ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND WORKPLACE MENTORING OF OIL SERVICING COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the role and impact of organisational culture on workplace mentoring in the Oil Servicing Industry, in Rivers State. The interpretivist-subjectivist philosophy was adopted in this study which inspired the use of the exploratory research design and consequently the use of the qualitative multi-method of data collection in the form of observations and interviews. Thus, primary data were gathered from 12 staff of the aforementioned companies, and analysed using thematic analytical tools. The analysis of this paper was conducted using the NVIVO software for data management and analysis. After analyses, the results revealed that organisational culture plays a critical role in workplace mentoring. It was then concluded that effective mentoring at workplace is highly dependent on the existing culture of the organization. The paper therefore recommended that in order for organisations in the Oil Servicing Industry to gain much from mentoring schemes set up, such schemes must be embedded in a culture that fosters learning and development.

Key Words: Organisational Culture, Role Culture, Task Culture, Workplace Mentoring

INTRODUCTION

The Oil servicing industry is one which is full of so many uncertainties. This spells the necessity to continuously develop the knowledge, skills and behaviour of workers in order to meet up with the demands of such a dynamic business environment. In order to develop workers and ultimately to retain organisational knowledge, a number of techniques can be adopted including conferences, simulations, job rotations and mentoring (Agulana & Awujo, 2011). Of the mentioned techniques, workplace mentoring sparks a lot of interest because it has become a popular medium for organisations to deliberately and properly manage their intellectual capital, invest in their human capital and transfer knowledge (Armstrong, 2012).

Workplace mentoring is therefore a common developmental approach for retaining operational processes especially in highly dynamic technical fields such as the oil servicing industry to produce excellent results for the involved/affiliated parties. Its popularity can perhaps be accounted for by virtue of it being a low-cost yet highly personalised approach to development and knowledge transfer (Chattered Management Institute, 2015). Notwithstanding its attractive virtue, Chan (2006), opined that mentoring requires a culture to support its implementation. He argues that without cultural congruence, the challenge of embedding mentoring into the organisation is daunting and efforts put towards this will continuously face challenges that have an impact on its viability and sustainability.

Culture in the organisational context, according to Armstrong (2012) refers to the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which people in organisations behave and get things done, which includes the assignment of roles and the achievement of set goals to better the organisation. From the foregoing, we deduced that role culture and achievement culture are two forms of organisational culture and as such, organisational culture is just as important to an organisation as assigning roles to every member and achieving goals and objectives thereafter.

Although a lot has been written on the general concept of mentoring over the years, little has been published on workplace mentoring in relation to how it is affected by organisational culture especially in the oil servicing industry in Rivers State. This problem therefore spurred this study with the purpose of exploring the concept of workplace mentoring in the Oil Servicing industry and the role organisational culture plays in its effectiveness.

Research Questions

- How is mentoring achieved in the oil servicing industry?
- What role does organisational culture play in workplace mentoring in the oil servicing industry?

The conceptual framework showing the relationship between organisational culture and workplace mentoring is displayed in figure 1.
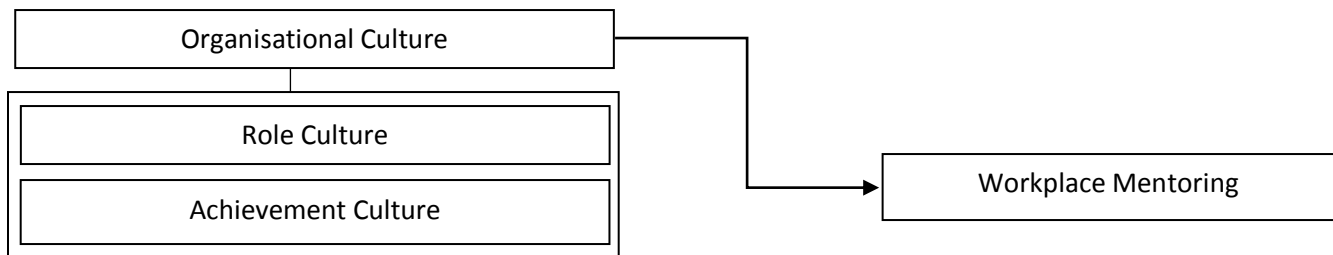

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Organisational Culture and Workplace Mentoring
Source: (Desk Research, 2020)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

