

Effective Organizational Management and the Evolving Roles of Librarians in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

A study of effective organizational management and the evolving roles of librarians in the 21st Century. The aim is to provide an overview of the current situation of librarians in the 21st Century. The librarian of the 21st Century is changing with the changing environment due to information and communication technology. It means that the librarian needs to employ their technological know-how and intellectual masterpieces to retain the leading role of the libraries in supporting teaching, learning, and research. As such, librarians must be armed with competent skills to enhance the provision of library services to meet users changing information needs. It is an evolving branch in the field of librarianship.

Keywords: *organizational management, roles of librarians, 21st Century, librarianship, ICT.*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational management is the cornerstone of success for businesses, nonprofit organizations, government entities, and small community groups. It serves as the compass that guides an entity toward its goals, offering a structured approach to resource allocation, decision-making, and problem-solving. In a world marked by complexity, change, and fierce competition, effective organizational management is not merely an advantage but a necessity. Organizational management is planning, coordinating, and overseeing various organizational elements to achieve its goals and objectives (Somvir, 2010). It involves directing and guiding resources, people, and processes to ensure efficient operations and optimal performance. Organizational management encompasses setting objectives, formulating strategies, allocating resources, making decisions, and fostering a productive work environment. Effective organizational management enhances productivity, promotes teamwork, and drives sustainable growth.

Principles of Organizational Management

The four main principles of organizational management referred to as the POLC framework are planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Rogers and Grimsley, Nd). These principles provide a comprehensive approach to managing an organization and achieving its goals. Let us look at each of the POLC principles:

- i. Planning involves setting goals, defining strategies, and determining the actions required to achieve those goals. It is a forward-thinking process that requires analyzing the current state of the organization, identifying opportunities and challenges, and developing tactics to capitalize on opportunities and overcome challenges. Planning provides a roadmap for an organization's activities and ensures that resources are allocated effectively.
- ii. Organizing involves structuring and arranging resources, tasks, and people. It includes establishing a formal structure, defining roles and responsibilities, and creating relationships between different positions or departments. Organizing ensures the right people are in the right roles, resources are allocated efficiently, and there is clarity in the workflow and reporting lines.
- iii. Leading refers to guiding and influencing individuals and teams to work toward an organization's goals. It involves providing direction, inspiring and motivating employees, fostering teamwork, and facilitating effective communication. Leadership involves not only managing tasks but also understanding and supporting the needs and aspirations of employees to enhance their engagement and productivity.

- iv. Controlling involves monitoring and evaluating the progress of an organization to ensure it is on track toward reaching its goals. It includes establishing performance standards, measuring actual performance, comparing it against the standards, and taking corrective actions when necessary.

In addition to the four main POLC principles, there are a few other principles, according to Prasad (2024), which affect organizational management:

- v. Staffing involves acquiring, developing, and retaining the right talent for an organization. It includes recruitment, selection, training, and performance management. Staffing ensures an organization has the right people with the necessary skills and competencies to achieve its objectives.
- vi. Time management involves prioritizing tasks, allocating time effectively, and optimizing productivity. It includes techniques such as setting goals, planning and scheduling activities, managing interruptions, and delegating tasks. Effective time management enables individuals and teams to work efficiently and meet deadlines.
- vii. Motivation plays a crucial role in driving employee engagement and productivity. It involves understanding individual needs and using various strategies to inspire and encourage employees to perform at their best. Motivation techniques may include recognition, rewards, career development opportunities, and creating a positive work environment.

These additional principles - along with the four main principles of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling - contribute to the overall effectiveness and success of an organization. By incorporating these principles into their management practices, organizations can create a solid foundation for achieving goals, maximizing productivity, and fostering a positive and efficient work environment.

Importance of Organizational Management

Goal alignment: Organizational management ensures that employees understand and work toward common business objectives. It aligns individual and team goals with the overarching company mission.

Resource optimization: Effective management of an organization helps allocate resources efficiently, whether it is labour, finances, time, or technology. It prevents wastage and maximizes productivity.

Enhanced productivity: A well-structured management system provides a clear framework for work processes, resulting in increased productivity at all levels of the organization.

Strategic planning: It involves strategic planning, helping the company adapt to changes in the business environment and remain competitive in the long term.

Decision-making: It offers a structured approach to decision-making, ensuring that choices align with the organization's goals and values, whether it is a front-line employee making a tactical decision or senior leadership making strategic choices.

Leadership development: Management practices identify and nurture leadership talent within an organization, helping it grow and succeed. It is essential at all levels, from team leaders to executives.

Quality control: It implements and monitors quality control measures, ensuring consistency and excellence in products or services.

Employee engagement: It promotes a culture of involvement and commitment, ensuring that employees feel valued and engaged in their work, regardless of their position.

