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Management, Organisations and Effectiveness: A literature review of this area with an emphasis on schools and educational institutions.

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Introduction

Identifying and measuring the concept of effectiveness in an organisational setting has been a major concern for many years. The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of the more recent research literature on the topic of organisational effectiveness, and to present some of the current ways that have been tried in an endeavour to measure this idea. Many researchers have tried to define what "organisational effectiveness" means, but while they have stated that they know "effectiveness" when they see it, they cannot really provide an adequate definition of the term. One of the difficulties, according to Cameron and Whetten (1983), is that "organisational effectiveness" is a construct rather than a concept. "Productivity" and "efficiency" are examples of concepts which can be defined and measured in a reasonably accurate way by observing events or by measuring the amount of organisational output.

However a construct is not the same as a concept. A construct according to Cameron and Whetten has no objective reality. The existence of a construct can only be inferred, since it is a mental abstraction whose main purpose is to give meaning to an idea. Consequently, the idea or mental abstraction of "organisational effectiveness" has been difficult to define in operational terms. There are other difficulties and these also should be recognised:

1. there is little or no agreement on what constitutes appropriate criteria to measure the idea of organisational effectiveness, and
2. there is still much uncertainty about the most appropriate type of model that should be developed to study this construct.

Nevertheless it is proposed to examine the findings of some of the researchers who have studied effectiveness in organisational settings. This approach would seem to be more useful and productive, even though there is so little agreement among researchers about what is the most appropriate way of analysing effectiveness in an organisational setting.

Organisational Effectiveness in the Thirties, Forties and Fifties

In contrast to Cameron and Whetten's construct, early views of organisational effectiveness focused on more concrete criteria. Katz (1955) wrote that effective administrative performance depended mainly on the acquisition of fundamental skills rather than on personality traits. These skills were classified by Katz into three basic groups:

1. technical,
2. human, and
3. conceptual

Technical skills involved the acquisition of specialised knowledge and techniques in a specific discipline. Human skills were those primarily concerned with people, and conceptual skills involved the administrator having the ability to see the enterprise as a whole. Current discussions still focus on these criteria.

A second, earlier, view focused on the concept of organisational effectiveness in the school setting. Mort (1946) and others of the Institute of Administrative Research argued that schools ought to be built around principles such as adaptability, flexibility, stability, democracy, justice and equality of opportunity. These criteria which were proposed in the 1930s and 1940s are still appearing in the current literature.

Organisational Effectiveness in the Seventies and Eighties

More recent research also points to the diversity of criteria which have been used to assess organisational effectiveness. Pratzner (1984) points to the similarities between the definitions or indices of productivity in the workplace and achievement in the schools. Productivity has been compared with academic achievement, and behavioural factors such as disruption, sabotage and absenteeism/turnover have been compared to discipline, vandalism, attendance/retention. Current research in the area of Quality of Worklife (QWL) and Effective Schools suggests that there may be some interrelatedness between these two areas of interest.

Mackenzie (cited in Pratzner, 1984) reviewed some of the research on school effectiveness. He argued that the effective schools literature, if read with some minor alterations, for example, if the word manager was substituted for the word teacher, employee substituted for the word student, corporation or workplace substituted for school, could easily refer to the QWL literature now appearing in more general organisation theory. Pratzner argues that the QWL and the effective schools literature address similar problems concerning the management and organisation of work and schooling. Both areas, according to Pratzner, could learn from each other.

Steers (1975) reviewed seventeen multivariate models of organisational effectiveness and found little consistency in the evaluation criteria of these

models. The evaluative criterion adaptability - flexibility; occurred ten times in the seventeen models. Productivity was next with six mentions. satisfaction was mentioned five times. profitability. resource acquisition received three mentions. and absence of control over environment. development. efficiency. employee retention. growth. integration. open communication received two mentions.

Eight major problems were identified in the study of organisational effectiveness by Steers and these have been summarised as follows:

1. Construct validity

Steers has referred to the effectiveness "construct", and as mentioned in the introductory remarks. a construct is an abstract idea rather than a concrete phenomenon. The question should therefore be asked. does organisational effectiveness really exist?

2. Criterion stability

In many of the models. the criteria which were used to evaluate effectiveness at a particular time might not be appropriate at some later time.

3. Time perspective

The problem here concerns the best way to balance short-run considerations with long-run interests in an effort to maximise stability and growth over time.

