Organizational Culture and its Relationship to Organization Performance in Ghana Education Service Head Office – Accra

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Abstract

The culture of an organization reflects its performance. Stakeholders who are direct beneficiaries of the Ghana Education Service have often complained of receiving poor service delivery from the organization. Using the Head Office of the organization in Accra, the researcher investigated whether the organization's culture had any relationship with the performance. With both interviews and questionnaires, core areas of the organization such as: Mission, Ethics and Accountability, External Environment, Strategic Planning and Management, Organizational Structure, Leadership and Management, Human Resource Management, Internal and External Communication, Financial Management, Evaluation and Performance Management and Information Technology were assessed. Five divisions of the organization were used for the study. The findings of the study were that the existing culture does not mirror the preferred culture; it was also established that the organization's culture and performance have a mutually reciprocating relationship. The study showed that the current level of performance could be improved if support systems in the area of finance, staff and technology are enhanced. Furthermore the organization should encourage shared leadership and give credit to others when they do the right things. Staff need to be trained in information technology so they can be current in the use of the technology.

Keywords: Organizational culture; Organizational performance; Organization development.

1. Introduction

Organizations are social entities made up of individuals and inanimate machines. Where individuals or groups exist for a common purpose, a pattern of doing things evolves and is referred to as culture. Culture is commonly referred to as how a group of people behave and how they do things. Culture is accompanied by a set of beliefs, values and agreed upon environment or 'feel' to the organization. Organizational culture is a relatively new type of organizational analysis that is borrowed from the field of anthropology. Pettigrew (1979) first described culture as an organizational unit of concern. In the short time since culture and its relevance to organizational systems have matters of academic and professional concern, many books and articles have been written to define and to describe the nature of organizational culture. To date, no single, universally accepted definition exists. However, Schneider (1990) state that the term organizational culture generally is accepted as referring to the shared meanings, beliefs, and understandings held by a particular group or origination about its problems, practices and goals.

It was not until the beginning of the 1980s that organizational scholars began paying attention to the concept of culture (Ouchi 1981; Pascale and Athos 1981; Peters and Waterman 1982; Deal and Kennedy 1982). This is one of the few areas, in which organizational scholars led practicing managers in identifying a crucial factor affecting organizational performance. In most instances, researchers and scholars have focused mainly on documentation, explanation, and building models of organizational phenomena that were already being tried by management (e.g., Total Quality Management, Downsizing, Reengineering, and Information Technology). Organizational culture, however, has been an area in which conceptual work and scholarship have provided guidance for managers as they have searched for ways to improve their organizations'

McLean and Marshall (1993) state that organisation's culture is the collection of traditions, values, policies, beliefs, and attitudes that constitute a pervasive context for everything we do and think in an

organisation. By this definition means that organisational culture gives a sense of identity for the organisation. Similarly, Pearce and Robison (2005) add that organisational culture is the set of important assumptions often unstated that members of an organisation share in common. The shared assumptions among a firm's members influence opinions and actions within that organization.

Morgan (1986) contended that shared reality and meaning will be created or maintained only when leadership and the management are symbolically consistent with some desired direction. In other words, culture cannot be controlled; it only can be influenced by leadership and managerial behavior. It was, therefore, necessary for the researcher to find out what types of culture prevail at GES Head Office and how these cultures influence the organizational performance.

The purpose of this research is to assist stakeholders in understanding the way in which culture can be diagnosed and changed in order to enhance organizational performance. Since culture is such a crucial factor in the long-term effectiveness of organizations, it is imperative that those charged with managing organizational culture be able to measure key dimensions of culture and to develop a strategy for changing it. Culture enables people to see the goal alignment and motivates them to higher levels of performance, as shared values make people feel good about the organization. People are, thus, able to commit their capability and potential sincerely to the organization. Such strong culture acts like an intrinsic motivator.

French and Bell (1984) state that Organisation Development (OD) is the applied behavioural science discipline that seeks to improve organisations through planned systematic, long-range efforts focused on the organisation culture and its human and social processes. They add that organisation development is a process whereby people manage the culture of an organisation, rather than being managed by it. The importance of one studying organisational culture is that it helps profile the current state of organizational culture, a preferred culture for the future, and it outlines a process from moving from the current to the preferred state. It is, therefore, very important for one to study the culture of Ghana Education Service Head Office to find out the type of culture that prevails there and its relationship with the performance of the institution.

