Humanistic Approach to Human Resource Development in Economic Lean Circumstances Through Organizational Leadership Interventions

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Abstract *https://doi.org/10.34047/MMR.2024.117*

Human Resource Development (HRD) in an organization becomes extremely important especially in economic lean circumstances. This paper explores this aspect through the effectiveness that can be viewed through organizational Leadership Interventions (LI) in a global and multicultural context. After conjoining the evidences obtained through a survey and experimental study in the selected firms of Oman, this research paper highlights the humanistic approach by testing inter-connected submissions of working employees to contribute to effectiveness of the organization. For testing hypothesis we piloted a survey to evaluate and gauge employee's responses working in the same firm. For each scenario, inter class correlations and factorial design were conducted and it was found that the competitive organizations of today were marked with less resources to train and had more concern with the productivity and profit that matched with the self-serving entitled employee that support humanistic approach to HRD. The results obtained were by and large accepted from the survey that used validated variables of humanistic approach to support claims for the hypothesis and external validity.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Humanistic Approach, Lean Circumstances, Leadership Interventions

Introduction

Humanistic Approach (HA), if seen in a broader sense, compliments towards the employee views and trepidates for people concerning organizational effectiveness. It is concerned toward achieving the target and not with as it were getting through individuals, instead over all, toward individuals themselves, appearing towards caring for themselves thriving and in the state of well-being. But in in today›s lean times the first cuts are to the HRD programs of outside learning resources. In Oman, the oil price affected many SMEs, due to decrease in prices of petrol and Diesel, especially in the construction companies where cars or trucks are used on daily business (Mishra, G.P., Mishra K.L.& Mishra, R), therefore employees are expected to learn on the job or come to the job better trained to begin with so that less time training the employees other than on the job training to get them up to speed and producing. The workers of today are also more self-centered as to say what is in it for me and less concerned about the organization as a whole and its long term stability. Swanson and Holton (2001) state that the competitive organizations of today marked with less resources to train and more concern with the productivity and profit matched with the self -serving entitled employee support that a humanistic approach to HRD is marked for failure.

Objectives of the research

The objective of this research is to understand humanistic approach to Human Resource Development in economic lean circumstances through organizational leadership interventions. We chose HRD investments, financial justifications, HRD opportunities, Strategic focus, managerial Coaching and Employee Performance Outcomes Career developments, Organizational leadership interventions and GLOBE study findings in our study. We chose the above variables because in our study we found positive correlations between them in previous studies conducted in cross-cultural contexts. It is intended to consider whether and, if appropriate, which variables are best suited in today's cross-cultural context.

Reason for doing the research

In Oman, there are over 55 public establishments along with over 270 non-government firms in 2022-2023. The nationalities of our staff and employees vary from British, Jordanian, Iraqi, Middle Eastern, European, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Japanese and African. Companies selected for the study, with employees outside Oman, are 0.6% from the United Arab Emirates, .66% from Australia, 0.85% from the Kingdom of Bahrain, 1.02% from Kuwait, and .56% from Australia. Other employees comprised of 7.60% from Germany, UK, 3.4% from Australia, 1.20.6% from India, 40.01% from United States, Poland 2.7%, Turkey 3.2%, Ireland 3.9, Malta 1.4, 1.3% from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia 4.4%, New Zealand 2.3%, .56% from Qatar and Netherlands 5.4%. With employees of such diverse backgrounds, it becomes a challenge for business owners to cope with daily life. It is was for this reason we decided to explore it further in order to find that how company leaders must be capable of taking a humane approach to dealing with employees of diverse backgrounds.

Research Methodology

The humanitarian approach of talent development leaders in multicultural companies was measured in two ways. First, how facilities managers perceive themselves, and second, how department heads perceive facilities managers. Quantitative research methods were used to measure consecutively occurring variables in which one variable is an ancestor of another. All information and the statistics were obtained from the similar and identical crowd of partakers that comprised of 30 managers and department in-charges from 12 companies in the Sultanate of Muscat. According to various researchers, acceptability requires a sample validity of 0.7 or better, as determined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement. In our study, we found a value of 0.95 for the KMO measure of sample validity. The questionnaire was designed and, due to its validity and internal consistency, was shown to be effective in identifying humane approaches to human resource development in economically lean settings through management interventions. Data were analyzed using SPSS latest version.

