



Why Inspiration Matters?

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Abstract: Inspiration plays an important role for personal and professional growth and development though it tends to be an overlooked concept. This research study was designed to explore people experiences with inspiration and it investigates why inspiration matters. It is a qualitative study based on the grounded theory methodology which involved telephone interviews with ten persons holding top and high level management in their organizations. Research findings revealed that participants' experience with inspiration is a worthy part of their lives, it is evoked by challenging situations, and it helps them meet their personal and business related needs. This research shades light on the inspiration role in changing or enhancing the individual characteristics and traits such as being more persistent, prudent and accountable which encourage further research in this area.

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Introduction

In today's competitive environment, we tend to focus on measuring competencies, abilities, skills and knowledge however we fail to recognize the importance of inspiration role. There are yet few research papers that we came across with that try to answer why inspiration matters?

We know that inspiration is well linked with creativity and innovation by allowing one to think of new unconventional ways (Christensen et. al., 2010). Inspiration is also known to boost a person or even groups or societies from the challenging and impossible status to the enjoyable and possible achievements. One reason that inspiration tends to be overlooked is because of its fluid and intangible nature, albeit it is an experience that we all are familiar with.

What is Inspiration?

Inspiration is about discovering your leap through dismantling the foundation of the problem as Hendrick (2009) mentions. Therefore, inspiration is about our ability to spot the upper limit of the human being within, thus enhancing his/her geniusity. Thus, as Hendrick (2009) put it, inspiration is about thriving in sustained abundance, love and creativity.

Why Inspiration?

Harding (1948) believes that inspiration plays the role for capturing and harnessing ideas. Therefore, different authors believe that inspiration is a motivational state that compels individuals to bring ideas into fruition and that such inspiration is important to the creative process (Christensen et al., 2010 ; Thrash et al., 2010).

Until recently inspiration is seen as a term limited to only prophets, righteous people and unique leaders (Carpenter, 1987). Today, the world of inspiration is spreading to all the countries, generations, genders, communities regardless of where, when, how and who limitations (Thrash, et al., 2010). The ability to inspire or get inspired is now a more frequent and consistent trend as compared to 20 years ago and it is certainly more progressive in the last few years. Inspiration is not any more about motivation for higher performance, it is more becoming as a core value for evaluating things (Hart, 2000). Inspiration is more needed today especially with the instability of social, economic and political environment, since it has the influence to building a common purpose among diverse communities (Iverson, 2011; Hart, 1998). When we inspire people we can involve them in the implementation of needed social transformation. A true inspiration gives a sense of independence and an ability to be autonomous and unique. An Inspired person means today he/she can be more self-serving, participative and self-confident (Hart, 2000).

Thrash and Elliot (2004) believes that inspiration has not been well studied in from the point of view of expectations, experiences, needs, and interaction patterns nor was studied from the point of view of organization and cultural environment. This research study would try to start to fulfil this need of understanding role of inspiration through a designed investigation of "why inspiration matters" for individuals level using a sample from the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Methodology

Method - The research methodology used to conduct this study is the one known as grounded theory. Grounded theory is a systematic research methodology in the social



sciences that involves the discovery of theory or propositions through the analysis of data. Grounded theory methodology is therefore a research method, which operates, almost in a reverse fashion from traditional social science research. Rather than beginning with a research hypothesis, the first step is data collection, through a variety of methods. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text.

Research question – Why inspiration is an important dimension for personal and professional growth and development?

Participants - Informants in the study comprised 10 persons. The pool of participants included five Bahraini men and five Bahraini women who have been involved as national consultants for the Bahrain Centre of Excellence. Those persons were appointed as consultant due to their remarkable achievements, dedication, contribution and special area of technical expertise e.g. research, statistics, marketing. Those informants were also serving as middle or top management. The selection of these persons was based on personal connection of the first researcher. We wanted to get in touch with people who had experienced inspirational moments and who could be assumed to be willing to and capable of articulating their experiences for the researchers.