4. Multiple criteria

Sometimes criteria can be in conflict with each other. for example. productivity and employee satisfaction. Workers can be pressured to be more productive in the short term. but their levels of job satisfaction could possible decrease.

5. Precision of measurement

Problems arise in the measurement of organisational effectiveness. Quantification is difficult due to the complexity of the concept. How is a concept such as "satisfaction" to be measured accurately?

6. Generalisability

Criteria such as profitability and market share which are suitable for the business world. may be inappropriate when a non-profit or a public agency. such as a school. is being evaluated.

7. Theoretical relevance

Questions should be asked about the theoretical relevance of current models. Do these models increase our understanding of the day-to-day activities

within organisations? Do the models assist in making predictions about future behaviour? If not, they are of little value from a theoretical standpoint.

8. Levels of analysis

Many models of effectiveness relate to phenomena on a macro mevel, and there seems to be little integration between macro and micro levels of performance and effectiveness. Models of organisational effectiveness should be developed which take into account both individual processes and organisational behaviour.

Levinson (1980) conceptualised effectiveness as performance of the subordinate group. This really means that the effective or "good" leader is someone who can persuade his subordinates to do something.

Campbell (cited in Goodman et al, 1977) listed thirty criterion measures of organisational effectiveness. The list includes:

1. overall effectiveness measured by combined archival performance records or by obtaining overall ratings or judgements from persons thought to be knowledgeable about the organisation;
2. productivity usually defined as the quantity or volume of the major product or service that the organisation provides; and
3. efficiency defined as a ratio reflecting a comparison of some aspect of unit performance to the costs incurred for that performance. Some of the other items were: profit, accidents, absenteeism, job satisfaction, interpersonal skills and participation in the decision-making process.

Angle and Perry (1981), in a study of organisational commitment/organisational effectiveness, identified employee turnover (separation rate), employee tardiness, absenteeism, operating expense and organisational adaptability as indicators of organisational effectiveness. The study was an attempt to relate the degree of organisational commitment of lower-level employees in a bus service industry to organisational effectiveness. In this study it was acknowledged that organisational effectiveness was multi-dimensional and that the determinants of organisational effectiveness could vary.

Dyson and Foster (1983) used two approaches in their study:

1. effectiveness could be assessed by the degree to which goals set by the planning process were reached, and
2. effectiveness could also be characterised by a number of attributes of the planning process.

This list of attributes including items such as a clear statement of objectives,

the level of integration, and depth of evaluation could be regarded as a check list to see whether or not a weakness was apparent in the system. However, the first approach had two immediate weaknesses, circumstances within the organisation could change, and the stated goals could become valueless. In addition organisation members could set goals that were too easily obtainable thus giving an impression of effectiveness.

Organisational Effectiveness in a School Setting

One way of analysing the concept of organisational effectiveness is to examine "effectiveness" in a particular kind of organisation, for example, a school. The ideas and concepts which apply to an effective school or educational institution could be examined to see if they apply to a non-educational institution. Recent research carried out within the discipline of educational administration has indicated that effective schools are characterised by:

1. clearly defined and constantly emphasised curricular goals;
2. high expectations for student achievement on the part of both teachers and principals;
3. an orderly learning environment with effective but nonrepressive discipline, and
4. low teacher turnover.

Conversely, ineffective schools are characterised by:

1. objectives which are vague or contradictory;
2. teachers who project low expectations;
3. a high turnover rate, and
4. rampant disorder.

Mortimore (1981) studied effectiveness in "unusually effective London high schools". The measures or indicators of effectiveness which he used were:

1. attendance
2. behaviour in school
3. delinquency out of school, and
4. learning measured by scores in public examinations.

There was a fifth outcome, the long term follow-up of young people in the world of work, but the data in this area are still being analysed.

According to Purkey and Smith (1983), an effective school could be identified by:

1. evidence of strong administrative leadership;
2. high expectations for children's achievement;
3. an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning;
4. an emphasis on basic skill acquisition, and
5. frequent monitoring of pupil progress.

They also identified organisational and structural variables which impinged upon the overall effectiveness of the school, for example:

1. the leadership and staff of a school should have considerable autonomy in determining the means by which the problem of increasing academic performance is addressed;
2. instructional leadership is necessary to initiate and maintain the improvement process;
3. a school staff should be kept as stable as possible; and
4. a planned purposeful programme of courses at the secondary level seems to be more beneficial academically, than an approach which offers many electives and few requirements.