The focus of most organization development change efforts is on changes in an organization's culture. This research is on the culture of the organization in the area of power, role, achievement and support as they relate with organizational performance at the Head Office of Ghana Education Service to see if there will be the need for change in the current culture of the organization to align it with its expected performance.

In OD, performance improvement is the concept of organizational change in which the managers and governing body of an organization put into place and manage a programme. This programme measures the current level of performance of the organization and then generates ideas for the modification of organizational behavior and infrastructure which are put in place for the achievement of a better level of output. The primary goals of organizational improvement are for the management to improve organizational effectiveness and organizational efficiency in order for them to improve the ability of the organization to deliver its goods and/or services in the marketplaces in which the organization competes.

Culture can be understood as a pattern of learned assumptions about how one has to behave, or in more colloquial language the way we do things around here. Organisations are much more complex than the formal aspects which can be easily seen above the water-line such as the organisational charts, job descriptions, the mission statements or strategic plans. The ways in which organisations perform are often more influenced by the informal things which occur 'below the water-line' such as the way people relate unofficially, the political manoeuvring, the personalities involved, and the ways decisions are made.

The analogy of an iceberg is often used to illustrate this reality. In more literary terms, Schein (1984) likens culture to lily pads: "There you can see the lilies floating on top of the pond ... but you do not see the roots that may go down 10-15 feet, deeply bedded down in the mud that made the lily pad grow. If you do not get down into these roots and down into the mud, you do not understand the whole process. (Schein quoted in Info-line 1988:5).''

Organisation Development is based on an action research model of continual data collection, analysis and feedback for collective awareness; on the assumption that for effective change to occur, issues and solutions should be owned internally not displaced. This model is underpinned by a normative, re-educative change strategy which works with the heart and the head by supporting learning processes that accept the psychological resistance to the change of fundamental attitudes. Organisation Development

must meet a felt need of the organisation and have an end of improved performance, not be an end in itself.

Mohrman et al (1990) state that performance of an organization is measured by its productivity, organizational effectiveness, market share, returns on investment and employee retention. They go with the assertion that the performance of an organization is determined by and organization's character. Specifically, an organization's performance is high when its character promotes effective exchanges with its environment and its internal-design features effectively fit together which reinforce one another.

Lusthaus et al (2000) state that organizational performance is made visible through the activities it conducts to achieve its mission. Outputs and their effects are the most observable aspects of an organization's performance. They came out with some indicators of organizational performance which are effectiveness efficiency, relevance and financial viability.

This research looked at how the four pillars of culture that is power, role, achievement and support relate to the organizational performance in GES.

2. Problem statement

Organizational culture conveys a sense of identity to employees, provides unwritten and, often, unspoken guidelines for how one has to get along in the organization. It also enhances the stability of the social system that individuals in an organization experience. Unfortunately, people are unaware of their culture until it is challenged; until they experience a new culture or until it is made overt and explicit through, for example, a framework or model. Such a framework or model has not been used to assess the culture of Ghana Education Service Head Office in Accra and its relationship with its performance. It is for this reason that this research was undertaken.

The main objective of this research is to assess the culture that exists at GES Head Office and to determine if this culture has any relationship with the organization's performance. The study is also targeted at getting feedback from respondents on the effect of GES culture on performance.

The significance of this study is to assist in the understanding of the way in which culture can be diagnosed and changed in order to enhance organizational performance. This study will also make respondents and readers aware of how culture can or cannot influence the performance of an organization either negatively or positively.

3. Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey design. This involved the gathering of data with the aid of survey instruments on which was based a description of the phenomenon under study, that is, whether there was any relationship between organizational culture and performance at GES Head Office in Accra. The total number of employees at the Head Office is Four Hundred and Fifteen (415). Data was collected purposively from five divisions out of ten main divisions. These were Basic Education, Curriculum Research Development Division (CRDD), Finance, Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD) and Secondary Education. The reason for the selection of these divisions was that they can offer more details and high degree of accuracy when answering the questionnaires and responding to the interviews. After selecting the five divisions each member of the division was selected by the use of the simple random sampling technique which uses a table of random numbers. The sampling interval was one out of two. This was done to give everybody in the divisions an equal chance to be selected.

