Organisational Behaviour and Analysis

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Essay Question 3

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1 Introduction

Ever since large groups of people started working together for accomplishing a certain task, the ones in charge have been concerned with how to make the workers perform their best in order to get the work done as quickly and good as possible. Back in history, most work of scale were performed by slaves, and the ways of making them perform their best were highly questionable (Anthony, 1977, 15-38). However, if we look towards work organisations after the demise of slavery, there has been a development and change in how work groups are organised and this is what will be addressed in this essay.

The later years, it has been a significant shift in the industry towards higher job satisfaction for the workers. The workers is in many ways a lot more demanding these days, as they want more from the workplace than just the monthly pay check. Noon & Blyton writes:

> "For most people work is a place to socialise, and complex social systems develop within the workplace which often spill over into leisure time."
> (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 77)

Many companies recognise this fact that work for the worker is also about social relationships and a sense of belonging. The social aspect of work is also important to the employer as it has an impact on how the workers perform. Howtorne claims that it is psychological rather than physical factors that influence the effectiveness on how we work (Makin, Cooper & Cox, 1989, 32-65).

Therefore, it has become more and more common for firms to encourage social activities among the workers both in and outside the workplace. Optimally, these activities should include workers from all departments and levels of the company hierarchy in order to break down the barriers between the physical boundaries between for example the marketing department and

the technicians in a nuclear power plant. By having a social relationship to the fellow workers, workers will function better as a "team" at the workplace, solving problems across hierarchical directions easing the pressure on the management and increases the feel of involvement and identity with the firm.

2   Traditional Organisation Design

Modern industry as we know it, saw a radical shift in how groups were organised with Henry T. Ford's introduction of mass production of cars in 1903 (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 426).

Prior to Ford, goods had mainly been manufactured in a the way that the worker followed the product from its beginning to its end, thus were involved with more or less the whole production cycle. Inspired by Taylor's theories of scientific management Vroom & Deci (1970), Ford introduced quite a few new ways of producing cars. The most famous element was the assembly line and the idea that each worker did a small, clearly defined task, contributing a small piece to the big jigsaw puzzle of producing a car.

This way of organising the workforce, had obvious advantages according to Taylor and Ford. First of all, it lowered the entry requirements for the workers. Almost everyone could join the assembly line, since the tasks were very simple and all the thinking were left to the technology and the management, thus totally separated from the workshop employee. Secondly, it made it easy for management to control the production cycle and predict the outcome of production. Third, the assembly line workers became also easy to replace since they did not hold any particular skills.

As Huczynski and Buchanan (2001) argues, we can find examples of Taylor's theories and Ford's practices in many parts of the world's industry today (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 433-435). However, there are several limitations and critics to the Fordist way, and thus other ways of organising

groups have emerged.

3 Working in Teams

One of the fundamental problems of Taylorism, is the pure nature of the way of work. According to Taylor, the only motivation for the worker was the money (Makin, Cooper & Cox, 1989, 32-65), in order words to full fill the fundamental needs as described in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 240-243). However, as many theories of motivation suggests, the human being is driven by more things than just food, housing and material status, the so called extrinsic values. Other values are as important, namely elements such as job satisfaction, the sense of accomplishment, being able to identify oneself with the product one is making and the feeling of making a difference. These are a part of the intrinsic values (Rosenfeld & Wilson, 2000, 95).

These days, many managers talk of teamworking and there has been a significant shift towards organising workers in teams (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 375). Critics, such as Womak, argue that teamworking really is only a fancy buzz word used by management loring the workers to think that they get more autonomy and control, as it really only gives the management more control and may even take away power from the workers (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 393). This is supported by Benders and Hootegem (1999) who claim that there is a lot of hype around the term "teamworking", that is is merely a word managers use in order to achieve their goals without giving anything more.

Nevertheless, teamworking has made significant development in today's industry. Three scientists, namely Eric Sundstrom, Kenneth De Meuse and David Futrell have identified four different kinds of teams, namely advice teams, action teams, project teams and production teams (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 378).

