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Effective University Management: Issues for Academics

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Abstract

The significant of efficient and effective management for fruitful and productive university system is stressed here. The university system is considered here in a Sri Lankan context. It is sure that university system has a center stage role in providing a productive labour force to the labour market in the country.to achieve its goal or mission it must have an appreciable and clear vision. In steering towards this mission with a better vision, leadership in the universities ought to be well equipped.This article stresses the importance of university authority and academies working together through managerial roles and sharing a strategy for an effective management process. Further an attempt is made to point out self-management, understanding individual behavior, assertiveness, delegation, empowerment and good relationship as aspects that could help to harness an effective university management process to enhance and strengthen productivity.

Key words: Management, Leadership, Subordinates, Delegation, Empowerment.

Introduction

In the face of dynamic macro environment and fierce resource scarcity. It is an ambition of every organization and a concern of every person within that organization, to perform well for the purpose of achieving the desired goals. This is true because the survival and sustained growth and development of any organization severely depend upon on the achievement of its goal =s and mission. Whatever the case, to be fruitful in reaching its mission, the achievement of productivity through attractive leadership and the effective management of personnel, together with their commitment to and collaboration with the organization is an essential pre-requisite. Management is a foundation stone for organizational well-being and is considered with preparation for the carrying out of organizational processes and the execution of work. Mullins (1996).

It is therefore perceptible that in any organization, including universities, managers are principle resources in achieving these objectives, goals and mission. No job is most vital to our society than that of the manager. It is the manager who determines whether our institution serve us well or whether they squander our talents and resource', Mintzberg (1975) pg,61.From this point of view it can be said that to bring an optimistic result in the achievement of the objectives, goals or mission of the organization, the leadership and management style adopted in any given organization ought to be efficient and effective. Although managers are responsible for organizing, controlling and maintaining a healthy work climate for their personal, subordinates also have a responsibility and accountability to help facilitate a productive management process.

This article stresses the significance of efficient and effective management with special reference to the university system. It is expected to highlight certain aspects that can be applied by the universities to develop effective management process.

Significance of effective management in an organization

Management is a process of dealing with and through other to achieve organizational goals in an efficient manner. To this definition the manager's role id defined as planning, organizing, leading and controlling. A manager has three major roles: (i) interpersonal role, (ii) informal

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role and (iii) decisional role. Under the interpersonal role he would act as a figurehead and spokesman. In playing the decisional role he becomes an entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. Mintzberg (1973).

All these role can be applied within the university system and thus option them as strong pillars of the universities. However, it is the university managers their leadership and effectiveness that bring a significant impact to the university achievement. The style adopted by the manager or leader is crucial of his/her individual and organizational effectiveness and the quality of leadership is one characteristics that distinguishes the successful organization from that is performing poorly, Kakabase *et.al*. (1988). The most crucial factor leading to a successful organization is the effective management of the human resources, Goulding (1996). Every failure is a failure of a manager. The vision, dedication and integrity of managers determine whether there is management, Drucher (1079). Management style leads members of an organization to behave with and build a particular attitude towards their job and their organization. This attitude may bring a positive or negative effect to the organization's performance. The management style can also influence the organization's image. At this point we can consider the way the universities are perceived by their stakeholders.

Leadership styles and universities

Here, the intention is not to give a detailed analysis of leadership and management styles. There are different alternative forms of managerial leadership and they all bear certain strengths and weaknesses. However, studied indicate that democratic styles of leadership are likely to bring effective performance for an organization in relation to authoritative or *laissez faire* styles. To Mullins (1996) a study made by likert found that an authoritative, job-oriented style of management could result in high productive in the short-run due to compliance based on fear. Whereas as long run improvement in productivity and labour turnover are more likely to result from a democratic, employee-centred style.

Fiedler's (1997) studies show that when the situation is favourable or not so in terms of leader- employee relations, task structure and position, then a task-centred approach of leadership is most productive. In fact, this can also be justified as at different stages and climate some of the non-democratic approaches are considered to be better. People have different cultures and values. Thus, certain people can best be managed by one specific approach and not another. Hence it is rather difficult to stat exactly what approach is more convenient.