The questionnaire used to assess the current and preferred culture was a diagnostic instrument which had a set of fifteen (15) questions. These questions were in the areas of members priority to work, people who do well in the organization, how the organisation treats individuals, decision-making, assignment of tasks, work motivation, relationship between groups, inter group and interpersonal conflicts, the external environment, systems and procedures and how new members learn. The questions had four (4) rankings that is, A to D. Respondents were to rank their answers for both current and preferred culture by assigning 4,3,2,1 for each phrase in the current and preferred with 4 being the most dominant and 3 the next most dominant and 1 being the least dominant alternative.

The data collected was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to establish the findings for the study. These findings were then sent to some respondents to get their understanding and recommendation in the form of feedback which was later incorporated into the research work. In the end conclusion was drawn with recommendations.

4. Results and discussion

This area deals with the presentation and discussion of the findings of the data gathered from Ghana Education Service (GES) Head Office.

The study primarily aimed at the assessment of the existing and preferred culture of the GES and its relationship with the organization's performance. The study also aimed at the way forward for the GES organization. As the study was basically and essentially qualitative and quantitative in nature, narrative descriptions, frequencies and percentages

were used in analysis of the data. The presentations are in the form of tables, graphs and narrative to for the facilitation of easy and quick reading and for better understanding. Only the returned questionnaire, that is, one hundred and ninety (190) for culture and one hundred and eighty four (184) for organizational performance were used for this analysis.

Table 1

Returned questionnaires from the five divisions on culture

Division	Number Given Out	Number Returned
Basic Education	24	22
CRDD	23	20
Finance	55	50
HRMD	87	75
Secondary Education	27	23
Total	216	190

Source: *Fieldwork, 2010*

In all 88% of the questionnaires were retrieved.

4.1 A. Power culture

The various items in each set of questionnaire were tallied and averaged. The Power figures in Tables 2 and Table 3 and Figure 1 histogram below show the existing power level as 144.4 and the preferred level at 43.4 (see Table 2 and 3). The former figure indicates that the power level as higher in all the five divisions. These mean that figures through the

existing power level is high, the respondents will prefer a lower power level in the organization. Power is centralized in supervisors and leaders at high levels in the organization. The performance of certain routine administrative tasks still requires approval of managers and supervisors. Rules have been put in place and members of staff are expected to abide by the rules. There is no room for tolerance such that any little deviation on the part of Heads of Division especially attracts some form of sanctions.

Table 2

Distribution of the mean responses in each of the five divisions on the existing culture

Division	A (Power)	B (Role)	C (Achievement)	D (Support)
Basic Education	81	73	40	22
CRDD	72	68	34	20
Finance	188	144	92	50
HRMD	292	233	145	75
Secondary Education	89	72	43	23
Total	722	590	354	190
Mean	144.4	118	70.8	38

Source: *Fieldwork, 2010*

As much as the staff members like the implementation of rules, they will prefer a system that tolerates human errors. The analysis also revealed that the system stifles initiative. The research shows that the staff will prefer the diffusing of power where Heads of Division were allowed to make decisions limited to their level, so that this practice percolates down other staff members. This in a way will encourage initiative. The power culture currently existing in GES confirms the comment by Handy (1993) that decisions in an organization that display a power culture are centralized around one key individual. That person likes the control and the power behind it.

Table 3
Distribution of the mean responses in each of the five divisions on the preferred culture

Division	A (Power)	B (Role)	C (Achievement)	D (Support)
Basic Education	26	40	68	82
CRDD	22	38	85	72
Finance	58	92	160	190
HRMD	85	140	233	292
Secondary Education	26	43	73	88
Total	217	353	619	724
Mean	43.4	70.6	123.8	114.8

