GROUP DYNAMICS

10. Team Effectiveness & Organizational Climate

10.1. Team Effectiveness: Overview

Team effectiveness (also referred to as group effectiveness) is the capacity that a team has to accomplish the goals or objectives administered by an authorized personnel or the organization. A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, and view themselves as a unit embedded in an institutional or organizational system which operates within the established boundaries of that system. Teams and groups have established a synonymous relationship within the confines of processes and research relating to their effectiveness (i.e. group cohesiveness, teamwork) while still maintaining their independence as two separate units, as groups and their members are independent of each other's role, skill, knowledge or purpose versus teams and their members, who are interdependent upon each other's role, skill, knowledge and purpose.

The evaluation of how effective a team is achieved with the aid of a variety of components derived from research and theories that help in creating a description of the multifaceted nature of team effectiveness. Team effectiveness can be defined in terms of three criteria:

1. **Output** - The final outputs produced by the team must meet or exceed the standards set by key constituents within the organization
2. **Social Processes** - The internal social processes operating as the team interacts should enhance, or at least maintain, the group's ability to work together in the future
3. **Learning** - The experience of working in the team environment should act to satisfy rather than aggravate the personal needs of team members

In order for these criteria to be assessed appropriately, an evaluation of team effectiveness should be conducted, which involves both a measure of the teams' final task performance as well as criteria with which to assess intragroup process. The three major intragroup process constructs examined are intra-group conflict, team cohesion, and team-efficacy. Intra-group conflict is an integral part of the

process a team undergoes and the effectiveness of the unit that was formed. Previous research has differentiated two components of intragroup conflict:

- **Relationship conflict** - This is the interpersonal incompatibilities between team members such as annoyance and animosity
- **Task conflict** - This occurs when members convey divergent ideas and opinions about specific aspects related to task accomplishment

Team cohesion is viewed as a general indicator of synergistic group interaction or process. Furthermore, cohesion has been linked to greater coordination during team-tasks as well as improved satisfaction, productivity, and group interactions. Team efficacy refers to team members' perceptions of task-specific team competence. This construct is thought to create a sense of confidence within the team that enables the group to persevere when faced with hardship.

10.2. Team Effectiveness: Teams

Work Teams

Work teams (also referred to as production and service teams) are continuing work units responsible for producing goods or providing services for the organization. Their membership is typically stable, usually full-time, and well-defined. These teams are traditionally directed by a supervisor who mandates what work is done, who does it, and in what manner is it executed. Work teams are effectively used in manufacturing sectors such as mining and apparel and service based sectors such as accounting which utilize audit teams.

Self-Managed Teams

Self-managed work teams (also referred to as autonomous work groups) allow their members to make a greater contribution at work and constitute a significant competitive advantage for the organization. These work teams determine how they will accomplish the objectives they are mandated to achieve and decide what route they will take to complete the current assignment. Self-managed work teams are granted the responsibility of planning, scheduling, organizing, directing, controlling and evaluating their own work process. They also select their own members and evaluate the members' performance. Self-managed work teams have been favored for their effectiveness over traditionally managed teams due their ability to enhance productivity, costs, customer service, quality, and safety.

Parallel Teams

Parallel teams (also referred to as advice and involvement teams) pull together people from different work units or jobs to perform functions that the regular organization is not equipped to perform well. These teams are given limited authority and can only make recommendations to individuals higher in the organizational hierarchy. Parallel teams are used for solving problems and activities that are in need of revision or improvement. Examples of parallel teams are quality circles, task forces, quality improvement teams, employee involvement groups. The effectiveness of parallel teams is proven by the continuation of their usage and expansion throughout organizations due to their ability to improve quality and increase employee involvement.

