

EFFECT OF AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN KENYA

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Abstract: The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of autocratic leadership style on quality assurance in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. This study focused on 19 public chartered universities and 18 private chartered universities. Using stratified sampling, 249 leaders were selected to represent the total population. The study used a mixed research approach of exploratory and descriptive designs. The questionnaire was used to gather relevant information from the respondents. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Linear regression curves were developed and these revealed positive correlations between autocratic leadership style and quality assurance in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The study recommended that leaders of institutions of higher learning be trained on academic leadership.

Keywords: Autocratic, Leadership Style, Quality Assurance, Higher Learning Institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership represents a challenge for contemporary institutions of higher learning. In USA, leadership in higher education are recognizing the need to develop an international strategy for their institutions but may lack the knowledge and perspective required to inform good decisions; they are affected by globalization, the advent of mass access, changing relationships between the university and the state, and the new technologies, among others (Global perspectives on higher education, 2014). A study carried in UK by Marion (2007) found that credibility and experience of university life is crucial for effective leadership in higher education. Most universities in the study had no systematic approach for either identifying or developing leadership skills. There is a need for a more proactive approach to identifying leadership competencies and developing leadership throughout universities.

In a recent study of leadership by Msila (2014) in South Africa, leadership styles have positive effects on the learning motivation of pupils. Msila's (2014) research emphasizes that principals need to demonstrate more transformational leadership style as the success of the school depends on the quality of leadership, they must instill certain crucial values in guiding their schools. These values may lead to school success. This is consistent with the findings of Bush (2007) which stated that there is a great interest in educational leadership because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership produces a significant difference to school and pupil outcomes. The issue of leadership in institution of higher learning in Kenya poses a lot of questions and Michieka (2016) questions how leaders of higher education institutions are identified, how they are prepared, the personal predispositions that individuals bring to the exercise of such positions and their personal experiences regarding what energizes or inhibits the performance of their work.

Quality assurance in institution of higher learning is critical in every country's strategical plans as it enhance competitiveness and help in meeting international expectation (Garwe, 2006) and as Adindu (2010) argues, it take care of factors affecting quality in tertiary institutions such as the vision and goals, talent and expertise of the teaching staff, the quality of the library and laboratories, access to the Internet, governance, leadership and relevance value added.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership is a global challenge that affects all organizations across countries and sectors irrespective of size and complexity of operations. Gill (2011) reported that higher education institutions are experiencing management and leadership issues that are unique to the sector and interesting leadership development challenges; the myth is that anybody who is highly educated and highly intelligent can naturally manage or lead. This myth is patently false. Hendel and Lewis (2005) studying on quality assurance noted that governance structures and management traditions in both public and private higher education institutions in transition countries are characterized by a lack of regulatory oversight. Academic freedom is frequently mistaken for managerial independence, which, in turn, leads to a lack of accountability for the use of resources and institutional performance, and often, to corruption. In most cases, private and public sectors, with no boards of trustees and limited external oversight, most faculty and administrators believe that they control and direct the institution. It is from the foregoing that the current study was based.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, autocratic leadership style will be measured using power distance, Individualism and collectivism, masculinity verses femininity and assertiveness as shown in the diagram above in relation to Hofstede dimension of leadership Irawanto, (2009). Significantly, masculinity verses femininity will determine whether leaders embrace performance success and competitiveness within an organization while power distance will measure the extent of tolerance for social and power structures as well as the equality or inequality among people in an institution. To determine the relationship between personal freedom and cohesive in-groups in these institutions of higher learning in autocratic leadership, the researcher will use Individualism and collectivism to test this. The researcher would like to use assertiveness to measure the degree to which individuals in organization exhibit and accept assertive, confrontational, and aggressive behavior in social relationship. Autocratic leadership style is also known as the directive or authoritarian style of leadership. It is a leadership style characterized by act in more self-centered ways of control, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. Autocratic leaders are poor in retaining members and recruiting new members to replace them, thus the group led by such managers may be very unstable (Tan & Yazdanifard, 2013, Terzi, 2011).

In most cases as Betty (2014) study shows, this type of a leader makes all decisions without considering input from staffs and because they see knowledge as power, they tend to withheld critical information from the team and the blame is placed on individuals rather than on faulty processes. The style to a large extends influence how stakeholders may behave toward quality assurance. Ayiro and Sang (2012) study on quality assurance argued that, because quality assurance is conducted within a collegial atmosphere without any pressure from an external body, the self-assessment fosters social cohesion and teamwork among staff and also enhances staff accountability of the results of the process. Moreover, self-assessment also helps institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, while generating awareness of key performance indicators. The process of self-assessment also helps institutions to build capacity from within.