The theory of knowledge capital management was used to underpin this study. Knowledge management has existed for decades and organisations have begun to key into it in order to preserve their culture, and ways of operations. Knowledge management is defined as being concerned with storing and sharing the wisdom, understanding and expertise accumulated in an organisation about its processes, techniques and operations (Armstrong, 2012). Scholars have laid emphasis on the fact that knowledge acquired by individuals are crucial to business interests and it could be lost if the employee locks them up in his mind or leave the organisation to another without replicating that in another via any means possible (Stewart, 2001; Armstrong, 2012; Girard& Girard, 2015). They further state that knowledge can be managed via a codification strategy or a personalized strategy. The codification strategy refers to storing knowledge in data bases that can be accessed easily while the personalized strategy is via an employee sharing his experiences with a less experienced employee and one of the ways to implement the personalized strategy is through workplace mentoring.

Workplace Mentoring

Mentoring is a management practice that assists organisations to deliberately transfer knowledge and skills. According to Armstrong (2012), mentoring is "the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop". It is a type of employee advancement and development whereby a trusted and experienced individual known as the mentor, - utilizes their experience to offer direction, guidance, and backing to another person- the mentoring in order to empower them (the mentee) to find and build up their capacity and competency with the ultimate goal of increasing their

performance (CMI, 2015). Micheal (2008) observes that in mentoring, the learner owns both the goals and the process and it can be a long-term relationship, where the goals may change and through this process, the learner gradually becomes more aware of their own experiences, support and guidance.

Although knowledge transfer is the major goal for workplace mentoring, organisations engage in workplace mentoring to achieve certain objectives. For some, mentoring is used as an entry place orientation for new hires in order to introduce the new hires into the culture of the organisation and offer advice, support and guidance on how to navigate the job. For others, workplace mentoring is for career enhancement and for breaking glass ceilings in goal achievements by providing employees with skills not just for the current job position but also for higher job positions which can in turn promote commitment, and increased employee satisfaction (Armstrong, 2012).This could act as a form of succession planning, ensuring that the employee gets all necessary skills to ascend a higher position or authority.

Ramalho (2014) espoused that when designing an organisational mentorship programme, certain components must be considered which includes the 'strategic purpose' to determine why the organisation is doing a mentoring program and what they want to get out of it, 'guidance' to provide direction and counsel that can assist a less experienced employee to gain competence and skills, 'support' to render assistance and being truly interested in the success of a mentee, and 'feedback' which refers to an evaluation of the goals and objectives of the programme as well as a tab on the progress of the mentee towards achieving development goals. Scalia (2018) further asserts that the impact of a well-developed organisational mentorship program can be seen and felt in the achievement of the overall corporate goals of the organisation. According to her,

organisational mentoring has four major components which are the program purpose, the program participants, the program format and the program style. In this context, the program purposeshould be in line with the overall business purpose and strategy, the program participants refer to the involved participators of the carved out program, the program format refer to how the program is designed in terms of mentor-mentee ratio (the ratio may be 1-to-1, 1-to-many or many-to-many depending on preference)and the program style refers to the structure in terms of how formal or informal the program should be.

There are various types of workplace mentoring, informal mentoring, formal mentoring, group mentoring, facilitated mentoring, peer mentoring and e-mentoring are all forms of mentoring that are available to management practitioners (Armstrong, 2012). Informal mentoring refers to one with less structure, which is not developed with any assistance from the organisation and which is more spontaneous in nature while formal mentoring schemes are developed with organisational assistance and approval (Singh, Bains & Vinnicombe, 2002). Group mentoring occurs when a group of mentors act as a resource for a group of protegees with similar expectations while peer mentoring occurs when two people of equal standing or position decide to engage in reciprocal mentoring whereby they both take the position of the protegee and mentoring (Mavuso, 2007). Facilitated mentoring involves autonomous bodies such as HR, Management, Mentoring Committee etc. assigning individuals together based on character, skills and any other needs while e-mentoring refers to tele-mentoring that breaks barriers that may be caused by geographical location, disability and gender (Mavuso, 2007).

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture refers to the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which people in organisations behave and get things done (Armstrong, 2012). According to Armstrong (2012), 'values'which is often interchanged with 'belief' refers to what is regarded as best or good for the organisation and it is usually closely linked with the strategic purpose and vision of the organisation. Hence, values translate into organisational policies and sets up basic expectations of what is acceptable or not towards achieving the organisational goal (Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014). Norms, on the other hand, refer to unwritten rules that nevertheless influence behaviours. Armstrong (2012) defines it as the informal guidelines of behaviour. That is, Norms tell people what they are supposed to be doing, saying, believing and wearing even though it isn't written like a policy. He explains that they are passed on to others by words of mouth, behaviour and reinforced by reactions.

