

Leadership and Creativity - A Vital Skill for Individual and Organizational Performance

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Abstract

Changes from all around the world in any activity are supposed to accept changes and respond being ready for them, by developing specific skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and experience. Based on bringing new ideas and creativity, human capital could obtain long-run leadership performance, becoming leaders for others and motivating them to do the same. Leadership and creativity could be the essential variables to overcome intellectual competition keep close the valuable customers, be a model to follow for other members of the organization and obtain individual and organizational performance. To get performance, the organization needs performance employees; thus, to have creative organizations, must have visionary leaders. This article will analyze educational creativity, the necessary environment to have innovative leaders, creative work, creative thinking, and the importance of visionary leaders in obtaining performance. This article is an examination of leadership and creativity in organizations. Its aim is to reflect on creative leadership and its contribution to stimulating performance. Despite the importance to researchers and organizations of how creativity contributes to efficient leadership and how leadership contributes to group organizational and educational creativity, our understanding regarding this interrelationship remains limited mainly. An analysis of the literature based on both theoretical information and empirical evidence shows that studies exploring the intersection between performance and creative leadership in organizations are disagreeing in terms of how they conceptualize this relationship. Therefore, the essential goal of

this article is to understand how leaders in distinctive settings can promote creativity among their followers and stimulate organizational performance.

The analysis of the subject literature was used to achieve the aim of the article and verify the hypotheses. The review of the results of the empirical research of different authors has confirmed the research hypotheses that a leader has the role of learning how to stimulate the creativity of employees and rewarding their innovative behavior. The article contains three related studies of distinctive researchers. Study I is a quantitative study focused on the effect of creativity on the work environment. Study II and Study III are correlational studies. Study II examines two behaviors: personality traits and creativity in different work fields. Study III looks at the relationship between individual or group creativity and innovation at work.

Keywords: creative leadership, creative work, creative thinking, organizational performance, educational creativity.

JEL Classification: D83, I30, J24, M12, O31.

Introduction

Historically, psychological research on creativity has highlighted individual traits or abilities in such way that might question whether it is possible to lead creative individuals or creative work. However, the claim of this article is that leaders are capable both of influencing creativity in organizations and influencing the followers' perceptions of the leader-follower relationship quality. In our ever-changing and complex surroundings, leadership becomes a target to challenges which exceed its initial traditional roles. Is important to invest in employees and leaders to face crisis and risks being well equipped (Bassous, 2022). Creativity has nowadays turned into a critical concern for most organizations. Based on these aspects, it has received great attention in creativity and leadership research. (Mumford et al., 2002; Mumford et al., 2003; Rickards et al., 2009).

A primary force pulling the fields of creativity and leadership is the complex problems that change brings (Puccio, G.J., Mance, M., & Murdock, M.C., 2011). Some researchers believe that

creativity is an essential factor in effective leadership, which enables an organization to solve ill-defined problems (Mumford et al., 2003), respond to opportunities (Shalley, C.E., & Gilson, L.L., 2004), further maintain a competitive advantage (Reiter-Palmon, R., & Illies, J.J., 2004) and thinking clearly (critically and creatively) (Parker, Begnaud, 2004). Continuous and constant training, learning, and development (Florea, N.V., 2014) and communication (Florea, N.V., 2017) are keys to creative leadership. Another key strength comes from the interweaving of creativity and leadership, which emphasizes development. In the leadership development process, the ability to think creatively is a crucial skill that people develop. Creative people decide to be creative and show an innovative attitude towards leadership. Creative people display many characteristics representing decisions or ways of making creative decisions (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). They are confident that their ideas are more likely to effectively address certain problems, and their solutions may be more applicable in certain circumstances (Gardner, 1993). Their eagerness and ability to challenge, together with their talents, make them stand out as leaders.

Creativity has frequently been described as the ability to generate new/original and useful/adaptive ideas (Feist, 1998). As Feist (1998) observed, the requirements of utility and adaptability are needed to divide creative thought or behavior from schizophrenic, eccentric, or bizarre. On the other hand, these requirements do not mean that a creative idea must automatically have a concrete and practical use. Ideas can be judged as creative based on their intellectual or aesthetic value alone (Feist, 1998).

