders, employees in the organisation, suppliers, government and the general public at large (Peters & Waterman, 1982, 2004).

Total quality management is a restricted approach to improvement in organisations' competitiveness, efficiency and profitability before attention was shifted to business excellence (Klefsjö *et al.,* 2008) which is interchangeably used as performance or organizational excellence (Kanji, 2002; Tata Ratan, 2007; Klefsjö *et al.,* 2008). The seminal book by Peters and Waterman (1982) titled *In Search of Excellence*, greatly influenced the attention, practice and research on excellence in organisations. Different definitions had been advanced on the meaning of organisational excellence. It had been defined from the perspective of stakeholders' satisfaction for long-term success (Kanji, 2006); or as the ability of organisation to continuously respond to changes in its environment by tracking, revamping, adjusting, transforming and adapting to shifts in customers' needs (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Patwardhan (2007) viewed it as putting in place, a well-established system in an organisation and vigorously pursuing it in proactively sensing and responding to changes within an organisation immediate and remote environment – with respect to all stakeholders. It is viewed as outstanding practice put in place towards satisfaction of stakeholders (EFQM, 2014) and as a combination of the excellence of the internal operations and external performances that were measurable (Dawei, et. al, 2011). It can be deducted that organisational excellence comprised efficient satisfaction of all stakeholders to an organisation in a sustainable (long-term) way. The two main focus of organisational excellence are: satisfaction of stakeholders and; sustainability of satisfying the stakeholders in the future through continuous improvements.

Cores of organisational excellence

The cores of organisational excellence were presented by Peters and Waterman (1982). These included: a bias for action; closeness to the customer; autonomy and entrepreneurship and; productivity through people. Others are hands-on, value-driven performances; sticking to the knitting; simple forms of organisation and simultaneous loose-tight properties. The National Institute for Science and Technology (NIST) which was charged with the implementation of the MBNQA Act (1987) in America, stated the cores of organisational excellence as customer-driven quality; leadership improvement; continual improvement learning; employee participation and development and; fast response. Others cores stipulated by NIST, as captured by Heapy and Gruska (1995) included design quality; prevention; partnership development; long-range look ; management by fact; good corporate citizen and; result orientation. These values could be subsumed under and were in alliance with the Peters and Walterman's descriptions above except that emphasis was now placed on continual improvements by organisations (this was because, most of the Peters and Walterman's excellent organisation became bankrupt after some years). The same can be concluded of the prescriptions by EFQM, George (1997) and, Kanji (2002). Cores of organisational excellence presented by them are in agreement to the eight basics of organisational excellence as presented by Peters and

Waterman (1982) which greatly influenced the core values of the organisational excellence. Although there were view variations over time, these variations only enriched Peters and Waterman's earlier stipulated core values.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership defined

Current developments in the area of globalisation, complexity of organisations, expectations of different stakeholders had impacted on leaders and followers by making them to be under intense pressure to do more with less and adapt to their environment (Bass *et al.,* 2003). Burns' (1978) *Leadership* shifted attention from leadership approach to leadership power thereby making a distinction between transactional and transforming (transformational) leadership. Transactional leadership is in agreement with exchange theory which is an approach to leadership where a leader and the follower discussed performance expectations and the reward that will follow suit if the requirements were fulfilled (Bass & Bass, 2008). Burns (1978) pointed out that transforming leadership (later refined as transformational leadership) were leaders who looked for potential motives in followers, sought to satisfy higher needs, and engaged the full person of the follower. Leadership is transformational when a leader stimulates the interest among followers and colleagues with a view to making them view their work from a perspective which was different from their former perspective (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Bass and Bass, 2008). The transformational leader sets challenging expectations (higher purposes) for the followers, raises the level of maturity of followers, is leadership based on mutual trust and respect between the leader and the follower. Behling and McFillan (1996) described the synthesis of charismatic and transformational leadership in form of demonstration of empathy; empowerment of followers; projection of self-assurance; dramatisation of organisational mission and; affirmation of collective efficacy as the hallmarks of transformational leadership. In fact, they equated charismatic leadership to transformational leadership. Thus, transformational leadership is leadership beyond expectations by making ordinary people to do extra-ordinary things through leadership. It appeals to getting the best from people by appealing to the higher-order motivation as stipulated by Maslow's hierarch of needs theory.

