

CRITICS OF OPEN SYSTEM THEORY

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ABSTRACT

Open System theory refers simply to the concepts that organizations are strongly influenced by their environment. Virtually all modern theories of organization utilize the Open Systems perspective as a result, Open System theories come in many flavors. For example, contingency theorist argues that organizations are organized in ways that best fit the environment in which the societal values and beliefs are embedded in the organizational structure and expressed in organizational change. Resources dependency theorist sees the organization as adapting to the environment as dictated by its resource providers. Although there is a great variety in the perspectives provided by open system theories, they share the perspective that an organizations survival is dependent upon its relationship with the environment.

INTRODUCTION

Open System Theory: was initially developed by Ludwig Van Bertan Lanffy (1959). A Biologist, Whose theory defines the concepts of a system, where "all systems are characterized by a combination of parts and the relations that make them interdependent". This theory is also known as Biological theory that has been adopted to business organizational structure theories. It study the organizational structure and how it affects the flow of information and interaction internally and with the external environment. (Scott P. 77). Open System is also a theoretical perspective that views the organization as open to influence from the environment. The organization is viewed as transforming human and physical resources from the environment into goods and services, by this I mean, a business organization may convert inputs like materials, energy, information which are then returned to the environment. Open system theory refers to how an organizational structure affects the flows of informational interaction internally with the external environment.

CONCEPTS

Organizations are open to their environment.

Open system theory are clearly open, that is one of the main concepts, they are open to their environment.

PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES: where information come in and out and resources also flows both in and out of those boundaries of the organization.

EXCHANGE WITH THE GOVERNMENT: it is essential for the health of the system, the environment terrain are very unpredictable you can't say exactly for certain what is going to happen with competitors in the future, so you have the leaders that are scanning the environment and they are called boundary spanners.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AND BOUNDARY SPANNERS: they are looking into the environment to see what the vendor are up to where the general economy is headed, and they are also keeping an eye through the environmental scanning on all the things that are happening in and around the organization to make a better decisions.

HOLISM:

This is also another important part of the open system where the system should be viewed as a whole not as a collection of separate units in other word a system is greater than the sum of its parts.

Those parts are interdependent and interact through mutual feedback processes, so feedback is a dynamic process where the units of the system of the whole are connected.

INTERDEPENDENCE: this is another leading concepts in the open system approach where organization are in dynamic, interconnected relationship with their environment.

For example: the subparts within the system that are also interrelated not isolated. The organizations are not simply isolated, they are connected to their community.

Changes to one part of the system directly or indirectly influence the other part.

GOALS

Open system also have goals. Goals in this system are contingent and negotiated. That means it depends on what exactly the organization is facing and where it is going it will have to adopted along the way as the situation develops.

EQUIFINALITY

This is another powerful concept that describes how open system people or organization approaches goals.

- There is on one best way to organize.
- All ways of organizing are not equally effective, there may be not one single way of doing things

However there are some ways that are better than others. You just need to know ahead of time as you pursue your goals.

FEEDBACK

Is also an important part of the open system approach under which there is a negative feedback and a positive feedback.

Negative Feedback: seek to correct or reduce deviations in the systems processes to reestablish a steady course back in the direction of the systems goals.

Positive Feedback: changes or grows the system in desired ways that amplify and enhance the systems current processes so positive feedback get you going in the directions you want to go faster. Positive feedback is not necessarily good for a system.

ENTROPY

Is a term that is central to the way system works, it is also one that has a lot of dept to these approach.

- System tend to run down, deteriorate, and move towards disorganization. Left on their own system will run down. You will have a whole lot of efforts and work in time to put in and maintaining a balance in the system so it does it on his own run down.

BALANCE

Energy, resources and information coming into the system to help it reach equilibrium to balances.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OPEN SYSTEM

If an organization is healthy, it means active interactions with their surroundings. They solicit feedback from customers, with surveys, market research and evaluations. They also try to influence their environment through marketing, advertising and lobbying legislators. Below are some of the characteristic of open system approach

- 1.) **Importation of Energy:** Open system takes energy from various types of inputs, from the environment. Without these inputs no system can service.