Source: *Fieldwork, 2010*
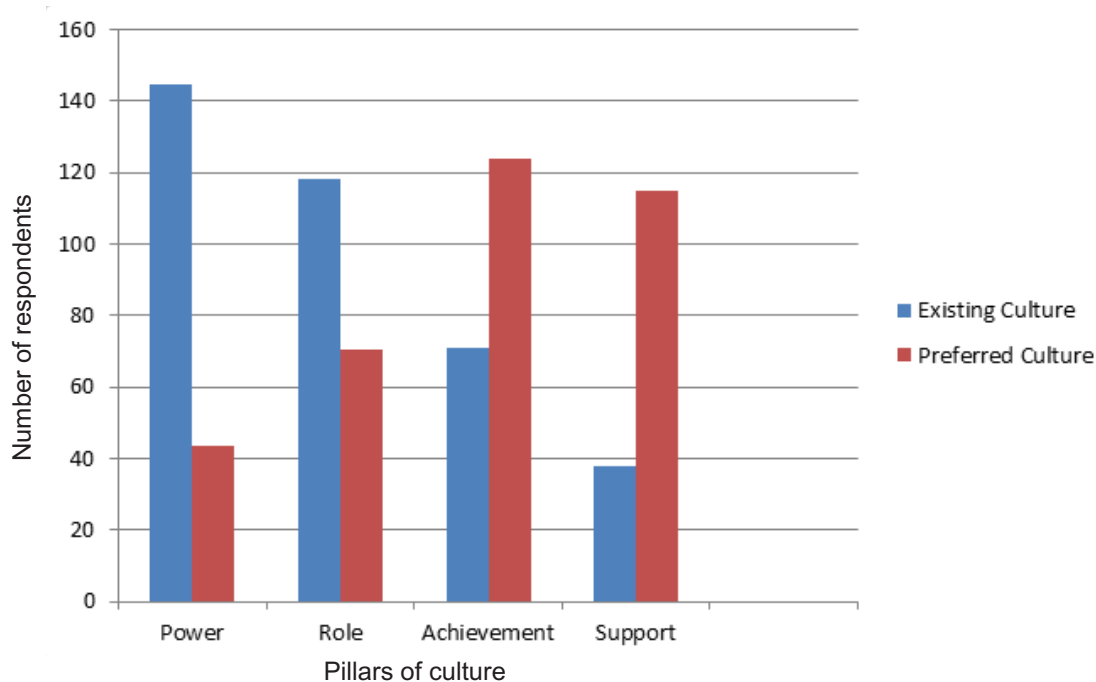
Source: *Fieldwork, 2010*

Fig. 1: Histogram on the existing and preferred culture of five divisions at GES Head Office

Table 4
The mean table for culture profile on the five divisions

Response	A(Power)	B(Role)	C (Achievement)	D (Support)
Existing	144.4	118	70.8	38
Preferred	43.4	70.6	123.8	114.8

Source: *Fieldwork, 2010*

The mean distribution table was used to generate the above histogram about the existing and preferred culture in the five divisions.

4.2 Role culture

According to the findings the role level existing in the divisions are 118, but the respondents will prefer 70.6. Roles within the organization are well spelt out and staff members who do well tend to be those who play by the rules. Members in the divisions need to learn the formal rules and procedures and abide by the regulations in the organization and stay within the boundaries of their jobs. It was found out that the relationship between staff members in the divisions are characterized by indifferences towards each other. They help each other when they are directed by their superiors to do so. According to the findings, the system is typically a bureaucratic type. Respondents will prefer the rules to be there but members should be allowed to take initiatives while performing their routine work (see Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 1).

4.3 Achievement culture

Contrary to power and role culture, the existing achievement levels in the five divisions are rather low at 70.8, and the preferred level is 123.8 This preferred level shows that staff members within these divisions are willing to take initiative to get things done to achieve the goals of the divisions and also healthily challenge their leaders or supervisors on issues necessary for the attainment of the goals of the total system. A mean preferred responds of 123.8 shows that staff members will wish that all the resources needed to help them do their job effectively and efficiently were provided for a higher achievement culture in the divisions. This finding also supports the statement of Handy (1993) that in a culture of

achievement you notice people who are interested, energetic, committed, and co-operative and results focused. They are inclined to be selfless if aligned systems, processes, structures and clear leadership exist. This attitude is shown in the preferred mean achievement level of 123.8.

4.4 Support culture

Respondents indicated that supports from members that exist in the divisions are on the low side. This condition does not encourage togetherness and team work. The bar indicates the support level at the existing level as 38 and the preferred as 114.8 (see Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 1).

Twenty five (25) respondents across the divisions who were part of those who responded to the culture questionnaire also responded to the performance questionnaire. The interview schedule was an open-ended type. The open-ended questions allowed interviewees freedom to express their thoughts on the culture that exists and the type of culture they would prefer. This interview offered more details on the culture at GES Head Office. The questions asked were:

1. How are things done here?
2. How are relationships like?
3. Are there any relationship with what you have said and the division's performance?
4. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing here, what would it be and why?

