A LINKAGE BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT, INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE- A THEORETICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

The revolution in technology convergence has transformed the workplace. The human excellence pushes the boundary with innovation and quality practices. The climate for innovation and engagement as a context for Excellence is an emerging area for research. The innovation and engagement as linkage to excellence was a conceptual model for presentation. The continuous innovation culture with the engagement of the employees leads to better performance. Organization Creativity is a collective effort to think and implement innovatively with a passion for exceptional organizational performance. The manifestation of innovation may be improved competitive positioning, higher customer satisfaction and decreased costs.

The concept of employee engagement was theoretically examined in this paper. The linkage with innovation and excellence were established with existing studies. The conceptual model was presented and benefits derived to them in the form of excellence were discussed.

Key Words: Work Engagement; Innovation; Organisation Creativity; Excellence.

Introduction

The revolution in technology convergence has transformed the workplace. The technology revolution is classified based on industry emergence into four phases. The timeline or chronology was not clearly demarcated but broadly begins with First Phase (1750-1820), Second Phase (1820 – 1940), Third Phase (1940-2000) and Fourth Phase (2000 to present date). The fourth phase is marked by speed, agile and convergence. The corporeal replacement of human has happened in the first three phases but it is a psychological replacement of human is the focus in the fourth phase. The thinking power of the machine has raised an important question of priority of human excellence or technology excellence (Maya Larissa Paul, 2015).

The innovation and creativity in a technological process is expected to improve human excellence (Beer, M., & Spector, B., 1989). The human element is replaceable or irreplaceable is a question for science researchers. The extent, scope and breadth of replacement are a question for the social scientist. The improvement in technology and efficiency of the machine is the intelligence of the human excellence or machine excellence?

The outcome of human Excellence is the financial gain to the Organisation, improvement in processes and innovative practices (S.I. Wong et al, 2017). The environment for enabling human Excellence is tested by researchers and practitioners. The relation between climate for Innovation, Engagement and Excellence (Marc Thompson, 2007) is a conceptual framework of research. The pertinent problem of achieving excellent grade is tested and retested by researchers in the context of HR practices. The climate for innovation and engagement as a context for Excellence is an emerging area for research. The innovation and engagement as linkage to excellence was a conceptual model for presentation.

Methodology

The concept of employee engagement was theoretically examined in this paper. The linkage with innovation and excellence were established with existing studies. The conceptual model was presented and benefits derived to the Organisation in the form of excellence were discussed.

Concept Framework

Engagement is means holistic and involving the employees in the work they are doing, encouraging them to participate in the work and making the work interesting for them to participate. Engagement is a two-way approach involving both employer and employee. Engagement includes job involvement, job commitment, job satisfaction and mindfulness (Pawinee Petchsawang & Gary N. McLean,2017) and has three dimensions meaningfulness, safety and availability and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances (Kahn 1990).

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The employer should enable a climate of participation for the involvement of the worker, better performance and contribution to the growth of the organization (Rao, T.V., 1999). This continuous involvement creates a learning climate where the employee acquires knowledge of the process and procedures. This is tacit knowledge which enables the employee to expertise. This expertise, when shared along with other employees, results in ideas and thoughts (Amy C.Edmondson & Jean-François Harvey, 2018). This manifests in employee to adopt an innovative approach to ease the process and gives benefit to the organization (Muhammad Ahsan Razzaq and Naeemullah, 2014). The continuous innovation culture with the engagement of the employee leads to better performance. This performance will come with excellence (Nada Al Mehrzi et al., 2016). Excellence means producing more with least defects and leads to zero defects workplace (Deming, W. E., 1986).

The application of the term Employee Engagement to management literature has evolved from the 1990's (Kahn, 2010). Aon Hewitt (2015) model of employee engagement is pillared on three observable behaviors Say, Stay and Strive. He explains Say means consistently speak positively, Stay means an intense desire to be a member of the organization and Strive means exert extra time, effort, and initiative to contribute to business success.

The term engagement was defined to mean involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy (Schaufeli, 2013). The focus of the definitions is on physical and psychological aspects of engagement at work. Therefore, the term means physical and psychological involvement. Some authors differentiate between employee and work engagement. The latter term refers to the relationship of the employee with work (Leiter M. P., & Maslach C., 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002), whereas the former on the relationship with the organization (Kahn, 1990).