- 2.) **Throughput:** An open system converts the inputs into some kind of outputs. This is a process known as throughput or transformation process. A business organization may convert inputs like materials, energy, information into goods services through the transformation process.
- 3.) **Outputs:** An open system can exports some outputs to the environments. The manner in which they exports outputs determines their viability and existence.
- 4.) **System as cycle of events:** The pattern of activities inflow of inputs, throughput, outflow of output- has a cyclic character. The outputs exported to the environment furnish sources of inputs for the repetition of cycle of activities.
- 5.) **Negative entropy:** Entropy is the law of nature which suggests that all organized forms move towards disorganization and demise. For the system to survive, he must move to arrest the entropic process, they must acquire negative entropy. This is only possible by importing more energy from the environment than what a system spends. For example, a business organization must earn profit in order to survive on long –term basis.
- 6.) **Feedback mechanism:** Feedback mechanism is a process through which it imports information is in the form of negative feedback. Information feedback of negative types enables the system to correct its deviation from the desired course of actions.
- 7.) **Steady state:** The importation of energy from the environment to maintain negative entropy has some constancy in energy exchange so that the system has steady state. However, this steady state is not motionless or a true equilibrium. Since energy import and export is a continuous process, a new equilibrium may be formed.
- 8.) **Differentiation:** An open system moves in the direction of differentiation and elaboration. Old patterns are changed by new specialized functions. Organizations, like other open systems, move towards well-differentiation and specialization of roles and functions. As the conditions permit, organizations bring more specialist and create specialized departments to have better control over the environment.
- 9.) **Integration and coordination:** As mechanisms for integrating and coordinating various parts in the case of organization, this is done through devising.
- 10.) **Equifinality:** An open system is characterized by the principle of equifinality which suggests that a system can be reach the same final state from differing initial conditions and by a variety of paths. It implies that not all organizations may choose the same course of action and strategies to be successful.

BENEFITS OF OPEN SYSTEMS VIEW OF ORGANIZATIONS

The following paragraphs itemize some of the major benefits when looking at your clients' organizations from an open systems perspective.

More Effective Problem Solving

Without clear understanding of the "big picture" of an organization, consultants and leaders tend to focus only on the behaviors and events associated with problems in the workplace, rather than on the systems and structures that caused the problems to occur in the first place. To effectively solve problems in any type of organization, it is critical to be able to identify the real causes of the problems and how to address those causes. A systems view provides clear understanding of the "big picture."

More Effective Leadership

The most important responsibilities of a leader are to set direction and to influence others to follow that direction. It is difficult to establish direction for an organization and to keep that organization on its course if you do not understand how the organization works in the first place. Without a clear understanding of the overall nature and needs of an organization, the leader can get lost in the day-to-day activities, never really giving attention to the more important activities, such as

planning the organization's overall direction and organizing their resources. As a result, the leader "cannot see the forest for the trees." The leader ends up working harder, rather than smarter. A systems view helps the leader to really understand the overall structures and dynamics of the organization and what must be done to guide the organization towards its strategic vision and goals.

More Effective Communication

One of the most important ingredients for the success of any system is ongoing feedback, or communication, among all the parts of the organization. Some of the first symptoms that an organization or consulting project is in trouble are sporadic and insufficient communications. In these situations, people often struggle to see beyond their own roles in the organization or project. Consequently, people are much less effective than they could be otherwise. Without a clear understanding of the parts of an organization or project and how they relate to each other, it is difficult to know what to communicate and to whom.

More Effective Planning

The planning process is basically working one's way backwards through the system of an organization or project. It includes identifying desired results (goals and outcomes), what measures or outputs (tangible results) will indicate that those results have been achieved, what processes will produce those outputs, and what inputs are required to conduct those processes in the system. A systems view often makes the planning process much more clear and orderly to planners.

