Teamwork in Service Industry Organizations

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Abstract

This academic paper deals with teamwork in service industry organizations. For efficiency of organizations, it is vitally important to build teams to work on assigned tasks in coordination. The author therefore used a qualitative approach with analysis, synthesis and literature review to study teamwork regarding adjustments of organizations and determining factors for success in team work. The study findings pointed to two areas for consideration: personnel adjustments and determining factors for efficiency in teamwork. As known, intense business competition in the service industry has prompted organizations to adjust themselves by using teamwork for change in internal management. Through teamwork, all personnel need to adjust themselves by bringing out their competencies to work together, adapt themselves to the new work environment, handle conflicts within the organization, and develop positive attitude toward the team leader and other team members. They are made aware of the fact that teamwork could be an alternative for outsourced staff. That is the reason why the current staff has no option but pull together their skills and expertise to work toward the organization's common goal. It was found that determining factors for success in team work were (1) skilled and experienced workers, (2) team leader with good leadership, and (3) team members who value teamwork as an incentive to survive through business competition in the service industry.

Key words: Teamwork, service industry organizations, team efficiency, trust in supervisors, participation

1. Rationale of the Paper

This academic paper intends to show why teamwork is urgently needed in the service industry organizations in Thailand. Intensive business competition has spurred the need of organizations to develop their personnel to do teamwork. Working alone is not possible because the work process is too complex to handle; it requires a pool of skilled workers with a good leader to work together toward the goal set by the organization. In this paper, the author reviewed studies on teamwork done by Thai researchers to secure information on adjustments made regarding the adoption of teamwork and determining factors for success in teamwork. Then the author looked at major theories related to teamwork and summarized major concepts in a diagram with explanation of each. In relating the literature and the selected theorists' concepts, the author collected additional information from interviewing ten team leaders in organizations in the service industry located in the central and the eastern parts of Thailand. This was to reach a convincing conclusion on the major issues of concern in Thailand's service industry regarding personnel adjustments and determining factors for success in teamwork as experienced by team leaders in the service industry.

2. Studies on Teamwork in Thailand

There are quite a few studies in teamwork in organizations in Thailand. The author selected ten to look at the issues of adjustments to teamwork and determining factors for success in teamwork as shown in this section.

The hotel business is highly competitive in providing services. Human resource management is therefore has its task on bringing personnel to work together toward the organizational goal (Piceshsiraprapa, 2016). Due to intensive business competition, the environment is changing rapidly, affecting many organizations, especially key personnel in their work (Rukhun, 2014); (Promsuwan & Fongnam, 2014; Sivapitak, 2015). The economic, social, and economic aspects of business need to be developed along with advancements in the economic competitiveness. The flow of changes also reflects the need for organizations to *adjust the management mode* that requires a wide range of knowledgeable and experienced personnel to be effective (Tridej et al., 2014). Therefore, the organization wants all personnel to collaborate effectively to drive the organization to reach its goal with good teamwork ((Sawetsomboon et al., 2007; Kongsueb, 2017). Therefore, the performance of the operations staff depends on their ability and skills to work together to provide good service and effective team collaboration (Makkaew, 2015).

Working in an organization requires working with other people; working alone cannot help much because the task is too complex for a person to handle. Workers need to understand the process or how to *adapt to the changing environment* and the demands for collaboration with others. If the management practice does not change with the situations or threats, it can cause limitations in the target outcomes in that organization (Promsuwan & Fongnam, 2014). Particularly, some staff with negative attitudes toward teamwork may delay the work process with insufficient collaboration. In this regard, *positive attitude* and coordination are the keys to save human resource and operating time. Low speed at work means lagging behind in business competition. Certainly, organizations need skilled workers with prior work experience and ability to work under pressure and *cope with conflicts*. As a result, talented personnel from other organizations may be outsourced to speed up the work process toward the target outcome. This often results in a change of job and the resignation of the existing staff. The higher the personnel turnover, the greater the dissatisfaction of the workforce, and this has impacts on the quality of service. To move to a better organization, human resource management may require hiring qualified people will also require a high budget in so doing (Rukhun, 2014). Competition within the organization, conflicts, lack of unity and teamwork will affect the organization in not having the right man on the right job with supporting teams, resulting in low efficiency at work. This will definitely affect the target results the organization has planned for (Picheshsiraprapa, 2016; Kongsueb, 2017).