Research results

In the 30-60 years of peer age group in a sample of 40 respondents, about 72 belonged to the 30-55 age groups, about 15 to the 46-50 age group, and 51 to around 10 years of age. Up to 50 years old, 55 to 55 years old, around 75 years old is 56 to 60 years old. Respondents aged 60 and older are not included, as the retirement age is generally assumed to be around 60. About 56% of the respondents came from India, about 6% from Pakistan, about 3% from Bangladesh, 2% from Germany, about 31% from the Sultanate of Oman and about 4% from various countries. About 3% of surveyors have not greater than 5 years of employment, about 1% have 6-10 years of service experience, about 56% have 11-15 years of service experience, and about

31% have 16-20 years of service experience. About 6% of the service experience he had between 21 and 25 years of service experience. An intra-class correlation of 0.12 indicates a significant mean difference between respondents for this outcome variable. Including the set effect (model 1), x2 (3.N51.432)54994.88–4852.20542.68, p.01 gave an improved model fit. Scenario effect (Model 2), x2 (7, N 5 1432) 5 4852.20 – 3899.39 5 952.81, p , 0.01; HRD and LI (Model 4), x2 (2,N51,432)53, 867.73 – 3,791.105 75.83, p , .01; and HRD 3 LI (Model 4), x2 (1, N 5 1,432) 5 3,791.10 – 3,749.51 5 42.39, p , .01. Together, HRD and LI explained (1 2 .79/.84) 5 6.0% of incremental variance within respondents after accounting for the set effect and the scenario effect; HRD 3 LI explained another (1 2 77/.79) 5 2.5% of the variance. HRD and LI both had a negative main effect on avoiding, as evidenced by their negative slopes (b52.56, p , .01, for HRD; and b52.65, p , .01, for LI). The hypothesized compensatory effect (i.e., a stronger, more negative effect of LI on avoiding when LI is low) was borne out (b 5 .62, p , .01. The highest levels of avoiding were attained when both HRD and LI were low.

Our research found that a humanistic approach requires a double commitment. First, commitment influences employee preferences for conflict management strategies that differ across teams. Second, high commitment to one unit, unless accompanied by high commitment to other units, can lead to the adoption of dysfunctional conflict management strategies that negatively impact the organization. According to McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell (2005), humanistic approaches to HRD won't work in today's economic lean times. Humanism is all about emphasizing self-esteem and self-development of the worker, hoping that the effects will manifest in increased performance and profits for the organization. This approach was a welcomed change in the economic boom of the 1980's and 1990's where growth and expansion of company's were marked with investment in HRD programs to keep the talent learning, profitable and at the company for the long haul. But in today's lean times the first cuts are to the HRD programs of outside learning resources. Employees are expected to learn on the job or come to the job better trained to begin with so that less time training the employees other than on the job training to get them up to speed and producing. The workers of today are also more self-centered as to say what is in it for me and less concerned about the organization as a whole and its long term stability. Swanson and Holton (2001) state that the competitive organizations of today marked with less resources to train and more concern with the productivity and profit matched with the self-serving entitled employee support that a humanistic approach to HRD is marked for failure (McGuire, Cross, & O'Donnell, 2005, p. 135). Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley (2002) state that when economic times soften the HRD division programs are the first to go (p. 220). HRD leaders fail for a number of reasons of which here are some: "HRD leaders failed to establish viable programs that enable employees to develop required competencies and skills that allow the organization to remain competitive. A supply-side mentality for HR predominates among organizational decision makers." (p. 220-221). Clarke (2006) conducted a study in the UK amongst hospices resulting in the supported findings that ineffective HR policies fail to support the worker due to loss of contact with the actual job. This is due to cuts in HR policy developers being able to better connect to the worker and what it really takes to effectively train and keep workers faithful to the organization.

Findings on investments in HRD during lean times

Our study found that in lean times HRD needs to show how they can save money for the company by investing in their employee training programs.

On the job training is cheaper in the short term but less effective overall by non-standardization of technique and extra burden on the trainer with no extra incentive to motivate them. Formalizing the training of new employees has shown that in the long run, the productivity and motivation levels of employees officially trained equate to actual revenue earned and other tangible money savers. According to Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley (2002) sometimes the company's executives are not sold on a presentation from the internal HRD for whatever reason and perhaps the investment should come in an outside HRD consultant that can "provide an impartial perspective free of the influence of the internal loyalties and values, organizational culture, corporate traditions, vested interests, and closed-mindedness" (p. 190). Other avenues can be considered, like the DeWolf and Klemmer (2010) article while trying to motivate those employees who stay with a company and are not laid off, the company may not hire behind those who left or were laid off. Perhaps an incentive for those who remain is to thank them and give them a slight raise to incentivize them to work harder for they are more appreciated by the company in a recession.