Performance evaluation: Through performance reviews and key performance indicators (KPIs), the management of the organization assesses individual and team performance. The evidence is then used in setting expectations and improving results.

Conflict resolution: Management plays a pivotal role in addressing conflicts and issues that may arise at all levels of the organization, preventing them from escalating and affecting productivity.

Change management: Adapting to change is crucial in today's dynamic business world. Organizational business management helps employees to understand, accept, and embrace change, ensuring a smooth transition.

Communication: Effective management practices promote open, transparent communication within an organization, facilitating the flow of information between different levels and departments.

Risk management: Management identifies, assesses, and mitigates risks, and ensures an organization can handle unexpected challenges while minimizing their impact.

Innovation and creativity: Encouraging innovation and creativity is essential for keeping a business competitive. Organizational business management fosters an environment where employees can contribute fresh ideas.

Sustainability and growth: It is essential for the sustainable growth of an organization. It helps in setting benchmarks, tracking progress, and making adjustments to ensure long-term success.

Financial Stability: Effective management practices enable financial stability by managing budgets, controlling expenses, and optimizing revenue streams, all of which contribute to business goals.

Customer satisfaction: Management ensures that employees meet customer needs and deliver quality products or services, leading to high customer satisfaction.

Ethical compliance: It ensures that all employees understand and adhere to ethical standards and legal requirements in their roles and maintains the company's reputation and credibility.

The Different Management Styles

Management styles play a significant role in shaping the work environment and the overall success of an organization. Two prominent management styles, autocratic and democratic stand at opposite ends of the leadership spectrum.

Autocratic management is characterized by centralized decision-making and minimal employee involvement, is often valuable in situations requiring quick decisions and strict control, such as emergencies. However, its overuse can stifle creativity and morale.

On the other hand, democratic management empowers employees by involving them in decision-making, fostering innovation, and creating a sense of ownership. While it promotes collaboration and engagement, it may sometimes lead to slower decision-making processes. The importance lies in finding the right balance and adapting these styles to the specific needs of an organization, department, or situation.

Effective organizational business management often blends elements of both styles, using autocratic approaches when urgency is paramount and shifting towards democratic methods to encourage employee participation, ultimately ensuring a dynamic and responsive organizational culture.

Leadership skills in Organizational Management

Skills needed in the leadership team for effective organizational management:

Effective management skills: It is at the core of organizational success. Leaders need to possess skills in setting clear objectives, creating actionable plans, and efficiently allocating resources. They should be able to oversee and guide teams, ensuring that tasks are completed on time and within budget. Effective management involves not only overseeing the daily operations but also addressing challenges and facilitating growth.

Strategic thinking: Strategic thinking is essential for leadership teams to navigate the complexities of today's business environment. Leaders must have the ability to formulate a long-term vision for the organization, set strategic priorities, and align resources to achieve these goals. Strategic thinkers consider market trends, competition, and emerging opportunities, allowing the organization to adapt and thrive.

Decision-making and problem-solving: Leadership teams need strong decision-making and problem-solving skills. They should be capable of analyzing complex situations, weighing pros and cons, and making sound decisions that align with the organization's objectives. Effective problem-solving skills help in resolving issues efficiently and preventing them from becoming significant obstacles.

Communication and interpersonal skills: Clear and effective communication is a cornerstone of leadership. Leaders should be able to convey their ideas, expectations, and vision to both their teams and other stakeholders. Strong interpersonal skills are essential for building relationships, inspiring trust, and resolving conflicts. Effective communication fosters collaboration and encourages employees to be engaged and motivated.

Adaptability and change management: The business landscape is constantly evolving. Leadership teams should be adaptable and open to change. They must have the ability to lead their organizations through transformations, whether it is adapting to new technologies, market shifts, or industry trends. Being flexible and resilient in the face of change is vital.

Financial acumen: Leaders should have a strong understanding of financial principles. This includes budgeting, financial analysis, and resource allocation. Financial acumen allows leaders to make informed decisions that optimize the organization's commercial performance and sustainability.

Team building and development: Leadership teams must be adept at team building and development. They should recruit, train, and mentor talent to create high-performing

teams. Effective leaders empower employees, allowing them to grow and contribute to the organization's success.

Emotional intelligence: Emotional intelligence is crucial for leadership, as it involves understanding and managing one's emotions and the emotions of others. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can build strong relationships, inspire trust, and effectively manage and motivate their teams.

Innovation and creativity: Encouraging innovation and creativity is essential for staying competitive. Leadership teams should foster a culture that values new ideas and approaches. They should also be innovative thinkers, exploring novel strategies and solutions to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Ethical leadership: Ethical leadership works on principles of integrity, honesty, and ethical decision-making. Leaders should set a moral compass for the organization, promoting values that guide behaviour and maintaining the organization's reputation and credibility.

