

Chapter 5

The Role of Leadership in Cultivating a Responsible Collective Creative Work Environment

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the concept of collective creativity in the work environment and in particular the manufacturing sector in Gweru, Zimbabwe. The chapter analyzes the role of a leader in fostering a work climate that cultivates collaborative efforts by followers in creating new ideas and for the sustainability of business operations. Literature relating to leadership role in enhancing sustainable and responsible collective creativity is reviewed. The chapter adopted a quantitative approach in which a survey questionnaire was pilot tested to assess the clarity of the questions on the questionnaire and test the internal consistency of the questions. A pilot test of the situational outlook questionnaire (SOQ) was conducted on 20 respondents in the manufacturing industry to assess the questions for clarity and internal consistency. The final survey questionnaire was distributed to 60 employees in the manufacturing sector in Gweru, Zimbabwe. The items on the questionnaire were rated on a 5 point Likert scale. Data was analysed using SPSS version 23. Data was analysed to determine the correlations between the

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independent variables and dependent variables. Transformational leadership constructs, namely idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration constituted leadership independent variables. Analysis of research data reveals that high performance is related to sustainable business practices such as the creation of environmentally friendly and affordable products. Unethical business practices are found to be negatively related to business performance and collective creativity. Analysis of the data revealed a positive correlation between individualised consideration construct of transformational leadership and ideal support ($r=.527, p=.001$) and a positive correlation between individualised consideration and openness ($r=.343, p<.001$), and a positive correlation between individualised consideration and involvement ($r=.123, p<.001$) This means that when a leader displays support through taking into consideration the individual needs of his or her followers, subordinates feel that the leader is encouraging them to participate in company activity and increase their perception of an involving climate. Acts of leadership support also stimulate subordinate views of an open forum where they can contribute to collective creativity within the organisation.

INTRODUCTION

The manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe is hard hit by the economic crisis prevailing in the country. Most industries have scaled down on production due to the cost of operations and this has seen products from surrounding countries flooding the country as they are produced at low cost making them more attractive to consumers. It therefore requires that the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe become creative and innovative in producing products that can compete with imported ones. Leaders and managers in the Zimbabwean manufacturing sector should play a major role in igniting collective creativity within organisations through offering guidance on the generation of new ideas in a way that embraces stakeholders' values such that new innovations become sustainable. Laszlo (2008, p. 25) states that "greater public awareness and rising societal expectations of business in terms of its impact on the environment and contribution are creating new strategic risks and opportunities". This means that stakeholders' values and perspectives on user friendly and affordable products require leadership to link them in order for business enterprises to create new products that can sustain competitive advantages. Valuing stakeholders' opinion is a management and thinking approach that sees the world from the perspective of stakeholders. Freeman & Phillips (2002) agree that stakeholder approach to managing business is a powerful lens through which managers can discover new business opportunities and manage risk. Creativity is what brings in new ideas and innovation in the business world. Collective creativity enhances organisational innovation in a way that creates competitive advantage. The objective of this chapter is to propose a framework that links leadership to collective creativity that can sustain company operations in the long run. The effects of transformational leadership on collective creativity will be examined.

BACKGROUND

In today's globalized economic environments, customers have wide access to information on the same type and range of goods and services. This access to information and range has created increased demand and appetite for more product features and higher quality such that a lot of pressure has been put on

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