Examining the Leadership Styles within Ghana Link Network Services

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Abstract
Leadership is one, if not the single most important, factor determining the success or progress of any human endeavour or organisation. It in the case of an organisation not progressing or succeeding in its bid to achieve a set goal, leadership tends to be the first to be held responsible. Ghanaian organisations seem to have a difficulty with leadership playing a vital role in their development, resulting in a high rate of organisational failures. Leadership challenges constitute one of the crucial problems confronting organisations. There is a myriad of problems which underlie leadership effectiveness in organisations and which have both short and long term effects on productivity within the organisation. A destination inspection company (DIC) such as Ghana Link Network Services (GLNS) will require efficient and effective leadership to get its work done for corporate objectives to be achieved. The study investigated the leadership styles within Ghana Link Network Services. Employees of GLNS are the target population for this research. Relevant information will be solicited from all categories (management and employees alike) of staff. The sample to be surveyed for the study will be limited to the Accra office of GLNS which has a population of one hundred and ten (110); made up of ten (10) top management staff, twenty (20) lower management/ sectional heads, thirty (30) senior staff and fifty (50) junior staff. The selected sample fraction is thirty-six percent (36 %) which constitutes a sample size of forty (40) respondents selected to be interviewed for the study. The study will be conducted using probability sampling in which all staff members have an equal chance of being selected as a sample unit. The researcher will sample forty (40) respondents representing thirty-six percent of the staff in the Accra office. This sample size has been selected as a result of budgetary and time constraints taking into consideration the need to have a high level of confidence in the representativeness of the sample selected and the reliability of the data generated from the sample. The study found that majority of both management and employees of the GLNS prefer the democratic style of leadership, which is the dominant or prevalent leadership style over all the other styles.
Keywords: leadership style, organizational strategy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leadership challenges constitute one of the crucial problems confronting organisations. There is a myriad of problems which underlie leadership effectiveness in organisations and which have both short and long term effects on productivity within the organisation. A destination inspection company (DIC) such as Ghana Link Network Services (GLNS) will require efficient and effective leadership to get its work done for corporate objectives to be achieved.

GLNS is endowed with the resources that could increase production and or productivity in the firm, thus enhancing the profitability levels of the firm provided that these resources are effectively combined. This can be achieved if the leaders in the firm can effectively harness the skills and abilities of the employees available in order to increase the productivity as well as profitability of the organisation.

Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that there are leadership challenges that mitigate productivity, and by implication, profitability. There is evidence to suggest that there exists patronage, favouritism, discrimination and other similar unethical practices going on in the company. This manifests itself most glaringly in the process of selection of employees to occupy positions of leadership in the various departments. This important exercise, which takes place from time to time, has been fraught with problems. This is because the members of staff who are selected to become leaders, are not selected by merit, there is considerable cronyism. As a result these leaders are not respected by their subordinate staff; in addition, some subordinate staff members perceive themselves to be closer to the power brokers in the organisation, than the leaders. A cursory look at relationships in the company may not reveal this problem. It goes on to erode trust and confidence in the leadership of the company, especially among those who are not party to this rather nefarious practice. There is, therefore, no control system to effectively supervise and check staff performance, since effective leadership has been compromised. Furthermore, promotion through the ranks is non existent, leaders and other potential leaders who expect to be recognised and promoted by virtue of their hard work get frustrated.

In a situation where the above exists, the necessary relationship of trust, direction and control between the leaders and the led is weakened as a result of the limitations and weaknesses in the practice of leadership as it pertains in the organisation. Since the company is operating in a competitive environment, it is imperative that

the phenomenon is studied with the purpose of identifying the shortcomings of leadership in the organisation and correcting those limitations identified in the practice of leadership so as to promote the development of the organisation and speed up the achievement of organisational goals and the overall development of the company. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between leadership, the style and practice of leadership, on one hand, and organisational performance on the other.

2.0 THEOREOTHICAL BACKGROUND
2.1 Definitions of Leadership
According to Bloisi (2003), Leadership is the process of providing direction, energizing others, and obtaining their voluntary commitment to the leader's vision. They further say that a leader creates a vision and goals and influences others to share that vision as well as work towards the goals.

Arnold, Feldman & Hunt (1992), define leadership as 'The involvement of the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behaviour of one or more other people'. In other words, leadership involves one person (the leader) consciously trying to get one or more people (the followers) to do something that he or she wants them to do.

In their book "Management of Organisational Behaviour", Wagner & Hollenbeck (1992), define leadership as "The use of non-coercive influence to direct and coordinate the activities of the members of an organized group towards the accomplishment of group objectives" this definition seems to ignore or discount leadership that uses coercion to influence. The use of coercion notwithstanding, it is still leadership, as is implicit in Arnold, Feldman & Hunt (1992).

Influence is a rather critical component and or function of leadership. This is indicated in a great many definitions of leadership. Robbins & Langton (1998), Mullins (2007), all cite influence as a central component and function of leadership just as Szilagyi & Wallace (1990) do.