Role Culture

Role culture basically places focus on legality, legitimacy and bureaucracy (Armstrong, 2012). This implies that organisations with this sought of culture rely on formal rules and policy. In role culture, organisations' formal job descriptions are more important than personal traits and characteristics of individuals taking these positions. Therefore, power is determined by a person's position in the organisational structure. In essence, organisations that adopt this kind of culture are the ones with typically tall structures with a long chains of command. Hence such organisations tend to be very bureaucratic, with slow decision making processes.

Achievement Culture

Achievement culture basically refers to the scenario where people work hard to achieve set goals for the benefit of the organisation with lesser attention to rules and procedure (Armstrong, 2012). In essence, this type of culture requires high level of adaptability and flexibility on the part of the organisation and the worker alike because when rules get in the way of achieving a goal the rule can simply be ignored

without much sanctions. Organisations that hold this culture in esteem are usually characterized by highly motivated people that possess the capabilities and the will to carry out their duties with little or no supervision (Armstrong, 2012). However, this culture can lead to a toxic workplace whereby members become highly competitive with each other, leading to dishonest or illegal behaviour which could dent the good public image of the organisation.

Organisational Culture and Workplace Mentoring

Mentoring is a management practice that assists organisations in building their desired corporate culture that encourages learning and a deliberate transfer of knowledge and skills. Especially for organisations that desire to have a deliberate and systemic transfer of knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that organisational culture can effectively promote or inhibit cooperation, exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and in the case of this study, learning via mentoring (Chan, 2006). Role culture may encourage formal mentoring but will end up turning it into a coaching exercise because there is no freedom to share ideas and ask questions (Meyer & Fourie, 2004). Meyer and Fourie (2004) further explained that this type of culture can only foster entry level mentorship where supervisors acquaint new recruits with job roles and expectations. An implication of the above is that mentors may not be motivated to go beyond requirement to offer support and guidance to their mentees which may lead to more cases of coaching or supervisory roles rather than mentoring.Further, achievement Culture as proposed by Schein (1984) investigates organisations whose culture supports and celebrates competence, motivation and commitment (Armstrong, 2012). Impacts are valued, and knowledge is transferred easily. This encourages team building level of mentoring, formal mentoring and so much more (Meyer & Fourier, 2004). In the light of this, it

becomes expedient to say that an organisation with this type of culture can indeed engender workplace mentoring, with reasons geared towards knowledge transfer and career advancement. By embedding it into the organisational culture and norm, workplace mentoring can become a means to transfer skills and experience and achieve organisational goals. Given the empirical views of organisational culture and workplace mentoring, the following propositions were outlined for examination:

Proposition 1: Role culture encourages workplace mentoring.

Proposition 2: Achievement culture encourages workplace mentoring.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an interpretivist-subjectivist philosophy to enable the researcher understand the viewpoints of the research participants on the research question through humanistic qualitative methods. Consequently, the descriptive-exploratory research design was adopted for this study. The exploratory research design focuses on gaining insight and familiarity about a problem that has little or no earlier studies but, has a limitation of using small sample sizes and it is ungeneralizable (Barnett, 2013).

The target population of this paper therefore comprised of twelve (12) staff drawn from two (2) oil servicing companies operating in Rivers State and because of the small size of the target population, census sampling was also adopted with the entire population constituting the study sample.The multi-method of data collection was adopted by the use of "observation" and "interviews" to collect primary data. In essence, the face-validity and test-retest methods were adopted respectively for validity and reliability of the research instrument. The data collected for this study were then analysed using thematic analysis through the NVIVO software for data management and analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Open Coding

This stage entailed listening and re-reading of the transcribed data to ascertain how patterns could be clustered and coded. The 32 codes derived from this first stage from the interview excerpts are as seen in the figure below.

Figure 2: Brief of Open Coding

Source: (Desk Research, 2019)

Axial Coding

This was done by looking for the links and connections within the themes without the data losing its potentials (Blair, 2015). In accordance with this, the previously thirty-two (32) themes where collapsed into 21 codes as seen below

Figure 3: Brief of Second Coding Stage

Source: (Desk Research, 2019)

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The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. **ISSN** 2312-9492 (Online) 2414-8970 (Print). www.strategicjournals.com

Selective Coding

This coding threw some light on the boundaries between some of the codes that were superficial and blurred, as such they could be infused together.

