

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction This critical review essay will involve a case study regarding Dr Alice Parker who works for SMART Engineering company. She faces many obstacles in her workplace, which I feel the case study comes across with. She has been tasked with being a lead role on a project which involves designing vital components for the electric car, the deadline of the project is going to be missed. I will be reviewing in depth detail of how the case study comes across within her and others self-management, personal, cognitive, and unconscious bias comes into play. Accountability and authentic behaviour appear. Interpersonal relationships with other colleagues and their Professional integrity. I will be critically evaluating Dr Alice Parker and her team and provide my opinion on what happened on this particular project, and the company in the way they handle their engineers, designers, and marketing specialists, as they all come from diverse backgrounds, with whom have different experiences and roles. I will discuss why this happened and who was affected at SMART Engineering, the consequences of their actions and how I think they could have done things differently.

Self-Management – Dr Alice Parker stresses in the case study that she feels a big divide between Genders in the workplace for example there are 4 male engineers and 3 female workers. She also explains whenever she has an idea or an updated status about the project, male workers will deliver it rather than her in the meetings. From reading the case study it does seem to me that male workers tend to have a higher authority and are given a voice to speak, rather than a female worker where they are overlooked. Although on the other hand she has been giving a very important project this will coincide with the employer following the Equality act 2010. It also requires that the public bodies have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. (GOV.UK, 2013).

Rather than speaking up on how she feels to Senior management Dr Alice Parker I feel closes herself off to others, by not saying how she feels which coincides with her not sharing her ideas and updates on the project, this

could lead to a massive effect on why the deadline is not being met. Stereotyping men and women do show greatly in the study, so what does this do to the females in this particular workplace and their confidence, ambition? You can clearly see that there is a divide which Dr Alice states explaining “them and us” which to me refers to the males versus females but also Senior Management. Research shows a consistent or systemic devaluing of women relative to men in professional settings even by individuals who explicitly endorse egalitarian beliefs and reject sexism. (Menzies. -2018). In the team most of her colleagues come from the same working backgrounds, which understandably people would gravitate towards each other, as they have a common knowledge or interest, we have learnt that is how society works and has done for years. Looking back at history dated from 1837 there was a lower class, middle class, upper class, which depending on your role and your income you were put into these categories; people would only interact with others from their class. We have come a long way since then but still seems to be a problem still in current times in society and the workplace. Alice does not have this which I think is making her feel isolated from her fellow colleagues in relation to coming from the same job roles. In their defence they just probably feel they have more experience on the project than she does, looking at it from two perspectives.

Emotions and stress levels are showing throughout the project regarding Dr Alice and her colleagues, they are not working together to solve the project as a team. Collective emotion, which is when a group of people shares an emotion, is often stronger than a single individual feeling the same emotion alone. (Goldenberg. A, 2023). They are clearly showing negative emotions towards each other throughout the case study especially towards Dr Alice and her wife who works for the same company. Sexual orientation is affected and explained when Alice and her wife walk into a room people stop talking and whispering behind their backs. Any person may be thinking “what are they saying about me or us”. This is causing a divide again and animosity in the workplace but is it just because of her sexual orientation? Or is it because of their status as “married”. The treatment could be a one-off action or as a result of a rule based on sexual orientation. It doesn't have to be intentional to be unlawful (Equality

Human Rights -2016). Throughout the case study Dr Alice has tried to speak to Senior Management and come to an agreement for resources but they did not follow through with this for her, creating issues for the project deadline to be met. I think her confidence and enthusiasm has decreased in the project as there are too many personal matters to come to surface. Negative relationships with senior management and fellow colleagues which are difficult interpersonal challenges to overcome. Her focus has not been on the project towards the end, as there were so many obstacles to achieve. I do not think Dr Alice could not lead herself or come up with strategies to focus on the project or even plan. She did not have a voice relating back to her opinions not being valid by colleagues. This could be because of her background of experience, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity coming from both sides. Colleagues did not help the situation as the male colleagues did not stand up to Senior Management either.

Everyone seems to be worried about the deadline of the project and blaming others. No one is taking accountability for their actions in the workplace, the interpersonal challenges seem to be overwhelming and distracting everyone from working together. Alice did not have good relationships with fellow colleagues to start out with, so to lead the project was even more challenging and of course she is a homosexual female. I felt like she chose to be a victim rather than a victor throughout the process of being leader and trying to lead a team. Ambition and self-motivation did not strive for Dr Alice as she had too many personal issues to contend with. Colleague's attitudes towards Dr Alice meant that the goal of the project was always negative, as they did not trust or believe in her. Rather than speaking about their problems, they would do it behind each other's backs. I think everyone got lost in the conflict of it all and the goal was never ending.

Personal, Cognitive, and Unconscious Bias - Looking at the case study it seems to be inevitable that the bias was mostly down to gender bias. The company was so used to male dominance and being stuck in their old ways, as society used to be. If you, woman, are home, your children equate housekeeping, childcare and other unpaid 'women's work' with women.

