

Influence of Project Managers Leadership Style on Project Implementation

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to highlight the significance of leadership skills that are vital for project managers while managing projects in an effective and efficient way. An observation have been noted from literature in the field of project management that research on leadership of project managers is still limited even though calls have been made to conduct more research for more than one decade. The project managers' role is rapidly evolving from managing or directing to leading the projects that must possess essential knowledge, skills, and new emerging concept of leadership. An unstructured interview approach were adopted for the study from which Leadership skills, leadership experience, leadership control and leadership styles all proved to have an effect on project performance. This study concluded that there is a relationship between management leadership styles and performance of projects; project management control had the greatest effect on performance of projects.*

Keywords: *Project Managers, Leadership Style, Project Implementation.*

I. Introduction

The study seeks to explore the leadership role of a project manager, which have largely been ignored in literature that is noted through an observation that research on project manager's leadership is still limited. It is becoming difficult to differentiate between the roles of project manager or leader in context of leadership and management as well as project management. Therefore, it becomes very important to understand the differences between project leadership and project management, in order to determine the effect of project leadership performance on success or failure of project. The project leadership needs attention in project management literature, even though calls has been made for more research on project leadership. Determining the effectiveness of project success by recognizing the distinction between the leadership and management roles of project managers is very vital.

This study is an effort to address new emerging challenge of leadership demonstrated by the project managers in project management perspective (Iqbar et al, 2015). The imminent effects of leadership skills and contextual factors in context of leaders while managing important activities associated with planning for organizational change through effective management of projects needs to be addressed (Iqbar, 2015). Leadership stands as a vital factor of effective management but its function and direct influence on project failure/success in terms of internal and external factor has not yet been addressed in literature even leadership performance founded moderately ambivalent (Vitez, 2017).

The swiftly rising change of manager's leadership characteristics and behaviours influence the success or failure in organizational change and relationship between leadership characteristics or behaviours and organizational changes has been explored over more than last two decades (Vitez, 2017). The essential leadership and managerial knowledge, skills, competencies and characteristics ensure successful completion of projects through right decisions at right time and by employing right people at right places (Munirat et al, 2014). The leadership vital function is to produce change and set direction to cope with change in a project, which is not similar to planning or long-term planning, but perplexity between both often take place among people (Chris, 2016).

Leadership style and personal traits have been determined as critical success factor for failure or success of a project, in most of research (Munirat et al, 2014). The project leaders motivate and inspire people by satisfying their basic human needs instead of pushing them in right direction because burst of energy is required for achieving grand vision (Chris, 2016). The significance of leadership being a requisite for project excellence have been accorded throughout the literature of project management and a mean for motivating people for change, which is influential for overall project ethnicity (Chris, 2016).

Project staff leaded by strong leadership possessed by project managers ensures their contribution towards project success with a great deal of dedication, commitment, significance and accomplishment of project objectives. Leadership motivate group members for ensuring to improve project outcomes through performing at higher level, which might not happen otherwise and one of the key principal of leadership is to turn project managers into leaders by making them responsible for the project outcomes. Role of Leadership versus Management in latter part of the last century, management's two "children" evolved into leadership and project management fields. It is commonly assumed that everyone in management position is a leader and leaders are not concerned to manage but the people perform leadership even though not in management positions. Management practices are considered for many centuries as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling.

Management skills were required for all mega events including building Great Wall of China, preparing armies for battle, and running the Roman Empire, etc. Traditionally, management was viewed as an art that was transferred from generation to generation until late nineteen centuries and science of management has developed in last hundred years (Atkinson, 1999). It is difficult to differentiate between leadership and management that which is necessarily better because both have their own characteristics and functions, which are necessary for success of any increasingly multifaceted and capricious business environment. Both leaders and managers have valuable contribution for organization and nature of each one's contribution is different (Bass, 1985). Leadership does the right things and management does things right. Mostly scholars argued that overlap exists between leadership, management but both the activities are not synonymous, and degree of overlapping between both the terms is a point of disagreement.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite advances in project management methodologies, many projects continue to fail. A project's success or failure is in part, contingent on effectively managing the constraints of scope, time, costs, and quality expectations. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the project manager possesses and displays appropriate project management leadership. The study identified four aspects of leadership and investigated their effect on performance of projects. Project performance is one of the most critical challenges for all grassroots, national and international development agencies. Globally, billions has been spent in community projects to enhance the living conditions of the people. Empirical studies have revealed that less than one-half of poverty eradication and community based project initiatives in Africa ever come close to achieving the anticipated results. Leadership has long been considered an important factor that influences innovation and performance in the workplace (Munirat et al, 2014). In project-based organisations, the leadership of managers is important in facilitating improved project performance. In the field of project management, researchers have studied the concept of leadership extensively. Project managers continue to face many challenges and problems concerning leadership skills, the type of leadership style to use, and how to control the various aspects of project management. Leadership plays a critical role in influencing project performance; hence, the project leaders must lead their teams in incorporating various project management methodologies to oversee successful project planning and implementation. On the other hand, the employees are expected to create and manage positive outcomes for their projects.

