Leadership for Quality, Effectiveness and Health in Organisations

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

För avläggande av teknologie doktorsexamen vid fakulteten för Naturvetenskap, Teknik och Medier vid Mittuniversitetet, Campus Östersund, som offentligen kommer att försvaras i sal F234, fredagen den 26 februari 2010, kl 10.00.

Opponent
Professor Stefan Lagrosen, Högskolan Väst

Betygsnämnd
Professor Su Mi Park-Dahlgaard, Lunds universitet
Professor Mikael Nordenmark, Mittuniversitetet
Docent Rickard Garvare, Luleå tekniska universitet
Abstract
Leadership, quality, effectiveness and health are important factors in the achievement of organisational success. Three questions are addressed to study these elements:

1. How do leadership values relate to leadership behaviours, quality methodologies and health in organisations?
2. How do leadership behaviours relate to effectiveness and health in organisations?
3. How can leadership tools be designed and used to promote health in organisations?

The research is based on five studies from three research projects. This research is reported in five papers. Study I concerned eight organisations in the middle of Sweden; the focus was on leadership values and behaviours. Study II concerned three successful organisations that received the award, ‘Sweden’s number one workplace’. Focus in this study was mainly on leadership behaviours. Study III combined results from Studies I and II with a focus on successful leadership behaviours. Study IV concerned the eight organisations in Study I. A leadership tool in the form of a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model was developed and evaluated. Study V was of two organisations in Sweden; the focus in that work was on the use of a leadership tool control chart designed to give managers statistically valid early warning signals about health in their organisations. Theory X and Y together with the three-dimensional leadership behaviour theory were used to assess leadership values and behaviours. The theory surrounding PDSA and control charts were used to develop leadership tools. The dimension of health is defined from a salutogenic humanistic perspective; which emphasizes individual well-being. The dimension of quality is defined as the ability to satisfy or exceed needs and expectations. Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which externally and internally defined objectives are fulfilled.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Interviews, seminars with employees, collection of human resource and effectiveness figures, and questionnaires completed by managers and subordinates were used to collect data.

Managers with more Theory Y-oriented leadership values were rated by subordinates as high concerning quality methodologies and leadership behaviour dimensions. The subordinates of these managers tended to be healthier.

Two of the studies identified common groups of leadership behaviours in effective and healthy organisations: strategy and vision, communication and information, authority and responsibility, learning culture, worker conversations, plainness and simplicity, humanity and trust, walking around and reflective personal leadership.

These leadership behaviours fit into a leadership profile where all three of the dimensions of structure, relation and change are present. Of the three, the relation dimension is strongest and concluded to be a universal dimension.

The developed PDSA model seems to be a leadership tool that influences both leadership values and behaviour, particularly in the area of relation-oriented leadership behaviours. An early warning system built on CUSUM- and Shewhart-charts concerning the health indicators of self-assessed general health and new sick-cases per employee was also found to be a powerful and usable leadership tool.

For future research, the explorative research findings can be quantitatively tested using representative and preferably cross-national data, with a longitudinal design.

Keywords: Leadership, Values, Behaviours, Tools, Quality, Effectiveness