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Leadership and Its Role in Developing a Positive Service Quality Culture in Organizations

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Abstract:
This research explored the role leadership has on positive service quality culture implementation. Positive service quality is explained as being a concept explaining consistent and continuous delivery of good quality service to customers leading to customer satisfaction. On the other hand, organizational culture is considered to be the beliefs and common practices binding organizational members.
The study utilized a desk top approach and reviewed a series of articles on leadership, service quality and organization culture. It was established that leaders are at the core of cultural change or implementation. If positive service quality is to be consistently delivered, then a culture of positive service quality must be implemented, and leaders need to oversee this with commitment and right leadership approaches. The findings established that there is need for leaders to show commitment through resource allocation towards positive service quality attainment and to fully participate in the service quality cultural shift. Additionally, the study established that using the right leadership approach will ensure this is a success and finally leaders ensuring their employees are rightly equipped for this change is key for this shift to be successful.

Keywords: Leadership, service quality, organization culture

1. Introduction

The effective running of an organization cannot be talked about without the active involvement of its leaders. Leadership plays a key role in ensuring that an organization is fully functional and meeting its obligations to its clients and society. The key issue then, is to understand what exactly a leader ought to do in ensuring that the entire organization adopts the desired qualities in delivering high standards of quality service to its clients. According to Hossan (2012), good and consistent quality service fosters customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and attracts profit to the organization.

If there must be continuous and consistent quality service delivery, positive service quality must be developed as a culture for the organization. Organization culture is explained by Linstead (2001), as being the internal beliefs or way of doing things within an organization and such is what makes it distinctive from other organizations. On the other hand, positive service quality maybe be explained as being service delivery which always strives to meet customer needs and deliver customer satisfaction through adherence to customer requirements. Therefore, if positive service quality is embraced as a cultural norm, then consistent and continuous positive service quality delivery is guaranteed to the customers. Leadership is the heart of cultural change or adoption in an organization. Therefore, understanding the exact role of leaders in positive service quality delivery is paramount to ensuring there is consistent and continuous delivery of good quality service.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership and Leadership Types

In today's world, doing business has become so competitive that successful organizations owe much of the success to the strategic vision of their teams at the helm. It is, therefore, prudent to state that leadership is at the core of organizational success or failure. Pahi *et al* (2020) has referred to Limbare (2012) who regarded leadership as being an art of inspiring followers towards the attainment of set goals. The role of a leader or leadership is deemed to be that of setting a strategic direction and influencing others to work towards it with the aim to achieve outlined objectives (Ahmed and Umrani, 2019). In most organizations the team at the helm sets the direction and objectives aimed at beating the competition or achieving certain market goals. Afterwards, the focus is on ensuring that this vision is bought by the entire organization especially employees on the functional levels. The success of this vision is mainly dependent on how much influence the team gets from its leadership to propel them into successful execution. According to Gandolfi and Stone (2018), ineffective leadership has the potential to affect communities, people and organizations in ways that may even be devastating. This stresses the significance of leadership in an organization.

2.2. Leadership Types

Leadership exists in various forms and this signifies different approaches to influencing subordinates and setting the strategic goals. Below are the different forms of leadership highlighted by Yusra (2016).

2.2.1. Basic Leadership Styles

- Autocratic leadership – According to Val and Kemp (2012), this leadership style is characterized with the leader being the sole decision-making authority for the group or team. This style is mostly common in the military as well as in dictatorial regimes.
- Democratic leadership – Sharma and Singh (2013) have explained this style as being one that encourages decision-making from subordinates, offer guidance and participates in group activities. This approach decentralizes power and encourages employee participation in decision making. Val and Kemp have explained this type as being relaxed but in control type of leadership.
- Laissez- Faire - This approach leaves subordinates to do things on their own without too much guidance or interference from the leader.

2.2.2. Other Leadership Approaches or Styles

- Bureaucratic leadership – This leadership style is more focused on methodology and guidelines. Kaleem *et al* (2013) has mentioned that this approach is more effective with teams that perform routine tasks and ineffective in groups and associations.
- Paternalistic leadership – James *et al* (1996) has explained this leadership approach as involving the leader offering protection and care to their subordinates and in return receiving employee loyalty. Pellegrini and Scandura (2007) have also stated that leaders using this style rely on loyalty and unfailing obedience of their followers. Additionally, these leaders are said to exchange their professional and personal guidance with one another (Gelfand *et al*, 2007).
- Charismatic leadership – This style gives high inspiration and motivation to the followers and this serves as the driving force towards achieving group objectives.
- Transactional and Transformational leadership – Kabeyi (2018) has explained transactional leadership as being one that utilizes reward and punishment to enforce compliance from subordinates. Rewards utilized may be in form of promotion, good performance review assessments or indeed monetary reward, etc. On the other hand, transformational leadership involves a leader being able to stimulate and inspire subordinates to attain extra ordinary things or outcomes. This approach is more focused on developmental needs for followers and pays attention to their concerns and can propel them to work extra hard to attain group goals (Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013).
- Situational leadership – this approach entails a leader being able to change their leadership style depending on the situation at hand or the environment of operation.
- Coaching leadership – This style involves the leader having to train and groom subordinates in executing their tasks.
- Participative leadership – In this approach, there is a joint responsibility for decision making between superiors and subordinates (Sagnak, 2016). This co-involvement of employees in decision making serves as a motivation to employees to exhibit commitment.

In addition to the leadership approaches discussed above, other styles encountered in literature include servant leadership, cross-cultural /diverse leadership, entrepreneurship leadership, strategic, facilitative and visionary leadership (Kaleem, 2016).

