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Developing Managers' Competence for Organizational Growth: A Theoretical Discuss

Sokomba Joshua
Registry Department, the Federal Polytechnic, Bida
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Abstract

Organizations need capable and competent hands that can move the organization to a higher level. In Nigeria there is much growing concern by many stakeholders, that many organizations are faced with a lot of problems of how to achieve organizational effectiveness and efficiency. This is attributed to such problem as absence of competent managers, poor supervision and poor motivation. The main objective of the paper is to assess the various means of developing manager's competence in a work setting that involve improving knowledge, skills, and behaviours to perform the job effectively and advance the career. The research is an analytical work based on the survey of the existing literature. The study found that existence of competence does not mean growth, but it is a key element of achieving growth in an organization. The study also concludes that there is no one better way of developing competence. Rather, it is a matter of circumstances in which an organization found itself. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the paper that organizations should continue to update their competences all the time using both internal and external means, in order to meet up with the demands of the competitive market environment.

Key Words: Managers, Competence, Development, Organization, Stakeholders, Capability

Introduction

Developing managerial competence is vital for organizational growth, because competent managers drive performance, innovation, and strategic goal achievement in complex environments. This involves identifying and enhancing essential managerial skills such as leadership, analytical thinking, problem-solving, and communication through practices like competence mapping and personal

development plans, which aligns individual capabilities with organizational needs and fosters a high-performing culture. Managers' competencies are the skills, attributes and expertise that can be applied in the workplace. It's essential to build competence to improve the quality and efficiency of work. Learning how to build competence helps to improve productivity and advance the career. In this article, the term developing managers' competence, outline types of competencies, list the steps to develop competence and highlight the benefits of developing it.

It is generally accepted that the machines, money, equipment and other non-human and human resources promote higher level of growth in any organization. The human resources especially the manager is the most important resource, because of understanding of the environment and creative use of other resources ensure the moving of the organization to higher level of growth. Managers and organizations over the years have seen a substantial increase in the understanding of learning and error, and how they affect organizational performance. Organizations therefore, invest resources, so as to gain competitive edge over competitors. Managers in any organization are charged with the responsibility of taking actions that will enable individuals to make efficient utilization of resources toward realizing organizational objectives. The aim of managers is to create surplus, by establishing an environment in which people can accomplish the aim goals with the minimum amount of time, money, material and personal dissatisfaction (Koontz and Weihrich, 2005). The manager's effectiveness is significantly influenced by his own ability as well as the ability of the resources in the organization. Managers need to be knowledgeable, capable and introspective for better performance. Organizations need management with rich talents and core competence that will make them unique, adaptable and have edge over competitors. Competent employees are the main resources of any organization in acquiring competitive advantage (Thanopoulos, Manouselis & Stracke, 2011).

As a result of the nature of labour force, organizations in Nigeria are faced with a lot of problems concerning how to develop managers' competence among their employees. There is a great concern that both the informal and formal educational systems are producing workforces that are not competent enough to meet the challenges of work environment, because in some cases students do not acquire both theoretical and practical skills. The formal system produces people with facts and theoretical knowledge but limited practical skills and no theoretical knowledge (Umar, 2013). Business environment is not static, but changing, the better way of doing things today may not be so tomorrow. There is also growing concern by many stakeholders about the widening gap between the need for and availability of new knowledge in the work place, as the expectation is that the twenty-first century will entirely take new dimension which will continue to be characterized by chaotic, transformational, rapid-fire change (Whetten & Cameron, 2007).

High quality employee who can adapt to inevitable change will be one of the essential ingredients to organizational growth. This paper is aimed at discussing the various means of developing manager's competence in a work setting that involve improving knowledge, skills,

and behaviours to perform the job effectively and advance the career for organizational growth. The paper is divided into three sections, the general introduction as well as review of literature with conclusion and recommendations.

Review of Literature

Concept of Competence

The concept of competence refers to a person's ability to successfully and independently perform tasks by effectively applying their knowledge, skills, experience, and attitude. It is a combination of having the necessary information and qualities, along with the capacity to use them to achieve a desired outcome, often in unpredictable situations. Competence is not fixed but rather a developing quality that can be measured, nurtured, and varies in different contexts and domains.