The Evolving Roles of Librarians in the 21st Century

As the traditional custodians of information, librarians in the 21st Century need to be aware of these significant changes and employ their technological know-how and intellectual masterpieces to retain the libraries' leading role in supporting teaching, learning, and research (Kanczak & Szoltysik 2006, Romas 2007, Somvir (2010). The 21st Century librarian must have competent skills to enhance and provide effective library services to meet changing information needs.

Literature abounds on the competencies and skills needed for the 21st Century library professional (Lichterman, 2011, Omeluzor et al. 2013). Tennant (1999) identifies personal traits as the capacity to learn, flexibility, innate skepticism, a propensity to take risks, abiding public service perspective, good interpersonal skills, skill at enabling and fostering change and the capacity for and desire to work independently. Omekwu (2003) mentions basic knowledge of computers and their capabilities; Competency with search engines; internet facilities; e-mail; internet navigator tools, web browsers and web file formats; database software; internet development and management know-how. According to Krishnan (2011), some 21st Century skills include communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, media literacy, ICT literacy, flexibility, and adaptability. The skills above are familiar to us; the challenge is how to harness these skills for effective library services.

The librarian of the 21st Century is changing with the changing environment that is a consequence of ICT. Moghaddam (2009) notes that one of the vital elements of success and dynamism is specialized human resources viz librarians. LaRue (2012) believes a library's asset is its professional personnel. According to him, librarians have the power to change lives and build community- but to do this, they have to leave their desks, leave their buildings, and show the community what a powerful tool they are. Tanawade (2011) observes that it is time to publicize our professionalism and skills. From the foregoing, the librarian of the 21st Century not only sits behind the reference desk answering mere reference questions but is an active marketer who sells their products and services to his community at every opportunity. He packages current information sources and delivers on point. This strategy serves as his bait to attract clients. Tanawade (2011) opines that fixes the idea in their minds that the library is a source of incalculable value. The 21st Century librarian is an information warehouse with a zeal to influence his environment (Kanczak & Szoltysik 2006). He is at home with modern technological infrastructure. If librarians continue substantial information dissemination, they understand and exploit ICT infrastructure and emerging technologies in delivering services to their clientele.

Positioning the 21st Century Librarians for Effective Service Delivery

From the foregoing, it is observable that much is resting on the shoulders of the 21st Century librarian (Kanczak & Szoltysik 2006). Many scholars believe that with the current trend and the utilization of information technology in carrying out library operations, librarians must possess some skills that will make them relevant. Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) have listed some of these skills to include the following:

- Information technology skills
- Managerial skills
- Personal entrepreneurial skills
- Technical skills
- Information literacy skills

Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Librarians in the 21st Century

Although many believe that with the invention of ICT, library and information science will cease to exist, there will be few jobs for librarians. Galeon (2017) cites Stephen Hawking as saying that intelligent machines are taking over jobs. This will make the discipline of librarianship irrelevant. On the contrary, Momoh (2018) has listed some entrepreneurial opportunities for the 21st Century librarian:

1. **Research and Data Analysis:** Research is the process of investigating

certain areas. Data analysis is a process of gathering and collecting data, processing it, and making assumptions that will lead to the formulation of theories and laws (Ranganathan, 1931). Since research is life, 21st Century librarians must learn the advanced and rudimentary stages of research.

2. **Information analysis:** This is an evolving branch of librarianship. Hence, 21st Century librarians should be able to analyze information in any format.
3. **Database Management:** Databases are repositories that provide access to large amounts of information. Therefore, 21st Century librarians must be skilled at managing databases. Knowledge of keywords that can aid information retrieval is a prerequisite for effective service delivery, especially in the 21st Century.
4. **Social media Management:** The 21st Century has incorporated social media into library services and information dissemination. As such, the 21st Century must possess the skills to manage different social media accounts. These accounts include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Technology and the 21st Century Librarians

Thiel (2014) defined technology as “any new and better way of doing things”. Without mincing words, technology has aided and made library operations easy in several ways. Vijayakumar and Vijayan (2011) listed benefits to include the following:

- i. Collaboration and creation of library networks
- ii. Reduction of staff workload
- iii. Round-the-clock access to library services by users.
- iv. Efficient and effective service delivery to library clientele
- v. Access to unlimited information from different sources
- vi. More up-to-date information
- vii. Availability of information in different formats

Based on the foregoing, the 21st Century librarian must be skilled in information and communications technology. This will help to achieve maximum productivity and efficiency at work. The 21st Century librarian should have a basic knowledge of computer software and operations. These include but are not limited to word processing packages, graphics design, web design, etc.

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