Findings on Financial justification for HRD benefits

Our study found that providing a financial justification for the benefits of HRD programs is often a challenge placed before HRD professionals. Swanson (2001) provides guidance for HRD practitioners on a variety of ways to calculate and demonstrate the financial benefits of these programs. The McGuire, Cross, and O'Donnell (2005) conclusions about humanistic approaches being cut in lean economic times highlights the common practice of cutting programs that cannot clearly prove their economic value. As noted by Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley (2002) point out that part of the issue is the failure of HR mangers to create and sustain programs that demonstrate their value by creating a skilled and engaged workforce. Several interesting points about elements of HRD are not directly related to compensation. The elements of stress levels, succession planning, and work/life balance are all important and provide non-compensation based benefits (Hauw & Ans Vos, 2010, DeWolf & Klemmer, 2010, Paton, 2010). These types of programs are more difficult to put a monetary value on and therefore can be susceptible to reductions and cuts when hard times come along. HRD professionals need to be able to demonstrate the value that these elements add to the organization, particularly in times of economic downturn. HRD professionals need to be able to demonstrate the value these add to the organization and their ability to help the organization during an economic downturn.

Findings on HRD opportunities in economic lean times

Several themes emerged as a result of the study. First the managers' perceptions of learning were strictly formal, thus it was difficult for them to distinguish informal learning opportunities. Second, the narratives however did bring out key non-formal methods for learning which centered on relationships, involvement, and participation in solving difficult events and making decisions. A specific aspect of non-formal learning reveals that a critical component, learning through doing (Warhurst, 2013). Another theme that emerged from the narratives of managers when learning in "lean" times was the knowledge gained when sharing within teams and creating knowledge within communities. One important observation stems around the need for trust in order for this type of learning to be successful. Kramer (1999) found that trust includes vulnerability and risk, which is foundational to the general attitude about a person or a system. A final observation in regards to informal learning environments is in regards to the ability for managers to influence and encourage learning through strong leadership (Warhurst, 2013). Informal learning must not be taking as an automatic but intentional effort encouraged by good leaders.

Findings on Strategic focus to HRD

Our study found that strategy in HR should address the business goals of the individual organization, which is also related to identifying the level of impact for specific HRD efforts. Guerci et al (2015) also discusses organization levels including individual, local (organizational) and cosmopolitan. According to Clarke and Higgs (2016), these levels of impact are individual, organizational, sectoral and community (p. 553). Organizational levels of impact are not unfamiliar to HRD research. At the individual level, the strategic focus is to build career pathways. Organizational level strategy focuses on improving performance and changing culture. Strategy at the third level of impact, sectoral, builds the capacity and social capital of the organization. At the community level, health, well-being, and social justice are the primary focus. An interesting extension of this article is the leadership strategy promoted by each organization. For example, the police service and higher education organizations promoted transformational leadership. Heroic leadership was valued more in the cultural industry and telecommunications organizations. The ecclesial organization focused on servant leadership.

Findings on Career development concept

Our study found that the career development is clearly and important component for HRD professionals to consider and it should be incorporated through programs that support managers and individual contributors as they work to develop their careers. Marshal Egan, Upton, and Lynham (2006) conducted a review to analyze the concept of career development (CD). The review revealed nearly 20 core theories for career development such as career decision-making, social network theory, and Brown's values-based theory (Marshall Egan et al, 2006). Interrelationships however exist between the theories resulting in some overlap or connection in actual practice. Pumroy (2016) defines career development as an individual's progression through career stages with differing concerns, themes and tasks. Earlier definitions of career development considered a variety of perspectives. For instance, career development was viewed as a predictable process through predictable stages and tasks. Later definitions considered career development as a lifelong journey through work-related events. Overall, Marshall Egan et al (2006) identified 30 definitions for career development through scholarly literature. This article reveals the need to clarify the definition of career development and its connection to human resource development for the sake of establishing a strong conceptual base for research. Pumroy's (2016) review however reveals that the field has a ways to go to solidify the concept. Saini (2006) said, "according to dominant variables identified for career development programs, proper counselling should be provided to the employees and career plans should be developed keeping in mind the horizontal and vertical development" (p. 69). Helms, Arfken, and Bellar (2016) also highlight the importance of career planning, particularly the importance of having a mentor in the development of women's careers. Brent and Perez (2015) share how General Motors uses a career development program that was built by employees for employees. The process at GM involves designing a vision for your career, discussing your vision and career, and developing your career (Brent & Perez, 2015, p. 11).