They see their father, a man, earn in the world. That informs their ideas about gender and what is expected of women and men. (Johnson.2018). So, if the company was mostly men and these were their beliefs embedded by old fashioned traditions, they would certainly have a cognitive unconscious bias. They would think it's the norm from growing up with these beliefs. On the other hand, being intelligent individuals who all have successful job roles surely, they would understand society has evolved from old traditions. You can always work on your bias and change your views, but some people in this company did not want to as it clearly shows as they keep on repeating the pattern, not just with Dr Alice but also other female colleagues too. Do the Male men have that self-awareness to even understand their cognitive bias? Self-awareness internal and external I feel needs to be worked on, by each individual of that company. Dr Alice's internal self-awareness always led to negativity, stress and anxiety as she did not fit into the environment not only as she was female but her sexual orientation and affinity bias that happened in the workplace.

Accountability and Authentic Behaviour - Taking a look at the case study there is a common denominator within accountability, that no one seems to be accountable for any part they play within the company. Always finding someone else to blame. No ownership, no lead. So was the project doomed from the start to meet these deadlines. Unrealistic goals perhaps from senior management. Meetings that took place verbally between Dr Alice and Senior management, who was accountable for that? It came across as informal discussions that took place on numerous occasions. Where was the written agreement in that meeting, who was accountable for taking notes signing an agreement about the resources for the team lead Dr Alice so she could complete the project on time. If it's not written down, did it actually happen. In my opinion it could have been both parties. If she had a negative relationship that was not trusting in the beginning with Senior Management, why was she happy just to take their word and promises so to speak. It also showed me at this point in the case study that maybe Dr Alice morals were different to senior management, that she believed their word as she would not do that to them, or not follow through

when you clearly make a promise with a person. To cover her own accountability, I would have written documentation of those meetings, therefore she wouldn't get the blame or be blamed for deadlines not being met. Vice versa for the Senior Management although being in such an authoritative role you would have procedures in place for formal or informal meetings. The accountability was never diverse or inclusive within the team as the gender affinity always came into it. Why wouldn't other colleagues let the women colleagues speak in the meetings. By doing this no one was really authentic or giving their own opinions. Being true to themselves was not shown at all, it states that the male colleagues felt bad about this situation in meetings, but never said anything. The divide just showed massively and maybe if the male colleagues did say something, would there be such a divide then? Or did they think it would have too much of a negative impact on them, and look badly at Senior Management to question them, stand up for their fellow female colleagues. It seemed to be that the male colleagues were afraid of the repercussions that could occur if they spoke against Senior Management. Authenticity is crucial within the workplace; it's one of the eight drivers to help professional and personal activity. (Smart,2013). The affinity basis is never addressed by Dr Alice; she may feel the exclusion but never expresses herself through words or her actions, she is not being true to herself. Where on the other hand I see her colleagues are authentic when gravitating to fellow colleagues who come from the same industry as it's a feeling of connection with a person or maybe the same direction, they could have had similar experiences, knowledge. Learning styles could be the same when making decisions within the project. Maybe they are unaware of the intent it is causing Dr Alice how she feels guarded and not speaking up. Will she be judged and looked over again from having different perspectives on things?

Interpersonal Relationships - The impact of gender and affinity biases regarding the relationships within the SMART company is massively affected. I believe each individual is affected in their own certain way, as no one ever thinks or feels the same emotions that occurred throughout the case study. They were the two key factors that broke down

relationships, or for even a positive relationship to start. How can you start off a negative relationship and turn it into a positive one. The obstacles and preconceptions about each other were too strong to see past it. Especially for Dr Alice as in the end it was too much for her resigned from the company. No one invested time into each other throughout the study, it seemed they were all split into their groups Males, Females, Senior Management. Why did they not integrate with others? Why did they choose to ignore the problems and pass the blame on numerous occasions? Maybe it came to them being comfortable in their groups, although Dr Alice certainly did not feel this at all. I feel she felt like everyone was against her as they were not being a team.

Relationships have to work both ways in order to achieve a goal, her team perceptions, observations and influence from Senior management all played a role in why the deadline was not met. There was no communication to build any form of relationship, Senior Management did not listen to Alice's wants and needs, and her fellow colleagues were gossiping behind her back; how she was ever to succeed. There was only so much resilience a person can take. Dr Alice was pushed to her limits. Language barriers could have been what stopped the relationships from being positive. The way people expressed themselves through verbal, vocal or visual language. When considering language use beyond the use of profanity or discriminatory language, which are often highlighted with formal policy documents, informal language policies exist where professionals at work operate and utilise in what is seen as an accepted organisational language. (Foster A,2019). Where was the documentation for all their meetings, it was always informal discussions with people she did not trust. Communication in this case study seemed not to go through a full cycle as too many barriers were in the way. Looking at Berne's transactional analysis the case study showed everyone at that company to be hopeless passive aggressive, when for effective communication to take place and to be inclusive to all colleagues, they should all or some come under the category of happy assertive person which means I'm okay you're okay (Harris,1967). In order to achieve this, they would have needed to collaborate with each other on the project, not avoid certain topics,

speaking up on the dynamics that were affecting them all including Gender affinity and roles. Senior management should have been more accommodating to Dr Alice wants and needs for resources.