Authoritative leaders tend not to negotiate or consult with staff, students or the community, but expect their orders to be obeyed without question. They focus on procedures rather than people. Because of their use of rules, punishments and sanctions, they may be feared, rather than respected or liked. Recognition and positive feedback from the authoritative leader are lacking, although people may occasionally receive a blast from the leader as he or she reinforces control and authority through pulling people back into line and reminding them who is the boss (Dinham,2007)

A study by Dinham (2007) stated that Schools of authoritarian leaders may be orderly and well run with delegation, reporting and accountability systems utilized to facilitate this. There tends to be a high degree of dependency on the authoritarian leader who has the final say on everything. Schools led by authoritarian leaders can be characterized by low risk taking and innovation. There may be considerable untapped potential in organizations led by authoritarian leaders. Staff and students can be infantilized under the authoritarian leader

The inclusion of majority of members of the society in decision making is an expected phenomenon in a democratic society (Soka and Bright, 2012). Kawaguchi and Tanaka (2012) in their study noted that stakeholders are key in determining an institutions quality assurance; this is especially on decision-making process. This lie, board of directors, administrative council, education and research council, and auditor, the faculties, graduate schools, administration bureaus, and other organizations. In light of this approach of leadership, there is a possibility that achieving the demand of quality assurance might be negatively affected as it is a non-inclusive approach of leadership and it implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions Terzi (2011) and while

Soka and Bright (2012) argue that it does not incorporate values of others at the same time it exclude the community in the decision-making process. Terzi (2011) study also report that leaders using this approach believe on power and status difference among people, and resist change.

The positive side of this style is that it works perfectly in emergencies or chaotic situations where there is little time for discussion. It is useful when enforcing policies and procedures, but it does not promote trust, communication, or teamwork when used for day-to-day operations (Betty Frandsen, 2014, Sitati *et al.* 2012). Bolden *et al.* (2003) posits that it takes the decisions and announces them, expecting subordinates to carry them out without question. A study by Terzi (2011) argues that employees with autocratic tendencies may be successful in organizations with a hierarchical structure, in which employees are required to be extremely obedient to the rules.

In line with the above information, autocratic leadership style has both positive and negative influence on quality assurance; positively, it directly have the power of telling, persuading and even showing the followers how quality can be attained (Hendel& Lewis,2005) but in a negative way, Amaral (2009) study on quality assurance reported that higher education systems need not to be complex, instead, they are supposed to become more flexible and adjustable to change, to avoid incompatibility with centralized systems of detailed oversight and control. They should try to avoid bureaucratic approach in their leadership and search for more flexibility, less heavy and faster guidance mechanisms that would allow for increased capacity for institutional adaptation to change and shorter administrative time.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focused on 19 public chartered universities and 18 private chartered universities. Using stratified sampling, 249 leaders were selected to represent the total population. The study used a mixed research approach of exploratory and descriptive designs. The questionnaire was used to gather relevant information from the respondents. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Linear regression curves were developed.

5. FINDINGS

The leadership style was operationalized by reference to the following indicators; power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and Femininity, and assertiveness. Findings are as follows:

Power distance:

This was the first item under autocratic leadership style and covers the first three statements in table 1 Under this indicator, the respondents were first asked to rate the extent at which the leader is very keen on maintaining relationships with stakeholders as far as autocratic leadership is concerned in relation to their position of work. 0.6% strongly agree, 2.3% agree 12.6% were neutral, 44% disagree and 40.6% strongly disagree. Finding implies that most of the leaders in the institutions of higher learning does not maintain relationships with stakeholders.

Failure to maintain relationship with stakeholders implies that leaders of institutions of higher learning exercise autocratic leadership style. Autocratic leaders act in a more self-centered way of control, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. Autocratic leaders are poor in retaining members and recruiting new members to replace them, thus the group led by such managers may be very unstable (Tan & Yazdanifard, 2013, Terzi, 2011).

Secondly, to know the extent to which the leader allow participation, 4.6% strongly agree, 7.4% agree 22.3% were neutral, 38.3% disagree and 26.9% strongly disagree. This is a clear indication that leaders in the institutions of higher learning does not allow participation. Finding correspond with those of other scholars. Betty (2014) study noted that this type of a leader makes all decisions without considering input from staffs and because they see knowledge as power, they tend to withheld critical information from the team and the blame is placed on individuals rather than on faulty processes.

