Creativity at Work Place

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Abstract

In earlier research, it has been acknowledged that creativity is a phenomenon which is incessant for any organization. Several climate factors influence creativity at workplace. In this article, an effort has been made to integrate such factors that appear scattered in the extant literature. Some suggestions have also been put forth which may be useful in the process of developing an organization in a better creative mode.

Introduction

Creativity has been considered lifeblood for surviving of any organization in a global environment. Today's global scenario is forcing managers at all level to become more creative and innovative. The market is continuously demanding novel ideas into their profile and assuming they are spending much time at their workplace. The managers are responsible to explore new mechanisms, ideas, techniques, methods for surviving their products and services in the market more efficiently and effectively in a creative and innovative manner. The organization expects that the managers are spending their time at the workplace in the creative and innovative manner for being productive and effective. To achieve the organizational objective, employees at any level can use their intellectual capabilities to stimulate positive changes by using their knowledge content and creative ideas to allow or empower such changes. We are experiencing changes more than ever before and to adapt and react to these changes. Creativity and innovation are seen as necessary conditions for change and development (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Runco, 2004; Weisberg, 1999). Creativity for individuals and organizations represents a dramatic aspect of organizational change and it provides a key to understand change processes, organizational effectiveness, and survival. This person-centred approach yielded some important findings about the backgrounds, personality traits, and work styles of outstandingly creative people (Barron, 1969; Mackinnon, 1965). This approach offered to practitioners for helping people to become more creative in their work. When employees exhibit creativity at work, they produce novel, potentially useful ideas about organizational products, practices, services or procedures (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). It is the use and development of creative ideas that allows the organization to adjust for shifting market conditions, respond to opportunities, and thereby, to adapt, grow and compete (Nonaka, 1991). Creativity has been considered as a unique human ability that provides with amazing potential and gives a chance to achieve results from the most glorious and the most heinous, and allow us to create a world we live in.

Meaning and Process of Creativity

Creativity is derived from an intellectual's accumulated creative thinking skills and expertise based on their learning & past experiences (Gong, Huang & Farh, 2009). It is studied that creativity cannot be done scientifically or captured in a theory. Creativity may be treated as a form of art that generates results by unexpected path and means. Creativity has been assumed diversely in psychology, intelligence, science and cognitive science (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995; Wallas, 1926). Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin (1993) defined creativity as a complex process that results in a product of an individual's behaviour in a specific context. Martin (1998) defined creativity as a process to find a solution that is both novel and useful. Wallas (1926) defined creative process in five stages, viz.; (i) preparation, (ii) incubation, (iii) insight, (iv) evaluation, and (v) exploration. Osborn (1953) found seven-step creativity process involving: orientation; preparation, analysis, ideation, incubation, synthesis, and evaluation. These steps are clear cut guidance to an individual to produce a creative outcome. Csikszentmihalyi (2006) claimed that creativity process may comprise of distinct phases that draw on different psychological resources. He further argued that every invention is the result of series of small, amalgamation steps. One step creates a new jumping off point for the next step, and so on. While Rossman (1931) projected a more ceremonial phase model of invention involving seven stages: Observation of a need or difficulty phases; ; Analysis of the need; Survey of all available information; Formulation of all objectively possible solutions; Critical Analysis of these solutions for their advantages and disadvantages; and experimentation to test out the most promising idea. Most people may find that they might be stronger in some phases than in others. People need to know their weak phases and the techniques which can help them in their strong phase of creative process.

Types of Creativity

Many researchers have associated creativity with great minds. Creativity comes in different types (Sternberg, Kaufman & Pertz, 2004). As Kaufman & Baghetto (2009) have distinguished among four levels of creativity viz., (i) Big-C (the example of Darvin and others), (ii) Little-C (for everyday creativity), (iii) Mini-C (for learning process), and (iv) Pro-C (the kind represented in the progression from little-C to big-C). These distinguished levels of creativity explain the extent of generation of the ideas. Sternberg (2003) promoted a "triarchic theory", asserting that there are three main aspects of intelligence that are keys for creativity – synthetic, analytical and practical. He stresses the importance of these three types of thinking to overall intellectual functioning and successful intelligence.

