Perceptions on Managerial Behaviour and Positive Workplace Experience

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Abstract
Managerial behaviour and its influence on the work environment is dynamic and requires continuous examination to ensure congruence of managerial and employee perspectives. This study, therefore, explored employee views on managerial behaviour that enhance positive workplace experience in a manufacturing company. Workers highly rated managerial actions that promote health and safety and the physical working environment. Key managerial competencies identified included managers' ability to get staff to commit to high performance, promote good working relationships, use participatory management style, respect the rights of staff and maintain business targets with work-life balance. The perception of the managerial role included demonstrable managerial actions and competencies that enhance performance and positive workplace experience.

Keywords: *Managerial behaviour, competence, work environment, managerial actions*

INTRODUCTION

Challenges of the global economy have led to fundamental changes that have impact on the manager's job (Daft, 2003). The transformations reflect a shift of paradigm from the old workplace to the new. Human resources have shifted from dependable employees to empowered employees. Dependable employees illustrate a condition where human resources are very passive and depend heavily on employers' commands. In this case, the organisation does not encourage and facilitate employee creativity (Cascio, 1995; Daft, 2003). Organisations with dependable employees differ greatly from those who develop empowered employees. The aim of empowerment is to achieve goals effectively through employee creativity and participation in decision making. Barney (1991) proposes that sustainable competitive advantage is attained when the firm has a human resource pool whose capability cannot be imitated or substituted by its rivals.

In this regard Schuller, (2000) acknowledges skills, knowledge and competencies as key factors in determining the success of organisations. The interface between the individual and the organisation is critical to the full utilization of human resources. This interface can be effectively handled with the help of HR planning, work analysis, career development, leadership, job motivation, appraisal-reward process, and a favorable organisational culture. Robbins, (2001) defined psychological contract as an unwritten agreement that sets out the mutual expectations of management and staff. The human resource is the company's most valuable and strategic asset whose development requires the focused involvement of top management. Positive managerial behaviour is, therefore, a fundamental prerequisite for the organisation.

Given the dynamic nature of managerial behaviour, employees' assessment is critical in providing current information as part of their participation in decisions concerning their jobs (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington & Ackers, 2004). Recent studies on the perception of the managerial role in relation to physicians, for instance, have provided information on weakness in managerial control and its implications for working conditions and the quality of care (Knorring, Rijk & Alexanderson, 2010). It is to be expected that in manufacturing companies, the focus of this study, the context may shape our understanding of what employees view as critical to positive managerial behaviour. This study, therefore, contributes information to this area. By so doing, it seeks to answer the questions, what are the perspectives of employees on managerial competence that enhance positive workplace experiences? What are the key managerial actions that influence employee performance?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The background information considered for this study focused on managerial behaviour, competence and the work environment. In order to carry out the process of management and the execution of work, the manager requires a combination of technical competence, social and human skills, and conceptual ability. Social and human skills reflect the ability to get along with other people and are important attributes at all levels of management. Technical competence relates to the application of specific knowledge, methods and skills to discrete task (Robbins, Millet,

Cacioppe, and Water-marsh, 2001). The term managerial behaviour is used sometimes to refer to the behaviour itself, often described as what managers do or managerial jobs. In addition, not only must managerial behaviour be predictable in order to generate trust, it must also be just, that is, it must conform to prevailing norms concerning employment practices. Managerial behaviour, therefore, is what managers do in practice and which to a large extent, lends itself to observation or self assessment.

Daft (2003) provides two main types of managerial competencies; leadership and team building skills. Cockerill, Hunt and Schroder (1995) present eleven aspects of high performance managerial competencies that include information search, concept formation, conceptual flexibility, interpersonal search, managing interaction, developmental orientation, impact, self-confidence, presentation, proactive orientation, and achievement orientation. Other writers also present skills of managerial competency- communication, problem solving, interpersonal, and leadership skills and orientation towards results, customers and team work (Abraham, Kearns, Shaw and Mena, 2001). The first normative obligation of management is to maintain an effective and coherent organisation of production. This obligation implies the maintenance of facilities and technologies and the coordination and integration of productive activities. Competent management behaviour, therefore, is an important precondition for employee satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and productivity (Whitner, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998). Maintaining a productive workplace environment is essential because it allows the creation of shared interest between management and employees (Tyler, 2001). There is good reason to expect that job satisfaction, citizenship, co-operation among co-workers and justice in the workplace (Youndt, Snell, Dean Jr. and Lepak, 1998), trustworthiness (Tyler, 2001) and the establishment of mutual respect and concern (Whitner et al., 1998) will be substantially influenced by managerial competence. In essence, if managerial behaviour is what managers do at the workplace, then workers are best placed to assess managerial competencies.