The staff's attitude toward teamwork has become a major concern among managers. This has impacts on employees and organizations now and in the future because the work of the personnel in the organization requires judgment, experience and specific *good skills* from *experienced* workers to team up collaboratively for efficiency (Sawetsomboon et al, 2007); Makkaew, 2015; Upakarnkun & Kaewka , 2016). The team needs *good leadership* and skilled workers. The team leader needs to build trust in the team members and vice versa. *Trust in leadership* and motivation can help create a sense of commitment to work and loyalty as a bond to the organization (Sivapitak, 2015; Kaewkangwan & Kwanruen, 2018).

The author has so far looked at the research results reported in various articles; some researchers identified the problems arising in teamwork. There may be conflicts involved in individual decisions, actions, and personal characteristics. To understand clearly the role and function of teamwork in an organization, the author has also considered well-known theories related to teamwork: Robbins' theory of expectation, McGreger's XY theory of organizational engagement, Allen & Mayer's personnel theory, Mclean's theory of quest for needs, and Baker's theory of changing leadership attributes.

As reported earlier, personnel working as a team in the organization must have a positive attitude toward the organization and themselves. They need to bring in their knowledge, relevant skills and competencies and experience to achieve maximum efficiency. Working together enables individuals to pool a wide range of skills and work experience to reach the common goals set by the organization effectively.

3. Review on Theorists' Concepts Related to Teamwork

This section reviews theorists' concepts related to teamwork so that readers can see how these concepts are related to the findings of the studies reported in Section 2.

Baker & Mahmood's Literary Prism Theory (1973) is about transformational leadership. This is the type of leader who is willing to change for adjustments needed for the new context or movement.

Haider's behavioral identification theory (1990) says that acknowledging or acting on something with their own needs is easier to work with, but it becomes harder to work when the environment is a deterrent.

Maslow's motive theory (2019) says that humans have endless demands. Once you've done something you want, there's another need to replace it.

Cairns (1996) supported Blenchard's leadership theory on two types of leaders: those who assign roles and tasks to followers, and those who focus on relationship and allow followers to think or work independently. For the second type, relationship means social support.

Bandura's cognitive theory (1986) states that the intellectual behavior, personal traits, and influence of the environment determine changes in an individual's behavior.

Robbins' theory of expectation (1982) consists of three assumptions: that human behavior is determined by the sum of impetus from within oneself and the external environment; that each human has different needs and goals; and when people decide to behave in a way, they tend to expect the value of the results after the behavior has been done.

McGreger's XY theory (1966). Theory X is the lazy type who needs control to work; and Theory Y is the diligent type who is willing to work by oneself and there is no need for the supervisor to control.

Allen & Mayer's theory of corporate engagement (2004) is divided into three ways: (1) Concept of attitude, (2) Behavioral concepts concerning the consistency of behavior and continuity of work, and (3) Concepts related to the accuracy or norms of society. These three concepts of corporate commitment focus on corporate engagement or organizational loyalty. It is the relationship between employees within the organization and with the organization. If the employee has a strong commitment or loyalty to the organization, the less likely that employees will leave their workplace.