Personal Characteristics and Creativity

Creativity is a multifaceted phenomenon with personal, cognition, philosophical, social, cultural, economic, and technological dimensions. We need to know a more enriched multidimensional human being, which is relevant or associated with the three Cs – Consciousness, Compassion, and Creativity (Osho, 1999). The three Cs are having its own great importance, but creativity has been considered the greatest rebellion in the existence. It is the fragrance of an individual freedom. A creative person is one who has ever seen before, who listens the things that nobody has heard before – and then there is creativity (Osho, 1999). An individual has three dimension – being, feeling and action. Action contains creativity, relating to all kinds of creativity – poetry, music, painting, architecture, technology, science. Creative ideas can include broad areas of interest and high energy level in the organizational environment. Creativity also requires some level of internal and supporting energy that forces individuals to pressure in the face of challenges coming from the outside inherent to creative work. A number of important studies have been done in the area of individuals i.e. the sense of recognition, advancement, feeling of competence, self esteem etc. for creativity (Amabile, 1987, 1988; Shalley, 1991; Shalley & Oldham, 1997). Sternberg & Lubart (2006; 1991; 1995a; 1995b) have proposed an investment theory of creativity. This theory explains creative people are the one who are willing and able to metaphorically buy low and sell high in the realm of ideas. The theory further explains that creativity requires a mixture of six interrelated determinants, viz; (i) intellectual abilities, (ii) knowledge, (iii) styles of thinking, (iv) personality, (v) motivation, and (vi) environment. This theory provides a platform to an individual to be creative from others in the realm of the ideas. People have a different personality which gives them often a predominant mind-set. Torrance (1965) reviewed over fifty studies in the area that eventually identified some traits to characterised creative individuals. His list had some contradictory traits such as 'quiet' and 'talkative' and 'independent in judgement' and 'willingness to accept judgement of authority'. He found in his list timid, domineering, and negativistic are hard to link to creativity, whether creative people are characterised by spontaneity, curiosity, love of complexity, playfulness and so forth.

Earlier research indicates that individuals are likely to be most creative when they experience high levels of intrinsic motivation (e.g., Amabile, 1996) since such motivation increases their tendency to be curious, cognitively flexible, risk taking, and persistent in the face

of barriers (Utman, 1997; Zhou & Shalley, 2003) all of which should facilitate the development of creative ideas. However, one should note that creativity and innovation do not come without a cost. Both creativity and innovation processes are identified as being unpredictable, controversial, and in competition with alternative courses of actions (Kanter, 1988). Some people have lots of ideas but not able to find a suitable environment for executing the ideas relevant to the problem. And then the necessity of an environment which may foster creativity of any individual required. Some people think that creativity is a god given gift. To shatter this myth many researchers gave insights that certain factors, abilities, and inner urge determine an individuals' creativity. There are certain abilities relating to creativity such as fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, problem solving and so forth (Khandwala, 1988). It is not clear that the personality traits cause creativity or some environmental factors determine creative behaviour. But, certainly the amalgamations of both the facets are necessary for determining an individuals' creativity.

Climate for Creativity

It is argued that individual characteristics and environmental factors are responsible for encouraging individual creativity and innovation. In some cases, the work context may inhibit the impact of individual characteristics, whether in others it facilitates their effect on behaviour (Schneider, 1975). Many researchers (Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996, Ekvall, 1996, Tesluk, Farr, & Klein, 1997; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Oldman & Cummings, 1996) suggest that external factors encourage people to be creative; on the other hand some advocated that people create because of the intrinsic satisfaction (Barron, 1969; White 1959; McClelland, 1961; Freud, 1959). Need is a one of the important factors that motivate people for inventive behaviour. Need provides more durable fuel for creativity; need for personal growth, for the development of one's potential, need to excel in job or need for everything (Maslow, 1954). Personality development, associative thinking, working environment, social environment, cultural values, imagination, independent and judgement motivation are the other determinants of creativity (Khandwala, 1988). Review of literature indicates that strong motivation, endurance, intellectual curiosity, deep commitment, independence in thought and action, strong desire for self-realisation, strong sense of self, strong self-confidence, openness to impressions from within and without, attracted to complexity and obscurity, high sensitivity, high capacity for emotional involvement in their investigations are some important associative factors that influence an individual creativity. It is said that material ease, liberal, progressive outlook at home plus a decent education plus talent may sharply increase the chances of one's creative efflorescence. Our environment profoundly affects our