To show compromise by maybe setting tasks for each month, splitting the project up in sections giving monthly deadlines maybe not a whole one for it all to be finished. By showing negotiation and diplomacy the communication would have been more effective and put a willingness and positivity on relationships so the deadline could have possibly been met. Therefore, would have given Dr Alice and her wife a reason to stay, if improvement was being made by equal communication. (Harvard law school,2024) states that diplomacy is the art of creating and managing relationships and the art of negotiation is that of forging relationships through agreements. Which we clearly did not see happening throughout the case study as too many views and opinions on gender dynamics and the affinity bias weighed heavily on the team.

Professional Integrity - When looking and reviewing professional integrity there shows very little in the case study. Where was the professionalism and values that they should have upheld in the company? Management gender bias was certainly not professional one bit, maybe on paper it was as they appointed Dr Alice a “female” leader on a project. However, a title didn't seem to mean anything though as she still was a woman. The Male beliefs, values and morals were so strong minded, which led to negative effects on their staff and their team leads. Resulting two women colleagues leaving the company. Which then leads to giving them a bad reputation, what women would go for a strong male dominance to work for such a company I certainly would not. Employability for the company could be affected massively, so if they did not have the numbers to do such big projects, how could they give their staff deadlines which are impossible to meet. Word and mouth would always follow any company “as people talk “. What would they say about this company and the bias that is within the company? Did they not think of the consequences that could follow, such as getting deals with big major car companies. What people are running them Males or Females? Does that even matter? What if the CEO of a car

company they were going to collaborate with next was a female, who in fact heard how they were mistreating their staff, especially females would she really want to work with such gender biased people. (Eriskien,2015) stated that professional integrity involved showing strong adherence to moral and ethical principles and values such as honesty, honour, dependability, and trustworthiness' Alice did not have any of these shown to her which to me shows the importance and the effect it had on the person, colleagues and the company as a whole. The company also should take a close in depth look at their affinity bias when employing different people. How will they learn or progress or move with the times, when employing the same people with the same backgrounds. The company would not move forward or progress or even come to a point of their success would they succeed or would they not? How much could they really have succeeded when working with the same types of people that come from the same backgrounds. What happened to looking for the next best thing being diverse. No one respected Dr Alice's opinions; this was not showing professional integrity. Senior management was definitely not a role model to look up too. In my career of dentistry professional integrity is not only important to myself fellow colleagues but also the patients. Every healthcare professional must be open and honest with patients when something goes wrong with their treatment or care which causes, or has the potential to cause, harm or distress.(GDC,2016).If I did not uphold these rules and value them, breakdown of communication and a professional relationship between patients and staff would occur, therefore involving consequences being struck off by the GDC. Meaning losing my job and livelihood which would have a massive effect on my life. Sometimes professional integrity within my workplace with colleagues who do not share the same values or passion for the job can be very difficult and challenging sometimes. I have come across this in recent days with a fellow colleague, who shares the same duties and responsibilities for our surgery, but who does not believe it is their duty to maintain their role in that certain room, as I always am the one to keep everything in order e.g. - stocking surgery, filling out correct checklist sheet, temperature testing and so on the list is endless. This is very frustrating and sometimes I am not being authentic to myself by expressing my true emotions. How could I

improve on this situation, maybe not being afraid to voice my opinion, because how are things going to change if I cannot tell this person, and just expect she will understand due to my body language or silence. I do not want to be judged for having poor professional integrity but on the other hand I should have an opinion to have good professional integrity without upsetting people's feelings. As they should abide by the same rules as me under the GDC regulations.

Conclusion

Throughout this case study it was clear that the gender and affinity bias were the reasons Dr Alice left the company. She was not supported in her job role and in the end was defeated. The company did not look after Dr Alice and the professionalism in the workplace was very poor. I most certainly think there should have been more training on diversity in the workplace for everyone that worked at the company, including Senior management. Team building exercises would have helped maybe with communication between everyone. Meetings where each individual would voice their opinions, evidence in formal writing when the meetings took place, such as minute taking and each employee to sign to say they are present. These improvements might have changed and made a success in the deadlines being met. Listening to everyone's wants and needs, if Dr Alice was supported by other colleagues they could have stood up to Senior management, maybe she would have not left in the end. This case study has definitely made me as an individual think about my job role in the workplace and how bias's whether it is down to Gender, affinity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, play a massive part of growing and evolving both negative and a positive way.

Appendix 1 - PDP

Personal Development Plan

The thinking, knowledge, skills and behaviours that I will change and develop in order to achieve my vision and goals, adhere to my values and become as resilient as possible

N o	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timeli nes	What will this help me to achieve?
1	Stress management	Certificate on completion	Online course within Roderick dental	6 mont hs	To know how to deal with stress to work more efficiently
2	Duty of candour	Certificate on completion	Online course within Roderick Dental	6 mont hs	To be confident on this policy to take forward as my goal practice manger
3	Complaints handling	Certification Updated knowledge Confidence	Online course within Roderick Practical with practice manger	1 year	Help me in my role of coming practice manger. Formality of complaints process

Appendix 2

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