Teams are an attempt to make improve both work experience, and by that improve the performance of the company. The basic ideas behind teamworking is to both improve job satisfaction, employee involvement and increase productivity. Also, since teams are given its own internal authority, they are to become more autonomous units that can manage smaller problems themselves such as supply of material and smaller changes in production without going the way of management, thus leaving less stress on management that can again use their time more effectively, without having to worry about "minor details".

The first kind of teamwork identified by Sundstrom, Meuse and Futrell is "advice teams". The main idea here is that the teams shall function as advisers for the management, providing feedback for further decision making. At the same time, it is to give the workers a greater feeling of involvement and influence in their workplace. Quality circles is an example of advice teams (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 380-381).

The Swedish car manufactures Volvo and Saab were for many years shining examples of firms successfully implementing this way of organising the workforce Makin, Cooper & Cox (1989). The idea of quality circles is that workers in the workshop are organised in groups that several times a day, meet and discuss how to best run the production. This idea was introduced by Herzberg in 1966. In his study he looked at the reasons for job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. He found that dissatisfaction was caused by what he called hygiene factors, which can be described as general welfare at the workplace. Job satisfaction on the other hand, was due motivators, that is rewards in one form or another. Quality circles was a way of giving the workers a greater feel of job satisfaction Makin, Cooper & Cox (1989).

Toyota is another example of recent implementation of the quality circle idea. Also called "Toyotaism" is an example of Japanese teamworking, where several elements in how the industry is run are totally different to traditional industry in the western countries. Japanese teamworking also

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involves elements such as "Total Quality Management" (TQM), to improve the organisational operation towards perfection, and "Just in Time" (JIT) systems. That is, products are delivered as they are produced, hence the firm does not have to keep a stock of its products. The reason behind both techniques were of course to improve company competitiveness.

Ouchi (1981) described another element of Japanese management as "Theory Z". The concept is that although management gives a clear strategy and overall goal theory for the company, the actual implementation of this strategy only becomes clear as it finds its way downwards in the organisational hierarchy. This gives the employees greater independence and involvement in the production cycle (Rosenfeld & Wilson, 2000, 529).

Even though Japanese management, or Toyotaism, unarguably represents an example of teamworking in the manufacturing industry, critics argue that Japanese teamworking has more elements from Taylorism than of employee empowerment (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 421).

A different kind of teamworking is "action teams". These teams differ from advice teams in that they are comprised of highly skilled labour that are put together to do a specific task for a set time period.

We can find a very good example an action team in a Formel 1 race. When the racers make a pit stop to change their wheels and get more fuel, 13 workers, specialised only for this task, works intensively for 4-6 seconds to accomplish their task of giving the driver new wheels and petrol (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 381-384).

The third kind of teamworking according to Sundstrm, Meuse and Futrell is "project teams". These teams are groups put together for a limited time perspective to accomplish a specific task. This task is often referred to as a project, hence the name (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 386).

The workers are often put together from different parts of the organisation, something which gives a greater feel for unity within the organisation and contributes to break down barriers between the different groups in the

organisation.

However, the members of these groups are usually chosen from the same level in the organisational hierarchy, so the effect of barrier breaking is limited to the horizontal dimension of the organisational structure (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 384-387).

Production teams are the fourth and last kind of teamworking. These groups are teams that are responsible for the day to day operation of core operations in an organisation. For example can the group responsible for pane in a window plant be called a production team.

This kind of teamworking is not at all new and can be found in most, if not all, big factories. A perfect example of production teams can be found at the Ford car plants. Even though everything about the production is fragmented, the factory itself is divided into different "shops", that represent a larger unit of the production of the car. For example the paint shop, which paints the car shells. These units have their own "steward" who functions as a leader of the shop. The steward maintains discipline among the workers so that work is carried out according to the agreements between the union and the company. Furthermore, the steward makes sure that work is evenly distributed among the workers in the workshop and takes the other workers' interest higher up in the organisation hierarchy. If any of the workers have a problem, they go to the steward who will take the matter further up the organisation. This way, the production team has its own organisational and hierarchal structure (Beynon, 1975, 109-150).