In accordance with the methodological and epistemological recommendations of the grounded theory methodology, we wanted to select informants with varying level of information and experiences. The groups therefore represented the entire spectrum of potential informants, ranging from age, sex, educational background and so on. All suggested persons accepted the invitation to participate in the study.

Data Collection - The collection of data consisted of telephone interviews with each of the study participants. Telephone interviews have major benefit in them that they simply allow easy access to the informants regardless of their geographical location or business work hours. This is a very important part because most informants selected in this study operate at different prime times and they will be very difficult to get hold of during 'standard' work hours and therefore agreeing with them on date and time for call made it significantly easier to contact them. Telephone interview are also cost- and time-effective compared to other interview methods, such as direct mail, cost much more. The issue of guaranteeing response is also a highlight to choose telephone over other interview venues.

Telephone interviews are not without their disadvantages. Researchers have less control over phone interviews. Participants might be interrupted by other phone calls, get distracted by TV, mobile or internet browsing or any other similar activity. The authors want to also acknowledge that telephone interviews have the inherited shortage of limited complexity of questions because it is fairly difficult to get people to elaborate on their responses by phone. The reason is that most phone interviews must be limited to 45 or 60 minutes.

The following questions were asked as standard in all interviews:

Tell me about your own experiences with inspiration?

1. What about your experience X that inspired you?
2. What in the environment related to experience X that inspired you?
3. Give me some examples of situations you have been inspired or inspired others?
Did they result in any change?
4. What are the characteristics of individuals who inspire you?



5. What are the characteristics of environments that inspire you?

Common follow-up questions were added to these initial questions, a series of individually adapted sequential questions of the type “tell me more,” “give some examples,” “why?” and so on were used. Each interview took about an hour to conduct and recorded using the record in the smart mobile device with permission of the informant. The informants were assured that the recording would be destroyed immediately after transcription of information to protect their anonymity.

Analysis - The interviews were transcribed from the recording files and consecutively analyzed according to the constant comparative method after entry into Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The first step of the analysis was open coding. Data were examined line by line in order to identify the informants’ descriptions of thought patterns, feelings, and actions related to the themes mentioned in the interviews. The codes derived were formulated in words closely resembling those used by the participants. Later, codes were compared to verify their descriptive content and to confirm that they were grounded in the data. As a second step, the codes were sorted into categories. This was done by constant comparisons between categories; and between categories, codes, and interview protocols. The third step consisted of fitting together the categories using the constant comparative method.

Results and Discussion

The table (1) below shows the responses to the interview questions on the topic why inspiration matters.

Table (1) List of interview questions and answers

Q1. Tell me about your experiences with inspiration? Answers to this question stemmed around topics like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting personal and business related needs• Inspired by problems and the need to solve them• Travelling around and see current trends there• Attending seminars and workshops related to the business operation or personal development• Using social network platforms and channels• Through networking and meeting new people• Revising history
Q2. Give me examples of situations you have been inspired or you inspired others? Did the results in any change? Answers to this question stemmed around topics like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participating in decision making• Dealing with challenges• Reading books and stories• Being around high-spirited and motivated persons• Following a leader at work• Meeting coaches and mentors• Being part of teams either for professional or personal development



(Cont.) Table (1) List of interview questions and answers

<p>Q3. What are the characteristics of individuals who have inspired you? Answers to this question stemmed around topics like:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persisted, high perseverance • Do not give up easily • Honest • Prudent • Fair • Responsible • Accountable • Approachable • Disciplined
<p>Q4. What are the characteristics of environments that have inspired you? Answers to this question stemmed around topics like:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging environment • Hard situations

Anatomy of Inspiration

The research interviews found most of the informants have positive perspectives about themselves. They think that their experience with inspiration is a worthy part of their lives. Most of them think that their experience with inspiration is associated with meeting personal, social and/or business needs. It is usually evoked by a problem that need to be solved or as a result of observing recent trends during travelling or as a result of using social networks platforms and channels. Networking and meeting new people and attending seminars either for professional or personal development can be an inspiring opportunity. Others indicated that revising history and reading some success stories or books is highly valuable for inspiration. This research emphasis what other authors called for a better understanding of the biological basis of inspiration (Thrash et al, 2010). The body of knowledge needs more work that will illuminate the process through which inspiration is compelled to transform ideas and spirit into products and solutions that may benefit our societies.

