

Additional cases

Case 1:

The Link between Leadership and Learning: A Study of Nursing Managers

Relevant to: Chapter 6 (learning) and Chapter 16 (Leadership)

Matsuo (2012) reports on the findings of a study into the relationship between leadership and workplace learning. As little empirical research has been done into the link between leadership and learning it was an exploratory study. Workplace learning was defined as the use of new knowledge, skills or values which result in changes in attitudes and/or behaviours by individuals or groups at work. Workplace learning was thus conceptualized as occurring at both the level of the individual and/or team.

Based on the preliminary literature search that was undertaken prior to the study it was hypothesized that reflective practice may be closely linked to workplace learning. Reflective practice is the process by which people analyze and question attitudes, values and/or behaviours that have traditionally been taken-for-granted and unquestioned. Reflective practice can thus be linked to learning as it has the potential to encourage people to think about alternative ways of thinking or acting.

Due to the lack of systematic research data on the link between leadership and workplace learning, it was decided to undertake an exploratory study to identify those aspects of leadership that could be linked to workplace learning. This was done by conducting interviews with a number of nurse managers and also getting them to complete some questionnaires. The analysis of this data identified 199 aspects of leadership behaviour that could be linked to learning. This data was used to construct survey questions for the main empirical study to be undertaken. In the survey, the 199 aspects of leadership were clustered into five categories. These were 'encouraging reflective practice', 'supporting team activities', 'promoting role modelling' (giving guidance and direction on how to act), 'clarifying the mission of the team' and 'clarifying individual goals'. The final survey was completed by managers in 22 Japanese hospitals, with 228 usable surveys being completed.

The key findings from their data analysis were as follows. Firstly, of the five dimensions of leadership examined, reflective practice was the only one which was found to be directly linked to workplace learning. This therefore suggests that workplace learning in hospitals is undertaken when managers encourage hospital staff to reflect on how they think and act in carrying out their work. The study also found that the process of encouraging reflective by leaders was itself positively linked to both 'clarifying the mission of the team' and 'promoting role modelling'. Thus, reflective practice itself is facilitated if managers provide clear guidance to teams and through managers acting as effective role models for staff.

While not specifically examining transformational and transactional leadership, it was argued that the two leadership behaviours which are positively linked to encouraging reflective practice (role modelling and provide clear goals), are linked to two of the dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence and inspirational motivation). Matsuo also argues that the link

between encouraging reflective practice and workplace learning identified in the study means there are links between the style of leadership which facilitates workplace learning and Cunliffe's concept of 'philosopher leader', as being a person who encourages people to engage in critical thinking about their actions and themselves.

Finally, in practical terms, Matsuo acknowledges that managers face practical challenges related to encouraging engagement in reflective practices among subordinates as questioning people's take for granted ideas and behaviours may induce hostility and fear in people. Further, due to power relations embedded in organizational hierarchies, workers may be unwilling to question values and behaviours which they feel may undermine their managers.

Questions:

1) One of the challenges of encouraging reflective practice is that people can be hostile to having their established assumptions, values and/or practices questioned. How can managers encourage people to engage in reflective practices without producing this negative response?

Source: Matsuo, M (2012). 'Leadership of Learning and Reflective Practice: An Exploratory Study of Nursing Managers'. *Management Learning*, 43/5: 609-623.

Case 2:

The learning organization model

This case relates to the paper by Oliver Serrat with the following citation:

Serrat O. (2017) *Building a Learning Organization*. In: Knowledge Solutions. Springer, Singapore

Note this paper is available as an open access paper from the following website:

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_11/fulltext.html

Download this paper, read it critically, then answer the questions posed at the end.

Notes on this paper:

In this paper the author emphasizes the importance of internal and external learning for organizational success and survival in modern organizations. The claim made is that there are three elements required for this to happen: people, knowledge, and technology for learning, with key sub-systems to organizational learning: organization, people, knowledge and technology.

The author elaborates on the sub-systems above outlining how each of these contribute to organizational learning. For organization, it is imperative that the organization itself values learning in the development of its effectiveness. In addition, leadership should value the importance of learning. People are central to organizational learning and most important is people's attitudes towards learning. Knowledge as a critical asset (see Chapter 5) requires that learning and knowledge are closely linked and managed accordingly. Finally, the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are central to knowledge management and learning in today's connected and networked world. Organizations need to ensure that different types of ICTs are applied and used in the best ways to foster learning in organizations.

Questions:

1. Identify for each of the elements described above: organization, people, and ICT, the specific attributes of each element that is necessary to cultivate and promote learning in organizations. Use the 4I framework to guide your answers in terms of the 6 learning processes at the individual, group and organizational learning levels respectively.
2. Imagine you are a senior level manager in a large organization who needs to develop a tool that assesses the quality of organizational learning in the organization. What would your assessment tool take into account and include?