attitudes, traits, abilities and behaviour. It is our internal and external factors in our environment that sharpens our creativity in various ways. These factors can instil in us much fearfulness and blockages. Khandwalla (1988) has proposed some environmental factors that influence an individual's creativity. These are stimulation, nurturance of creativity, low-tension environment, constructive feedback, opportunity to learn, diversity of viewpoints, freedom with accountability, creators as role models, facilities, creative norms, and expectations of boss figure. These dimensions positively correlate with the creativity motivation of the professionals (Khandwalla, 1988). An individual has to find out the stimuli in the environment which can engender creative ideas. Innovative performance outcomes are more likely to occur when innovative behaviour is rewarded and when the organizational environment support creativity and innovation. It has been discussed in diverse studies that how creativity can be enhanced in the organizations and what common factors provide a complete view of factors affecting employee creativity and innovation. Organizational design for corporate creativity may yield far better performance when change in the environment (Khandwala & Mehta, 2004); work environment can enhance employee creativity and the practical tools and solutions are available to realise creative supporting work environment (Dul & Ceylan, 2011); motivational based systems are more likely to provide viable climate determinants (Hunter, Bedell & Mumford 2007). Authentic leadership directly influences team members' individual creativity and team innovation (Cerne, Jaklic and Skerlavaj, 2013). Overall organizational learning influence creativity (Rakesh & Ahmadi, 2011). Transformational leadership has important effect on creativity at both the individual and organizational levels. Behavioural and cultural context appear conducive to develop innovative outcomes and performance (Prajogo & Ahmad, 2006). Values, norms and beliefs also play supportive or inhibitive role in encouraging creativity (e.g., Martin & Trblanche, 2003). Organizational climate, organizational culture, organizational structure and systems, leadership style and organizational resources are important determinants that enhance or inhibit creativity in a work environment (Andriopolous, 2001). In earlier research, positive feedback was also found a powerful tool for stimulating creative performance (e.g., Farr & Ford, 1990; George & Zhou, 2001; Zhou, 1998; Zhou & George, 2001; Zhou, 2008). The social environment has also been considered as an important factor that influences the frequency of creative behaviour as well as the level of creative work (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Herron & Lezenby, 1996; Hemlin, Allwood & Martin, 2004). Martin and Turblanche (2003) asserted that environment can persuade organizational creativity in two ways: (i) the socialization process; (ii) norms, values and assumptions guide people how to behave and how

to think. These two ways may be the important source to guide the management for establishing a suitable environment for organizational creativity.

Creating Climate for Creativity

Management should play an important role in developing a culture that emphasises and support the generation and implementation of new ideas. The environment that supports values, flexibility, autonomy at work and encourage the team work undoubtedly fosters creativity. Creativity is promoted in such a climate where employees show their curiosity, discover, and explore themselves for generating novel ideas and potentially identify beneficial results. To mobilize these activities of employees, a manager needs to avoid applying too many controls in the creative learning process and cognitive functioning. It is very important that consideration of theoretical perspective of creativity in the organization need to be turned into innovation that should positively influence the profitability of the organization. Leaders are responsible to allow flexibility and adaptability in the organization. In the context of understanding an environment for fostering creativity, it is important to understand the uniqueness of the climate or culture of an organization. Osborne and Brown (2005) suggest that the context where new changing pattern of policies initiate changes are responsible for generating new ideas for individuals. Various mechanisms supporting creativity and innovation in the organizations to be, reward and recognition for creativity and work, fair evaluation of work; open, active communication of information and ideas etc. (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Cumming, 1965; Ettlie, 1983; Monge & Cozzens, 1992; Paolillo & Brown, 1978; Kanter, 1983). These factors might be a significant ways to promote creativity and innovation at the individual and organizational level. A number of previous researchers (e.g., Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Andrews & Farris, 1967; Ekvall, 1983; King & West, 1985; Pelz & Andrews, 1966; Paolillo & Brown, 1978; Siegel & Kaemmerer, 1978, West, 1986) have also claimed that creativity and innovation in the organization are encouraged by permitting a substantial degree of freedom or autonomy in the performance of one's work. Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin (1993) suggest that organizational creativity is a subset of organizational innovation, which in turn is a subset of organizational change. There must be interaction between the individual characteristics (cognitive function, personality and motivation) and situational and circumstantial characteristics (i.e., physical environment, time and task constraints).

