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The leader's role in agile organisations: a review of the contemporary literature

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Background

There are five underpinning trademarks of organisation agility (strategy, structure, process, people, and technology) that healthcare professionals need to recognise, align, and utilise in practice to respond to the complexities in delivering services (Aghina *et al.*, 2017a). The review of the leader's role in such organisations was explored in a review of the literature.

Method

A structured review of publication databases: BMJ, PubMed and CINHALL, were searched using the terms 'Organisation*' AND 'Agility' OR 'Agile' AND 'Leadership' AND 'Healthcare'. Articles were screened to identify leadership traits in agile organisations.

Results

A total of 15 papers were finally screened and reviewed to give insight into leadership traits and informed the discussion below.

Discussion

Leadership agility is fundamental to success when the need for rapid, at pace, change in healthcare is required (McPherson, 2016). Services that continue to be flexible and adapt leads to a team of dynamic transformational individuals capable of taking on new challenges and developing innovative ideas (Aghina *et al.*, 2017a; Aghina *et al.*, 2017b). Servant leadership, in which the objective of the leader is to serve, and a cohesive team environment generate shared team ideas, ongoing improvement activity, role mobility and entrepreneurial drive (Bushuyev, *et al.*, 2010). In these organisations leaders offering mentorship to teams also creates cohesion (Hoda *et al.*, 2013). This in turn generates

opportunities for teams to hold autonomy through accountability, with regular reviews ensuring productivity and efficiency are maintained (Aghina *et al.*, 2017b).

The leader in an agile organisation also has to challenge, when necessary, ensure team cohesiveness and development continues (Bushuyev and Morozov, 2000), pushing creativity and embracing new technologies (Bushuyev, *et al.*, 2010). Structured teams with clear roles encourage identification and utilisation of key strengths in individuals, promoting staff self-development and desire to achieve recognition and reward (Highsmith and Cockburn, 2001).

Finally, service transparency that encourages leaders to increased standardisation and consistency, imbedding trust in those that use the service, are important traits seen in agile organisations (Bushuyev and Dorosh, 2015), as stakeholder involvement is fundamental in developing teams with collective goals, driving organisations to remain agile and responsive to service-user needs (Hoda *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusion

Although leadership skills may be learnt, key character traits are necessary to avoid distortion in implementation that can lead to organisational inefficiency. Therefore, an agile mindset is fundamental in further developing leadership agility and wider organisational efficiency.

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