III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The specific objectives of the study were to determine the following:

- i. To examine the effect of leadership skills, leadership experience, and leadership control and leadership style on performance of a project.
- ii. To examine the association between project managers' leadership style and teamwork performance

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Role of Leadership in Project Management

There is an important endeavour for research on project manager's leadership through the field of project management as it is essential that project management field must take the responsibility for development of apt theories of project leadership either using deductive approach or inductive approach (Munirat et al, 2014). Since mid-1940, project management is considered one of the key activities for business success in modern organization and projects have achieved immense attention from researchers as combined projects frame for the organization's future. Time, budget, and quality are three dimensions of project success in many definitions of project management success (PMI, 2014).

Quality of project management processes, leadership performance, and satisfaction of project stakeholder's expectations are also needed to be considered as time, budget and quality are insufficient for measuring project success are also other dimensions of project success (PMI, 2014). Leadership is an effective tool to be used by the project manager which moderately influence project outcome, otherwise, lack of leadership skills are directly associated with project failure (Chris, 2016). The prediction about functions of the project managers in future to become key players in organizational world has come to reality. The project managers articulate clear vision of project and communicate to project team in order to create a project strategy well connected to business strategy. The project manager is an emergence of new professional and there has been a continuous dialogue about what a project manager or leader does.

4.2 Leadership

Leadership as a combination of skills and experience while employing the necessary control measures in the most appropriate style to oversee successful project performance (Assaf, 2006). An organizational setting requires the leader to use his experience and skills in directing his team towards success. Leaders were likely to succeed in situations where the skills of the leader are specific to the organization. Individuals tend to be attracted to organizations or roles consistent with their personalities because given their broader patterns of dispositional skills they find the perceived goals and rewards attractive (Assaf, 2006). Leadership skill is operationalized as the ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort arising through talent, training or practice to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities involving ideas (cognitive skills) things (technical skills) and people (human skills), as according to Zenger and Folkman (2012).

Skill is developed following a cluster approach, such that basic skills are learned first and then combined to form higher-order skills. Skills are usually developed in an individual partly by the introduction of theory, but mainly by practice, that is learning by doing. This is called experiential learning. Kolb's experiential learning cycle is used to assess how one learns a skill by doing it, reflecting upon it and learning from it, then planning how you will do it again and then repeating it (Bass, 1994). Researchers have studied leadership skills directly or indirectly for a number of years.

A multitude of studies has been published that contend that a leader's effectiveness depends on the leader's ability to solve complex organizational problems. Leadership as a combination of skills and experience while employing the necessary control measures in the most appropriate style to oversee successful project performance. An organizational setting requires the leader to use his experience and skills in directing his team towards success. Researchers also found out that leaders with strengths in multiple competencies were most effective, and, significantly, that particular combinations of competencies seemed to be a powerful predictors of effectiveness (Chan, 1997). For example, being able to give feedback did not always correlate with effectiveness, whereas giving feedback while building trust did. They also found out that listening skills alone were not particularly valuable, but listening skills plus other interpersonal skills like being considerate and caring did make a difference. It is worth noting that different competences mixes are needed at different managerial levels, with conceptual skills more important at higher levels and technical skills more important at lower levels.

Some of each competence will be needed at every level, and interpersonal skills are equally important at every level of management. In many cultures, the myth is that people get wiser due to more exposure and experience gained over a period of time (Anantatmula, 2010). For example, in African culture, experience is considered as a priority for leadership positions in different organizational set ups. Many scholars viewed that leadership and performance of individuals differ from culture to culture and country to country depending upon life patterns, beliefs and value system or otherwise on the knowledge and experience of the people.

