Research on Leadership and Management Vision for Private Undergraduate University

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Abstract: This paper will construct a leadership and management vision by analyzing the basics of Xiamen Huaxia University, a private undergraduate university, dissecting the current level of leadership and management, presenting strengths and weaknesses, and then contextualizing the situation.

Keywords: Leadership and Management Vision; Private Undergraduate University; Transformational Leadership; Contingent Leadership

Introduction

Xiamen Huaxia University is a non-profit private undergraduate school in a special economic zone and is located in the more economically developed southeastern region of China. The school has been established for 30 years and currently has an enrollment of about 7,500 students.

Orientation and the effects to culture

Conservative orientation and humanist/progressive orientation are dominant in Xiamen Huaxia University (Carter, Banfield, O'Donogue & Brennan, 2009). Although it is a private school, it is a non-profit school, and the founders of it have a government background, so in some of decisions, it refer to the standards of public schools that have a long history of operation, and the staff act more conservatively, preferring to preserve the original culture of the school. In addition, the school strictly implements the concept of "student-centered" education and teaching.

In terms of important matters of daily teaching and learning operations, the management layer regularly organize and hold a "student information forum" to listen to the opinions of students, in addition to many other channels to receive feedback from students. In classroom teaching, the teaching design are also based on different majors, different types of courses, as far as possible to abandon the traditional lecture method to let the students feel the fun of learning, understanding of the knowledge learned.

In the combination of these two orientations, we find that the administration and the teaching departments of the university present two different styles of doing things. The administrative departments at times act as if they are serving the higher echelons of leadership and educational authorities, and their behavior is more conservative and closed, whereas the teaching departments, with their more youthful staffs and their main orientation towards the students, are more liberal, open, and inclusive.

Cultural influences and leadership culture

China has a strong focus on collectivism, both in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism (House et al., 2004;). Our organization are similarly influenced by these (Dimmock & Walker, 2005); we focus on the collective good, have a sense of social responsibility, and make the common goals and discipline of the organization a requirement for ourselves. At the same time, our society is more performance oriented, with results as the primary measure of effectiveness, and in our daily work we focus on how to improve performance, achieve goals, and produce results. In such an environment, we utilize our collective strength to solve some difficult things, but it is also easy to extinguish the individuality and interests of a small number of people in the process.

In addition, our organization attaches great importance to social and interpersonal skills, because China is a "humane society", and sometimes we feel that our work ability is much less important than our social skills, and we have to spend more energy to maintain good relationships with our leaders and colleagues in the work environment.

Vision

Based on research, the school will construct a leadership and management model that creates an environment in which all employees actively contribute to the organization, culture, and relationships that will transform our organization into a mature self-managed school system

(Woods, 2005).

Instead of overthrowing the original type of leadership, our organization can build on the original foundation of transformational and contingent leadership (Bush, 2007&2011). This is because the school has been around for 30 years and has done a better job at the management level and has established a more structured set of systems.

The central focus of transformational leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. Because of our conservative approach to day-to-day leadership and management, we expect less of our teachers and provide little proactive support for their learning and development. Leaders need to exert influence on others, but in doing so, leaders should instill the shared values and help everyone clarify the common goals of the organization, such as what we want to accomplish and who we want to be, so that the goals of the employees' actions are aligned with the goals of the organization (Wheatley, M., 2005a).

At the same time, leaders should not be conformist and should initiate change. Due to the unique nature of universities, we have a diverse organizational environment, and our leadership style should change accordingly, actively reflecting and reviewing, anticipating problems before they arise, and preparing responses in advance. When problems arise, we should be flexible and make judgment based on the actual situation without relying on a standard leadership model in order to prevent bigger problems from arising. Meanwhile, since our organizational goal is to provide high-quality applied talents for regional development, we should be more free and inclusive at the leadership level to keep up with the times. Most theoretical models of leadership start from a rational perspective, but based on the Chinese society we live in, we must also pay attention to the important role in building harmonious relationships. Therefore, it is very important to develop the contingent leadership in our organization.

Our organization consists of many departments together, mainly including the administration and teaching management. Due to the different nature of people in management and different ways of doing things, we should implement distributed leadership in all types of departments (Gronn, 2002). At the same time, leaders should continuously improve their leadership and think systematically about the development of the whole organization, rather than only when problems arise, only begin to solve the appearance of the problem. Leadership requires effective diagnosis of problems and then the most appropriate response to the problem or situation (Morgan, 1997). Often in an organization such as an university, the culture is more comfortable and harmonious, but an atmosphere that is too free and open can also lead to leaders and employees becoming addicted to the status quo and unwilling to take the initiative to make changes. As leaders, they should form a virtuous cycle to actively search for problems through systematic thinking and reflective review, identifying problems, finding the root causes of the problems, and searching for solutions (Senge, 1994).

Leadership practice

A culture of continuous innovation and improvement learning should be taken into account in our organizations first through the professional learning community we have established in which we are constantly researching, exploring, and engaging in a continuous process of problem identification and problem solving.

Secondly, it is important to develop "Appreciative Inquiry", which can help us think creatively and develop visions of possible futures. Often, when we explore possible problems, we tend to lose confidence or consider individual problems in isolation, ignoring our strengths and the cultural context in which we live. Appreciative inquiry can help us to learn more about ourselves and our organizations, identify our strengths, draw out the values and motivators implied through the process. (Whitney & Trosten Bloom, 2010)

Thirdly, performance appraisal of teachers cannot simply rely on students' test scores and students' evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Student grades do not reflect everything. Continuous improvement of teachers is significant and should be included in performance, such as whether teachers update their teaching design and cases every semester, and whether they can fully demonstrate the concept of "student-centered".

Conclusion

Leadership is a culture thing, embedded in whole lives (Greenfiled & Ribbins, 1993). Changes and innovations in university should not disrupt the original organizational culture and should place leadership enhancement in the context of national and societal development. Our organizations have done well in day-to-day management, and what is most needed today is to improve in the area of leadership. Through the development of transformational and contingent leadership, along with distributed leadership and systemic thinking, the university will develop a culture of learning, and members will be able to continuously improve and innovate.

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