Managerial Coaching and Employee Performance Outcomes

Managers in organizations are encouraged to act as a coach for their employees, guiding them toward higher levels of performance through coaching. Kim et al. (2013) explored the relationships between employee outcomes and perceived management coaching behaviors in a Korean organization. This study was conducted to provide quantitative support for the connection between the coaching managers provide and the behavior of employees (Kim et al., 2013, p. 315). Ellinger et al. (2010) presents coaching as a managerial and leadership practice that can increase the effectiveness of employees. Coaching is primarily a part of one on one interaction and is made up of active listening behaviors and constructive feedback designed to help improve employee performance (Kim et al., 2013, p. 316). Park (2007) highlights the increased use of managerial coaching in organizations and its relationship with employee learning, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intention. The Kim et al. (2013) study posited that management coaching would have a positive relationship with employee role clarity, satisfaction with work, and job performance (p. 318). The results of the quantitative analysis conducted supported these suppositions, documenting a clear link between managerial coaching and the outcomes of improved employee role clarity, satisfaction with work, and job performance (Kim et al., 2013, p. 326). This study provides empirical support for incorporating management coaching behaviors into an organizational human resources development strategy. In my personal experience, managerial coaching has been a successful tool with previous managers I have had and it is one I am working to use with my current team. What managerial coaching practices have you found to be the most successful and how can they be integrated into a human resources development program?

Organizational leadership interventions

Several additional studies promote coaching as a useful intervention in organizational leadership. Frich et al (2014) cite coaching along with mentoring, peer learning, and action based learning as broader tools for leadership. Clarke et al (2016) found that a combination of on-the-job skill development, assessment and coaching are most effective methods for leadership. Salicru et al (2016) describe executive coaching as a beneficial activity "with a strong focus on goal setting, feedback and performance" (p. 16). Organizational leadership interventions resulted in the distinction between coaching and mentoring. Solansky (2010) highlights an important distinction between coaching and mentoring. Coaching moves beyond compliance with protocol to open dialogue and engaging relationships. This distinction is important because Kim et al's (2013) study identifies a positive connection between coaching and role clarity, work satisfaction and job performance. However, these benefits should not be confused with the outcomes of mentoring. Peer coaching is an interesting perspective to extend this study. Is peer coaching as effective a method as managerial coaching? Salicru et al (2016) provide a list of benefits from peer coaching that are similar to the benefits of coaching in general. These benefits include "increased organizational effectiveness and improved personal productivity" (Salicru et al, 2016, p. 16).

GLOBE study findings

Kim, Egan, Kim, and Kim's (2013) study in South Korea reference coaching immediately made me think of the GLOBE study and that this concept would not gel with traditional Confucianism. The GLOBE study was mentioned throughout the study stating that in a collectivist, high power, society as noted by House et al. (2004), that coaching was not normally accepted. The Kim et al. (2013) study claimed to be the first of its kind in a Confucianism country and in it's recommendations for future research more studies in said cultures should be conducted in cross-cultural societies to promote generalizability of the study. Coaching as noted by Kim et al. (2013) was widely accepted in the U.S. and Europe. According to Longenecker and Neubert (2005), coaching as a concept is great but only a couple of people had one or two bosses at the most who really embraced the concept of coaching. Some of the researchers found the same in military career dealing with Department of the Army Civilians where coaching is a specified part of the counseling process where like Longenecker and Neubert (2005) is supposed to be a one-on-one conversation that involves constructive criticism and discussion on a plan to make the employee better but rarely happens.

Conclusion

In intercultural institutions, leadership interventions are common in companies with large expatriates, whereas humanitarian approaches are practiced in institutions with large Omani employees with fewer expatriates. We propose that Leadership interventions in cross-cultural settings will result in superior performance, deeper trust, stronger bonding among the employees of different nationalities along with greater engagement. On the job training it is cheaper in the short term but less effective overall by non-standardization of technique and extra burden on the trainer with no extra incentive to motivate them. Formalizing the training of new employees has shown that in the long run, the productivity and motivation levels of employees officially trained equate to actual revenue earned and other tangible money savers. One important observation stems around the need for trust in order to inculcate this type of learning to be successful and that trust includes vulnerability and risk, which is foundational to the general attitude about a person or a system. A final observation in regards to informal learning environments is in regards to the ability for managers to influence and encourage learning through strong leadership interventions. We conclude that a humane approach to human resource development may be most appropriate in cross-cultural settings, but organizational leadership intervention may be required along with strategic change at the strategic operational levels.

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