

LEADERSHIP AS AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION

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Recently in the world significant importance has been attached to the problem of place and the role of leadership in public administration. An essential aspect of addressing this problem is the effectiveness of leadership, because leadership is the determinant of the effectiveness of the government in policy implementation, service delivery and overall governance. This is considering that the services provided by public service organizations significantly influence the quality of living standards and circumstances of the general population. Therefore, to execute this task civil servants are expected to be effective and efficient in order to maximize human and financial resources towards the provision of adequate services to the general public and also to possess interpersonal relationships that are characterized by a high level of responsibility for the quality provision of social function of the public administration.

In order to effectively modernize public administration, the system of public administration should uphold conceptual principles which encompass the growth of professionalism, transparency, administrative culture and legal protection of civil servants, and the development of their leadership capacity to ensure the implementation of the reforms. Therefore, the question of leadership arises not by chance, since effective leadership is one of the integral managerial components that contribute to maximum optimization of the management processes in the public sector. The effectiveness of leadership is confirmed by the research of many authors, in particular, R. Kunz and S.

O'Donnell, who experimentally proved that formal leadership allows you to use the potential of employees about 60% or 65%, whereas, "exercising leadership", the leader can achieve full use of the abilities of subordinates [1, p. 4].

There are many different definitions of the concept of leadership and “always, it seems, the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity. Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that leadership involves a process whereby one person exerts intentional influence over other people to structure, guide and facilitate relationships and activities in a group or organization. Most conceptions of leadership entail that at various times one or more group members can be identified as a leader according to some observable difference between the person(s) and other members, who are referred to as “followers” or “subordinates”. According to Cooper, definitions of leadership as a phenomenon involve the interaction between two or more persons. In addition, most definitions of leadership mirror the assumption that leadership involves an influencing process whereby intentional influence is exerted by the leader over followers [2].

The researcher will not attempt to resolve the controversy over the most appropriate definition of leadership as part of this study. For the purposes of this study, the various definitions will be viewed as a source of diverse perspectives on a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. The operational definition for this research is, leadership is the process of influencing others so that they understand and agree about what actions can be taken, how the actions can be executed effectively, and how to inspire individual and team efforts to accomplish shared objectives [3].

In Zimbabwe, public administration includes all government activities that use human resources to manage public affairs. It can be observed that the public sector is government's policy implementation tool. In a nut shell, the functions of public service include revenue generation, management, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of policies political, economic, and social and service delivery to the people of Zimbabwe.

Thus, the public sector is the major channel for resource allocation, expenditure and policy administration and that defines its control of the economy.

The public sector serves as a medium through which resources flow down to the private sector and to individuals. Underwood states that “Public administration is the machinery by which government performs its activities”. This refers to the networks by which the federal government fulfills its economic developmental goals. Management of the public sector basically involves the implementation of government policies through the administration of resources and delivery of services to the general population. It should be carried out in tandem with economic, social, political and environmental demands [4]. A public administrators’ end goal is service delivery and as such, must be capable of explaining their conduct, allocation of time and other resources for the realization of overall objectives [2]. Given that leaders in the public sector are also administrators, they are accountable for their decisions, actions and the consequences thereof.

As this study wants to assess the core components of leadership effectiveness in the public administration in Zimbabwe with a special focus on the health sector, the researcher looks at the following five components namely Strategic leadership, Organizational analysis, Effective Communication, Conflict management, Workplace culture and Overall vision as they are vital aspects of organizational leadership for public administrators to understand, as they highlight key skills and responsibilities necessary for assisting others and inspiring success in order to grow and develop a strong organization. One of the significant aspects of leadership competency is the ability of a leader to conduct organizational analysis. Organizational analysis is the process of reviewing the work environment, personnel, development and operations of an organization [2]. The comprehensive analysis of a public or private body can be a useful way for leaders to identify inefficiencies or unaddressed issues that impact an organization’s clientele particularly in governmental offices.

Effective means of communication is also a key component in order to succeed in practicing a transparent and honest government. Before focusing on why communication is important in public administration, it is essential to consider how communication impacts the job of a single public manager. A person in a leadership role works with many different stakeholders, including other employees in the same agency, members of other agencies, legislators, public voters and agency program beneficiaries. Information exchanges with each of these types of stakeholders affect the outcomes achieved by the agency [5]. Thus, all these stakeholders should be consulted in any decision making panel to avoid any chaos and discord.

A public administration leader should be able to handle conflict in the work place. Conflict in the work space encompasses a wide variety of causes from philosophical differences or divergent political leanings to differing long-term organizational goals. Unresolved conflicts in the workplace can hinder productivity and erode trust, creating a harmful work environment. Conflict is particularly ruinous to public administration officials trying to pass legislation or create programming for constituents; hence, successful public organizations most often rely on collaboration between departments to reach shared goals.

Strategic leadership refers to a leaders' ability to "anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes". Strategic leaderships have the potential to be a solution to recurrent leadership troubles as it is as an amalgamation of various leadership styles, about twenty leadership theories.

Leaders are also responsible for cultivating a positive work environment that provides tangible benefits for an organization's employers, employees and clientele. New research in positive organizational psychology has shown that cutthroat work environments are harmful to employee morale and thus, productivity. Low levels of productivity can be ascribed to people losing enthusiasm and essentially, motivation.

For the public sector to be in a position to instill these components there is need for the establishment of effective Leadership Development Programmes (L.D.Ps) that

would be responsible for shaping effective and astute leaders. The LDPs would be critical in developing comprehensive strategies for leaders. A few countries have set up systematic strategies for leadership development. For instance, the UK Government has recently started to work on a leadership development model. It would also be responsible for setting up new institutions for leadership development. For instance in Sweden and the US, governments have set up new institutions for identifying and developing future leaders in the public sector. Last but not least the LDPs also come in handy in linking the existing management training to leadership development. Most OECD countries are expanding their existing management development programmes to encompass leadership development.

So, successful public sector leadership amounts to strategy, transparency, organizational analysis, effective communication and a good working culture. These aspects are key in producing an astute leader who is able to create the conducive environment for all the stakeholders involved in an organization. Furthermore, the LDPs must be effectively done to ensure that leaders are not chosen on any other basis apart from merit.

References

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Науковий керівник: к.е.н., викл. В.В. Гришина

Матеріали конференції публікуються в авторській редакції.