In response to question one (1), the respondents in the group said they come to work on time and do what is expected of them. Some said, "Sometimes when you need files to do your work it becomes difficult getting the files from records". Others said, "Over here, you do only what you are told even if you think there are other ways of doing the same things".

Others said, "We have to follow procedures even though some of these procedures cause delay in performing tasks when you complain some of my own colleagues will say, "When did you come".

Seven of the interviewees complained, "To work on people's salaries and other financial inputs we have to do everything manually because the computers we have are few leading to delay in the way things are done here". All twenty five (25) interviewees complained about regular power failure in the office. This is what was said by some of them: "Sometimes we come to work and cannot do anything profitable because the lights are off". Responses to question two (2): How are relationships like?

Some of the interviewees admitted they have a cordial relationship with people in their unit but people in other units look down on them so they also do not go near them. Some bemoaned, "Over here we have those who are teachers and non-teachers, and sometime of the teachers feel they are better than we the non-teachers which I think is not good". "If you are not close to people at the top when you have a problem no one cares about you".

Question three (3): Are there any relationships between what you have said and the division's performance? Some said; "In the area of relationships where others think they are more qualified than others, it becomes very difficult for us to work together and is relationship in turn affects performance level and productivity". One complained sadly, "It is always my desire to do more to achieve more but when I want to use other means of doing the work so I can finish on time I am told to follow some old procedures, and this leads to low level of performance".

Another interviewee pointed out, "When only those who are free with top managers get what they want we will also not help them when they come to us for help to do their work and this will lead to low level of performance." Some of the interviewees said if they had their own way they would change the procedure of their task performance and how they relate with each other for the organization to be able to achieve its mission for existence. These comments of the interviewees confirm the idea of Morgan (1986) that organizational culture evolves from the social practices of members of the organization and are, therefore, socially created realities that exist in the heads and minds of the organization's members as well as in the formal rules, policies, and procedures of the organizational structures. The research also agrees to the comment of some of the interviewees that if

procedures and practices are not working well for employees, there must, therefore be the need for a change for the improvement of the organization.

In relation to question four (4): If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing here, what will it be and why? Most of them talked about the attitude of some staff members towards colleagues and towards clients who come to the office for official work to be done for them. According to them some staff members have rude attitude towards teachers who come to the Head Office to get things done. One person said, "We are here because of them so I think this must be stopped to enable the organization to achieve its goals." Some also wished that teachers documents were computerized for easy retrieval. Again, others wished that the kind of relationship which exists now could be changed to a more cordial and friendly one no matter ones level of qualification or your position for better organizational performance. Twenty of the twenty-five interviewees said they will wish the bureaucratic procedures could be reduced so that unnecessary delays could be eliminated so that teachers and other stakeholders would not be complaining about their work. After the study and analysis of the results on the culture profiles of the five divisions of GES, the conclusion is clear that the existing culture does not mirror the preferred culture.

5. Performance level in the organization

5.1 The analyses were basically descriptive in nature.

Mission: On the subject of the organization's mission, 85% of the respondents agreed that Ghana Education Service Head Office has a clear mission and core values and they are understood by them. They also agreed that the mission addresses critical needs in the human market place. The rest stated that they do not know about this function. Seventy percent of the respondents disagreed with the fact that the organization periodically reviews the mission statement to assess whether the conditions it addresses still remain. The others stated that they do not know about this claim too.

Ethics and Accountability: In the area of the ongoing evaluation, peer reviews and performance reviews, 90% of respondents stated that there are evaluation procedures in place. They also agreed that there are policies governing distribution of materials to the public.However 80% of the respondents pointed out their disagreement with the statements

that the organization has processes in place to periodically assess compliance and that the organization conducts ethics audits or has ethics compliance programme.

External Environment: Seventy-five percent of respondents agreed to the fact that the organization monitors the needs of the external environment. They also agreed that GES Head Office helps to plan or solve community challenges when needed. Eighty percent said the organization is involved in expansive network of people, organizations and communities. They finally stated that GES Head Office forms alliance with other organization when appropriate. These findings confirm the truth stated in the work of Mohrman et al (1990) that an organization's performance is high when its character promotes effective exchanges with its environment and its internal-design features effectively fit together and reinforce one another. However, the rest of the respondents stated that they do not know about GES head office forming an alliance with any organization.

