

STUDY UNIT 6 WORK GROUPS AND TEAMS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- On successful completion of this study unit, students will be able to:
 - Compare and contrast work groups and teams
 - Summarise the five stages of group development and their main characteristics
 - Identify the key factors in explaining group behaviour
 - Identify group decision-making techniques in every day situations
 - Explain the growing popularity of teams in organisations
 - Identify and discuss the four types of teams used in organisations
 - Discuss the team effectiveness model
 - Summarise the various approaches to identifying team roles

DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING GROUPS

- A group is two or more interacting and interdependent individuals. Who get together to achieve particular objectives.
 - Formal groups are those defined by the organisation's structure.
 - Informal groups are alliances that are neither formally determined nor organisationally determined.
- Sub-classifications of groups include:
 - Command groups, which are determined by the organisational chart.
 - Task groups, which are determined by the organisation, and where people work together to complete a job.
 - Interest groups, which are composed of employees who band together to achieve personal interests.
 - Friendship groups, which are social alliances which frequently extend beyond the scope of the organisation.
- People join groups for various reasons:
 - Security, which gives individuals feel stronger and more resistant to threats.
 - Status, because people get recognition for group membership.
 - Self-esteem, where groups provide feelings of self-worth.
 - Affiliation, in that, groups can fulfil social needs.
 - Power from strength in numbers.
 - Goal achievement, where it allows to achieve more than individuals can achieve on their own.

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

- Forming, which is characterised by a great deal of uncertainty about the group's purpose, structure and leadership.
 - Members are 'testing the water' to determine what type of behaviours are acceptable.
 - This stage is complete when members have begun to think of themselves on part of a group.
- Storming, which is characterised by intra-group conflict.
 - Members accept the existence of the group, but there is resistance to the constraints that the group imposes on individuality.
 - There is conflict over who will control the group.

- When this stage is completed, there will be a relatively clear hierarchy of leadership within the group.
- Norming, which is complete when the group, structure solidifies and the group has assimilated a common set of expectations of what define correct member behaviours.
- Performing
 - The structure at this point is fully functional and accepted.
 - Group energy has moved from getting to know and understanding each other to performing the task at hand.
- Adjourning
 - The group prepares for its disbandment.
 - High task performance is no longer the group's top priority, instead attention is directed towards wrapping up activities (220 / 10.2).

EXPLAINING GROUP WORK AND GROUP BEHAVIOUR

External conditions imposed on the group

- External conditions which impact the work group include:
 - The organisation's overall strategy, which affects group power and resource allocation.
 - Organisational authority structures, in terms of who reports to whom, who makes decisions, and what decisions groups are empowered to make.
 - Formal organisational arrangements, such as rules, policies and job descriptions which are established to standardise employee behaviour.
 - The presence or absence of resources such as money, time, raw materials and equipment.
 - Organisational criteria which guide selection processes.
 - The organisation's performance evaluation and reward systems.
 - The organisation's culture in areas such as the behaviours that are supported and the dominant cultures of powerful groups.
 - The physical work setting, including issues such as size and layout, illumination levels and acoustics and noise distractions.

Resources for group members

- A group's potential level of performance is dependent on the following:
 - Knowledge, skills and abilities of group members
 - Personality characteristics expressed through traits such as sociability, initiative, openness and flexibility

Group structure

- Structural variables include:
 - Formal leadership
 - Roles which are reflected through sets of expected behaviour patterns
 - Role identity which reflect the expected attitudes and behaviours consistent with a role
 - Role perception which reflects a person's view how he / she is supposed to act in a given situation

- Role expectations, which are defined as how others believe a person should act in a given situation, and tend to be reflected in terms of the unwritten psychological contract
- Role conflict, which occurs when a person is confronted by divergent role expectations
- Norms which reflect acceptable standards of behaviour shared by group members.
 - The following classes of norms can be identified:
 - Performance norms, which are cues how hard group members should work
 - Appearance norms, which reflect rules in terms of dress, when to look busy, and when it is acceptable to joke around
 - Social arrangement norms, which regulate social interactions
 - Allocation of resources norms
 - Norms are important because they:
 - Increase the predictability of member behaviour
 - Reduce embarrassing interpersonal problems
 - Allow members to express central group values
- Conformity, which requires people to adhere to group norms
- Groupthink, which refers to a situation in which groups pressures for conformity deter the group from critically appraising unusual, unpopular or minority views.
- Groupshift, which indicates that when people discuss set of alternatives, initial positions are exaggerated
- Group status, which reflects a socially defined position or rank.
- Group size, where groups of five to seven are preferable
- Composition of the group in terms of demographics
- Group cohesiveness, which reflect the degree to which members are attracted to each other

Group processes

- Four effectiveness areas can be identified:
 - Design
 - Team member interaction
 - Empowerment
 - Leadership

Group tasks

- Task complexity and interdependence affect performance.