More Effective Design of Projects, Products and Services

An advantage for designers who have a systems view is that they have stronger knowledge of the primary parts of their project, product or service and how they should be aligned to more effectively reach desired goals. A systems view also promotes focus on achieving overall results, so the day-to-day details of managing the project, product or service do not become the most important activities for people to address – so people do not become focused in matters that are urgent, rather than important.

More Effective Organizational Results

The most successful projects and organizations often use a variety of methods to achieve results. In projects, methods can include, for example, coaching, facilitating, training or provision of resources. In organizations, methods can include strategic planning, business planning, management and leadership development, team building, supervisory development, organizational and employee performance management, and principles of organizational change. Any consultant or leader would be hard-pressed to employ these various methods in an effective fashion without a good understanding of the overall systems of their project or organization. Consequently, having a systems view is critical to accomplishing successful results.

Avoid Founder's Syndrome

Founder's Syndrome occurs when an organization operates primarily according to the personality of one of the members of the organization (usually the founder), rather than according to the mission (purpose) of the organization. When first starting their organizations, founders often have to do whatever it takes to get the organizations off the ground, including making seat-of-the-pants decisions to deal with frequent crises that suddenly arise in the workplace. As a result, founders often struggle to see the larger picture and are unable to suitably plan to make more proactive decisions. Consequently, the organization gets stalled in a highly reactive mode characterized by lack of funds and having

to deal with one major crisis after another. The best "cure" for this syndrome is developing broader understanding of the structures and processes of an organization, with an appreciation for the importance of planning.

OPEN SYSTEM THEORY ADVANTAGES

Freedom, liberty and the ability to make your own decision.

Open System enables a faster rate of over all innovation because an ecosystem of different providers can all contribute to the solution. This shortens development time and time to market consequently it might reduce the ongoing cost of supporting and maintains the system because the provider doesn't have to take responsibility for each and every components of the system.

DISADVANTAGES OF OPEN SYSTEM

The Open System does not work for people that do not want to be productive member of society. A disadvantage of Open System theory suggests all variables have some equality in the extent of impact and control over the business environment condition. Weakness functional unity and harmony not always possible view the organization and environment as concrete items metaphor of an ideology strengths.... Incorporate the role the environment includes the satisfaction of needs for survival needs of subsystem satisfied within overall system.

CRITICS OF OPEN SYSTEM THEORY

The Open System Theory encompasses efforts of researchers to create models that focus on the interaction between firms and their different environments.

Negandhi and Prasad (1975) developed a model that suggested that management practice within a firm are determined not only by environmental factors but also by the necessary dictated or predetermined by culture or environment.

The environmental factors not only influenced management and their enterprise effectiveness. The variable that are part of the organizational environment, which are generally considered to be under the control of managers of the firm, including the following:

Size, structure, technology, organizational climates capital and human resources.

Negandhi – Prasad model has been criticized as not being comprehensive, relying on arbitrarily selected and poorly defined variables, failing to examine inter relationship between variable and the organizational effectiveness of the firm. In addition, the relatively small weight that the model gives to the role that culture play in the formation of managerial attitude has also been challenged by critics who maintain that even the most innovative and enlightened management philosophy will not succeed unless barriers to execution embedded in the cultural environment can be identified and overcome.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1957) contingency model is another example of the system theory that argues the management system used by a firm should be compatible with the nature of the people within the firm.it also argues that if the open system perspective is taken rational natural perspectives identify different organizational types which vary because they have adopted to different types of environment. Unlike Etzioni's structural view which sees the two perspectives as two sides of the same coin, Lawrence and Lorsch see them as different organizations entirely.

CONCLUSION

Open system theories has advantages over other theories. Because it takes your environment into account, an open system approach gets a more realistic picture of the pressure on you, your organization and your workers.

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