Innovation is a concept that has been used together with creativity across some disciplines (Kahl, C.H., da Fonseca, L.H., & Witte, E., 2009). Researchers have been criticized for not drawing a clear line between the two. The idea of innovation broadens the definition of creativity to include implementing or commercializing an idea (Björk, 2011). In the psychology of science (Feist & Gorman, 1998) tradition, researchers commonly use the concept of creativity, while management researchers seem to prefer the term innovation. This indicates distinctive interests in different creativity and innovation processes phases: psychologists focus on the generation phases and management researchers target the implementation phases. However, the differences between creativity and innovation research are still not concise (Denti & Hemlin, 2012).

Methodology

This article aims to reflect on creative leadership and its contribution to stimulating performance in organizations. Despite the importance of the interrelationship between creativity, education, efficient leadership and group organizational creativity, our understanding regarding this subject remains limited mainly. Furthermore, studies exploring the intersection between creativity and leadership in organizations are disagreeing in terms of how they conceptualize this relationship. Therefore, the main goal of this article is to understand how leaders can promote creativity among their followers and stimulate organizational performance.

The analysis of both theoretical information and empirical evidence of the subject literature was used to achieve the aim of the article and verify the hypotheses. The review of the results of the empirical research of distinctive authors has confirmed the research hypotheses that a leader has the role of stimulating the creativity of employees and rewarding their innovative behavior. The article contains three related studies of different researchers. Study I is a quantitative study focused on the effect of creativity on the work environment. Study I concludes that while intrinsic motivators can enhance creativity, extrinsic motivators can negatively affect it when followers feel tools are specifically used for them to be externally controlled at work. Study II and Study III are correlational studies. Study II examines two behaviors: personality traits and creativity in different work fields. Findings indicate that creative people are usually more outgoing, more prone to learn, conscientious, competitive, and spontaneous than uncreative people. Study III looks at the relationship between individual or group creativity and innovation at work. Study III suggests that external communication, internal communication, cohesion, and support for innovation are positively associated with individual creativity.

Creative work

Leadership in creative work is different from that in not so creative work because of the characteristics that creative workers have and the nature of the creative work (Mumford, M.D., Scott, G.M., Gaddis, B., & Strange, J.M., 2002). Creative people have experience, a high motivation for achievement, and a high need for independence. As a result, creative leaders should provide their subalterns with intellectual stimulation and freedom to explore. Furthermore, because of its uncertainty, creative work and its management cannot be established

on routine action plans. Mumford et al. (2002) suggest an integrative leadership style that matches people and their relationships in the various phases of creative activity.

At the individual, group and organizational levels, a series of factors affect individuals' creativity. Regarding the first one mentioned – task motivation, domain-specific expertise, and creative abilities are central to creative performance (Amabile, T.M., 1996). First of all, it is debated that intrinsic task motivation is more conducive to creativity than extrinsic task motivation. However, extrinsic motivators such as rewards can lead to creativity as long as they are meant to increase an individual's intrinsic motivation (e.g. rewards that inspire progress at work) rather than focusing on the extrinsic motivation of an individual (Amabile, 1996).

Secondly, creative people tend to invest in expertise. Domain-specific expertise is an essential asset for both leaders and followers (Mumford et al., 2002). Third, in terms of creative skills, studies in experimental settings suggest that leaders of creative people need cognitive problem-solving skills (Mumford et al., 2003) and creative thinking skills to evaluate and improve subordinates' creative ideas (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003). It is better for leaders and followers who attend creative work to own all three of these skills. Empirical findings have found that by using role play, leaders can assume unconventional behaviors aimed at increasing the followers' creativity (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003). Furthermore, the creativity of the followers can only be enriched by stating that creativity is an expected goal. In examining the leaders support for creativity among followers (Tierney & Farmer, 2004) found that the perceptions of the followers for support correlated with the expectations of leaders for creativity.