Mclean's theory of needs (2001) is divided into three categories: (1) Need for Achievement, (2) Need for Power, and (3) Need for Affiliation.
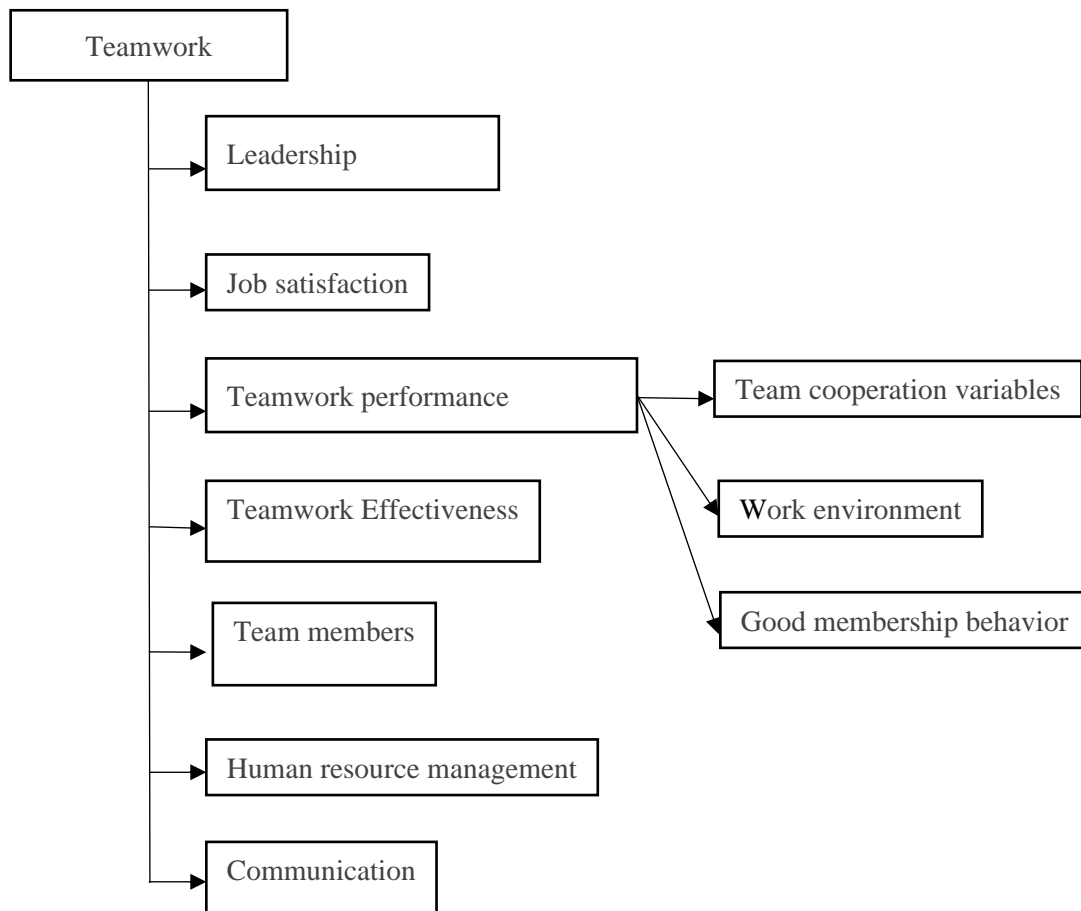
Hernon & Rossiter (2007) supported Blake & Mounton's theory that states: the form of teamwork is one that focuses on work efficiency with moral support for subordinates. Employees are to act in a relevant manner and in the same direction. Cooperation from employees within the organization is vitally important in that teamwork can gather quality employees in the organization to work toward the identified goal which one person cannot achieve. Work assignments according to abilities of individuals enable team members to learn from others and in turn recognize and accept each other.

Fiedler (1967) proposed that performance is the success of the group's operations by getting everyone involved in the operation to achieve their goals. Focus is on the quality of work and speed.

4. The Diagram of Selected Theorists' Concepts and Explanation

From the theorists' concepts in Section 3, the author then developed a diagram of selected concepts to be applied to team work. Such concepts will be used as guiding points to collect information from team leaders in the service industry, to be reported in Sections 5 and 6.

