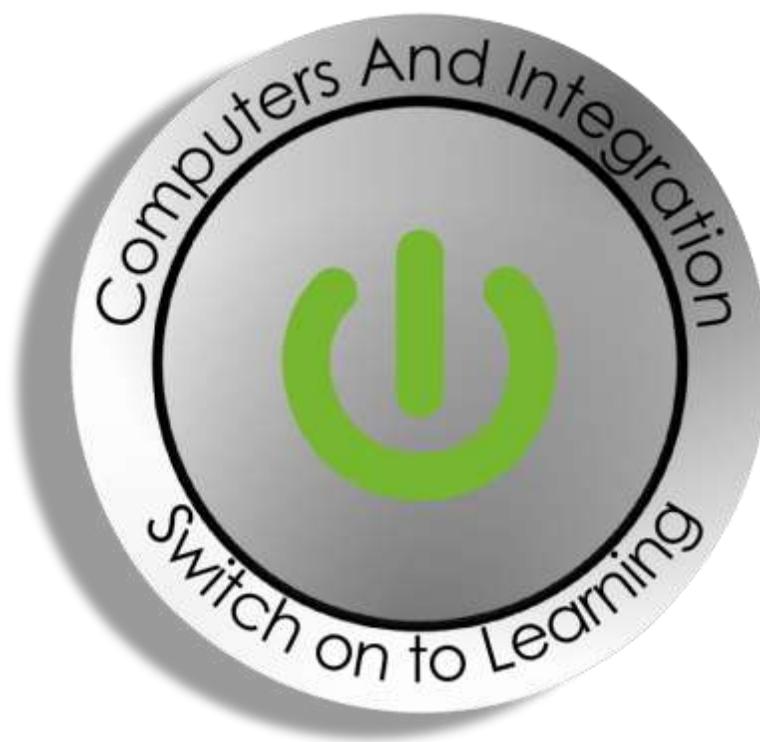


How to achieve good management practice in Universities

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Preface

W. Edwards Deming is an inspirational role model in the field of managerial science. Basically, Deming devised a system, known collectively as the System of Profound Knowledge. Moreover, this system dictates that managers should have a little bit of knowledge relating to systems thinking, variation, psychology and the theory of knowledge in order to efficiently manage an organisation. In addition, one of Deming's main aims was to extinguish competitiveness and promote co-operation amongst a subset group of people, for example, a team or a workforce.

Adopt the System of Profound Knowledge to manage an organisation

However, Deming's theories relating to efficient management practice tend to be largely ignored in today's modern workplace. For example, managers tend to adopt certain elements of Deming's solution to management, and yet arrogantly ignore other elements. The reasoning is fairly simple: managers just don't understand the complexities associated with Deming's System of Profound Knowledge. Therefore, they just utilise the parts they understand, subsequently ignoring those parts they don't. The problem with this approach is that it is likely to do more harm than good, as in order for a manager to efficiently manage an organisation a comprehensive understanding of Deming's System of Profound Knowledge is required. Put simply, well-managed entities tend to utilise a custom management strategy, which is derived from an understanding of all components of the System of Profound Knowledge.

Further, higher educational establishments are one such example of a system where Deming's System of Profound Knowledge is not in effect. Basically, higher educational establishments tend to utilise a misguided approach to management, where the fundamental knowledge relating to the basics of psychology (people) appears to have either been forgotten, or alternatively not learned.

Promote co-operation

In relation to Deming's System component, higher educational establishments do promote co-operation (the looking after of the interconnections between the component parts of the system) amongst students through activities such as group work. However, a simple group work exercise is very trivial. Basically, students will co-operate for a single simple exercise when there are no rewards. However, in a situation where rewards, or grades, are given on an individual basis, such as in examinations, people tend to become competitive.

Moreover, as human beings, we have a natural inclination to compete with one another, therefore this natural competitiveness decreases co-operation amongst students thereby increasing the strain on individuals. As a result, the probability that health problems will occur is increased. An example of a common health problem is stress. In addition to increasing stress, fear is also an element factored into the equation of

compounding the strain on individuals. With examinations, it's the fear of failing that increases the stress on individuals.