Creativity for leaders

A century ago, leadership was considered an innate trait acquired at birth. Thus, few people possessing specific skills, such as masculinity, self-confidence, and dominance, were predisposed to become leaders. This approach, called the Great Man Theory was the original leadership theory. Then, the concept of leadership learning and continuous improvement emerged through the study of senior organizational leaders by (Bennis, W., & Nanus, B., 1985). It has changed the myth that leaders are born this way, considering the learning stage as one of the most important qualities that leaders should acquire. They revealed that top leaders are

perpetual learners who look forward to pushing boundaries, exploring new ideas, and considering new challenges.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) defend the idea that leadership is not about position, anyone in any hierarchical position can behave as a leader. This concept states that those in positions of power and authority such as presidents, CEOs, or managers are not automatically leaders. To illustrate this view, a quote from Anita Roddick states: "if you think you're too small to make an impact, try sleeping next to a mosquito" (Entrepreneur Media, Anita Roddick, 2014). The Great Man Theory states that the success of leaders comes from their personality. According to Bennis, Spreitzer, and Cummings (2001) the skills needed for successful 21st century leaders match the characteristics of creative people conceptualized by Davis (1986 cited in Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011, p. 9).

Creative thinking in organizations

Creative thinking improves to work environment and teamwork; creative people and leaders are giving the tone in obtaining creative results (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2010). Many specialists in the field found that creative leadership study ease employees' creativity, by developing a creative vision and integrating the diversity of creative contributions (Feuld, Stierand, Dorfler, Boje, Haley, 2021). From a leadership perspective, creative thinking skills are beneficial for a numerous business problems. Proctor (2010) lists examples that require creativity: "optimization of time, attractiveness of products, motivation of employees, effectiveness and efficiency of production processes, identification of opportunities, retention of talented people". Moreover, Proctor indicates four categories of "open" problems that creativity can solve: planning strategies, missions, and objectives, organizing job assignments and trainings, controlling standards, and managing people.

Creativity in the organization is a clear sign of performance and should be seen in today's world as a competitive advantage for an organization. Harris (2009) mentioned that creativity is an "unconventional" skill for some people because of the desire to move beyond current boundaries and norms. Creativity is and must be part of the personality of the leader, in order to think more "innovatively". All creative achievements come from the efforts of individuals. Leading means

let people to think, to let to be great, to have an idea, to be curious (DePaul, G.A., 2022), to communicate effectively and make a daring dialogue (Helm-Murtagh, Erwin, 2022).

The role of a creative leader in organizations

Creative leaders play the role of supporting employee creativity and supporting innovation in the organization. Faced with the changes of globalization and the evolution of new technologies, this generation of leaders "embraces uncertainty as it opens up new possibilities and opportunities" (Nanus, B., 1990). Creative leaders aim to do everything possible to grow talent, influence others, and establish a corporate community. They seek to reduce barriers to relationships and push employees to collaborate and share information. However, creativity could be considered a threat in a "formal way of thinking".

Leaders can foster creativity by giving freedom to employees, who are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes. In fact, they fight against structured and rigid organizations where the culture approves with the belief that the way things have been done in the past should always be done that way. This mindset can be explained by fear of change and anxiety to implement something new. Creative leaders are able to challenge followers, make them think of new solutions and learn to think in a new way. Leaders must also consider managing diversity – new employees might bring a greater diversity of knowledge and perspective from their past, but leaders must provide opportunities for them to express themselves.

Leonard and Swap (cited in Morris, 2003) characterized the role of creative leaders as being capable of creating a beneficial environment, namely "psychological support and environmental safety". The way a leader expresses his leadership will impact the entire organization, as explained in the next section.

Encouraging a creative way of thinking

This section is related to the issue of behavior to inspire and motivate people to think creatively. According to E. Agbor (2008) authoritarian leadership blocks creativity due to control of work, decisions, and resource allocation. Consequently, employees feel disempowered, less creative, and less productive. Efficient organizations are more inclined to succeed with a collaborative and shared leadership, rather than an authoritarian and hierarchical one.