Forms of Inspiration

Most informants found that dealing with challenges, participating in decision-making, being surrounded by high-spirited and motivated persons and working with leaders were inspiring situations. Other inspiring situations highlighted were being part of teams, meeting coaches and mentors and reading books and stories. There was consensus that challenging environment or hard situations are the main characteristic of an inspiring environment. The most common characteristics of an inspiring persons as highlighted by informants include being persistent, highly perseverant, prudent, disciplined, honest, fair, responsible, accountable, punctual and approachable. This brings us to the conclusion that inspiring persons share leaders' characteristics. Similarly inspiration is a key feature for effective leadership style where leaders need to far beyond communicating their vision to create purpose and share meaning so others get motivated and passionate about that vision.



Thrash and Elliot (2003) suggests that inspiration is delivered in various forms and that the term inspiration has many shades of meaning, and usually there are some variance in participants understanding of the concept (Hart, 1993). Best inspiration is seen to reach its heights of human motivation to the extent it awakens us to better possibilities (Steele, 1977). Inspiration thus falls squarely within the purview of psychology, and we hope that our research will serve as an impetus for further study of this important and neglected topic.

Inspiration might come from new and striking combinations of ideas. So you might be a physician or an engineer or a lawyer, yet you are also one of the most prominent story authors or history scientist, and so on. Such inspirational characteristics however depend also on our ability to build sufficient knowledge on the subject.

Most of inspired figures in our present or old history are not made by wish, but by hard focused work and sacrifice. The inspired person does not decide exactly on the process of achievement, but rather focus on the process of perfecting the delivery time after time. Many Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Al-Razi, Ibn-Rushd, Ibn-Alnafees and Ibn-Alhaitham have managed to get all of their contributions in different areas of knowledge with sustainable inspiration till today because of this holistic integrated knowledge and the spirit of perfecting their product time after time. This spirit of inspiration can be seen clearly today in leading countries products and services.

Some leading scholars, practitioners and artists in our world today have managed to bring many ideas outside the norm of subject and became associated with inspiration, due to their ability to create the integration of these ideas with what makes the difference to the world or at least to their specialty. This type of practice is called today disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2010).

Relation between Innovation and Inspiration

Inspiration has received little attention within the scientific community due to none clarity of inspiration meaning and its variety of disciplines origin such as in theology, psychology (Thrash and Elliot, 2003; Carpenter, 1987). Therefore, inspiration was rarely studied as an integrated definition that leads to innovation.

Inspiration may be conceptualized not only in terms of the characteristics of the inspired state, but also as distinct processes that compose an episode of innovative trials. Innovation and inspiration have been linked together for a long time. Therefore, today inspiration can affect the level of innovation in every discipline and hence can flourish our life and our society's unity and speed up the economic development and recovery (Christensen, et. al, 2010).

Inspiration and innovation when they meet would be a source for an insight or what is called the "aha" moment (Catmull and Wallace, 2014). Others believe that through inspiration spirit 'disruptive innovation' can be implemented where a focus on reverse thinking and giving a new way on how the world should learn (Christensen et al., 2011). Therefore, authors like Thrash and Elliot (2004) find that the process of "being inspired by" gives rise to the core characteristics of evocation and transcendence, whereas the process of "being inspired to" gives rise to the core characteristic of approach motivation.

Inspiration as a Motivator

In general the study supports that inspiration involves motivation in which the individual



strive to create an idea or do something new and creative. It is evoked without intentions as a result of interaction with people and/or the environment. Although inspiration is unconscious, through recognizing situations that tend to inspire us, we can proactively seek inspiration and create such stimulating experiences. To achieve this openness to new thought is a key pre-requisite as well as having psychological mastery, self-confidence, values and optimism are important to be inspired. It is worth indicating that inspiration may not always lead to positive effects. To achieve desired outcomes, we need to put what we have created into action rather than only getting enthusiastic about it.