There is no general consensus as to the exact definition of competence. Core competencies are the foundational skills and behaviours that are essential for all employees within an organization, regardless of their specific role or department. These competencies reflect the organization's values, culture and overall business strategy, and are crucial for ensuring that all employees align with the organization's goals. Wojtczak (2002) defined competence in generic terms: as possession of a satisfactory level of relevant knowledge and acquisition of a range of relevant skills that include interpersonal and technical components at a certain point in the educational process. Such knowledge and skills are necessary to perform the tasks that reflect the scope of professional practices. Sanchez, Heene and Thomas (1996) defined competence as "the ability to sustain the coordinated deployment of assets in ways that help an organization achieve its goals". Also Doz (1994) defined competence as "the underlying process routines that allow combining skills, systems, assets and values, to result in predictable high level performance of specific tasks, which yield advantage over competitors and provide valued functionalities for customer". Walo (2000) sees competence as any underlying characteristics leading to successful performance.

Competence is not only achieving a result but it also involves the qualities needed for good performance. Competence may differ from performance. Performance denotes actions taken in a real life situation, but competence refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities at a level of expertise sufficient to be able to perform in an appropriate work setting, (Sulosaari & Riitta, 2009).

Thus, competence can be seen from the perspectives of quality and scope. The desired quality of performance should be part of the performance criteria, whereas the scope of the competence can be found in the range of qualities which enable a manager to perform in different situations.

The Link between Manager Competence and Organizational Growth

Managers' competence in any organization is directly linked to the organizational growth, because competent managers effectively guide organizations toward their goals by making

sound decisions, allocating resources, fostering innovation, and building a positive work environment. Their ability is to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables effective problem-solving, strategic adaptation to market changes, and the maximization of profitability, all of which are crucial drivers of organizational success and resilience. There are quite a number of facts that show the important role a manager plays in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. For example, studies by Wetten *et al* (007) and Walo (2000), reveal that organizations that perform better are those that have competent managers, and that all other factors that contribute to the overall organizational success and profitability, competent management is the most important factor. Lai (2011) found that perceived competence mobilization is associated with several favourable employee attitudes including improved intrinsic motivation, increase organizational commitment and reduced turn over intention.

Despite the available evidences on the importance of competent managers, one thing that should be noted is that getting managers that have the requisite competence is a means to achieving organizational growth, rather than being a guarantee to growth. Espedal (2005) opined that the main source of competitive advantage is the group of core employees of the organization who have valuable and unique capabilities and skills. Thus, management is an asset that need to be source and developed for organization to distinguish itself and be able to compete favourably. Therefore, organization need to provide the employees with the adequate competencies in such a way that the competence possessed by the employees will enable the organization to achieve its goals and objectives in an efficient and effective manner.

Competence Development

Competence development is the strategic process of enhancing an individual's or team's knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve specific individual or organizational goals. It involves identifying necessary competencies for a role or objective and then utilizing training, on-the-job learning, and other experiences to improve them, ultimately boosting job performance and career advancement. Developing managers' competence is a complex, dynamic and unending activity. Competence can be improved over time. Lapina & Aramina (2011), state that knowledge, skills and ability are the key factors in developing competence. Managers can improve their competence through learning, practice and feedback. Savaneviciene, Stukaite & Silingiene (2008), state that competence can be develop through formal and informal means.

There is enormous body of literature devoted exclusively to the development of competencies. Management scholars and psychologists show that competence may be enhanced, developed or acquired (Zadel, 2006). Managers are aware that competence constitutes an important herald of growth in work; however, it is in their interest to know how to ensure that employees develop their competence to the highest level possible. Whetten *et al* (2007) opined that the method which has been found to be most successful in helping individuals develop management skills is based on social learning theory. They approach marries rigorous

conceptual knowledge with opportunities to practice and apply observable behaviours. It relies on cognitive work as behavioural work. Cole (2004) observes "the most widely used experiential methods (on-the-job training), process advantages as relevant to the learner, valuable experience, improving collaboration between parties and keep professionals up to date. Koontz & Weihrich (2005) state that off-the-job training, such as lecture, classroom programs, and vestibule training, exposed managers to theories, principles, new developments in management and share ideas with expert in the field of management. It can be deducted that it is more appropriate to strive for both the on-the-job and off-the-job improvement of competence. It should be noted that individual competence development is based on competence development need, strong inner motivation for self help and openness to change (Savaneviciene, *et al* 2008).