Transformational leadership can influence people and stimulate their creativity. According to Avolio, Bass and Jung (Avolio, B.J., Bass, B.M., & Jung, D.I., 1999) this type of leadership is based on four principles. The first, "idealized influence" is about the leader being a role model for his followers. This aspect brings trust in their relationships because the leader is respected and adheres to ethical standards. The second one is "individualized consideration", the leader considers everyone's expectations and needs. People are different and leaders must ensure an appropriate climate for all. Third one, "inspirational motivation" refers to building a vision that encourages others to achieve a common goal. Leaders motivate by believing in everyone's high potential. The last factor is "intellectual stimulation", which is the most important in promoting creativity. This factor deals creatively with organizational issues, trying to verify new approaches. Those involved in this style of leadership expand each other's creativity. Regardless of the leader's personality and leadership style, some organizational factors will still enhance or diminish creativity.

Creativity enablers

Communities can contribute in the developing of creativity. Creative leadership, through interactions and confrontation of ideas enables people to debate and even though disagreements can appear, the result is still enhancing the capabilities of each member. According to McCoy & Evans (McCoy, J.M., & Evans, G.W., 2002) creativity can be maximized by 8 factors: "freedom, challenges, resources, supervision, teamwork, recognition, unity, cooperation and support for creativity". Amabile (1996) conducted a quantitative study to gain an understanding of the effect regarding work environment on creativity. She used a tool for measuring the psychological context for innovation called "KEYS: Climate for Creativity Assessment", intrinsic motivation being the main mechanism attached to the method. Intrinsic motivation is the availability that people can find at work – satisfaction, pleasure, interest, and challenges – to maximize their creative ability.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivators can drown this energy when people feel tools are used for them to be externally controlled at work, such as a pay rise, for a motivational tool (Amabile, T.M., 1988). Enhancing a creative workplace directly impacts organizational creativity, and the expected result is greater well-being. Creative people have been found to hold opposing views

from less creative people on a number of personality traits which were measured by validated psychometric scales. In a meta-analytic review, Feist (1998) compared scientists with non-scientists ($k = 26$ studies, $N = 4852$), creative scientists with less creative scientists ($k = 28$ studies, $N = 3918$) and artists with non-artists ($k = 29$ studies, $N = 4397$) based on previous research examining personality traits and creativity. Feist came to the conclusion that creative people are usually more outgoing, conscientious, competitive, and impulsive than uncreative people. Regarding scientists, Feist (1998) also found that less creative scientists are typically more conventional, and less outgoing than creative scientists.

Moreover, at a group level, many environmental factors are considered to influence individual and group creativity. A leader uses a direct or indirect influence on many variables considered to influence creativity, such as group climate, group composition, resources, and knowledge management (Hemlin, S., Allwood, C. M., & Martin, B. R., 2008). In a meta-analysis focused on team-level predictors of individual and group creativity and innovation at work, it was also found that external communication ($= 0.418$), internal communication ($= 0.369$), cohesion ($= 0.331$), and support for innovation ($= 0.261$) were the variables most strongly related to individual creativity (Hülsheger, U. R., Anderson, N., & Salgado, J. F., 2009). In a more pessimistic view of leadership, Krause (2004) considered that leaders are, at best, non-obstacles to creativity. She also stated that leaders are probably well advised to leave their creative followers alone and better focus on protecting them from organizational demands tasks.

According to a review of empirical studies over the past 30 years, leaders have consistently been found to influence creativity and innovation (Denti & Hemlin, 2012a). Therefore, we can conclude that leadership is vital to the creativity of the workplace. Although it can be discussed that creativity is unpredictable and cannot be strictly managed, leaders can manage the conditions for creativity (Amabile, T.M., & Gryskiewicz, S.S., 1987; Hemlin, S., 2006). The research of a study indicated that creative leadership and supervisor support are very important to employee well-being (Heyns, McCallaghan, Roos, 2021). A study made in 2021 determined that creative leadership skill, emotional reaction to change, innovation environment, and knowledge sharing are influencing directly and positively on innovation (Ye, Tan, 2021).