Avoid fear at all costs

Basically, according to Deming, fear has an astonishing affect on people. With fear, people are afraid to express their views and ask questions. Moreover, fear really dominates people, and it has an amazing effect on our society. For example, fear in relation to examinations will restrict a student's learning of a particular subject as they're focusing their efforts on passing examinations.

Without examinations, students are merely learning for enjoyment, and in addition the fear element that was present with examinations is subsequently non-existent. Therefore, contributing to a more knowledgeable student society and a better working environment for all concerned.

Another problem with higher educational establishments is the utilising of examinations to serve as a means of testing a student's ability.

Treat everyone as individuals

The problem with examinations is that they reduce individuality. Basically, students are awarded a grade, and that grade is awarded solely on the basis of comparing a student's answer against somebody else's opinion. In addition, that somebody else will be ranked higher up in the educational hierarchy than the student being tested, therefore their opinion will be considered to be correct, or in other words will carry more weight as it's considered more likely to be the correct answer. Moreover, the reasoning for this is due to our underlying psychology combined with the disrespect for the intellectualness of students. More specifically, people like to think in terms of right and wrong, and this way of thinking is just part and parcel of everyday life.

However, the reality is that everyone is a unique individual, and as a result everyone's knowledge and opinions are different. Subsequently there is variation in all our answers therefore everybody's opinions should be respected, and no one party should be considered more right than another – we are all equal, but different. As a result of utilising examinations as a means of testing we are merely standardising the way we think – cloning us as individuals to be the same as our counterparts thereby ignoring the idealism of equality and uniqueness.

Aim to facilitate learning not testing

Moreover, examinations promote testing rather than facilitating learning. Basically, examination writers set questions, but the answers are never provided or explained. In order to fully facilitate learning, answers should be provided, thereby providing students

with the opportunity to learn. In addition, making mistakes and learning from them is the key to learning and developing experience within a specific field of speciality as experience is merely knowing what works and what doesn't.

Furthermore, using grades to demonstrate the effectiveness of one student's performance in an examination promotes competitiveness between students. Basically, as human beings we have a natural inclination to compete, and it's this natural competitive streak that Deming said contributes to the death of an organisation.

Moreover, Deming's strategy to management is to promote co-operation and get everyone working together within the same system, and in addition with a united aim. In addition, Deming felt that the interconnections (relationships) between people were the key to successful management. Therefore we should work on the links that separate us from our counterparts.

Basically, rather than using examinations to compete and to test our knowledge, everyone should individually develop a rapport with their supervising lecturer to ensure constant co-operation and ongoing support in facilitating learning. As a result of working in partnership, lecturers ensure that students are learning rather than struggling. If people aren't struggling, they will learn...and the fundamental aim of higher education is to learn.

Promote the gaining of new knowledge

In relation to the theory of knowledge element in Deming's System of Profound Knowledge, the aim of higher educational establishments is to promote, and facilitate learning. More specifically, allowing people to learn and subsequently gain knowledge. This is a shared aim throughout the system of higher education.

However, the problem is a higher educational establishment's definition of learning. For example, they tend to lean towards promoting knowledge that's based upon the fundamentals of education rather than the requirements laid down by industry, or alternatively industry standard skills. Therefore this curriculum that's based upon education often consists of the teaching of irrelevant, or useless, subjects.

The reasoning for the teaching of irrelevant subjects is largely due to somebody somewhere thinking that teaching a particular subject matter would be a good idea. Therefore, one person's persona, or paradigm, is reality for everyone else. In addition, useless subjects are wasteful as students' time could be better spent learning skills that relate to the industry with which their course co-insides. Therefore as a result, useful knowledge is learned.

Conclusion

To conclude, higher educational establishments are managed ineffectively and inefficiently. Therefore significant improvements could be made as a result of adopting

Deming's System of Profound Knowledge, where systems thinking, variation, psychology and the theory of knowledge dominate. Subsequently student performance and the quality of learning would be increased.

Universities should scrap the first class, second class and third class paradigm and opt instead for pass and fail. Students will perform better when they are not under pressure. The most successful Universities will be the ones that adopt Deming's System of Profound Knowledge.

Lots of people died on the Titanic because of first, second and third class segregation.