In light of this approach of leadership, there is a possibility that achieving the demand of quality assurance might be negatively affected as it is a non-inclusive approach of leadership and it implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions Terzi (2011) and while Soka and Bright (2012) argue that it does not incorporate values of others at the same time it exclude the community in the decision-making process. Terzi (2011) study also report that leaders using this approach believe on power and status difference among people, and resist change.

Privileges offered by the leader was also rated under power distance as follows: 1.7% strongly agree, 9.7% agree 25.1% were neutral, 38.3% disagree and 25.1% strongly disagree. The implication is that most leaders does not offer privileges to stakeholders. The finding goes together with the theory of Rensis Likert that reveal autocratic leaders as leaders that

are more independent in their decision making by not incorporating other people's values (Soka and Bright, 2012) and according to Bolden *et al.* (2003), it takes the decisions and announces them, expecting subordinates to carry them out without question. The study concludes that the leaders agreed there is power distance in the institutions of higher learning and therefore this will impact negatively upon quality assurance.

Individualism and collectivism:

This was the second item for autocratic leadership style. Under this indicator, the respondents were first asked to rate the extent at which the leader embrace ideas from stakeholders in relation to their position of work. 2.3% strongly agree, 3.4% agree 16.6% were neutral, 50.3% disagree and 27.4% strongly disagree. It is a clear indication from the findings that leaders do not embrace ideas from stakeholders. Tan and Yazdanifard (2013) stated, a leader using autocratic leadership style is a more self-centered and close minded in terms of their behaviors. It implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions (Terzi, 2011).

In regard to know the extent to which the leader embrace acceptance, 2.3% strongly agree, 14.4% agree 26.4% were neutral, 36.2% disagree and 20.7% strongly disagree. This agree with scholars finding. Terzi (2011) study noted that leaders using autocratic approach believe on power and status difference among people, and resist change and according to Terzi (2011), it is a non-inclusive approach of leadership that implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions. Findings in table 1 below indicate that 13.1% of the respondents strongly agree that the leader is reserved, 31.4% agree 24.61% were neutral, 17.7 % disagree and 13.1% strongly disagree.

This finding corroborates with other scholars. Betty (2014) study shows, this type of a leader makes all decisions without considering input from staffs and because they see knowledge as power, they tend to withheld critical information from the team and the blame is placed on individuals rather than on faulty processes. Soka and Bright (2012) reported that autocratic leaders are more independent in their decision making do not incorporate other people's values.

In regard to dealing with individual issues, 1.7% strongly agree, 7.4% agree 12.0% were neutral, 58.9% disagree and 19.4% strongly disagree. In relation to what Tan and Yazdanifard (2013) stated, a leader using autocratic leadership style is a more self-centered and close minded in terms of their behaviors. It implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions (Terzi, 2011).

The fifth and last item under individualism and collectivism was whether the leader emphasizes on harmony and social order values. 1.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the leader embrace harmony, 4.0% agree 12.0% were neutral, 42.9 % disagree and 39.4% strongly disagree. The implication is that most of the leaders in the institutions of higher do not embrace harmony and social order values.

These findings do not correspond fully with other scholars. (Bolden et al., 2003, CMI, 2015) noted that autocratic leadership involves theory X and theory Y managers that focuses on human relationships. In relation to this, a leader holding theory X assumptions would prefer an autocratic style, whereas one holding theory Y assumptions would prefer a more participative style. In this case, if leaders decide to use theory X approach then it might be difficult to gauge with stakeholders such as teachers, students, personnel distribution as well as finance resources if the leader does not show interest and undermine their presence. Positively, a leader employing theory Y approach is able to win the trust of the stakeholders by making them to participate in the process of quality assurance. The study concludes that individualism and collectivism have both negative and positive implication when it comes to achieving quality assurance in an institution of higher learning.

Masculinity and femininity:

This was the third item for autocratic leadership style. Under this indicator, the respondents were first asked to rate the extent at which the leader consider employee perception in relation to their position of work. 1.7% strongly agree, 9.1% agree 16.0% were neutral, 36.6% disagree and 36.6% strongly disagree. Implication is that majority of the leaders does not consider stakeholders perception. The data agree with findings by other scholars including Soka and Bright (2012) who argue that autocratic leaders does not incorporate values of others at the same time they exclude the community in the decision-making process. Terzi (2011) study also report that leaders using this approach believe on power and status difference among people, and resist change. In light of this approach, there is a possibility that achieving the demand of quality assurance might be negatively affected as it is a non-inclusive and it implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions Terzi (2011). The study concludes few leaders consider stakeholders perception, this could reduce team work that is an important aspect of quality assurance.