Four process variables were also identified in this study as having an effect on the school culture and climate:

1. an emphasis on collaborative planning, and the development of collegial relationships which would encourage the kind of intellectual sharing that could lead to consensus;
2. a sense of community that would contribute to reduced alienation and increased achievement;
3. a clearly defined purpose so that schools would focus on those tasks which they thought most important, and
4. a school which emphasised order and discipline would be more likely to convey its sense of purpose to the student body than an unruly school.

In another study by Miskel et al (1979) effective schools, as perceived by teachers, were described as characterised by more participative organisational processes, less centralised decision-making structures, more formalised general rules and more professional activity. According to Miskel, perceived organisational effectiveness was the subjective evaluation of a school's productivity, adaptability and flexibility. Schools produced a variety of services in terms of the instruction, learning and extracurricular events which they developed. In Miskel's view the relative quality, quantity and efficiency of these services were components of organisational effectiveness.

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In a later study Miskel et al (1983) stated that effectiveness in schools was too often narrowly defined by the scores on standardised tests. This approach was due in part to the current political interest in reading and mathematical skills. However, Miskel argued that criteria for organisational effectiveness should include:

1. quantity and quality of outputs;
2. adaptability, and
3. participant attitudes.

According to Miskel et al (1983), organisational effectiveness was now assumed to be a multi-dimensional concept and they cited the following as indicators of effectiveness in schools: perceived organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction and student attitudes. In more detail:

1. perceived organisational effectiveness was defined as the subjective evaluation of a school's productivity, adaptability and flexibility. Effective schools were perceived to produce more services and in better quality, and to show more flexibility and adaptability than less effective schools.
2. job satisfaction was defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's values. Job satisfaction is now a legitimate criterion of organisational effectiveness.
3. student attitudes which are now considered important indicators of school effectiveness. Studies of student attitudes can range from: alienation to identification with school, drop-out to high attendance behaviour and competition to individualism.

Organisational Effectiveness - Some Practical Applications

In this introductory review of a very complex and slippery construct, several features have appeared in the literature which have received almost unanimous agreement. Most organisational theorists agree that the study of "effectiveness" is central in organisational theory, and one which cannot be ignored. However problems arise when agreement is sought on the criteria which should be developed. At a more practical level, every type of organisation is subject to some form of discussion about the effective and efficient operation of its activities. Sometimes the criteria may appear to be superficial and perhaps even simplistic. For example, some organisations such as schools are constantly being evaluated to see whether or not they are reaching their stated goals. Some schools are known for their academic success, other schools are known for their sporting prowess, or their music or drama programs.

Irrespective of the particular programs, the various client groups make their appraisals and then form judgements about the effectiveness of a particular school. Business firms and non-profit organisations are also constantly being appraised by their client groups, and it does seem to the layman that appropriate judgements can be made about the effectiveness of organisations without experiencing the difficulties that professional organisational theorists seem to experience. The organisational theorist is likely to consider a number of factors when making a judgement about an organisation's effectiveness, such as:

1. the structure and technology of the organisation;
2. the environment including both external and internal characteristics;
3. the policies and practices involving the use of resources, and
4. the characteristics relating to employees such as performance and attachment.

All these would be considered when judgements were being made about a particular organisation's effectiveness.

The layman might not be so concerned with all of these aspects, but he could use some of the following indicators to make his judgements about an organisation's effectiveness.

1. **Public recognition:** Is the organisation recognised by the public for the contribution it makes in its special area of expertise?
2. **Satisfying needs:** Does the organisation satisfy a need(s)?
3. **Measures of performance:** Does the organisation produce what it purports to produce?
4. **Comparison with other organisations:** Does the organisation compare favourably with other organisations engaged in similar activities?
5. **An estimation by a knowledgeable person:** Does the superordinate "knowledgeable" person comment favourably about the organisation?
6. **Visible innovations:** Is the organisation perceived to be innovative, and does it keep up with changes?
7. **Research and publications:** Does the organisation encourage research activity and does it publish the findings of such research?
8. **Public service consultants:** Does the organisation provide a service to the public?
9. **Cooperation with other organisations:** Does the organisation

cooperate with other organisations and institutions engaged in similar activities?

10. **Concept of net performance:** How does the organisation measure up to an overall estimation of its effectiveness?