Results

This article seeks to point out the role of the intersection between creativity and leadership in influencing performance management in the organization. There were identified important variables that can facilitate creative leadership in individuals, teams, and organizations. The identification can help leaders acknowledge and further invest in the development of creative leadership. This study also tries to incorporate the idea that taking benefits from creativity and innovation requires good management and focus on good leadership. In order to obtain a good management of the creative activities, either strategic or operational, organizations must develop the ability to expand creativity, and apply innovation effectively.

Therefore, the main results of the article are the following ones:

- The ideal level of creativity and innovation is the ability of generating and recognizing ideas, alternatives or possibilities, and, then, turning the ideas into reality to assist organizations in attaining their goals.
- Organizations must provide a great leader that could deliver the proper climate to his followers, persuade, and motivate them, so they could develop the ability of generating new ideas.
- Organizations must develop a culture that acknowledges change and look for leaders which have the capacity of making employees feel the necessity to innovate and have initiatives.

For the improvement of both creativity and innovation in organizations, we recommend the following:

- Organizations should consider offering their employees training programs. This could help them develop the ability to generate creative ideas and find the suitable manner to apply them.
- Organizations should, as well, establish a fair framework of rewards in order to motivate their team to approach a creative style of thinking, which generates new ideas.
- Leaders should not feel threatened by their followers, more specifically - the fear that the followers who bring innovation might potentially take their places in the organization. It is recommended to put personal interests aside and aim for the organization's success. Creativity is the product of a complex cognitive equation and a permanent questioning.

Every human being has a creative potential in a distinctive field, at a different extent or frequency and the environment surrounding them definitely influences their creative outputs. Important external environment factors such as education or workplace have a certain impact.

Conclusions

To summarize, this article offers a piece of evidence in direct linking to creative leadership and its impact on work group creativity, and it also suggests possibilities of improvement regarding the ongoing methods for measuring the extent of leadership towards a group. Both the results and conclusions of this article lay the foundations for future scientific research. They confirm the hypothesized link between leadership and creativity, which suggests further research, is worthwhile. The results may, as well, broaden the knowledge on the roles of leaders in stimulating the organization's innovative activity.

The matter of how to best evaluate creative versus hierarchical leadership is of particular relevance to the future development of this field. The opinions of the employees on the leadership role in stimulating performance in the organization should be further explored. It also seems important to investigate to a greater extent the impact of leadership (specific roles) on the organization's innovativeness. Apart from leadership, the results of the conducted analyses can also significantly contribute to the exploration of organizational climate (culture) as a factor conducive to the innovativeness of contemporary organizations.

Several limitations of this article need to be taken into consideration. First, even though we tried to include a variety of topics linked to creativity and leadership, the subjectivity regarding the selection of research, databases or topics might still be considered a limitation of this review. Second, our intention is not to develop a new theory of creative leadership, but to deliver a systematic review for the development of future theory. In order to obtain that, we covered an extensive frame of literature and further opted to limit the depth of our analysis. For example, nearly every empirical study involves some form of measurement, including creative thinking tests, climate ranking or work group interviews.

More in-depth research of these evaluation tools shows that nearly all of them have their own quantification problems relevant to reliability and validity. Also, it would be useful to extend

future research to a larger number of leaders from different organizations. The subjectivity of the respondents' assessments in the selected studies is also a limitation. Therefore, we encourage readers interested in creative leadership to continue to study and research beyond the coverage of this article.

We have confidence that our paper may provide a valuable overview for further research. The information provided shows that a foundation in terms of organizational culture, work climate and trusted leadership is essential for having creative collaborative experiences. In addition, creative expression must be seen as a search for human fulfillment both in organizations and in our daily lives. Creativity inspires us to be more optimistic, empowers us to overcome dilemmas and to thrive.

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