

Employee Perceptions on Transformation Leadership: A Case Study of Kenyan Public Universities

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Abstract

Leadership is a critical factor in Universities to steer the direction and implementation of processes towards reforms. Burns 1978 as cited by Reeds (2005) introduced the concept of transformation leadership describing it as not a set of specific behaviors but rather a process by which leaders and followers encourage one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. This paper focuses on the employee perceptions of transformational leadership by public universities. The researcher obtained both qualitative and quantitative data. The study was carried out in public universities in Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used and data was collected using a questionnaire. The data was modeled and then it was analyzed using multivariate techniques. The results of the findings were presented and it was established that employee have perceive transformational leadership highly. Consequently, universities should focus training for transformational leadership for leaders at all levels.

Keywords: Transformational, Intellectual stimulation, Individual consideration, Inspirational motivation, Idealized Influence

1.0 Introduction

Kenyan public Universities have been undergoing reforms in the recent past. Governance is perhaps the most critically needed area of reforms because higher education in Kenya has been the subject of much political manipulation and intervention. Partly as a consequence the public universities have experienced numerous strikes and closures over the past decade, prolonging the time required for graduation, disrupting academic years and driving prospective students and resident staff to private and overseas institutions. Governance is important too because it involves the recruitment of the individuals managing the higher education institutions and determines relevance and whether management structures are more or less open. Steps have already been taken to enhance the democratization of decision-making within the universities by promoting wider representation of staff and students in key university governing bodies and allowing staff a greater say in selecting senior university

administrators. Any reform package requires a determined leader whose vision and support make possible the success of reform strategies Mwiria, *et al* (2007).

Beyond defining leadership, studies consistently centre on the question: What makes a leader effective or ineffective? Yukl (2002) asserted leadership effectiveness is not conveniently quantified by organizational outcomes and results. Many definitions have been given on leadership but according to Bass (1997) leadership has been conceived as the focus of group process, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as an initiation of structure, and as many combinations of this definition.

Transformational leadership has been found to be consistently related to organizational and leadership effectiveness in well over 100 studies Bryman, 1992; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996 as quoted by Reeds (2005). Transformational leaders believe in the need for change. They, then articulate a vision of the future of the organization, and provide a model that is consistent with the vision. They then foster the acceptance of group goals and provide individualized support afterwards. As a result, followers of transformational leaders often feel trust and respect towards the leader and are motivated to do more than they are expected to do. Therefore, leaders change the beliefs and attitudes of their followers so that they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization Aziz, *et al* (2009).

Bass (1995) refers to transformational leadership, which recognizes that influencing followers is crucial to organizational performance in a model with four elements. Idealized influence is the first element which involves demonstrating behavior such as setting a personal example for followers, high standards of ethics and sacrificing for the benefit of the group. There is provision of vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect and trust. The leader serves as a role model and expresses personal standards that unit the followers thus change the follower's goals and beliefs so that they are able to perform beyond their expectations.

Inspirational motivation the second element involves creation and presentation of a vision, use of symbols, emotional arguments and a demonstration of enthusiasm and optimism. Provision of vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect and trust. The leader serves as a role model and expresses personal standards that unit the followers thus change the follower's goals and beliefs so that they are able to perform beyond their expectations. Communication of high expectations, use of symbols to focus efforts, and expression of important purposes in simple ways is done. They inspire and excite their followers that they are able to accomplish great things.

Intellectual stimulation on the third element displays behaviors that increase awareness of problems and challenge followers to view problems from new perspectives thus encouraging innovation. Promoting intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving and encouraging innovation takes place. The leaders allow the followers to come up with new ways of solving problems.

Individual consideration is the fourth element where leaders work with individual followers to understand their needs and help them to identify personally rewarding goals thus providing support, encouragement and coaching to followers. It also involves giving Personal attention where each employee is treated as an individual, coaching and advising by the leader. The leaders are compassionate, appreciative and responsive to the employees' needs and they thus celebrate individual achievements.

Kark and Shamir (2002) have found TL to be a multifaceted, complex and dynamic form of influence in which leaders can affect followers by highlighting different aspects of the followers, social self-concept and change their focus from one level to another. This is likely

to determine whether the followers see themselves primarily in terms of their relationship with the leader or in terms of their organizational group membership. They suggested that different leadership behaviors could account for priming these distinct aspects of follower, self-concept and followers' identification. Furthermore, these different forms of influence are important because they can lead to differential outcomes.

Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater and Spangler (2004) posited that by means of individualized consideration, a leader addressed issues of competence, meaningfulness and impact with each team member, and encourages continued individual development. Kark and Shamir (2002) found that TL behavior such as intellectual stimulation increases the follower's feeling of self-worth because they transmit the message that the leader believes by being cooperative, loyal, and committed. The most significant effect of TL is that of influencing followers to transcend self-interest for the sake of the welfare of the organization.

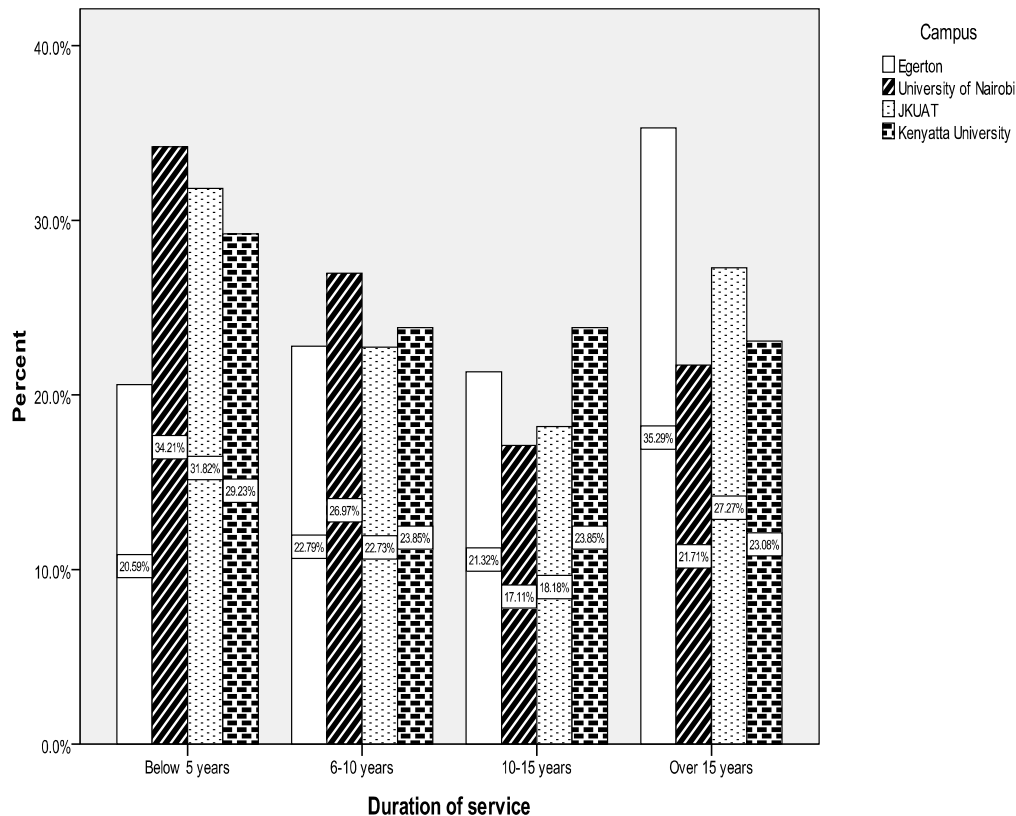
Jung, chow and Wu (2003) indicated that TL has significant and positive relations in terms of both empowering and fostering an innovation, supporting organizational climate. Dvoret *al* (2002) have found TL to have a positive impact on the development of followers' empowerment in terms of their engagement in the tasks and specific self-efficacy. They confirmed the hypothesis that follower development can influence performance to show that TL affects development as well as performance.

Shinet *al* (2003) found that TL positively relates to follower creativity, followers' conversation, and intrinsic motivation. TL boosts intrinsic motivation and provides intellectual stimulation; the followers are encouraged to challenge the status quo and the old ways of doing things. Kark and Shamir (2002) suggested that transformational leaders can have a dual effect, exerting their influence on followers through the creation of personal identification with the leader and social identification with the work unit and that these different forms of identification can lead to differential outcomes Modassir and Singh (2008).

2.0 Methods

The research design was quantitative and the designs, techniques and measures produced discreet numerical or quantifiable data. The study was a survey and the study area was four public universities namely: Nairobi University, Kenyatta University, JKUAT and Edgerton University which accounts for over 50% of the Kenyan public universities. The four public universities were purposively selected to account for over 50% of public universities taking into consideration the distance. The population of study was all staff cadres in the four public universities. The sample was randomly selected four public universities.