Another list of criteria or indicators of an organisation's effectiveness could be as follows:

1. To what extent is the organisation surviving in a harsh and turbulent external environment? This factor alone might be sufficient cause for defining the organisation as effective.
2. How efficient is the organisation? Efficiency is defined here as a ratio that reflects a comparison of some aspect of unit performance to the costs incurred for that performance.
3. To what degree do the members of the organisation and the clients group of the organisation, demonstrate a degree of satisfaction?
4. To what extent is the organisation perceived to be adaptive in a rapidly changing environment?
5. To what degree does the organisation demonstrate a level of development?

Both these lists of indicators/criteria could provide a starting point for an analysis of the way in which organisations attempt to reach their goals. According to Hoy and Miskel (1982), these could be the "official goals" as set out in the organisation's formal statement of purpose, the "operative goals" which reflect the actual task and activities carried out in the organisation, or the "operational goals" which carry with them approved criteria and evaluation procedures that delineate how the levels of accomplishment will be measured.

Organisational Effectiveness: Recent Models

The goal model of organisational effectiveness is one way of analysing the concept. In this model, a goal is understood to be a desired state of affairs which the organisation attempts to realise. If the organisation reaches its goals then the organisation may be considered effective. The goal model is based on an understanding that the decision makers are rational, that they have in mind a certain number of goals which they wish to pursue, and that these goals should be few enough in number so they can be administered conveniently.

Another way of examining effectiveness in organisations is through the system resource model. In this model of organisational effectiveness originally developed by Yuchtman and Seashore (1967), the effectiveness

of an organisation is based on the ability of that organisation to procure assets and to acquire resources. The basic assumption in both models was that it was possible to arrive at a single statement of organisational effectiveness. However organisational effectiveness is now regarded as multi-dimensional, and to promote this idea the work of Talcott Parsons (1960) is considered in the following explanation.

Parsons had argued that a social system's survival depends on four critical functions:

1. adaptation which is concerned with the system's need to control its environment;
2. goal achievement which is concerned with the gratification of system goals;
3. integration which refers to a social solidarity with the system, and
4. latency which is the maintenance of the integrity of the value system.

A model of organisational effectiveness has been developed (see Figure 1) which according to Hoy and Miskel (1982) integrates the work of Parsons, Campbell and Steers.

The model specifies the four functions which Parsons had proposed and describes them as "dimensions" of effectiveness. To each of these four dimensions, multiple indicators are added, and to each multiple indicator the perspectives of time, level and constituency are added. The completed model incorporates dimensions, indicators and added perspectives of organisational effectiveness. In more detail, the dimension of "adaptation" can be expanded by the multiple indicators of adaptability, flexibility, innovation, growth, development and equipment. The dimension of "goal attainment" has been expanded by the adaptation of the multiple indicators of achievement, productivity, resource acquisition, efficiency and quality. The dimension of "integration" has been expanded by the multiple indicators of satisfaction, employee turnover, absenteeism, conflict-cohesion, climate and open communication. Finally, the dimension of "latency" has been expanded by the multiple indicators of loyalty, central life interests, sense of identity, motivation and norm congruency. This model is a most comprehensive conceptual approach to the study of organisational effectiveness, however it does require lengthy and complicated analysis.

Another approach which was originally developed by Mott (1972) (see Figure 2), was referred to earlier in the paper (see page 8). Miskel et al (1983) later referred to this concept of perceived organisational effectiveness and two others, job satisfaction and student activities, as reliable indicators of organisational effectiveness in schools. An eight item measure for use in

various organisational settings was developed which Mott called the "Index of Perceived Organisational Effectiveness". In his view the subjective evaluations of organisation members provided a reasonably valid measure of an organisation's effectiveness.

A Realistic Approach to Organisational Effectiveness

Organisational effectiveness, even though it is such an elusive concept, is now a major area of research in organisation theory. People are always having to make judgements, sometimes instant judgements, about the effectiveness of organisations such as schools, banks, health funds, building firms, hospitals, insurance companies, superannuation funds and airlines. The man in the street seems to be able to make these types of judgements, without too much trouble, but it is the professional researcher in the area of organisational theory who has most trouble in deciding what makes one organisation effective and another organisation less effective.

