Moving Forward in 2022 - UoS SPARC Conference

Self Managing Teams in Higher Education

Since the increase in tuition fees in 2012, UK universities are experiencing a collective pressure to deliver a superior experience to their students.   As Universities are highly complex organisations operating within considerable regulatory constraints, their ability to be creative and explore new ways of working are somewhat restricted. In addition, there may also be little free time or resource to focus on any significant change. Therefore, this calls for a reform in the way public sector teams are organised to deliver their services. Universities need to evolve into agile, responsive organisations to remain competitive within the sector.

Considering the private sectors' ability to be responsive to a change in customer needs, the implementation of self-managing teams has shown increased organisational agility. The definition of a self-managed team (SMT) is a group of employees that are accountable for all or most aspects of producing a product or service.   Although there are differing frameworks available, literature on SMT generally share the same fundamental principles.

Introduction

Successful SMT remove traditional hierarchal structures and introduce a flat structure of self-directed teams. These teams are then responsible for all elements of work packages such as co-ordination of activities, managing budgets and critical decision making.

Why is it important?

Considering the private sectors' ability to be responsive to a change in customer needs, the implementation of self-managing teams has shown increased organisational agility. This could prove helpful in enabling Universities to be more responsive to their students needs.

Proposed Research

Translating the core guiding principles of SMT into a public sector organisation, such as a University, is not thoroughly researched or documented. Therefore, further insight is needed to consider Universities and how they reorganise their structures to become more responsive organisations.

Proposed Methodology

After obtaining ethical approval, the resarcher plans to collect qualitatiave data via semi-structured interviews to develop a richer understanding of what may enable and constrain agile working within Higher Education.

Summary

Universities need to evolve into agile, responsive organisations to remain competitive within the sector. Self managing team principles may enable Universities to become more responsive to a students needs. The researcher will collect qualitative data to deepen understanding of how these principles may be applied to the public sector, and in particular Higher Education.

Further Reading

Buurtzorg . (2016). Buurtzorg Study. Buurtzorg Briefings. N/A (1), All.

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