Cores of Transformational Leadership Dimensions

Avolio *et al.* (1999) identified the conceptual organisation of transformational leadership along four correlated dimensions viz: idealised influence; individualised consideration; inspirational motivation and; intellectual stimulation behaviours. These four cores have been expanded to include personal recognition based on the study by Rafferty and Griffin (2004). When followers have emotional identification with the leader based on the internalised ideological values espoused by such leaders, idealised influence behaviour is taking place (House, 1997). These included trustworthiness, consistency of action of leaders to ethical beliefs, principles and values which endears a transformational leader to the followers. Idealised influence is a value-based core of

transformational leadership. A transformational leader exhibits individualised consideration behaviour when the leader provides supporting function to the followers. These supporting functions include mutual trust, provision of job security, interpersonal warmth, mentoring to individuals and provision of a climate to grow for the followers. The leader recognises the needs and potentials of individuals and helps them in achieving them (Bass and Bass 2008). Although a transformational leader can disagree with followers, he does so without making the followers feel wrong (Bracey *et al.,* 1990; Bass and Bass 2008). An organisation's visions are better expressed through leadership behaviours. Followers are expected to rever these visions as espoused and exhibited by transformational leader. This is the state of inspirational motivation in organisations. The leader aroused action on the part of followers either through individual action or team spirit for the purpose of achieving the vision of the organisation. Every follower has both explicit and innate gifts of intellect. A transformational leaders not only exploits the explicit intellect of followers, he stimulates the latent ones as well. A transformational leader encourages creativity among followers while giving room for unavoidable mistakes. It had been pointed out that majority of leaders and followers believed their intellects were underutilised as much challenges were not set out for them (Avolio 1999). When followers' intellects are challenged into developing perspective in solving organisation problems and issues and; are seen as part-contributors to a new idea generation and solution processes as common in Japanese companies (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995), intellectual stimulation is taking place. Whenever there were obstacles or challenges, the leader stimulates the intellect of every follower to find a solution.

Burns (1978) confirmed the interrelationship of transaction and transforming leadership. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) observed that further research evidences have proved that there was a link between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. They discovered that leadership effectivenes had been found to depend on contingent rewards to employees as there was a highly positive correlation between contingent reward and transformational leadership. To them, personal recognition occured when a leader indicated that he or she valued individuals' efforts and rewarded the achievement of outcomes consistent with the vision through praise and acknowledgement of followers. The leader can negotiate with and provide rewards to the follower based on agreement of personally recognising follower. In summary, the above are the cores of transformtional leadership which were based on focussed and validated researches into the construct. They provided the reflective items in the transformational leadership trajectories.

Transformational leadership and organisational excellence

Researchers had shown the impact of transformational leadership on organisations excellence in organisation regardless of the form such organisations take. Transformational leadership had a positive effect on subordinates in the areas of performance appraisal, training and development needs as well as succession planning. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) work suggested that the general human resources management in an organisation could be

improved upon through proper understanding and implementation of transformational leadership in organisations. Closely linked with the above was the guarantee of employee loyalty to the organisation. When a leader intellectually stimulated followers, it brought about a positive affective attachment of followers to the outcomes of the organisational activities. This usually propelled an employee to be emotionally attached to the fate of the organisation. This loyalty and subsequent feeling of security must be balanced against further productivity to prevent a follower from being less likely to make positive contributions to the organisation (Meyer and Allen 1997; Rafferty and Griffin 2004).

Transformational leadership through senior management commitment has a positive effect on operational performance of organisations. The study by Prabhu and Robson (2000) confirmed the fact that leadership impact on internal operational performance could be easily seen in an organisation. They found that external impact, although may be varied, are as positive as the internal impact on operational performances of organisations. Also, to be able to sustain quality performances in higher education institutions, transformational leadership had been found to be a necessity. Higher education institutions need to adopt deliberate approach for effective communication between the leadership and followership on the vision of the institutions. Institutions leadership should also empower staff (individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) towards best practices and superior results. This approach of transformational leadership had served as a way of standing up to the challenges of dwindling fund allocation and scarcity of teaching and research facilities (Osseo-Asare *et al.,* 2005) in higher education institutions. Transformational leadership had been found to positively impact on followers by motivating them to set higher goals and performance. Studies by Bass and Avolio (1989); Sparks and Schenk (2001) have found that followers of transformational leaders often set high work purposes for themselves; they are more committed and involved with their organisations and; usually perform beyond social expectation. Thus, as a way to motivate followers to willingly and enthusiastically strive for higher levels of performance beyond ordinary expectation, transformational leadership had made an extra-ordinary man out of an ordinary man.

Using Transformational Leadership For Organisational Excellence in the Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria

Many organisations have used organisational excellence framework and measurement yardsticks as a means of starting the quality journey (Prybutok and Cutshal 2004; Bou-Llusar, *et al.,* 2005). It has also been found that the organisational excellence yardsticks also helped in determining areas that need improvements for performance excellence and in making a fictitiously-named university, a better university (Blackmore and Douglas 2003). It could be concluded from previous studies that leadership had a positive impact on achievement of excellence in organisation. The studies suggested that, regardless of the nature of such organisation – public service; academic; manufacturing and; banking et cetera,

transformational leadership positively impacted on the achievement of goals and satisfaction of interest of different stakeholders to such organisations. On the strength of that, higher education institutions in Nigeria stand to benefit from the positive impact of transformational leadership on excellence in the activities of their institutions. This can be discussed in the following ways.