The distinction between engagement and organizational commitment differs. Employee engagement is a relationship between an organization and its employees. An engaged employee is fully absorbed, enthusiastic, has a positive attitude and interest on Organisation (Kahn, 1990). Therefore, under equal conditions, an organization with "high" employee engagement might be expected to outperform those with "low" employee engagement (Lashika Saunders & Deepika Tiwari, 2014).

The differentiation between human capital and machine capital was spread by human relations movement (Elton Mayo, 1933). The behavioral attachment to work was open for scientific scrutiny in this phase. The investment theory of employee, classified employee as assets who aspire and perform for rewards. The Porter and Lawler (1968), Victor Vroom (1964) have concentrated on satisfaction–motivation-reward syndrome. The Human Asset Class theories institutionalize the soft human practices like the motivation-reward system, performance–reward system, engagement-reward system etc., to derive maximum utilization (Hoole, C., & Hotz, G., 2016). The engagement is exhibited behavior and an attitude towards work and the Organization. The engagement is positive communication between employer- employees, employees-employees and managers-employees.

The employee engagement includes employee involvement and the two terms differ in scope. The Involved employee recognizes the responsibility, reward and value in the job. The engaged employee finds pride and ownership in the work assigned (Moo Jun Hao & Rashad Yazdanifar, 2015). The employee engagement is identification with enthusiasm in work and has the highest levels of engagement with employees (Kahn, 2010).

Robinson's Model (2004) also discusses feeling valued and involved manifests in engagement. The pyramidal model of engagement is built on the hierarchy in the order of Recruiting and Retaining, Health, Safety, Wellness and Workplace Support, Workplace Wellbeing, Employee Engagement and High-Performance Levels (Schmidt, 2004). The hierarchical model of Penna (2007) has pay, working hours and conditions, learning and development, promotion opportunities, leadership, trust & respect, and meaning in the increasing order of engagement with Organisation.

The findings of Nilesh Thakre (2016) suggested that employees with transformational leaders' shows higher work engagement and better psychological empowerment.

Innovation

Innovation is a process and manifests in a new process or product. The learning environment shall enable experimentation for process and product changes. The innovation enhances competitive advantage for the Organisation (Beer, M., & Spector, B., 1989) and also improves the sustainability and growth of the product. Further, Organisations concentrate on improving the innovation climate and has a history of research. The growth has the greatest impact of innovation. Innovation is the process of creating new and value and marching towards innovation may results in competitive positioning, higher customer satisfaction and decreased costs (Drucker, 1992).

The motivation is derived from engagement and is an inner drive of motives in a particular direction. The motivation its factors, causes and consequences were researched since its introduction. The available literature review on motivation and its factors are abundant. The contributions of pre-1990's researchers(Herzberg,1987; Maslow,1954; Mc Clelland,1961) and post 1990's contributors(Handy,1990; Drucker,1992; Guest, D.,1997) clarified scope for work autonomy to innovate is a factor of motivation. Pareek, U., & Rao, T. V. (1999) discusses experimentation as part of organizational culture and concludes innovation is possible in such culture. The innovation as a source of motivation culture was formulated and researched by many researchers (Srimanaraya, M., 2009).

Excellence is the quality of sustained peak performance, the term is philosophical, and performance-oriented attitude or behavior. Peter Drucker (2001) and Keith Davies (1975) view it as performance oriented behavior or attitude. Charles Handy (1990) presents excellence as a way of life or philosophy. Excellence reflects the following characteristics

1. Culture reflects philosophy
2. Philosophy is translated into process
3. Process institutionalized with systems and structure.

The principles follow the hierarchy of maturity levels with culture, processes, optimization and ultimately excellence. The sustainability of excellence is attained with monitoring and evaluation on continuous effort (Barrie, J., & Pace, W., 1997; Becker, B. E., & Huselid, M. A., 1998).
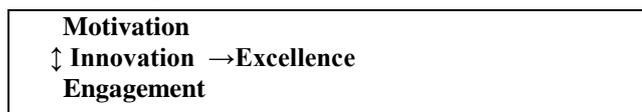
Conceptual Model

Motivation **↕ Innovation →Excellence** **Engagement**

Figure Number 1

The above reviews establish the relationship between Motivation, Innovation, Engagement on and Excellence.

Conclusion

The linkage of engagement with excellence by providing a climate for innovation may be institutionalized by the Organisation. The framework model is based on existing empirical and literature review. The scope for innovation in the process or product is enabled with motivation climate in the form of rewards, participation in internal and external competitions, appreciation and gain sharing. The model requires an in-depth study in the future for testing its viability and feasibility.

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