Project Teams

Project teams (also referred to as development teams) produce new products and services for an organization or institution on a one-time or limited basis, of which the copyrights of that new product or service will belong to the establishment that it was made for once it is completed. The task of these teams may vary from just improving a current project, concept or plan to creating an entirely new project with very few limitations. Projects teams rely on their members being knowledgeable and well versed in many disciplines and functions, as this allows them to complete the task effectively. Once a project is completed, the team either disbands and are individually moved to other special functions or moves on to other projects and tasks that they as a unit can accomplish or develop. A common example of project teams are cross-functional teams. A project team's effectiveness is associated with the speed with which they are able to create and develop new products and services which reduces time spent on individual projects.

Management Teams

Management teams (also referred to as action and negotiation teams) are responsible for the coordination and direction of a division within an institution or organization during various assigned projects and functional, operational and/or strategic tasks and initiatives. Management teams are responsible for the total performance of the division they oversee with regards to day-to-day operations, delegation of tasks and the supervision of employees. The authority of these teams are based on the members position on the company's or institution's organizational chart. These management teams are constructed of managers from different divisions (e.g. Vice President of Marketing, Assistant Director of Operations). An

example of management teams are executive management teams, which consists of members at the top of the organization's hierarchy, such as Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, etc., who establish the strategic initiatives that a company will undertake over a long term period (usually 3–5 years). Management teams have been effective by using their expertise to aid companies in adjusting to the current landscape of a global economy, which helps them compete with their rivals in their respective markets, produce unique initiatives that sets them apart from their rivals and empower the employees who are responsible for the success of the organization or institution.

10.3. Organizational Climate

Organizational climate (sometimes known as Corporate Climate) is the process of quantifying the culture of an organization, it precedes the notion of organizational culture. It is a set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behavior. Climate and culture are both important aspects of the overall context, environment or situation.

Organizational culture tends to be shared by all or most members of some social group; is something that older members usually try to pass on to younger members; shapes behavior and structures perceptions of the world. Cultures are often studied and understood at a national level, such as the American or French culture. Culture includes deeply held values, beliefs and assumptions, symbols, heroes, and rituals. Culture can be examined at an organizational level as well. The main distinction between organizational and national culture is that people can choose to join a place of work, but are usually born into a national culture.

Organizational climate, on the other hand, is often defined as the recurring patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization, while an organization culture tends to be deep and stable. Although culture and climate are related, climate often proves easier to assess and change. At an individual level of analysis the concept is called individual psychological climate. These individual perceptions are often aggregated or collected for analysis and understanding at the team or group level, or the divisional, functional, or overall organizational level.

10.4. Organizational Climate Approaches

Cognitive Schema Approach

Cognitive representations of social objects are referred to as schemas. These schemas are a mental structure that represents some aspect of the world. They are organized in memory in an associative network. In these associative networks, similar schemas are clustered together. When a particular schema is activated related schemas may be activated as well. Schema activation may also increase the accessibility of related schemas in the associative network. When a schema is more accessible this means it can more quickly be activated and used in a particular situation. When related schemas are activated, inferences beyond the information given in a particular social situation may influence thinking and social behavior, regardless of whether those inferences are accurate or not. Lastly, when a schema is activated a person may or may not be aware of it. Two processes that increase the accessibility of schemas are salience and priming. Salience is the degree to which a particular social object stands out relative to other social objects in a situation. The higher the salience of an object the more likely that schemas for that object will be made accessible. For example, if there is one female in a group of seven males, female gender schemas may be more accessible and influence the group's thinking and behavior toward the female group member. Priming refers to any experiences immediately prior to a situation that caused a schema to be more accessible.

Shared Perception Approach

Some researchers have pursued the shared perception model of organizational climate. Their model identifies the variables which moderate an organization's ability to mobilize its workforce in order to achieve business goals and maximize performance. Departments use this model of climate to survey staff in order to identify and measure those aspects of a workplace which impact on: stress, morale, quality of work life, well-being, employee engagement, absenteeism/presenteeism, turnover and performance. While an organization and its leaders cannot remove every stressor in the daily life of its employees, Organizational Climate studies have identified a number of behaviors of leaders which have a significant impact on stress and morale.