There is a need for commitment to achievement of institutional goals and achievement of excellence on the part of leadership in higher education institutions in Nigeria. The commitment of the leadership by espousing the visions of the higher education institutions will ensure the commitment of other units in the organisation. This will enhance excellent performance of the institutions. This is plausible as found out by Ardi, Hidayatno and Zagloel (2012) in their investigation of the relationship among quality dimensions in higher education institutions. They found out that commitment of faculty's top management (leadership) to quality (a requirement in organisational excellence) strongly influenced commitment of other units in a higher education institution.

Higher education institutions in Nigeria will benefit from transformational leadership in their efforts towards making their institutions centres of organisational excellence in a knowledge-based economy. The world is now knowledge-based and higher education institutions need to excel in their activities. This can be supported by the study of Bosetti and Walker (2010) in their investigation of the perspectives of UK Vice-Chancellors on the challenges of leading universities in a knowledge-based economy. They discovered that Vice-Chancellors had introduced transformational leadership as a way of meeting up the challenges. Colleagues and followers were made to understand the nature of competitiveness of the education market and their thinking had been shifted on the challenges faced by new institutions. Leadership in higher education institutions in Nigeria can intellectually stimulate their followers by raising the subordinate's aspirations about what their institution could achieve. Transformational leadership through personal recognition and inspirational motivation by the leaders will ensure retention of manpower. It will also encourage the followers to imbibe the spirit of psychological ownership with respect to the achievement of the institutions' aims and objectives.

Higher education institutions in Nigeria could positively contribute to the society by providing opportunities for members of the institutions' immediate environment and improving quality of life of people in the locality. Through excellent performances, institutions could contribute to economic development and serve as source of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. Instead of the capital flight being experienced now due to increase in Nigerians seeking further education abroad, excellent performances by these institutions could reverse this trend. This would also result into a reduction in the drain of foreign exchange direly needed for development by a developing country like Nigeria. A transformational leader will help in improving the image of public higher education institutions as entities and Nigeria as a country. This is due to the fact that excellent performances in higher education institutions will play significant role in

boosting the image of such World Class institution. Institutions like Harvard University, Masachusset Institute of Technology, Cambridge University, et cetera have boosted the images of their countries and served as source of foreign earnings to their countries. They helped in boosting education tourism in their respective countries. Display of individualised consideration by a transformational leader in higher education institution in Nigeria will ensure support for the followers in form of training and development. The situation of unaccessed funds of public higher education institutions in Nigeria domiciled at the Tertiary Education Fund (TETFund) will not happen with a transformational leader. Report has it that as at October, 2013, over One Hundred Billion Naira ($625m) was idle as unaccessed funding by Nigerian public higher education institutions as domiciled with the TETFund.

The executive secretary of TETFund lamented that "Here we are with so much money to spend, and the institutional managers, for whatever reason, are unable to access these funds." Over Two Hundred and Seven Billion Naira ($1.294b) had been collected for allocation to public higher education institutions in this year - 2014 (Daily Trust 2013). The leadership in these institutions should access these funds for organisational excellence in these institutions. Just as the corporate sectors ensure extra-ordinary performance from ordinary people, leaders in higher education institutions in Nigeria can show that their institutions could be as, if not more, efficient as corporate private organisations. With good vision, stimulation of followers, these leaders can ensure lesser dependency on government subventions and exploitations of other sources of funding. This will ensure the satisfaction of the needs of the stakeholders. Higher education institutions can pursue collaboration within and outside Nigeria. Intra- and inter-institutional collaboration as well as collaboration with local and foreign donor agencies, non-governmental organisations et cetera will improve their access to funds and improve their visibility in the World academic landscape. Visionary and intellectually-stimulating leadership should ensure that higher education institutions are conducive as a fertile ground for breakthrough research. If staffs' intellect are challenged towards discovering and achieving what individuals would had thought not achievable, there would be organisational excellence. To this end, breakthrough researches in Nigerian higher education institutions will be possible through transformational leadership.

Conclusion

The discussions above suggested a strong positive relationship and impact between transformational leadership and organisational excellence. This is not surprising because leadership plays an important role in providing direction to achievement of organisational goals. A leader who enjoys the confidence and cooperation of his or her followers would be able to get changes through and excellently implemented than a non-transformational leader. This is more important, especially in higher education institutions in Nigeria, which do not have a strict command structure like the army or other private sectors.

All higher education institutions in Nigeria which are desirous of being classified as World class or high performers needed to

practice transformational leadership. This was why all organisational excellence frameworks utilised leadership as the spark plug of excellence programme.

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