In this turbulent environment forward-thinking leader is responsible for their organizations to capitalize on the inherent complexity in today's environment and catalyze

creativity and innovation within their business representation, products and services. These leaders are likely to enlighten their employees that the ability to develop new ideas and innovations is one of the top priorities of their organisations (Porter, Stern & Council, 1999). Many scholars believe that creativity is initiated by ideation or brainstorming. Brainstorming is probably one of the most well-known tools of creative problem solving (Fernald & Nickolenko, 1993; Leclef, 1994; Stein, 1975). Creativity can also be encouraged by establishing a class environment that accepts and reinforces new ideas. Since the group or employees often meet challenges, changes, and stressful work assignment, the impact, influence and importance of the presence of a leader is unquestioned. Hence, the significant proficiency of a leader and his ability to encourage creativity within their employees has been emphasized (Mumford & Connelly, 1999). Leaders play crucial role in supporting creativity and innovation. They may exert influence and motivate employees to work together in a collaborative environment. Shalley and Gilson (2004) identified numerous contextual factors that leaders influence at the individual, job, group and organizational level. These numerous factors undoubtedly support or hinder creative behaviour. De Jong and Den Hertog (2007) have given thirteen leaders' behaviour encouraging both the idea generation and application of ideas. Some of them are – innovative role modelling, stimulating knowledge diffusion, providing vision, showing support for innovation and providing resources. Creative outcome could be achieved by these defined leaders' behaviour and associate an implicit link to the leaders' role for creating an environment for organizational innovation. One of the ways leaders influence creativity is creating a positive environment that encourages creativity and implementation of creative ideas. In earlier research, leadership behaviour was found positively related to these type of organizational outcomes (e.g., Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Andrews & Farris, 1967; Ekvall, 1983; King & West, 1985; Pelz & Andrews, 1966; Paolillo & Brown, 1978; Siegel & Kaemmerer, 1978, West, 1986). Leaders encourages employees to express their opinions, high level of social support, showing concerns for employees' feelings, positive feedback on giving their ideas, balancing employees' responsibilities and freedom, and facilitating skill development (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Amabile, 1998; Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta & Kramer, 2004). Leaders are not supposed to make or create a less tightly structured environment for giving new ideas or criticizing employees on their thought process by expressing novel ideas. Further, leaders should not only encourage creativity but also provide their employees with time and resources to take risks (Mumford & Connelly, 1999).

The employees are also required to design for themselves a creativity nurturing environment by taking up some creative colleague and mates, and if possible, by getting into a

more creative job or occupation. Creative achievements are outcomes of personality factors (traits, motivation), and appropriate environment (stimulation, rewards, and or opportunities, relevant knowledge and skills). If one cannot able to get this environment, his chance of achieving anything significant is likely to be rather slim. And if there is adequate level of each of these, the chance of success may be quiet substantial. Besides shaping personality and ability, the environment may block or facilitate creative activities themselves. Awareness, diagnosis, support from a credible source, inoculation, rewarding of unblocking and appropriate setting of goals go a long way in getting rid of some deliberating blocks. For promoting creativity in the organization, it may be argued that it is the inculcating creative abilities (i.e., elaboration, associative thinking, cultivation, imagination, flexibility, originality etc.) which help to plan the detailed steps by which one goes from a high potential idea to a finished creative work. In order to develop these abilities further, the other resources such as interesting books, habits, hobbies, close friends, interesting places to visit and so forth provide value addition. Drucker (1999) suggests that the practices and discipline of innovation should be somewhat systematic, guided by diligence, persistence, and purposeful focused exploration. It also requires rethinking organizational designing.

Implication

The past decade has also seen a dramatic increase in our understanding of creative practices and organizational performance. As consequences, creativity and innovation are now seen as a competitive advantage that cannot be copied readily by one's competition. The role of leaders has been altered, though many managers / leaders may not yet be well equipped for the understanding and application of that knowledge to the work. The leaders / innovators can relate their leadership, with external relationship, methods of innovation, resources, recruitment, selection and retention and employees with an innovative mindsets rewarding such employees and thus creating and maintaining a culture of creativity and innovation. Montouri (2011) asserted on a vision gap of creativity that there should be an emergence of new, contextual, collaborative, the implications it can have fourth future. There is a need to explicitly measure and evaluate the effects of culture, climate, structure and leadership styles at various levels of the organization. As far as gaining a holistic understanding of creativity is concerned, we need to see the interdependence between different factors that are responsible for building a creative environment at workplace.

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