GROUP DECISION MAKING

- Four techniques need to be noted:
 - Brainstorming, which sees members freewheel their ideas and using others ideas as a way to fuel their own creativity.
 - Nominal group technique, which sees members physically present but operating individually.
 - After a problem is presented the following steps are taken:
 - Each member independently writes down his / her ideas on the problem.

- The ideas are then presented.
- Presented ideas are discussed for clarity and evaluation
- Each group member silently and independently rates the ideas and the idea with the highest aggregate ranking determines the final decision.
- Delphi technique, which does not require the physical presence of participants.
- Electronic meeting which sees participants seated around a horse shoe-shaped table behind computer terminals.
 - Input into terminals is made individually and electronically summarised.

UNDERSTANDING WORK TEAMS

Why have teams become so popular?

- Teams typically outperform individuals when tasks require multiple skills, judgement, and experience.
- Teams are more flexible and responsive to changing events than traditional departments.
- Teams have the capability to quickly assemble, deploy, refocus and disband.
- Teams have created a vehicle for organisations to democratise workplaces.

The difference between teams and groups

- A work group is a group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help each member perform within his / her area of responsibility.
- A work team creates positive synergy through coordinated effort (244 / 11.1).

Types of teams

- Teams likely to occur in organisations are:
 - Problem-solving teams meet on a weekly basis to discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency, and the work environment.
 - Self-managed work teams consist of relatively highly-skilled workers who take on wide-ranging and joint responsibility for a whole process or product through the performance of a wide variety of tasks within clearly defined boundaries.
 - Self-managed teams are a concrete manifestation of the learning organisation in that they reflect:
 - Involvement, which see freedom awarded for independent action.
 - Empowerment, which reflects how a team exercises its freedom.
 - Enabling, which refers to the repertoire of competencies and conduct that team members must have.
 - Leadership, which includes those activities to contribute toward the establishment and maintenance of favourable team performance.

- Cross-functional teams, which are made up of members at a similar hierarchical level, but from different work areas, who come together to accomplish a task.
- Virtual teams, are teams which use computer technology to ties together physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal.

CREATING EFFECTIVE TEAMS

- The Team Effectiveness Model prescribes the following as core to team performance:
 - Work design
 - Composition
 - Context
 - Process (249 / 11.2)

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TEAM ROLES

Belbin Team Roles

- Eight types of people are useful to have in teams:
 - Company worker
 - Organising ability, practical common sense, hard-working, self discipline
 - Chairman
 - A capacity for treating and welcoming all potential contributors on their merits and without prejudice.
 - A strong sense of objectives, calm, self confident, controlled.
 - Shaper
 - Drive and readiness to challenge ineffectiveness, complacency or self deception
 - Strong and outgoing
 - Plant
 - Genius, imagination, intellect, serious-minded
 - Resource investigator
 - Capacity for contracting people and exploring anything new
 - An ability to respond to challenge, extroverted, curios and communicative.
 - Monitor-evaluator
 - Judgment, hard-headedness, sober, unemotional
 - Team worker
 - Ability to respond to people and to situations
 - Promote team spirit, socially orientated,
 - Mild, sensitive
 - Completer-finisher
 - A capacity for follow through
 - Perfectionism, painstaking, orderly, anxious

Margerison and McCann's Team Management System

- To determine team roles two constructs need to be considered:
 - Work preferences: Four key areas are at the heart of manageable differences these are:
 - How people prefer to relate to others.

- How people prefer to gather all use information.
- How people prefer to make decisions.
- How people prefer to organize themselves & others.
- Type of work
 - Advising
 - Innovating
 - Promoting
 - Developing
 - Organising
 - Producing
 - Inspecting
 - Maintaining
 - Linking

Team Management Index (TMI)

- The team management index identifies the following:
 - Reporter–adviser
 - Excellent at gathering information and putting it together in such a way that it can be readily understood.
 - They are patient people and prefer to make sure they have all relevant information before they take action.
 - Creator–innovator
 - People who are more future orientated
 - They will enjoy thinking up new ideas and ways of doing things
 - Explorer-promoter
 - Are excellent at taking ideas and promoting them to others.
 - Assessor-developer
 - They are good at taking ideas and making them work in practice
 - They are usually sociable, outgoing people who enjoy developing new markets or opportunities
 - Thruster–organiser
 - People who enjoy making things happen
 - Their great ability to get things done on time and within budget
 - Concluder-producer
 - Are highly practical people who can be counted on to carry things through to the end
 - Their strength is in setting up plans and standardised systems
 - Controller-inspector
 - Generally polite, reflective people who enjoy the detailed side of work
 - Like working with facts and figures
 - They are careful and spend time on tasks, working quietly on their own
 - Upholder- maintainer
 - People with strong personal values and principles
 - They have significant concern for people and will be strongly supportive of those who share the same ideas values as they do