Effectiveness of Management Theories in Learning Institutions in Kenya

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Abstract

It has become pressing nowadays to adopt management styles that achieve or maintain competitiveness in Kenya. In order to achieve competence, organizations and individuals need creative leadership as well as active learning. Learning institutions have mostly been run with uncertainty due to lack of a standard and universal method of management. The present situation has arisen due to a number of factors, including incompetent leaders and managers, increased interests by shareholders, technological innovations and political initiatives. Schools in Kenya have been growing at a higher rate. The government has awarded charters to more than ten universities in the last ten years. Schools have also been upgraded while the emphasis on contract service has increased more than before. All change is accompanied by uncertainty, but change can also be instrumental in raising important questions. One essential question currently being asked is: can there be one universal management style in learning institutions? Another equally important question being raised is: how will performance-based work impact on management of schools.

Keywords: Management, Leadership, Effectiveness, Schools, Education

1. Introduction

The theory of management has grown over the past one-hundred years evolving from the time and motion studies of engineers to contributions from social scientists, the Hawthorne studies and a behavioral approach to more quantitative approaches that look for the "best" or optimum functioning of an organization or "total quality management (TQM)" (Gabor 1990).

The development of principles and concepts of management encouraged the formalization of schools of business during the Twentieth Century.

The contribution of organizational culture theory and the impact of environmental constraints is an important part of the growth of management theory over the past fifty years (Kotter 1992, Schien 1985). The impact of changes in organizational culture is so well illustrated in the Federal arena during the tenure of James Lee Witt. He led a charge to change FEMA's culture to one of responsive service delivery and proactive emergency response. The changing environment and the impact of the external environment on organizations is fundamental to business as well as government operations and so important in preparedness and mitigation of hazards / disaster (Tapscott 1998).

Management theory has embraced as a part of the planning process the preparation of contingency plans and crisis management to address threats and hazards (Pearson 1998). The development of a crisis audit including "What if" questions and contingency plans when things go wrong are critical elements of business planning and analysis (Roberts 2001). The management literature reflects an appreciation for the need for business to grow more aware of the need to provide some level of protection against an unplanned disaster (Myers1999). Management needs to know how to structure strategic planning to include plans to minimize disruptions in operations in times of crisis and disasters. The Harvard Business Review published a crisis management series on the best articles relating to disasters and business

interruption (2000). Laye's assessment of how to keep business going when catastrophe strikes (2002) is a reflection of the attention that hazards and disasters have had on the literature since 2001.

2. Theories of management

The Scientific Management Theory was developed by Frederick Taylor. The theory espoused careful specification and measurement of all organizational tasks. Tasks were standardized as much as possible. Workers were rewarded and punished. This management approach appeared to work well for organizations with assembly lines and other mechanistic activities. The Bureaucratic Management Theory developed by Max Weber and it embellished the scientific management theory. Weber focused on dividing organizations into hierarchies, establishing strong lines of authority and control. He suggested organizations develop comprehensive and detailed standard operating procedures for all routinized tasks (Shilote, 2001).

The Human Relations Movement developed in 1930 and which is widely recognized today reacted to the rather dehumanizing effects of these theories. More attention was given to individuals and their unique capabilities in the organization. A major belief included that the organization would prosper if its workers prospered as well. Human Resource departments were added to organizations. The behavioral sciences played a strong role in helping to understand the needs of workers and how the needs of the organization and its workers could be better aligned. Various new theories were spawned, many based on the behavioral sciences (Sackney & Mitchell, 2001).

3. Traits of Progressive Management Development Programs

With the Human Relations movement, training programs recognized the need to cultivate supervisory skills, e.g., delegating, career development, motivating, coaching, mentoring, etc. Progressive management schools now have students review a wide body of management topics and learn those topics by applying that knowledge in the workplace and reflecting on that application. Learning activities incorporate learners' real-world activities in the workplaces or their lives. Assignments include reflection and analysis on real-world experience. Learning is enhanced through continuing dialogue and feedback among learners. Very good schools manage to include forms of self-development, too, recognizing that the basis for effective management is effective self-management.