Through this stage, the total number of codes became 5 in total with subthemes attached as displayed below;
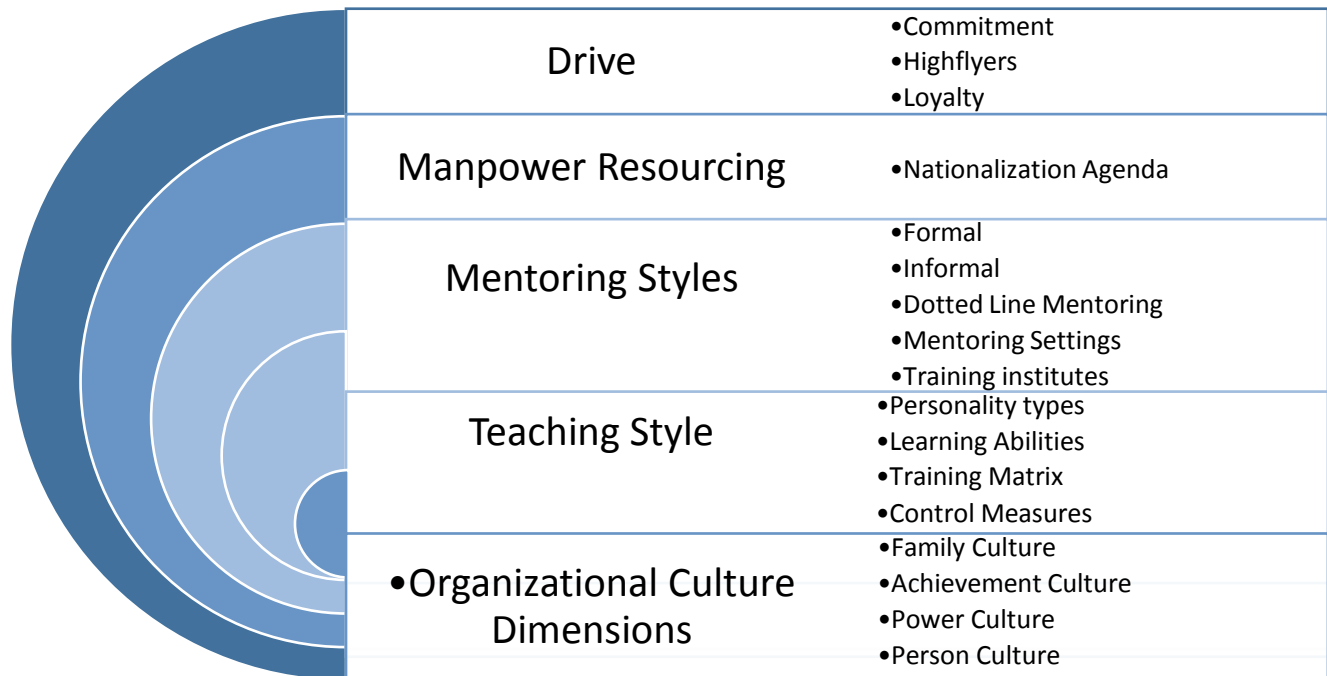
	Drive	•Commitment •Highflyers •Loyalty
	Manpower Resourcing	•Nationalization Agenda
	Mentoring Styles	•Formal •Informal •Dotted Line Mentoring •Mentoring Settings •Training institutes
	Teaching Style	•Personality types •Learning Abilities •Training Matrix •Control Measures
	•Organizational Culture Dimensions	•Family Culture •Achievement Culture •Power Culture •Person Culture

Figure 4: Brief of Selective Coding Stage
Source: (Desk Research, 2019)

Themes

This stage is basically for refining and reviewing themes that will enable the researcher to pattern the themes to tell a story and describe social reality (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). From the above figure bearing the merged codes, 4 themes emerged;

▪ Participant Drive
▪ Manpower Resourcing
▪ Mode of Knowledge Transfer
▪ Organisational Culture