There is one important difference between this organisation and the over-all factory organisation however. And that is how the management is selected. In the workshop, the steward is selected by the other workers. If they think the steward is doing a bad job, they can replace him with another they think is better suited for the task. The workshops is therefore a meritocracy as opposed to the factory management who are appointed following the more traditional employment scheme, using qualifications and seniority (Beynon,

1975, 129-150).

4 Conditions for Good Teamworking

Dividing workers into group is not enough in itself to achieve the desired outcome of the organisational change, that is increased work experience for the workers and increased production for the management.

According to Locke, the worker needs a clear goal setting for his or her work. The more precise the goal is, the better. This means that it is not good enough to say "do your best" to get the desired effect Makin, Cooper & Cox (1989). He differs between two types of goal setting, namely challenging and specific goals. The challenging goals are there for the workers to have something to stribe after, something to which they must better themselves to accomplish and thereby feel that they are in development themselves, that they improve their own abilities. This contributes to the intrinsic values to the workers. Specific goals are more short term and describes in numbers what the worker should produce in the immediate future (Vroom & Deci, 1970, 22).

Locke also emphasise two other requirements for successful management of groups, namely participation in the goal setting and feedback on past performance. Participation in defining the goals gives the worker a higher commitment to meeting this goals. However, high performance can also be accomplished if management makes a good case on the reasons and objectives for the goal setting. Feedback on what the workers have done in the past is also valuable as it gives updated information on the worker's job status and is motivational (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 252).

The latter point can also be found in J. Richard Hackman's theories on team based job design. In addition good feedback, the team need to be given a variety of non trivial tasks, which must be a identifiable piece part of the production with a visible outcome. Furthermore, the team must be given a

certain amount of autonomy to how they are to function as a group and do their tasks. Lastly, Hackman lists that the outcome from the work group, must have a significant impact on other people. In order words, what the group does must have identifiable consequences for other workers in order to make their work meaningful and motivational (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 372).

This theory is supported by the interviews done by Huw Beynon at the Halewood Ford car plant. For many workers at Ford, the only satisfaction that the workers got at the car plant, was the sense of helping out others (Beynon, 1975, 119).

Obviously, the group members themselves are also important. As in all different groups, workers in a team take certain roles in the group setting, from which they contribute. An interesting aspect of this is the composition of such a group and the different roles workers take. R. Meredith Belbin, cited in (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 329), identified nine different team roles, that group members take when entering the group setting. He claimed that in a "perfect world", all nine would be represented, even though a group necessarily had to consist of nine or more members. One group member can play several roles and thereby giving the role a complete set of roles.

5   Conclusion

The change in the way organisations are structured and groups are developed must also be seen in conjunction with the change in the industry. If we look at the UK industry, which was primarily a manufacturing industry, has changed significantly the last 20 years to now being a more service based industry. These kinds of industry demands a different organisational structure and group technology found in the traditional model from the 1920s. Also, the principle of scientific management is not applicable to all kinds of work, thus other ways of organising workers had to be found.

Another point, is the increased focus on employee involvement, job satisfaction and motivation. Employees demand more from the employers now, wanting both a job that can secure their financial situation and give them job satisfaction, supporting Maslow's theory of self actualisation (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 241). Some writers claim that we are moving towards a "leisure society", a "post-industrial society", which both implies changes in both the organisation of work and in the work ethics (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 68-70).

One of the key arguments for dividing the workforce into groups, is to get rid of the hierarchical structure of organisations and thereby make the organisation more dynamic and a better place to work. Management likes to talk about a "flat structure". However, the same hierarchical structure is created all over again with the introduction of groups. It is just of a smaller scale. People will always take the different roles of a group, no matter its size. Some people will be leaders, some will be followers. Sometimes with consent, other times not (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 329). The bottom line is that even though we might not like hierarchical structures, they are inevitable and organisations must therefore make the most out of making the organisation a livable environment to work within. What this implies, depends on the different workplaces. Nevertheless, it is a good thing that the focus is more on people than it has ever been. For companies are just about people when it comes down to it. People and a lot of money.

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