Steele (1977) believes inspiration is often the motivator for questionable actions. Through this motivated people are often willing to sacrifice to discover more of their potentials. Inspiration can help us create and/or overcome challenging decisions in life (Allen, et. al, 1998). This means that inspiration raises or motivates our ability to create an environment where many people can thrive, grow, and live in peace with one another. Thus through inspiration harmony can be promoted thereby provide sustainability for future generations with ability to create communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility.

Inspiration depends on the type of stimulus or object you get inspired from. We get inspired from people, models, examples, ideas. Once inspired, we get motivated to transmit and actualize certain realization. Thrash and Elliot (2004) sees inspiration as a process of either being 'inspired by' and 'inspired to' which would lead to motivation. This research sees this clearly true to the sample taken in Bahrain. However, this research fails short to investigate whether the process of being 'inspired by' involves intrinsic value of a stimulus object, or even see how the process of 'being inspired to' involves motivation to actualize the valued qualities to a new object or individual as per (Thrash and Elliot, 2004).

Characteristics of Inspired People

This research clearly shows as per the sample chosen that inspired individuals' values making meaning to things and awakening something unique or new and usually appreciate innovation. We can learn here that inspiration is not just about creating a wholly unique idea but mainly may be about incorporating old valuable ideas into something unique. This really makes exposing to stimulating experiences and ideas a learning opportunity that can help people progress toward excellence. Inspiration as shown from the sample has positive impacts upon individuals as it can promote well-being, psychological health, happiness and satisfaction. It can strengthen relationships and empower people.

The research shades a possibility that our ability to inspire others depends a lot on the level of influence we can reach; i.e. our ability to develop a vision that is both clear and highly appealing for us or to others (Zarda, 2012). It is found that inspired people selected for this sample show confidence and optimism with more confidence by recognizing small accomplishments toward their goals and would have dramatic actions to symbolize key organizational values or might even lead by example, which supports the work of Hart (1998). Actually, Hart (2000) latter came to believe, after conducting a research for many years, that inspired people have characteristics as drive, honesty and integrity, self-motivation, self-confidence, Cognitive ability/intelligence, Knowledge of the business, emotional intelligence and flexibility, which are around the same characteristics and/or traits seen in this study. Therefore, it can be said that an inspired person differs usually from others by their ability to discover.



Inspiration nonetheless endures people with more explained innovation and would be willing to give much effort to the extent required to produce innovative work (Catmull and Wallace, 2014).

When you know you are inspired?

The sample shows that people know when they are being inspired. The participants showed an overwhelming clear sense of self-satisfaction when they talk about inspiration. Sample shows Inspiration is about discovering what you are most love doing and spend more and more time doing it. So you know you are inspired when you start to enjoy the success and/or the good feeling that this doing creates so that to bring you more towards life satisfaction (Andrews and Withey, 1976). Brown and Pabon (2014) indicated that what we sensed in the sample of Bahrain that people feel more inspired when they have better ability to learn through seeing with the eyes of the heart and not only the eyes of your mind.

The individuals of the research sample expressed their knowledge in being inspired explicitly through their sensitive feeling and high consciousness with coincide with Harts (1998 and 2000). This research confirms previous work which showed that inspiration status is recognized within us when we reach self-actualization, self-esteem and high belongingness (Lockwood and Kunda, 1999).

Conclusions

To conclude, inspiration matters since it fulfills an important aspect of our life essentials be it our personal needs and/or professional growth and development. Inspiration as shown from the interviews feedback has a positive impact on our psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Nevertheless, inspiration has not been well-studied in terms of people needs and experiences and its potential impacts on individuals and organizations.

As a recommendation, getting inspired and inspiring others are important, therefore we need to proactively seek and encourage inspirational experiences for both personal and organizational purposes. Exposure to stimulating experiences such as networking, observing recent trends around us, involving in decision-making and solving problems and being around high-spirited persons represent inspirational opportunities that enhance our learning and ability to innovate. These inspirational experiences can motivate people and help our societies integrate newly generated ideas into actions thus producing desired outcomes while enhancing our communities' readiness towards change.



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