Figure 1: Selected Theorists' Concepts as Applied to Teamwork

Teamwork

The concept of teamwork as given by Hernon and Rossiter (2007) supported Blake & Mounton's theory which focuses on work efficiency, morale of work, cooperation from employees within the organization, gathering of quality employees to share expertise and skills, and peer recognition.

Gathering people with different abilities or skills to help and fill what is missing in each other is required in good teamwork. Team members then work toward the same goal while bringing out the full potential each, resulting in achieving the same goal effectively (Saritvanich, 2006).

Leadership

The nature of leadership affects the performance of employees. A leadership style that focuses on work in the middle line and as a team has a positive relationship with job success. People-oriented leadership has a negative impact on job success.

Job satisfaction

How a person feels about his/ her work performance affects job satisfaction. It is important to involve employees in the assigned work and motivate them to strive to achieve their goals. There are a number of factors concerned, particularly participation in work and decision-making that can create job satisfaction. Work satisfaction accounts as a major part of the organization's success.

Teamwork Performance

As proposed by Fiedler (1967), performance is the success of the group's operations by getting everyone involved in the operations to achieve the goal. It is measured by workload with good quality done in the assigned working period. The quality of work and speed are expected as results of the executed operations

A good teamwork environment will enable employees to work efficiently. This requires sufficient support facilities and reasonable space in a friendly atmosphere.

Teamwork effectiveness

According to Robbins (1982), the ability to work as a team to achieve the goals set by the organization is based on powerful team attributes as follows:

(1) Having a clear goal

(2) Skills consistent with the job responsibilities, including personal attributes necessary for work.

(3) Trust with each other

(4) Commitment to the same thing

(5) Exchange of ideas.

(6) Negotiating skills by applying knowledge and persuasion skills. This makes it flexible and adaptable to the situations that need to be faced at any time.

(7) Proper leadership to complete the task as needed by guiding and helping the team to accomplish its goals.

(8) Providing internal and external support, incentive support, good working environment, additional training, reward or welfare.

Team Members

Team collaboration for effective teamwork contains the following variables:

(1) Determination for success shared by all team members regarding objective,

policy and goal.

(2) Leaders with appropriate attributes, such as sincere recognition, leadership and neutrality.

(3) Team members have appropriate attributes: responsibility for their own duties and groups, as well as good listeners and commentators.

(4) Good interaction among members.

(5) Collaboration in every step in planning, paying attention to data, collaborating and communicating well.

(6) Teamwork empowered by participation and allowing employees at all levels to participate in management under their authority, using Deming's cycle of *Plan, Do, Check, Act.*

(7) Good teamwork environment.

Human Resource Management

Organizations need to have a clear-cut policy of human resource management known to all employees. Human resource managers are to work on career paths of individual employees to ensure that they grow with the organization, and that teamwork forms a major part in work life within.

Communication

Undoubtedly, teamwork requires good communication among team members. It is a must that the outcome of the assigned task be spelled out in concrete duties individuals have to perform and update each other by effective channels of communication agreed upon by all team members. Communication gaps or breakdowns, if any, must be remedied without delay.

5. Collection of Information from Personnel in the Service Industry

In relating the literature and the selected theorists' concepts, the author collected additional information from interviewing ten team leaders in the service industry located in the central and the eastern parts of Thailand. This was to obtain information by interview about the key concepts as shown in Figure 1. The author looked for consistency, if any, in their views on personnel adjustments and determining factors for success in teamwork as experienced by team leaders in the service industry.

The author asked ten team leaders three holistic questions on (1) teamwork in their organization, (2) the building path to teamwork and its coordination, and (3) teamwork efficiency. Then the author probed into their perception of the concepts shown in Figure 1 on (1) teamwork, (2) leadership, (3) job satisfaction, (4) teamwork performance, (5) teamwork effectiveness, (6) team members, (7) human resource management, and (8) communication.