2.3. Service Quality

The concept of service quality focuses on analyzing how well a service was delivered, and if it met customer expectations. According to Wilson *et al* (2008), expectations by customers are simply their beliefs about the service received and that serves as a standard to gauge service quality. In other words, customers express feelings regarding the levels of satisfaction received from a service delivered. Arokiasamy and Abdullah (2013) explained that service quality serves as a determinant of customer satisfaction and is gauged from services organizations provide.

Hermon and Nitecki (2001) has explained service quality as falling in four categories which include Excellence, Value, Conformance to specification and Meeting/exceeding customer expectations. The four categories are discussed in belief below:

- Conformance to specifications – Customers expect the service or product to be certain prescribed specifications; if these specifications are met, then good or positive service quality would have been delivered.
- Value– If the service delivered makes the customer appreciate and consider it as meeting the value for the money spent, then good service quality would have been delivered.
- Excellence – High quality service or exceptional service delivered rendering the customer satisfied is deemed good service quality.
- Meeting and Exceeding customer expectations – Customers expect services that consistently meet their expectations and even exceeding them.

Service quality as earlier alluded to is a determinant for customer satisfaction and consistency in delivering good or positive service quality would promote customer loyalty. Attainment of high levels of service is dependent on employee

loyalty, commitment and satisfaction (Loveman, 1998). It is, therefore, imperative that employees are trained in interpersonal skills and their behavior managed to ensure it is customer oriented (Schneider and Bowen, 1985; 1993).

2.4. Organization Culture

Organization culture covers the belief and norms of doing things within an organization. Dahlgaard (2015) has explained organization culture as being the common beliefs, values, attitudes and expectations within an organization. Additionally, it has been referred to as being a system of values possessed by the people, management and other related parties of an organization.

The nature of culture developed within an organization can either lead to success or failure in performance. According to Gillespie *et al* (2007), a strong organizational culture is vital in enhancing employee performance and it consequently results in achievement of organizational goals.

3. Methodology/Research Approach

This paper utilized a desk top research approach by reviewing secondary data to establish the role leadership plays in fostering positive service quality culture. The research involved a broad review of articles, books and other publications on the key concepts of the study, which are leadership, service quality and organization culture. Findings were established to aid the conclusion on the role leaders ought to play in establishing a positive service quality as a culture.

4. Discussion

4.1. Leadership Role in Service Quality Culture Implementation

Leadership is vital to the success of every organization. For organizations to successfully implement a cultural shift, leaders need to be committed to it and ensure they utilize the right approaches to get the entire organization onboard. Committed leadership is a key factor in establishing a successful quality culture (Dahlgaard, 2015). Schein (2004) has mentioned that leadership and culture are intertwined due to the role played by leaders in creating and managing culture. Therefore, leadership is imperative to the successful implementation and delivery of positive service quality. It is because leaders ought to adopt approaches that consistently show commitment to delivering positive service quality. According to Gandolfi and Stone, the style of leadership used by a leader may affect the various parties profoundly. Chaleff (2009) has supported this perspective by stating that organizational success greatly relies on both leadership and followership efforts though a leader has more influence to break or make the organization. For this reason, leaders should adopt approaches that greatly support the creation of an organization. In this case, leadership styles to be adopted need to compliment the setting up of a positive service quality culture. Xenikou (2022) refers to Schein (2010), and Trice and Beyer (1993), who, in both cases, have cited leaders as being key agents in the process of cultural management. The emphasis is on leaders to take the lead whilst utilizing the right leadership approaches or styles to motivate and compel subordinates into adopting the desired cultural shift. As earlier mentioned, adopting positive service quality as a culture ensures that there is consistent and continuous delivery of good services, and this enhances the strategic position of an organization. Ramseook *et al* (2010) mentions that continuous delivery of quality service stands as an important strategic approach to success in current market conditions. This confirms the need to have positive service quality as an organizational cultural norm. Based on the discussion above, the exact role expected of leaders maybe be classified as below:

- Leadership Commitment – Commitment to service quality cultural change is expected of leaders by ensuring the organization adopts positive service quality culture. Leadership commitment maybe shown through resources allocation and participation in the desired change. Leaders, instead of just being spectators, need to drive this change.
- Right approach adoption – As earlier seen, leadership exists in various forms and if a cultural change is to be achieved within an organization, utilizing the right approach is key. For instance, adopting an autocratic style may not work for this to be attained, therefore it is imperative for leaders to assess the situation and see what works best for the implementation of the desired shift to positive service quality culture.
- Employee training/engagement – Service quality is gauged by customer satisfaction and employees are in the forefront of this service delivery. Leaders ought to recognize the need to ensure their employees are fully trained or equipped to deliver positive service quality and always meet customer needs. This training ought to include both professional skills and behavioral adjustments to deliver customer satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

Leaders are the Centre of success or failure for most organizations. Their role in ensuring there is consistent and continuous delivery of positive service quality is dependent on them establishing this as a culture within their organization. A research done by Gantsho and Sukdeo (2018) established that organizational culture and service quality have a positive correlation, hence the need to make this into a cultural norm that every member of the organization embraces. If leaders don't establish a culture of positive service quality, then, any culture will be adopted by the organization and this may be detrimental to the business or organization. As shown in the findings above, there is need for leaders to show commitment and utilize right leadership approaches if positive service quality is to be achieved. As already seen, positive service quality is vital for business survival and profitability, hence all leaders should strive to have it as an organizational culture for continued and consistent service quality delivery.

6. Limitation and Future Research

This study was only conducted using secondary data because of the limitation of time to carry out a full empirical study. For future research, it will be important to obtain some primary data and establish the true extent of leadership impact on service quality culture implementation.

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