4.3 Role of Leader versus Project Manager

There is a real difference that exists between leadership and project manager in complex working environment but yet a complementary relationship between these two roles are supposed to be performed by the project manager (Belout, 2004). An intrigue distinction between leader and project manager roles identified by is that “a leader does the right things (effectiveness); a manager does things right (efficiency)”, while project leader create vision for project, bring together the resources, and provide motivation and inspiration to project stakeholders in doing the right things to achieve the project objectives (Belout, 2004). Leaders focus on what needs to be done while managers focus on how things are done, namely “leaders do the right things and managers do things right” (Ansell, 1993). Typically, leaders are coping with transformation while managers are dealing with intricacy but it is the need of the day to possess both skills to cope with fast growing competitive and volatile challenges of 21st century (Cheng, 2005). A leader creates change and serves subordinates while manager handle change and serves super-ordinates. The leaders manage changes while managers handle complexity (Assaf & Al-Hejji, 2006).

Leaders and managers, both are needed to the organizations but each one performs in a different role, followed with enumeration of distinction between leaders and manager in beginning (Cheng, 2005). The managers and leaders differ from their chaos, psyches, and order. The project managers embrace process, hold stability and control, and intuitively try to quickly solve problems even sometimes before fully understanding the significance of problem. On the other hand, the leaders tolerate chaos and do not make decision before fully understanding the issues (Coghlan, 2003). The good managers or leaders must be responsible for two approaches – vision and execution, direction and planning as everyone can perform equally good both at leading and at managing the projects.

A strong project leader is required to deal with administrative or bureaucratic projects but it does not mean that strong leader is always a more successful leader (Dias & Fernandes, 2014). Any strong leadership with weak management and vice versa is always not better for good results but actual challenge is to use combination of strong management and strong leadership for balancing each other. The leadership traits are invariably associated with project leadership in contrast to project management, difference of which has been discussed throughout in the literature of project management (Correia, 2015). It is imperative to comprehend the differences between project leadership and project management, to determine the effect of leadership performance on success or failure of project.

Project leadership is the ability to lead in most powerful manner while leading the others in project work. Project leadership impact on improving project management practices in order to reduce uncertainty and complexity associated with project pursuit (Dulaimi, 2005). To achieve project objectives in complex working

environment, vibrant leadership induces the need of change, inspire for new ways of thinking and problem solving, and motivate for working together (Dulaimi, 2005). The role of project leader can be illustrated through combination of leadership and managerial roles as well as internal and external roles. The first dimension of project manager is leadership and management roles while second dimension is based on internal and external roles. Planning and execution both are just considered to an end due to new responsibilities of project leaders in which most important is to identify and articulate clear project strategy with emphasize to revisit and deal with business assumptions at higher level by defining the outcomes and business expectation (Dulaimi, 2005). Project leaders need to apply sound project management practices while leading the projects but project management is not a substitute for leading others (Cobb, 2012).

The role of a project manager has become so important in today's organizations that dealing with strategy are not just sufficient at the senior level and there is no more need of time to realize while leaving the project manager only for operational activities in the projects. Project leaders have a significant and dynamic role in simplifying complex projects and within performing organization (Cobb, 2012). Project leader needs to create awareness and trust among team to feel that they play fundamental part in project success or failure. Projects provide opportunities for project leadership to transform new ideas into tangible outcomes where vision becomes a reality. The role of information is powerful for project leadership as air for breathing (Cobb, 2012). The project leader can be more powerful advisor, advocate and decision maker for project in hand, if able to get useful information.

Good managers are not necessarily good leaders and good leaders are not necessarily good managers. Project leadership is a new paradigm, which is becoming most important to achieve winning business results and project success (Bass, 1994). Strong leadership and strong management are required in organizations for optimal effectiveness as managers having legitimate authority are unable to give assurance to lead effectively in the organization (Burns, 1978). A project leader needs to create an environment of empowering, in addition to planning, executing and controlling the project, to provide best working environment to project team as leading the teamwork during project implementation is not a substitute for project management (Burns, 1978).