Organizations are influenced by both internal and external factors. The internal factors are normally known to the managers and managers are expected to be in position to control them. The external factors are normally beyond the manipulation of managers. Therefore in developing management competence, there is need to use both the internal and external resources. While the internal resources will aid in enhancing and developing organizational capabilities and skills, the external resources will broaden the knowledge base of the organization, thereby making organization adaptive to different situations. Espedal (2005) states that, "the use of a combination of internal and external resources in management development is a mechanism that can generate a dynamic capability". Any approach in developing competence and skills must involve a heavy dose of practical application. At the same time, practice without the necessary conceptual knowledge is sterile and ignores the need for flexibility and adaptation to different situations. Developing management competence is inherently tied to both conceptual learning and behavioural practice (Whetten *et al* 2007).

In the real work situation, a manager can make use of empowerment as a means of developing competence, because empowerment enables a manager to have a close relationship with other specialist within the organization. Manager may concentrate on key areas by allowing others to have limited free hand to undertake the responsibility assigned to them, thus make him more focused. Empowerment helps in developing the skills and competence of other workers. George and Jones (2003) opined that empowerment can contribute by increasing the manager's ability to get things done through others, so also more time to concentrate on his pressing concern. It often increases workers' involvement, motivation and commitment.

Competence for Managers

Managerial competence includes key skills like effective communication, strong leadership, strategic decision-making, problem-solving, and adaptability, all of which are crucial for achieving organizational goals and motivating teams. Core competence also encompasses emotional intelligence, team building, time management, and the ability to provide coaching and feedback. These competencies vary slightly by management level and business needs, but the underlying ability to inspire, guide, and manage resources effectively remains

consistent. Cole (2004) itemized four key elements that a manager needs to know: managerial knowledge, managerial skills, managerial attitudes and managerial style. Bassellier and Benbassat (2004) came up with two broad set of knowledge that emerged from literature i.e. organization and business knowledge and interpersonal skills knowledge. Swetlik as in Zadel (2006) came up with four groups of competence that a manager needs to possess and these include methodological, social, learning, and specific work related competences.

In the other hand, Vacarescu (2008) gives more elaborate list of identified competencies which are contoured for the managers, which include: strategic thought, piloting of the change, establishing the relations with the complex network of partners, achievement of change, interpersonal relations, allocation of power, efficiency of team, and mobility. There are volumes of literatures that identified the competencies and skills required for effective management across organization. The review of literature raises several points. Most studies emphasize competence in such skills as communication, interpersonal and human relations, just as the role of manager cuts across every organization, so also the competence required by managers i.e. managers require similar or same skills and competencies in respective of the nature of their organization.

Competency Models

Competency modelling is a process of defining the skills, knowledge and attributes that a performer needs to be successful (Dubois, as in Theodorescu and Binder, 2004). Competency model includes competency names and clear definitions, behavioural indicators describing how to demonstrate them, and proficiency levels outlining different stages of skill mastery. Core, functional, and leadership competencies are often categorized, along with human skills, to guide talent development and organizational success. Having a model does not ensure success but it makes the task of finding and developing the people best fit for the job easier. Theodorescu and Binder (2004) explain the process for building a competence model to include inputs, processes, output, and applications. The descriptions and definition of the stages in the process are organizational goal, mission, key accomplishments, performance analysis, synthesis and validation, and rollout and implementation.

Having an established model does not ensure that organizations have competent hands, but to complement the model in achieving a desired result, there is need to have a designed system of hiring competent hands and development programme for the existing employees. Theodorescu *et al* (2004) state that to fully leverage the value of competence models, organization can design hiring profile and performance assessment and communicate specific objectives that are measurable. Input and resources should be put in place to assist competence development and also create incentives for competence rather than behaviour. Organization should have a solid and dynamic training curricula and resources required by the competence model.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The existence of competence does not mean growth, but it is a key element of achieving growth in an organization. There is no single best way of developing competence among managers. Organizations must embrace multiple ways to develop their management competences based on their circumstances. Updating competence in the work place and among individuals in an organization is the process of achieving positive development, thus organizational efficiency and effectiveness. To achieve a unique level of competence, the system of developing managers' competence must cover special knowledge, skills and attitude that enable individuals to meet with the reality of the current demands. Developing managers' competence should be a continuous process that has no end.

It was recommended that organization should develop training program on the basis of its needs and the challenges of the day. Managers should be proactive in their approach toward competence development. Managers should design good system of rewarding competence. Therefore, organizations should have management development programme that would develop managers that can respond effectively and efficiently to both internal and external pressures. Moreover, future research should be conducted on how to develop competencies of each group or level of employee and management in an organization.

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