6. Information from Personnel in the Service Industry

Ten team leaders, five each from the service industry in the central and eastern parts of Thailand, were interviewed on the points as described in Section 5. They were given the scope of questions and responded as they considered possible to volunteer information to the author. Their responses were recorded as well as noted by the author. This section will report viewpoints of high frequency at 80% or above to show representativeness of obtained information as shown below.

(1) There has been now intense competition in the service industry. This causes each organization to *adjust their management* by pooling *expertise and skills* to *work together in teams*. Employees within the organization must have good working abilities and skills to work together effectively. Working alone as in the past is no longer possible because the work process is too complex to achieve the goal or target outcome—either in short or long terms.

(2) Such a change in using teamwork has brought some *conflicts* within, for the existing staff tended to prefer their own working styles. Those who refuse to adapt or have negative *attitudes toward teamwork* often cause delays in operations and result in inefficiency. This inevitably affects competitiveness of the organization.

(3) Team building is needed and requires *cooperation* from all staff members. The organization has provided teamwork workshops and activities to help employees adapt and develop themselves into *members of teams* for good performance and effectiveness.

(4) The organization is well aware of employees' *job satisfaction* that it affects performance and effectiveness as team members. Team leaders have a vital role in creating *trust, satisfaction and feeling of support* for team members. In this regard, team leaders have been made aware of their significant role in *communicating tactfully* with followers.

(5) The *human resource management* in the organization has explicated the clear-cut policy and team-based work procedure to all employees. Their individual career paths, expected work performance, and performance appraisal criteria are made known to those concerned to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation that could lead to undesirable turnover.

(6) In coping with the increasingly intense business competition, the organization *needs skilled and experienced workers*, and tends to look for *talents from other organizations*, causing those existing staff members with required experience to lose their jobs. This also has impact on the organization's policy on staff recruitment, and also on *team leaders* who are not able to maintain their team members.

From the information volunteered from ten team leaders in the service industry, we can see that their responses pointed to the issues of concern in Figure 1, personnel adjustments to teamwork and determining factors for success in teamwork, as reported earlier in Section 2.

The obtained information from ten leaders was consistent with the topic of concern over teamwork in the service/ hospitality industry organization. It is without doubt that teamwork relies on a number of factors, namely the relationships between team leader and team members, communication within the organization, support from the human resource management policy and work procedure, trust in the supervisor or team leader, and relationship models and organizational engagement.

Good hospitality job abilities and skills are always in great demand. However, for organizations to keep their existing talents in teams, they need to work on leadership, teamwork attributes, and staff involvement through tactful processes of motivation and good

corporate culture. As known, transformational leadership is required to sustain entrepreneurship traits for productivity and effective teamwork within service industry organizations.

7. Conclusion

The author showed in this paper that studies in teamwork by Thai researchers pointed to personnel adjustments and determining factors for success in teamwork practiced in the service industry. Their findings are related to teamwork based on theoretical concepts as shown in Sections 3 and 4, and Figure 1 which was supported by interview information from ten team leaders in the service industry in Thailand.

In relating the literature and the selected theorists' concepts, the author collected additional information from interviewing some service industry personnel located in the central and the eastern parts of Thailand. This was to reach a convincing conclusion on the major issues of concern in Thailand's service industry regarding personnel adjustments and determining factors for success in teamwork as experienced by them in the service industry. Through teamwork, personnel adjustments prompt personnel to bring out their skills and competencies to work together, adapt themselves, handle conflicts, and develop positive attitude toward teamwork and team leadership. To remain in the workforce, current employees need to pull together their skills and expertise to work toward the organization's assigned tasks and common goal. As for what determines success in team work, those factors were skilled and experienced employees, good leadership, and good team membership. As such, teamwork has therefore served as solution for organizations to stay competitive in productivity and attained goals in the service industry.

8. The Author

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