In regard to know whether the leader possess friendly behavior, 2.3% strongly agree, 5.7% agree 15.4% were neutral, 44.0% disagree and 32.6% strongly disagree. In relation to these finding, most scholars suggest that autocratic leaders are poor in retaining members and recruiting new members to replace them, thus the group led by such managers may be very unstable (Tan & Yazdanifard, 2013, Terzi, 2011). The study concludes there is poor relationship among leaders and stakeholders, implication is that leaders of institutions of higher learning lack innate intelligence and as Magoha (2017) suggested, leadership is not possible for all despite desire or training

Findings in table 1 below indicate that 1.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the leader is wise and honest, 3.4% agree 18.3% were neutral, 38.3 % disagree and 39.3% strongly disagree. These finding corroborate with Tan and Yazdanifard (2013) views that stated that a leader using autocratic leadership style is a more self-centered and close minded in terms of their behaviors. It implies a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions (Terzi, 2011). The study conclude that the level of honesty is minimal among the leaders in the institutions of higher learning, hence no hope in quality assurance

In regard to being responsible, 14.3% strongly agree, 20.6% agree 24.6% were neutral, 24.0% disagree and 16.6% strongly disagree. Finding correspond with those of other scholars. (Hendel& Lewis,2005; CMI, 2015) notes autocratic element that comes with seven stages such as tells, persuades, shows, consults, asks, shares and involves might also lead to some direction.

A study by Dinham (2007) stated that Schools of authoritarian leaders may be orderly and well run with delegation, reporting and accountability systems utilized to facilitate this. There tends to be a high degree of dependency on the authoritarian leader who has the final say on everything. Schools led by authoritarian leaders can be characterized by low risk taking and innovation. There may be considerable untapped potential in organizations led by authoritarian leaders. Staff and students can be infantilized under the authoritarian leader. The study concludes that autocratic leaders are responsible, implication is that leaders in the institution of higher learning are committed to their duties, hence hope of quality assurance.

Assertiveness:

Under this indicator, the respondents were first asked to rate the extent at which the leader exercise control on others in relation to their position of work. 6.3% strongly agree, 19.4% agree 27.7% were neutral, 30.4% disagree and 14.3% strongly disagree. This disagree with findings by (Terzi, 2011) that states that autocratic leaders imply a high degree of control by the leaders without much freedom or participation of members in group decisions. It is a leadership style characterized by act in more self-centered ways of control, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. Autocratic leaders are poor in retaining members (Tan & Yazdanifard, 2013, Terzi, 2011). The study concludes that leaders of institutions of higher learning do not exercise control, implication of hope of quality assurance.

In regard to know the extent to which the leader act authoritatively, 9.1% strongly agree, 28.0% agree 48.0% were neutral, 18.3% disagree and 8.0% strongly disagree. The data agrees with findings by other scholars. (CMI, 2015) reported that autocratic leaders exert authority to their followers – the leader has little trust or confidence in his subordinates, manages by issuing orders and uses fear and punishment as motivators. Autocratic leadership style is also known as the directive or authoritarian style of leadership. It is a leadership style characterized by act in more self-centered ways of control, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. Autocratic leaders are poor in retaining members and recruiting new members to replace them, thus the group led by such managers may be very unstable (Tan & Yazdanifard, 2013, Terzi, 2011). The study concludes that leaders of institutions of higher learning act authoritatively. Implication is that leaders have minimal chance of achieving quality assurance.

Directions given by the leader was also rated as follows: 4.0% strongly agree, 8.0% agree 20.6% were neutral, 48.6% disagree and 18.9% strongly disagree. These findings corroborate with Tan & Yazdanifard (2013) and Terzi (2011) that posits that authoritative leaders impose directives or authority on stakeholders. It is a leadership style characterized by act in more self-centered ways of control, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. In most cases as Betty (2014) study shows, this type of a leader makes all decisions without considering input from staffs and because they see knowledge as power, they tend to withheld critical information from the team and the blame is placed on individuals rather than on faulty processes. The study concludes that leaders of institutions of higher learning impose directions on stakeholders and this impact quality assurance negatively.