Effective management development programs help students (learners) take a system's view of their organizations, including review of how major functions affect each other. Assignments include recognizing and addressing effects of one's actions on their entire organization.

4. Contemporary Theories of Management

Contemporary Theories of Management include the contingency theory, the systems theory and the chaos theory. Contingency Theory asserts that when managers make a decision, they must take into account all aspects of the current situation and act on those aspects that are key to the situation at hand. Basically, it's the approach that assumes management depends on several factors. For example, the continuing effort to identify the best leadership or management style might now conclude that the best style depends on the situation. If one is leading troops in the Persian Gulf, an autocratic style is probably best (of course, many might argue here, too). If one is leading a school or university, a more participative and facilitative leadership style is probably best.

Systems Theory has had a significant effect on management science and understanding organizations. A system relies on cohesion of constituent parts such that if one part of the system is removed, the nature of the system is changed as well. A system can be looked at as having inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. Systems share feedback among each of these four aspects of the systems. In a learning institution, inputs would include resources such as raw materials, money, technologies and people. These inputs go through a process where they're planned, organized, motivated and controlled, ultimately to meet the organizational needs. Outcomes would be educational services to students, enhanced quality of life or productivity for students and cooperative environment for researchers. Feedback would be performance levels, information from human resources carrying out the process, students, etc. Feedback also comes from the larger environment of the organization, e.g., influences from society, economics, and technologies. This overall system framework applies to any system, including subsystems (departments, programs, etc.) in the overall organization. Systems theory may seem quite basic. Yet, decades of management training and practices in the workplace have not followed this theory. Only recently, with tremendous changes facing organizations and how they operate, have educators and managers come to face this new way of looking at things. This interpretation has brought about a significant change

(or paradigm shift) in the way management studies and approaches organizations. The effect of systems theory in management is that writers, educators, consultants, etc. are helping managers to look at the organization from a broader perspective. Systems theory has brought a new perspective for educationists and administrators to interpret patterns and events in the learning institutions.

Chaos Theory posits that the world is chaotic and random. For decades, managers have acted on the basis that organizational events can always be controlled. A new chaos theory, recognizes that events indeed are rarely controlled. Many chaos theorists (as do systems theorists) refer to biological systems when explaining their theory. They suggest that systems naturally go to more complexity, and as they do so, these systems become more volatile (or susceptible to cataclysmic events) and must expend more energy to maintain that complexity. As they expend more energy, they seek more structure to maintain stability. This trend continues until the system splits, combines with another complex system or falls apart entirely (Sebakwane, 1997).

5. Organizational Effectiveness

Literature suggests that the concept of organizational effectiveness has been very problematic due to its subjective and abstract nature. In as much individuals and groups such as owners, employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, consumer groups, governments, economists, business consultants, media, and academics often raise different perspectives in assessing organizational effectiveness according to their particular needs. These diversified perspectives create a lot of trouble for assessor to whom viewpoint should be taken for evaluating effectiveness of an organization. Due to these reasons organizational effectiveness has proven difficult, some even say impossible to define.

6. Decision Making Approaches and Organizational Effectiveness

Decision processes in organizations are designed in such a way that they become "internally focused patterns that relate to the information gathering, analysis, and choice activities of managers inside the enterprise" Southworth (2002). Further, they proposed that since resource allocation decisions have paramount importance in organizations, therefore, they likely to reflect dominant organizational decision processes. Additionally, in organizations, literature suggests six different styles of decision making of resource allocation. For instance, collegial or participative which urges on consensus building; rational characterized by supporting data; bureaucratic values structured administrative patterns; political concentrating by conflicting self-interest and power; organized anarchy grounded on serendipity, and autocratic dependent upon the preference of a single, powerful individual. However, working on these six styles of decision making by factor analytical procedure into two broad categories as rational/collegial and autocratic/political (Ogulla, 2003).