Strategic Planning and Management: On the issue of strategic planning and management 95% of the respondents agreed that the organization has strategies that were developed as an outcome of a strategic planning process. They also agreed that the organization has a clear strategy that guides the programmes or activities in the context of the organization's vision and mission. The same number of respondents disagreed to the fact that the organization involves functional heads of the organization in the strategic planning process.

Organizational Structure: About 85% of respondents stated that the structure of the organization supports and reflects the strategy and vision of the organization. They also stated that GES Head Office has clear lines of authority and responsibility. They continued that the organization has a supportive and knowledgeable council in place. However, they strongly disagreed that the organization has enough as well as the right kind of resources, for example, financial, staff, time and technology to achieve its goals. The others agreed to this statement.

Leadership and Management: About 90% of respondents disagreed with the fact that individuals who lead the organization create a culture that enables and motivate the organization to fulfill its mission. They also disagreed to the fact that the organization has a systematic process that promotes effective leadership across the organization. In addition to these they disagreed to the fact that the organization has a strong council that relates dynamically with the

staff and officers to provide a bridge to the larger community. This finding disagrees with Morgan (1986) that shared reality and meaning will be created or maintained only when leadership and management is symbolically consistent with some desired direction. In other words culture can be influenced by leadership and management.

Human Resources Management: 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement that the organization has a system or process to attract, reward, retain, value and develop talented staff including emerging leaders. They also stated that the organization has no formal programme for staff development. However others agreed to this fact. Sixty percent disagreed that employees are considered a valuable asset of the organization. The others also agreed to it.

Internal and External Communication: On the issue of communication, 85% of the respondents agreed with the statements that stakeholders are informed about the plans of the organization, and that the organization routinely share information from external sources with staff affected by the information. They also agreed that the organization educates its management and staff to communicate effectively.

Financial Management: fifty percent of respondents agreed that the organization is committed to the survival, growth and financial soundness of the organization. They also agreed with the fact that the organization has an ongoing capacity to attract sufficient financial resources. However, the other 50% stated that they do not know about the operations of the finance division.

Evaluation and Performance Management: eighty percent of respondents agreed to the statement that the organization's programmes, projects and activities have well defined outcomes that have real impact on society. The others disclaimed anything like that.

Information Technology: 85% of respondents agreed that the organization is involved in electronic networks. They also agreed that the organization uses information technology to enhance decision making. However, they stated that the organization is not current in its use of information technology. The research on organizational performance proves that there is an appreciable level of performance in the organization in all the eleven thematic areas assessed.

6. Feedback from respondents

All the twenty five (25) respondents agreed that a relationship exists between culture and performance. Some of the comments from the respondents were: "I believe GES Head Office can perform better if the kind of power some of our leaders wield is defused so that performance will go up and this organization will be one of the best." "I think the culture of bureaucracy is not helping in the performance of our work because something that can be done in a few minutes will have to pass through a lot of channels and by the time it is done it has taken about two weeks which is not good for the growth and performance of the organization. I believe when this is reduced we will perform better. Others stated that if they are given all the support they need, performance will increase automatically. Some of the interviewees said performance is low in some areas, because some of those who matter are not involved in decision-making, and this is a culture that will not help the organization. An interviewee stated, "The culture of pleasing people in high position leads to low performance so if people are not doing the right things others cannot talk about it."

7. Conclusion

Feedback from respondents has shown that organizational culture does make a difference with respect to long-term performance. It was also revealed that the existing culture of GES does not mirror the preferred culture. The research also revealed that there is a relationship between culture and performance in the sense that where power level is appreciably low, performance goes high through staff initiatives. Organization's leaders will have to build cultures that endure and are adaptable through multiple generations of leaders, and that preserve the core of the organizational culture as an anchor point in changing and uncertain times.

8. Recommendations

• Leadership of Ghana Education Service Head Office should make frantic efforts to change the current culture of the organization as the staff wants it for better improvement in performance.

• The staff should be trained in information technology so they can be current in the use of technology.

• There should be regular in-service training for staff members to update their knowledge on human relations.

• There should be regular assessment of performance so that improvement strategies could be put in place for staff members.

• Issues on the finances of the organization should be made known to all the members of staff.

• The vision and mission of the organization should be made known to all members of staff including in members.

• Staff members could be educated on the effects of their attitude on the improvement of the organization's performance.

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