In universities, as in any other organizations, the leadership approach practiced by the authorities may hinder or enhance performance, quality and productivity. Some managers, their personality traits and temperaments, may become too harsh, loose, lenient or otherwise. This nature of behavior affects the performance of universities in one way or another. Some bosses with this trait tend to be lenient to the extent of failing to assert their authority and legitimate powers. This result in a loose and unaccountable style that seems to have been adopted mostly by academics for the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them. As such, higher performance cannot be expected from them in this type of situation. This is referred to as a *laissez-faire* management style. Laissez-faire leaders, according to Cooper *et.al*. (1993) are energetic, collective and ent are energetic, collective and enthusiastic and provide substantial verbal help to initiate subordinates. In the case of interpersonal and human relation skills they are better. Their weakness is that they are not committed to management

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and their employees tend to be left to run themselves. As a consequence of this, problems such as workers' responsibilities and neglecting routine tasks emerge unexpectedly. It is in this type of situation in universities that we find jobs such as teaching and conducting research, however, trying to improve the quality of education, participating in meetings and giving innovative ideas to improve courses, are not given due attention. Additional responsibilities for handling departments and accepting higher-ranking positions offered to them are not seen as being of great importance. As a result, *laissez-faire* leaders use very few or no sanctions and avoid reprimanding their employees (Cooper *et.al*.,1993).

For this reason, lazy and inefficient staff members continue to be remiss and adopt behaviours that result in poor productivity and the hindrance of the entire efficiency of the university.

In this regards, one may ask what can be done for the purpose of enforcing work discipline among the academics as a measure of raising work out put. Should university authorities become authoritarian or disciplinarians? Should they institute close supervision? The answer is that there is no one best way of managing personnel. As much as possible the good bosses of universities should be democratic, but without losing or surrendering their officers such as registrar, Bursar and other related non-academic ranks and their controlling powers. Senior appointment are made from academic staff. We know that the life of the university is students. The next strong component is academic staff because they are the only personnel who directly serve the students. Therefore, the respective authority should stimulate and motivate the academics that cater directly to achieve the mission of the university. Accordingly, the authority within the university system, in such the same way as management in other organizations, has the responsibility of providing productive leadership. This can be achieved through improved communication, feedback, guidance, performance appraisal and supervision and staff to develop their full potential. For improved productivity, a manager has the responsibility of providing a vision, delivered through a mission and set of goals and objectives that give the right orientation and direction for employees to follow. To achieve this, the university authority should overcome the paradox of how to treat its subordinates and, at the same time, balance three sets of opposing interests: (i) treating employees fairly (ii) holding employees accountable and (iii) maintain control.

Academic's participation in university management

The management style practiced by the authority of universities and their behavioral pattern have and direct effect on academic staff in terms of their well-being, performance level, human relations and the general image of the university. If the manager is that centre stage for providing useful leadership, academics have their interests to share the responsibility too. In practice, this may sound difficult and complex, particularly in some universities where traditional 'top down 'leadership common. Academics can affect roles of the leader by concentrating on a number of issues as follows:

Self –management

Different people have different talents and skills that they would like to display to their management. Eventually they expect to attain self-satisfaction. Some have responsibility for managing themselves together with the university staff. If these people are empowered with the necessary skills they themselves can become more accountable to the respective authority. Within this climate of delegated responsibility their participation towards the achievement of the university's mission can be strengthened. University academics at all

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levels have an obligation and an accountability to strive for a more efficient and effective organization. Universities are expected to provide a knowledgeable, trained, quality labour force to the labour market in the country. This can be made possible only if one manager oneself accordingly through effective management and through being committed and accountable. Habits such as absenteeism or laxity in attending lectures have no place within the university system and only strive to present a poor and pessimistic image among university clients and other stakeholders.

In the Sri Lanka context, it is true that certain factors such as poor salary, lack of incentives such as scholarships and attitudes of management have caused poor work motivation and, consequently, poor performance and productivity. The university authorities should consider changing their working habits by promoting a 'willingness to work' ethos more efficiently and effectively.