Szilagyi & Wallace (1990) define the concept of leadership in their book "Organisational Behaviour and Performance" as "…a process in which one person attempts to influence another to accomplish some goal or goals''. This definition and the basic leadership model, highlight a number of important points about leadership.

Firstly, they argue that leadership is founded on the concept of influence, which is one of the aspects of power. The power base acquired and the way they are used, determine the quality and success of a leader's influence attempts.

They postulate further that the second part of the model is the process of leadership which consists of three stages that use influence. The first stage is assignment. This involves such activities as planning, direction and instruction. The second stage; implementation, consist of leadership activities that guide, monitor, support, and delegate to subordinates in their work. The reward stage is the third; the leader rewards and feeds back information about the degree to which the subordinate's performance has achieved the stated goals.

They conclude their arguments saying that the final part of the model and definition concerns the outcomes of the leadership process. Here, one is concerned with outcomes that are job-oriented (productivity) and people–oriented (satisfaction, turnover, absenteeism and the like).

From the above definitions, one can therefore conclude that, Leadership is the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Wagner & Hollenbeck (1992) seem to introduce the criterion of non-coercive influence as a determinant character of a leader. In the researcher's opinion the element of non-coercion is not a necessary determinant trait of a leader as is evident in the other definitions. Almost all the definitions rightly indicate that there is/are necessarily predetermined goal(s) that leaders in institutions work towards.

2.2 FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEADERS
As a formal leader, one can exercise formal influence. This is ascribed or given to an individual because of the position or office one has been given by the organisation. A leader in this sense is responsible for performing such leadership functions as planning, organising and controlling work. A formal leader who exercises these functions does so because of the authority given them by the organisation.

Leadership can also be of an informal nature, such a leader may be a peer leader or an emergent leader, as implied by Mullins (2005). Peer leaders exert informal influence which is not ascribed by the organisation in terms of position or authority but nonetheless can affect the behaviour of group members. Informal influence originates not from the position held but from some special quality of the individual that is needed and or recognised by the group.

Two further points should be brought out with respect to formal and informal leaders.

Firstly, in some situations only formal leaders may exist. Secondly, informal leaders can play a very valuable role in organisations if their behaviour and influence is congruent with the goals and objectives of the total organisation. If an informal leader influences a group member's behaviour in such a way that the norms

displayed are counter to the behaviour desired by the organisation, then an incongruity of goals between the organisation and the group can develop. This can result in reduced efficiency and performance (Szilagyi & Wallace 1990).

2.2.3 Intellectual Traits

Dimensions of intelligence that have been associated with leadership effectiveness include decisiveness, judgmental ability, cognitive and verbal abilities. In a review of thirty five (35) studies, Stogdill (1974), found a general trend indicating that leaders were somewhat more intelligent than their followers but not exceedingly so, on the other hand, extreme intelligence differences tend to be dysfunctional (Bloisi, 2003).

2.2.4 Personality Traits

Some researchers suggest that personality traits such as alertness, originality, personality, integrity, and self-confidence are associated with effective leadership. Still other investigators identify creativity, emotional balance, nonconformity and diplomacy. A major difficulty in attempts to relate personality and leadership has been finding valid ways to measure personality traits (Hellriegel & Slocum 1995).

2.2.5 Physical Traits

Studies of the relationship between effective leadership and physical characteristics such as age, height, weight and appearance provide contradictory results. Being taller and heavier than the average of a group certainly is not a requirement for attaining or assuming a leadership position. However, many groups believe that a physically large person is required to secure compliance from followers. This notion relies heavily on fear or coercion as a basis of power (Ivancevich &Matterson, 1990).

2.3 APPROACHES TO STUDYING LEADERSHIP

2.3.1 Trait Theories

Much of the early work on leadership focused on identifying the traits of effective leaders. This approach was based on the assumption that a finite number of individual traits of effective leaders could be found. Thus, most researches were designed to identify intellectual, personality, and physical traits of successful leaders (Ivancevich & Matterson, 1990).

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2.4 THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

2.4.1 Behavioural Theories Of Leadership

Trait theories of leadership focus upon personal characteristics of the leader and try to explain leadership effectiveness on the basis of what type of person the leader is. An alternative approach is to focus instead on what the leader actually does when he or she is dealing with followers and subordinates.

According to Arnold, 1992, what is known as the behavioural theories of leadership effectiveness focus upon leaders' behaviour and seek to understand the relationship between what the leader does and how subordinates react emotionally (i.e. their levels of satisfaction) and behaviourally (their job performance).The two most important behavioural studies are: the Ohio state studies and the University of Michigan studies.

2.4.2 Situational Theories

The extent to which any approach to leadership, focuses on identifying a style of behaviour or mix of traits that will be effective in all situations, may be thought of as a Universalist theory. The failure of universalist approaches, be they trait or behaviour in nature, has led to the evolution of "situational" theories, which suggest that leadership effectiveness is a function of a variety of factors that will vary depending on the context of the exercise of leadership.