Cameron and Whetter (1983) have outlined three major problems which, in their opinion, have led to the multiple models of organisational effectiveness being developed. These are, the multiple conceptualisations of organisations, the notion of unbounded construct space and an absence of consensual criteria. They have argued that the best criteria for assessing effectiveness are as yet unknown. The rationale for this view is that organisational effectiveness is subjective and is based on personal values and preferences. Where does this approach leave the student who is new to the study of organisation theory? Every researcher can indicate problems associated with defining the concept of organisational effectiveness and with the inadequacies of previous research, but no one, it seems, can provide any substantial answers or examples to clarify the problem.

However Cameron and Whetten do make two suggestions concerned with improving our understanding of organisational effectiveness. They argue that: there cannot be only one universal model of organisational effectiveness, and developing frameworks for assessing effectiveness is more useful than trying to develop theories of effectiveness. A number of guidelines have also been proposed. These include establishing the perspective from which to judge the particular instance of effectiveness, establishing the domain of activity upon which the judgement is focused, determining the level of analysis to be used, determining the purpose for judging the effectiveness, establishing a time frame, deciding upon the type of data to be used and deciding the reference against which effectiveness is to be judged.

Finally Cameron and Whetter argue that to increase a deeper understanding of organisational effectiveness, a more productive and useful approach

would be to concentrate on specifying the characteristics of our own particular circumstances rather than trying to develop universal models of effectiveness.

Summary

The purpose of this paper has been to identify some of the major problems associated with understanding the concept of effectiveness in organisations. Estimating the degree of effectiveness in an organisational context presents a number of problems, for example, no one has yet developed an instrument which can accurately measure organisational effectiveness in such a way as to be acceptable to all those interested in the concept.

In the first section of the paper, organisational effectiveness was presented as a construct rather than a concept. This interpretation raises problems because a construct is essentially a mental abstraction, and thus this type of conceptualisation is very difficult to operationalise. Even though researchers have found it almost impossible to agree on what constitutes effectiveness, a number of them have written about the nature of effectiveness in various situations. For example, Katz (1955) wrote that the performance of effective administrators depended on the acquisition of technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. Mort (1946) who studied effectiveness in an educational context stated that a school/educational institution was more likely to be effective if it was built around principles such as: adaptability, flexibility, stability, democracy, justice and equality of opportunity.

Steers (1975), in a review of seventeen models of organisational effectiveness, found that the evaluative criteria occurring most frequently was adaptability-flexibility. Angle and Perry (1981) identified employee turnover (separation rate), employee tardiness, absenteeism, operating expense and organisational adaptability as their indicators of organisational effectiveness. Dyson and Foster (1983) argued that effectiveness could be assessed by the degree to which goals set by the planning process were reached. Miskel et al (1978) found that effective schools were characterised by more participative organisational processes, less centralised decision-making structures, more formalised general rules and more professional activity. In a later study, Miskel et al (1983) cited three other factors as indicators of organisational effectiveness; perceived organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction and student attitudes.

Purkey and Smith (1983) in a major review of the school effectiveness literature found that an effective school could be identified by strong leadership, high expectations for the pupils, an orderly atmosphere, an emphasis on the basic skills and frequent monitoring of pupil progress. More

recently Pratzner (1984) has compared productivity in the workplace with achievement in schools. Factors such as disruption, sabotage, and absenteeism/turnover in the workplace have been compared with disciplinary problems such as vandalism, attendance/retention in the school setting.

The models of organisational effectiveness which have been most widely used are the goal model and the system resource model. Recently the work of Talcott Parsons (1960) has been revived and a model which integrates his work with Campbell and Steers has been developed.

Concluding Comment

Cameron and Whetten (1983), in their study of this most slippery and elusive concept, have argued that it is more productive to concentrate on specifying the characteristics of our own particular circumstances rather than trying to develop universal models of effectiveness. One such approach would be for Education Department superintendents to nominate effective schools, which could then be studied in depth with ethnographic research procedures. Another approach would be to carry out comparative studies on an inter-state basis. For example, a study could be undertaken to see if schools in Victoria, now administered in a more decentralised way, are any more effective than schools administered in a centralised system. Thirdly, comparative studies could be undertaken on an intra-state basis with schools from the State. Catholic and Independent systems being considered. Fourthly, an action research model could be used to implement and monitor administrative changes suggested by staff within one school on the basis of staff consultation and participatory decision making. However, whichever way we decide to go or whichever model we decide to use, "effectiveness" will always remain a major concern of management and organisations in general and educational institutions in particular.

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