Worker behavior

Whoever the boss, whatever the organization, it should be noted that employees are not slaves. They are human being who have self-respects. The understanding of a person's bahaviour is an important aspects for both leaders and subordinates. To develop a healthy working relationship, it is important for managers to understand the bahavioural determinants and value systems within the organization. As there is no one set of fixed parameters to call upon, variable components such as beliefs, values, individual goals and skills and the way each of them interact become increasingly important. To understand how these effect a persons likes, dislikes, working style and total personality, managers have almost to become a psychoanalyst. However, exploration of such personal issues should be attempted, Gabaro and Kotter (1987). Employee can use this knowledge to work well with their bosses and help him or her to become a better executive. In managing the organization, an appreciation of workers, understanding of their own situation and needs is required. Bosses should also understand the individual's needs and wants before directing them to work. University academics are not factory workers. They are intellectual with rare talents and calibrate in different fields. Thus, university authorities should be flexible on obtaining their services. Instead of traditional bureaucratic leadership style it is better to follow a contingency approach on managing universities. Furthermore, to bring a good and sustainable working relationship, subordinates should also critically evaluate and understand themselves as individuals and try to establish their weaknesses. It is wrong to think of theboss as the sole cause of poor work relationship and poor performance. Subordinates should know their strength and weakness as well as their personal working style and other general behaviour that result in adverse performance in their university.

Delegation, empowerment and good relationships

These are some of the important managerial dimensions that influence quality and productivity. Subordinates should not be excluded or divorced from the aggregate management process. Further, it is not suitable to think subordinates should accept and obey without raising questions regarding the decisions made by top executives. The reason behind this is that if workers are not allowed to participate in the managerial decision making process, their morale becomes poor and it can lead to lower performance and may also bring about other pessimistic behaviours that my generate more problems within the organization. To eliminate this issue, university authority has to learn to accept the culture of sharing managerial roles with their non-academics and academics specially. Bosses of the universities should delegate authority and responsibility not only to the non-academic officers, sectional

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heads and respective deans but also to the senior academics, enabling them to deal in their given scope and span of control. It can be done through consultation and involvement of academics at senior levels in decisions that affect them as members of the university. Some may say that is implemented through the board f studies and other respective meetings. But most probably we find that some are suffering from not having the place for their voices in such meetings.

The results of participate decision making are higher quality decisions, greater acceptance and greater identification with the organization. The universities are likely to harness its staffing resources effectively if there is more participation with management. Empowerment and delegation should not be seen as a form of undermining the authority or marginalising the powers vested in the university management in decision making. Delegation and empowerment can be regarded as a way of motivating and bringing togetherness to organisations. To achieve this, there should be trust and delegating responsibility is another related way. However, this trust has to be seen as being genuine, Line (1996).

A feasible delegation is one that provides responsibility, not one that merely assigns jobs. Whatever the care, it should be noted that empowerment provided to employees should not be abused by irresponsibility. Employees should obtain delegation to be an acceptance for more responsibility and accountability. It is very important to stress that in any organization, productivity can be achieved best when there is genuine better co-operation amongst staff. University authority can grow better and conducive task relationships in its university only if it treats its employees fairly, regardless of their position or rank. For the purpose of facilitating better co-operation, Lebedun (1996) has pointed out certain important dimensions including:

clearly communicating vision, giving feedback positive to negative, listening to an opposing position and then stating your opinion, use of non-blaming words, treating people s individuals

and talking about people the same way when they are absent as you would if they were present. Also, for maintaining better co-operation, university administration should recognise and respect its employees' authority; authority derived from their positions, their knowledge and any other qualities, talents or skills that and individual may have.

Conclusion

Effective management is a very important value for a successful and productive organization, universities included. University authorities, by virtue of their ranks, are principal and central figures in exerting an effective management process and quality circles for its university. For the purpose of becoming successful in this, managerial styles of universities should be conducive to allowing the achievements of their universities' objectives, goal and mission. The management style adopted should be democratic yet take account of the type of culture, type of behaviour and the task orientation of the people employed in the universities. Also, university authority should provide clear vision and direction for what it wants its university to be and what subordinates should follow. Ultimately, better supervision of work and people is crucial for an effective university both in terms of output and productivity. However, it is significant to note that, whatever management style university authority adopts, without co-operation between authorities and subordinates the aggregate management process and efforts to bring productivity will prove a failure. University authority through delegation and empowerment should allow and accommodate its academics in the management process. It should also accept and stimulate different points of view from its academic staff. Both

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authority and subordinates should use assertive behaviour as a tool for creating mutual understanding and fulfilling its objectives, goals and mission.

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