

Improving Organizational Systems Effectiveness: Interventions and Strategies

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Abstract— Communication climate is an example of macro, global concept that is often the focus of organizational change effort. This paper states that changing workers in organizations by means of processes that enhance their knowledge base, modify their attitudes, and strengthen their skills is an important way to improve both individual and organizational or system effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness can also be increased by making changes in aspects of organizational communication and work systems.

Index Terms— Organizational Change, Communication Climate, Communication Technology, Organizational Processes, Organization Systems, Organization Change Interventions, Communication Processes

1 INTRODUCTION

THE communication variables of information patterns and flow, leadership, practices and styles, decision making and problem solving, conflict resolution, superior-subordinate relations, and communication technology as well as work flow, rewards, strategic planning, and financial management are variables and issues that comprise macro, organizational processes. Macro organization change efforts involve strategies and interventions designed to affect communication processes directly, and the strategies and interventions to bring about macro organization change efforts are based on and are implemented through communication activities and practices. This paper points out that the heart of both organizational processes and organization change interventions is communication. Organizational communication is both the method of change and the object of change. Making an organization more effective requires changing communication processes and practices, but changing an organization involves using communication processes and practices.

2 MODELS AND METHODS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

Change in organization systems can occur in one or more of subsystems: the social, the technical, and the administrative (Kur, 1981), and among different levels: the individual, the structural, and the cultural (Goodstein & Burke, 1991). It is on these subsystems and levels of phenomena that the organization change agent must focus in order to bring about change in the overall system.

Systems change programs are usually coordinated by a change agent (Pace, Smith & Mills, 1991, pp. 129-136), but practical considerations dictate that organization members work collaboratively or together as a team with the change agent. A basic assumption underlying most systems change interventions is that organization members must take control of the problems and “own” the solutions, or at least feel that the procedures to be used are ones that they have selected. The change agent is involved in the process not to provide answers

to problems, but to show organization members alternative ways to work on the problems.

Even though systems change efforts are directed toward subsystems and process levels, of which communication is the most prominent organization systems, and especially bureaucratic or formal organizations, run so counter to the assumptions on which change efforts are based that it may not be possible to make only far-reaching changes in organization systems. For example, Schein and Greiner (1977) argued that interventions work best in an “organic” or open system rather than in a functional system, which are characterized by open communication, interdependence among groups, considerable trust, joint problem solving, and risk taking. On the other hand, bureaucracies tend, not to be very open, making change interventions somewhat difficult to use. In addition, bureaucracies are not particularly amenable to change in order to become open system.

Therefore, to bring about more open communication, more trust, more risk taking, and more joint problem solving, which are some of the primary goals of organization change interventions, one need to have an organization that already embodies those goals.

This dilemma or paradox—may be solved by using interventions that improve or refine the operations of bureaucratic organizations, rather than attempt to bring about significant overall system change. Working within the confines of the social, technical, and administrative subsystems, change interventions should look to reduce interdepartmental conflicts, increase coordination, improve communication across functions, reduce frustration and boredom, accentuate innovation, and enhance vitality.

3 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that most interventions fail to bring about any fundamental change in the way in which things are done in organizations. They are nevertheless, clearly helping organization members to adapt to and cope more effectively with environmental and internal work conditions. In fact, change interventions fine-tune and stabilize organizations so that they can become more effective. Burke (1980) says that what is practiced as organizational change does not usually make systematic changes anyway, but results in a form of "tinkering" with the system.

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