The main research tool was a structured questionnaire, which was preferred as it would provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study. Likert scale questions were used to obtain quantitative data and semi-structured questions used for qualitative data. The questionnaire was constructed using the elements of Bass (1995) model for transformational leadership. The elements included idealized influence or Charismatic leadership, Inspirational motivation or leadership, Intellectual stimulating and individual consideration. Eight statements indicating level of satisfaction on a five point likert scale were used. 1= completely dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=neutral, 4=satisfied and 5= completely satisfied. Therefore data was collected using a questionnaire. The research instrument was pre-tested using a sample of 1.5% as per Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) that a successful pilot study would use 1% to 10% of the actual sample size. The respondents used for pretesting were similar to the sample under study using procedures similar to those of the actual study. The data was both qualitative and quantitative. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used in the analysis to execute quantitative data. Descriptive statistics such as percentages were used to analyze the qualitative data.



Duration of Service

The research findings indicate that employees below five years were 20% for Egerton university, 34 % for Nairobi university, 32% for JKUAT and 29% for Kenyatta univeristy. Therefore university of nairobi had the highest number of employees serving below five years of service. Employees who had served for 6-10 years were 23% for Egerton university, 27% for Nairobi university, 23% for JKUAT and 24% for KU. Nairobi univeristy had the highest number of staff serving between 6 and 10 years of service followed by KU. 10-15 years of service employees for Egerton university were 21%, univerity of Nairobi had 17%, JKUAT had 18% and KU had 24%. KU had the highest

KU had the highest number of staff serving between 10 and 15 years followed by Egerton univeristy. Employees hwo had served over 15 years were 36% for Egerton, 22% for university of Nairobi, 27% for JKUAT and 25% for KU. Egerton had thehighest numberof employees who had served for over 15 years followed by JKUAT. Therefore majority of the employees had served below 5 years. These findings are in line with Mwiria at al (2007) who argues that there is a high staff turnover in public universities generally. He also points out that the demand for university education is high thus indicating gradual expansion f universities.

Table 4.15: TL descriptive statistics

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Idealized Influence								
There is trust and respect for leadership	3.43	4.00	4	.888	.788	4	1	5
Employees are treated as individuals and their views and ideas are sought and contributions valued	2.93	3.00	3	1.012	1.024	4	1	5
Inspirational Motivation								
Employees are encouraged to achieve the university mission	3.60	4.00	4	.944	.892	4	1	5
Individual and team accomplishments are celebrated	3.03	3.00	3	1.065	1.133	4	1	5
Intellectual Stimulation								
There is openness to change and new ideas	3.02	3.00	3	1.051	1.105	4	1	5
Anticipating and meeting customer needs	3.47	4.00	4	.908	.825	4	1	5
Individual Consideration								
Employees are encouraged to get involved in goal setting	3.36	3.00	4	1.069	1.142	4	1	5

Development of employee skills, knowledge and abilities	3.25	3.00	3	1.073	1.152	4	1	5
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** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The means scale scores ranged from 3.47 (intellectual stimulation) to 2.93 (idealized influence). This reflected a general similarity. The standard deviations obtained from the five point likert scale ranged from 1.073 for development of employee knowledge and skills to .888 for trust and respect for leadership. The median was between three and four and also the mode. The variance was from 1.152 for development to f employee skills and knowledge and abilities to .788 for trust and respect for leadership.

The factor analysis for transformational leadership resulted in one component. Therefore there was no iteration because only one component was extracted.

Table 4.26: TL Factor Analysis

	Component 1
Openness to change and new ideas	.804
Individual treatment and valuing of views	.769
Employees involvement in goal setting	.766
Development of employee skills	.751
Celebration of accomplishments	.751
Anticipating and meeting customer needs	.696
Employees encouraged on university mission	.632
Trust and respect for leadership	.631

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A factor analysis of transformational leadership extracted one factor with loadings from .804 for openness to change and new ideas and .631 for trust and leadership being the lowest. Individual treatment and valuing of views, employees involvement in goal setting, development of skills, celebration of accomplishments range between .769 and .751 indicating closeness in similarity where loading is concerned. Anticipating and meeting customer needs, employees being encouraged to achieve university mission and trust and respect for leadership loadings are from .696 to .631.

Conclusion

The factor analysis results indicate that all the elements of transformational leadership were perceived to be highly significant by university employees.

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