These themes will first be tabulated to show their sub themes and then described. Nevertheless, it is important to note that themes cannot always be successfully separated from one another (Blair, 2015). For instance, in an attempt to describe one theme, references may be made to the contents of another theme.
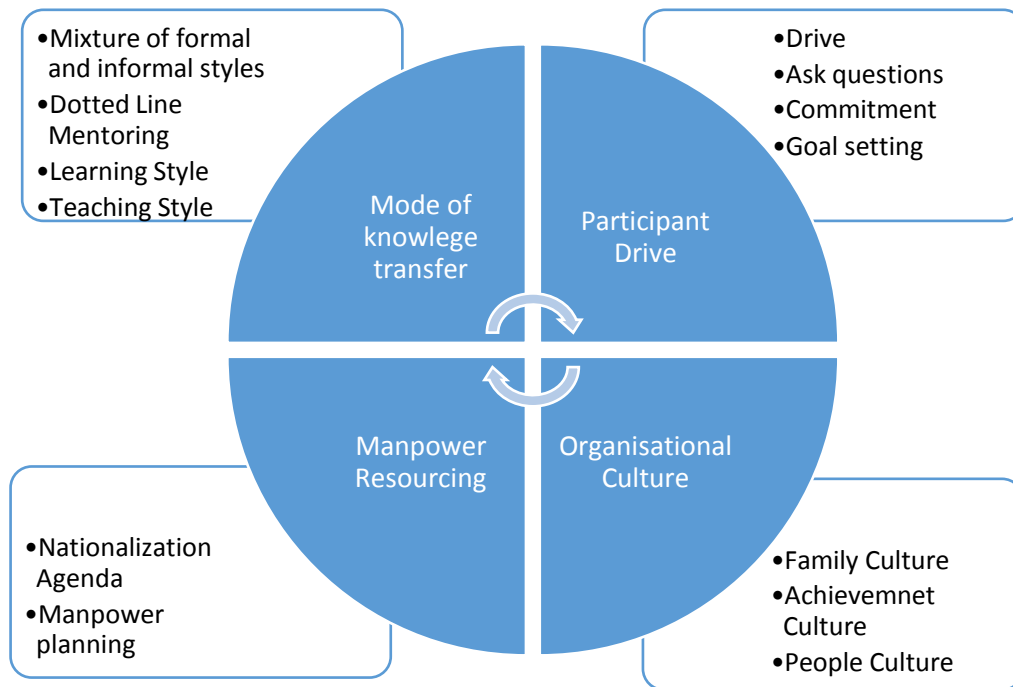
Figure 5: Brief of Research Themes
Source: (Desk Research, 2019)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research explored the concept of workplace mentoring in oil servicing companies in Rivers State and the role organisational culture plays in its effectiveness. The study revealed that there is an intrinsic relationship between organizational culture and workplace mentoring. It showed that for workplace mentoring to thrive, it must be embedded in the culture of the organization. In the same vein, using the themes discovered, it was gathered that the mentee needs to have a drive and hunger for learning. Through the mentors interviewed, it was noted that workplace mentoring in the oil servicing industry should be majorly driven by the mentee. This was in line with Micheal (2008), argument that although mentoring is set out for the nurturing and growth of the mentee, the long-term goals are always set by the mentee. However, though the learner sets the goal, the mentor has a job of observing through intrinsic behavior and helping mentees develop their insight (Micheal, 2008). It was also discovered that

mentoring in this industry is used to ensure human resource planning and is heavily influenced by the mode of aching adopted by the mentor. This finding was relevant to this study as it gives an insight on how workplace mentoring occurs in this industry. In addition, findings showed that mentoring is highly beneficial to the Oil servicing industry. However, it is expedient to say that organizations with high level of role culture and achievement culture engender workplace mentoring and as such have their technical processes transferred and retained and also have career advancement opportunities for workers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, workplace mentoring in the oil servicing industry is a mixture of old and new methods. It's likewise a mixture of formal and informal mentoring styles. It is an age long practice used in preserving the operational processes within this industry as there are few formal schools that impact the practical processes of performing tasks. Also, workplace mentoring in the oil servicing

industry is heavily influenced by the organisational culture of the company which shows the position and philosophy of management. In resonance with the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended that:

▪ More organisations within the Oil Servicing Industry should pick up the pace of formalizing workplace mentoring to effectively preserve their technical know-how and operational processes. A formal process will enable the accurate tracking

of the programme and build deliberate systems of transferring knowledge. This would also ensure that management always has the available human resource based with the right skills, competence and exposure for higher positions.

▪ Management should show commitment to encourage learning culture in their organizations which is needed for workplace mentoring to thrive in any organisation.

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