The national/collegial style of decision making of resource allocation are based on "group discussion and consensus", directed by the use of "a standard set of procedures" and criteria reflecting "what objectively seems best for this institution overall" (Southworth (2002). In contrast, the autocratic/political style of decision making of resource allocation predominated by one individual at a particular organization, decisions are made in a political manner "based on the relative power of those involved" and without any "particular pattern" characterizing the criteria used. Although, most of organizations probably have one or all of these processes operating simultaneously as multiple decisions are made yet it is evident from the research that specific processes tend to dominate in most organizations to the extent that these organizations develop a distinctive decision-process orientation. It is this overall, dominant organizational style to decision making of resource allocation that is investigated in this study in terms of its influence to organizational effectiveness.

The relationship between styles of decision making approaches and organizational effectiveness is not clear enough, since various previous studies showed mixed results. For example, some researchers found that centralized or autocratic decision making approaches were inversely related to organizational effectiveness revealed a positive relationship between non-participative decision making approaches in large industrial organizations when these were facing turbulent environments. Moreover, Sergiovanni (1984) found in their study that political decision processes hindered organizational effectiveness, while Southworth (2002) contended that political decision making approaches boosted performance. However, there is general agreement presents in theory that participative decision making approaches are associated with enhanced organizational effectiveness in the long run

7. Methodology

This study concentrates on schools and a few higher education institutions. Moreover, perceptual data was collected from the full-time school principals, administrators and senior faculty members in colleges. The reason to choose these people

is grounded on the fact that they are core constituencies and play an active role in policy, directions, performance and decision making activities. Additionally, same kinds of individuals were selected in previous. A representative sample size (200) was determined through disproportionate stratified random sampling, a technique that guaranteed presentation of schools and colleges, both public and private. Subsequently, sample of subjects from each stratum was drawn using simple random sampling procedure.

8. Findings

Of the 200 respondents, 39% were teachers, 15% were head teachers, 15% were deputy head teachers, 23% were head of departments and 8% were members of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). From the study, there was no clear management style in any of the schools. Each school incorporated different management styles. 98% of the respondents had had experience in the management of the educational institution with 44% having served in a management position for more than 10 years, 33% having served between 6 and 10 years, and 23% having served for a period of less than 5 years.

Majority of respondents agreed that students, teachers and non-teaching staff were involved in decision making process. Student representatives were allowed in almost all schools to represent their interests. With regard to the statement 'My school has arrested dropout rates and improved completion rate', 96% strongly agreed, 3% agreed while 1% disagreed. A performance contracts strategy was lacking in all schools although most there were well laid out policies, goals and objectives and methods of achieving them; they were largely communicated to teachers, learners and parents.

Most teachers used appropriate teaching/learning resources. While more than 70% of schools organized social interaction platforms, activities and meetings. Most schools had established measures to enable them tap the necessary potential from learners, teachers, parents and non-teaching staff. Majority of school has a strong financial and social support from neighboring community. Majority of schools also had mechanisms in place to evaluate whether the school was achieving its objectives.

More than 70% of schools used schemes of work and lesson plans that had well defined and carefully stated objectives which were associated with our performance improvements.

In about half of the schools, activities and meeting were not carefully organized. Teachers and non-teaching staff were offered incentives in about 70% of the schools. In about 60% of schools, teachers and non-teaching staff were offered promotional and training opportunities or encouraged to pursue them. There was delegation of work in all schools.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

From the findings, it is evident that most schools had a human relational style in decision making and characteristics of the scientific of management in terms of delegation of tasks, goals and methods of achieving them. Most schools allowed students representatives, teachers and non-teaching staff to participate in learning and decision making process.
There was strong correlation between

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