4.4 Stages and levels of leadership

It is stated that there is a wheel of learner leadership, which involves four stages namely: - Self-awareness; - Learning; - Judging; and - Acting. There are two aspects of self-awareness, namely humility and confidence (Chan & Kumaraswamy, 1997). As a leader, you do not have to be an expert in all spheres of an organization or in your personal life. There is a time to ask questions when there is uncertainty. Learning is a continuous process. Reflection on self and the job at hand is prevalent when one wants to improve unceasingly. Judging plays a key stage in leadership, as this allows a leader to take cognisance of his/her surroundings and acting, which could be defined as mobilising, consulting and influencing others, respectively (Chan & Kumaraswamy, 1997).

Leadership styles and skills assert that the ability to persuade should be auctioned rather than commanded as a skill within project management. With diversity in human personalities, project managers need to approach project team members objectively by utilising certain approaches whilst engaging. Projects often need staff who

are competent in an operational area and who possess skills and an attitude that are relevant to the project (Assaf & Al-Hejji, 2006).

4.5 Leadership attributes

All human beings have certain attributes, which make them unique. Acquiring and motivating personnel is one attribute that is required when employing any project manager in any organization. These factors include having: - High quality technical skills; - Political sensitivity; - Strong foundation; - Strong goal orientation; and - High self-esteem, High quality technical skills are factored as a leadership attribute for the following reasons. Firstly, project delivery varies from a micro, mesa and macro project management level within any organization. Secondly, in order to be successful in project delivery, being an expert in the technical aspects of the requirements is highly recommendable, however it is not essential. However, it is essential to understand the quality of skills required to deliver a project in order for project managers to select their project team effectively. Political sensitivity plays a major role when engaging with employees within an organization. Nigeria is a diversified country, which constitutes different races, cultures and religions. In any organization, awareness of diversity should be created when engaging with employees. It is often found that owing to different cultures, it is important to take cognisance of political differences. A strong foundation and goal orientation are important leadership attributes. Firstly, a strong foundation is required to understand different cultures, religions, and personalities of the human race. Secondly, as a leadership trait, it is relevant to understand the context of the environment within an organization, as well as the skills, which are required to achieve an organization's objectives. Thirdly, being goal orientated is essential to be aligned with the organization's needs, and a factual mind-set in order to achieve successful delivery of what is required.

4.6 Project success

The key learning points of competencies identified for successful project delivery is Communication, Planning, and Progress Tracking. Communication is defined as verbal, telephonic, email, face-to-face engagement, which takes place between inter-relationships, namely project manager vs. team members; and project manager vs. customers. Planning is defined as identifying the needs of the customer in order to execute successful project delivery. Progress tracking is defined as the method of ensuring that tasks are executed timeously with the correct level of quality. Goal setting is trying to achieve successful implementation of a project by agreeing on adequate timelines. According to (Goal Setting, 2014), emotional competences such as attitude towards the task directly correlate with project outcome. Attitude is a personality trait, which magnifies the relationship between the project manager and the customers, which demonstrates good project management.

V. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a singular source of data collection. The secondary source of data generation, which include the use of textbooks written by different authors on the subject matter, journals, magazines, information from

the internet and other published and unpublished materials relevant to work. The data was analysed using the content analysis approach. This is because of its major dependence on the secondary source data.

VI. CONCLUSION

The literature reveals that project managers must possess essential qualities and competencies of leadership in addition to management skills for effective accomplishments of business and projects results. The project manager must apply right skills at right time and embrace right knowledge for right jobs. A sufficient research is required to develop and authenticate a single model for project manager's leadership, which suits all the projects across the countries as well as all the industries. The impact of project management qualification on project success and career outcome also needs to be addressed in future research. Hence, the project manager role as a leader is significant for successful management of projects, which will remain an interesting and diverse area for research in future. Leadership is defined as improvement of human beings and equipment; improves quality standards; ensures that there is a substantial amount of delivery; and brings pride of workmanship to human beings. Leaders should be influential, have a sense of power, demonstrate persistence, and engaged in consistent people management.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To be successful, project managers should be able to use a wide range of methods, whilst drawing on political and interpersonal skills (communicating, negotiating, team building and creating ownership), Leaders should be innovative, have respect for others, be courteous, sensitive, and go beyond their ability in order for any organization to be highly effective. Leaders should show confidence, display integrity, demonstrate extraordinary persistence, work hard, be responsive, have a high degree of energy and develop humility (Flanagan & Finger, 2003). The role of leadership styles is considered important within an organisation's path to success. The literature study outlined the importance of leadership styles to a learning organisation, and proposed key traits for successful management thereof.

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