As the importance of situational factors became better recognized, leadership research became more systematic,

and contingency models of leadership began to appear in the organisational behaviour and management literature. Among the well researched and publicized situation oriented leadership approaches, the most prominent are the Fiedler contingency Model, the Vroom-Jago Model and the Path-Goal theory. Each of these approaches has its advocates and each attempts to identify the leader's behaviours most appropriate for a variety of different leadership situations. Also, each model attempts to identify the leader-situation patterns that are important for effective leadership (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1990).

3.0 METHODOLOGY
3.1 TARGET POPULATION
Employees of GLNS are the target population for this research. Relevant information will be solicited from all categories (management and employees alike) of staff. The sample to be surveyed for the study will be limited to the Accra office of GLNS which has a population of one hundred and ten (110); made up of ten (10) top management staff, twenty (20) lower management/ sectional heads, thirty (30) senior staff and fifty (50) junior staff.

3.2   SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES TO BE USED
The study will be conducted using probability sampling in which all staff members have an equal chance of being selected as a sample unit.

The researcher will interview all the 110 members of the population. This is due to the fact that leadership style and organizational strategy impact on all workers of an organization. Thus the 110 interviewees will include top management, lower management, sectional heads, senior staff, and junior staff. These four categories of personnel will be put into a single a single group for easy analysis.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Table 4.1 Distribution of Responses on Perceived Leadership Style

	MANAGEMENT		EMPLOYEES		TOTAL	
Response	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Democratic	9	81.8	11	37.9	20	50
Laissez Faire	0	0	4	13.8	4	10
Autocratic	0	0	9	31	9	22.5
Situational	2	18.2	5	17.3	7	17.5
Total	11	100	29	100	40	100

Source: Field Data   December, 2013

Both management and employees seem to agree on the number of situational leaders in the company. As table 4.4 shows, 18% and 17% of the management and employees respectively assess the leaders as situational leaders. The researcher also tried to find out the leadership style that best describes the employee's leader. As table 4.4 shows there is a predominance of democratic leadership as perceived by both management and employees. This indicates that Ghana Link Network Services does not believe in the leadership style where the focus of power is with the manager but one where there are interactions among leaders with the group and individual members.

It is evident from table 4.5 that the preferred leadership style for both management and employees was the democratic one with 57.5% of all staff preferring this style while situational leadership came as the second most preferred for 35% of the staff.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Responses on Preferred Leadership Style

	MANAGEMENT		EMPLOYEES		TOTAL	
Leadership Style	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Democratic	6	55	17	59	23	57.5
Laissez Fair	0	0	1	3.5	1	2.5
Autocratic	1	9	1	3.5	2	5
Situational	4	36	10	34	14	35
Total	11	100	29	100	40	100

Source: Field Data   December, 2013

It seems that the generally high level of education attained by the staff in addition to the regular training programmes the staff attended (as revealed during the interviews) explains the preference for democratic and situational as compared to the autocratic and laissez faire leadership styles.

In finding out the effectiveness of leadership style on employees' performance as table 4.6 shows, 54.5% of the employees said it is to a very large extent, while 31% of the respondents acknowledged that it is to a considerable extent.

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Table 4.4 Distribution of Responses on Effectiveness of Leadership Style

Level	MANAGEMENT		EMPLOYEES		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Large Extent	6	54.5	15	51.7	21	52.5
Considerable Extent	5	45.5	9	31	14	35
Slight Extent	0	0	4	13.8	4	10
No Extent	0	0	1	3.5	1	2.5
Total	11	100	29	100	40	100

Source: Field Data   December, 2013

A few of the employees (13.8%) think it is to a slight extent whiles only 2.5% said it is to no extent. The predominance of the level of effectiveness as perceived to be to a considerable or very large extent (88.8%), agrees with the observed and preferred leadership style as discussed in table 4.4 and 4.5. It can therefore be concluded that majority of employees and their performances are affected by their leaders' styles.

Results from the interviews conducted also showed that the democratic style of leadership was preferred. this seems to explain the high levels of productivity, as argued by Arnold, J (1992), because employees are empowered to take decisions on their own concerning determination of policies and implementation of systems and procedures to boost workers' morale and hence productivity.

In the effort to find out whether employees are able to achieve their performance targets and factors or reasons that can be assigned as the explanations, 72.4%, of employees, as table 4.7 shows, attributed the achievement of their targets to leadership. 27.6% attributed the success to causes other than leadership.

Conclusion:

The study found that majority of both management and employees of the GLNS prefer the democratic style of leadership, which is the dominant or prevalent leadership style over all the other styles.The democratic style of leadership coupled with the existence of situational leadership as practiced in the firm explains the productivity level that the firm has attained.The study revealed that distrust and cronyism as was indicated earlier is not as prevalent as indicated earlier. It was also found that qualification is an important determinant for the attainment of leadership status at the GLNS and not favouritism. It was again found that the success of employees' at achieving performance targets was largely due to the influence of leadership. The study again revealed that the level of motivation engendered in the firm by management has a high and positive impact on productivity in the firm.

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