In regard to dominant and aggressive, 13.7% strongly agree, 24.6% agree 21.7% were neutral, 29.7% disagree and 10.3% strongly disagree. To some extent, the data agree with findings of other scholars at 24.6%. (Dinham,2007) felt that authoritative leaders tend not to negotiate or consult with staff, students or the community, but expect their orders to be obeyed without question. They focus on procedures rather than people. Because of their use of rules, punishments and sanctions, they may be feared, rather than respected or liked. Recognition and positive feedback from the authoritative leader are lacking, although people may occasionally receive blast from the leader as he or she reinforces control and authority through pulling people back into line and reminding them who is the boss. On the other hand, a section of leaders disagrees at the level of 29.7% that leaders are not dominant and aggressive. These findings go hand in hand with (Bolden et al., 2003, CMI, 2015) suggestions that stated that autocratic leadership involves theory X and theory Y managers that focuses on human relationships.

Table 1: Autocratic Leadership Style Descriptive Analysis

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Maintainrelationsp	0.6%	2.3%	12.6%	44%	40.6%	4.22	0.794
Participation	4.6%	7.4%	22.3%	38.3%	26.9%	3.76	1.072
Privileges	1.7%	9.7%	25.1%	38.3%	25.1%	3.75	0.995
Embrace ideas	2.3%	3.4%	16.6%	50.3%	27.4%	3.97	0.887
Acceptance	2.3%	14%	26.4%	36.2%	20.7%	3.59	1.043
Reserved	13.1%	31%	24.6%	17.7%	13.1%	4.22	0.794
Individual issues	1.7%	7.4%	12.0%	58.9%	19.4%	3.76	1.072
Harmony	1.7%	4.0%	12.0%	42.9%	39.4%	3.75	0.995
Employeeperceptin	1.7%	9.1%	16.0%	36.6%	36.6%	3.97	0.887
Friendly Behavior	2.3%	5.7%	15.4%	44.0%	32.6%	3.59	1.043
WisdomandHoney	1.7%	3.4%	18.3%	38.3%	38.3%	2.86	1.238
Responsible	14.3%	20%	24.6%	24.0%	16.6%	3.88	0.873
Control	6.3%	19%	29.7%	30.3%	14.3%	4.14	0.902
Authoritative	9.1%	28%	48.0%	18.3%	8.0%	3.97	1.025
Direction	4.0%	8.0%	20.6%	48.6%	18.9%	3.99	0.959
Dominant Aggressive	13.7%	24%	21.7%	29.7%	10.3%	4.08	0.925
Total						3.84	0.970

The findings of this study suggest that the variable Quality Assurance and Autocratic leadership style had a significant relationship indicated by a correlation coefficient value of .409^{**}. This suggests that there was a linear positive relationship between Autocratic leadership style and Quality Assurance which means that an increase in Autocratic leadership style would lead to a linear increase in Quality Assurance institution of higher learning in Kenya. The study established that there is a strong positive influence on quality assurance on the institutions of higher learning attributed to units of change in autocratic leadership style. Strategies such as change of attitude by the leaders, academic leadership training as well as human relation will lead to achievement of quality assurance, which in the long run will make a positive contribution to the institutions of higher learning. A supportive policy and legal framework enhances quality assurance unlike an oppressive one.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Leaders require to know the effect of autocratic leadership style in order to dispense their duties well. Autocratic leadership style as illustrated in chapter two in the literature review and in chapter four in the study findings has a direct link with quality assurance. When the leaders are trained on autocratic leadership style and human relation, they become aware and therefore work well. Particularly, self-assessment as it fosters social cohesion and teamwork among staff and also enhances staff accountability of the results of the process. Self-assessment also helps institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, while generating awareness of key performance indicators. The process of self-assessment also helps institutions to build capacity from within. Awareness should also involve inclusion of majority of members of the society in decision to enhance democracy; this lie, board of directors, administrative council, education and research council, and auditor, the faculties, graduate schools, administration bureaus, and other organizations. The leaders should know that autocratic leadership style is good in enforcing policies and procedures, but it does not promote trust, communication, or teamwork when used for day-to-day operations. The reforms need to happen at a much faster speed in order to improve on quality assurance. There is need for training on employee relation as most of the leaders in the

institutions of higher learning does not maintain relationships with stakeholders. The strategy of high involvement by all stakeholders is also a requirement as this will lead to quality assurance.

Given the backdrop that quality assurance in the institutions of higher learning is poor, the findings indicated that autocratic leadership should not be used excessively. This kind of leadership style pull quality assurance towards a negative direction. It is high time that the leaders of the institutions of higher learning to change their negative attitude for the benefit of quality assurance. It is also logical to articulate that the current phenomenon or poor-quality assurance in the institutions of higher learning in Kenya can be reversed if the government and other stakeholders ensure that the leaders of the institutions of higher learning are trained on disadvantages of excessive use of authority. These should also be coupled with human relation training as well.

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