METHOD

The study focused on the Coca Cola Company of Ghana Limited that was set up in 1995. The company is currently fully owned by the equatorial Coca – Cola Bottling Company, a subsidiary of the COBEGA GROUP of Spain, and its major operation is the bottling of carbonated soft drinks. Given the background information and the key question of the study, a descriptive approach was taken to find out the employees view on managerial performance and the workplace experience. A sample size of 150 respondents (representing 65% of the company) was chosen for the study. This was made up of 110 junior staff, 32 senior staff and 8 managers and the respondents were randomly selected from the seven departments; technical (52), commercial (48), supply chain (28), finance, administration , human resource and internal control (22), senior managers (8). Questions related to their views on managerial behaviour that enhances workplace performance, ratings on managerial competence and the positive workplace experience. Questionnaires were pre-tested. The results were presented in percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Views on managerial actions that enhance employee performance are shown in Table 1. Respondents were of the view that managerial actions that promote employee performance, in decreasing order of rating were maintenance of equipment (95%), safety at the workplace (94%), physical surroundings of the workplace (78%) , promotion (25%) and handling of grievance (19%). The results suggest that workers of the manufacturing firm strongly emphasise health and safety in the workplace. Table 2 also provides information on ratings of managerial competence and the positive workplace experience. Staff highly rated managers' ability to elicit staff commitment to perform as the key managerial competence in creating positive workplace experience. Additional factors, in decreasing order of rating, were setting priorities based on business needs (54%), involving employees in decision making (54%), promoting good working relationship between management and staff (52%), acknowledging staff for sharing ideas (39%) inclusiveness (33%), bringing others on board regarding new plans (25%) and handling disputes quickly (18%). The results suggest that staff equate competence with managers' ability to create committed and high performing staff with a good team spirit.

Table 1. Views on managerial actions that enhance employee performance.

Factors	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %
Physical surroundings of the work place	78.3	11.6	10.1
System of appraising workers	10.0	22.5	67.5
Maintenance of equipments	95.0	5.0	0
Safety at the work place	94.2	5.8	0
Handling of grievances	19.2	57.5	23.3
Proper channel of communication	14.2	26.6	59.2
Promotion	25.0	53	44.2

Table 2. Rating on managerial competence and positive workplace experience

Factors	Rating (%)		
	High	Moderate	Low
Giving others credit for their ideas and suggestions	39.1	16.7	44.2
Set ting priorities based on business needs	54.2	12.5	33.3
Fair and equitable treatment	24.2	52.5	4.2
Respecting the rights of others	37.5	16.7	45.8
Considering employees' views	25.8	44.2	30.0
Asking for comments and suggestions from staff	33.3	29.2	37.5
Promoting good working relationship between staff	52.5	13.3	34.2
Involving employees in decision making	54.2	25.0	20.8
Improving staff commitment to organisational performance	65.0	15.8	19.2
Settling employee disputes quickly	18.3	47.5	34.2
Bringing others 'on board' regarding new plans	25.0	45.8	29.2

According to Mullins (2005), involvement is the degree of commitment by members to the organisation. Owens (2002) defines participation as the mental and emotional involvement of a person in a group situation that encourages the individual to contribute to group goals and to share responsibility for them. Participation involves 'ownership' of decision, which is motivating to the participant; it releases one's energy, creativity and initiative. An important feature of organisations is that decisions are often discussed and made by groups rather than individuals. Employee voice is the term that is increasingly used to mean empowering employees, directly and indirectly, to contribute to decision making in the firm (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington and Ackers, 2004; Boxall and Purcell, 2003). This process of personal commitment occurs as a result of employees' identification with the immediate manager. The identification between the immediate manager and the employee is likely to transcend the organisation. Job satisfaction is influenced by managerial competence and trust-worthy managerial actions that respects workers' rights and interests (Youndt, Snell, Dean Jr. and Lepak, 1996; Tyler and Kramer, 1996; Whitner, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998).

A clear notion emerges from this study, however limited the extent to which generalisations can be made, that managerial competence influences workplace experience. Perspectives on the positive workplace experience relate to achieving organisational goals through managerial actions that improve the work environment, and managerial competence that enhances participation and performance. Managerial behaviour, therefore, requires continuous examination as it has implications for up-to-date managerial practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the perception of the managerial role includes demonstrable managerial actions and competencies that enhance employee performance and positive workplace experience.

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