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ORGANIZATION THEORY

SELECTED READINGS

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Organization Theory

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Selected Readings

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For my children, Helena, Jonathan and Rosalind,
who already spend most of their waking lives
in formal organizations

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Introduction

Organization theory is the body of thinking and writing which addresses itself to the problem of how to organize. The basis of selection for this wide-ranging volume has been to include those writers whose work has had a clear impact on thinking, practice and research in the subject. They have all stimulated work by others, some of it in support of their theories, some of it highly critical. Their views are the subject of much current debate. In every case (except one, which will be explained later) the readings are primary sources, so that the reader may be in a position to sample the direct impact of the writer and his work.

More specifically, organization theory can be defined as the study of the structure, functioning and performance of organizations and the behaviour of groups and individuals within them. The subject has a long history which can be traced back, for example, to the Old Testament, when decentralization through the appointment of judges was undertaken to relieve the load on the chief executive. The first English textbooks appeared in the thirteenth century.[1] It is, however, in the present century that the administrative, as distinct from the political, aspects have come to the fore. It is also in this century that the impact of social science thinking has built up until it has become a major force. It is still, though, a heterogeneous study, with the systematic analysis of sociologists, psychologists and economists mingling with distilled practical experience of managers, administrators and consultants.

These writers have attempted to draw together information and distil theories of how organizations function and how they should be managed. Their writings have been theoretical in the sense that they have tried to discover generalizations applicable to all organizations. Every act of a manager rests on assumptions about what has happened and conjectures about what will happen; that is to say it rests on theory. Theory and practice are inseparable. As a cynic once put it: when someone says he is a practical man, what he means is that he is using

1. e.g. Robert Grossteste, *The Rules of Saint Robert*: cf. Keil (1965).

old-fashioned theories! All the writers on this subject, who include many busy chief executives, believe that there is a necessity continually to examine, criticize and up-date thinking about the organization and how it functions if it is to develop and not to decay.

The concept of organizational behaviour is basic to this field. From this point of view the task of management can be considered as the organization of individuals' behaviour in relation to the physical means and resources to achieve the desired goal. The basic problem in this subject to which all writing may be related is: '*How much* organization and control of behaviour is necessary for efficient functioning?' It is in the implied answer to this question on the control of organizational behaviour that two sides of a continuing debate may be usefully distinguished. On the one hand there are those who may be called the 'organizers' who maintain that more and better control is necessary for efficiency. They point to the advantage of specialization and clear job definitions, standard routines and clear lines of authority. On the other hand there are those who, in this context, may be called the 'behaviouralists' who maintain that the continuing attempt to increase control over behaviour is self-defeating; that the inevitable rigidity in functioning, apathy in performance, and counter-control through informal relationships, means that increased efficiency does not necessarily occur with increased control. Even when it does it is only in the short term and at the cost of internal conflict and greatly reducing the organization's ability to cope with the inevitable environmental changes which take place in the long term.

It is around this continuing dilemma that the study of organization theory takes place. It is a dilemma because, of course, both sides of the discussion are right. It is not possible to opt for one view *to the exclusion of* the other, and it is one of the basic tasks of management to determine the optimum degree of control necessary to operate efficiently. This must be affected by many factors, such as the size of the organization, the training and experience of its members and the techniques used in the manufacture of the product or the carrying out of the service. It is through a study of the constraints in relation to the objectives that the most efficient organizational control systems can be established.

This volume has been arranged, inevitably somewhat arbitrarily, in three separate but highly interrelated sections. In Part One the selection focuses on the structure of organizations, examining the workings of the authority, task allocation and communication systems. Part Two is concerned with management and decision making, the functions and the processes which they involve. Part Three on behaviour in organiza-

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tions presents the work of those who have studied the effects of the form of organization and management on the behaviour of its members.

I am grateful to Iain Rangeley who compiled the Index and to Sue Taylor for secretarial assistance.

For the second edition of this selection – issued concurrently with the third edition of the companion introductory text *Writers on Organizations* by Pugh, Hickson and Hinings – a thorough revision has been carried out and about half the material represents new contributions to the subject.

I am grateful to Margaret Blunden and David Hickson for discussions about possible selections and to Helena Pugh for a revision of the index.

Reference

KEIL, I. (1965), 'Advice to the magnates: management education in the 13th century', *Bulletin of the Association of Teachers of Management*, no. 17, March. pp. 2–8.

Part One **The Structure of Organizations**

All organizations have to make provision for continuing activities directed toward the achievement of given aims. Regularities in activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision are established which constitute the organization's structure. The contributors to this section examine in a systematic way, comparatively across numbers of organizations, the causes and the results of structural forms encountered.

Weber (Reading 1) analysed three general types of organization stemming from the bases of wielding authority, and drew attention to the fact that in modern society the bureaucratic type has become dominant because, he considered, of its greater technical efficiency. In doing so he formed the starting point of a series of sociological studies designed to examine the nature and functioning of bureaucracy, and particularly to draw attention to the dysfunctions of this structural form which were left out of the original analysis. The contribution of March and Simon (Reading 2) is the only one in this volume which is not a primary source, and it is included because it cogently and creatively summarizes many studies which have been undertaken with this 'bureaucratic dysfunction' approach. They show that the inadequacies of bureaucracy may, paradoxically, be just as great a cause for its perpetuation as its efficiencies. Burns (Reading 3) forms one culmination of this approach when he contrasts, on the basis of studies of firms in stable and changing environmental conditions, bureaucratic with organismic structures. In the latter, authority, task allocation and communication are extremely flexible, in contrast to the rigid rules and procedures of bureaucracy.

Woodward (Reading 4) presents results to suggest that the structure of manufacturing concerns is strongly related to the technology of production and thus opens a debate on whether it is possible to conceive of basic principles of structure which are appropriate to all organizations. Pugh (Reading 5) describes work carried out with his colleagues which measures the range of degrees of specialization, standardization

and centralization of authority structures and investigates the effects of contextual factors such as size, technology, ownership, interdependence, etc., on the characteristic differences found. Lawrence and Lorsch (Reading 6) analyse the degree of structural differentiation necessary for a firm to function in a particular environment and the corresponding integration mechanisms required for it to be a high performer.

Crozier (Reading 7) focuses his analysis behind the structure to the recurring strategic and tactical 'games' which are played by individuals or groups in organizations which develop power through bargaining relationships, while Jaques (Reading 8) considers that the basic depth-structure of an organization is established by the manager–subordinate relationships which have different time-spans of work discretion.

1 M. Weber

Legitimate Authority and Bureaucracy

From M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, Free Press, 1947, translated and edited by A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, pp. 328–40. (Footnotes as in the original.)

The three pure types of legitimate authority

There are three pure types of legitimate authority. The validity of their claims to legitimacy may be based on:

1. Rational grounds – resting on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).

2. Traditional grounds – resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority); or finally,

3. Charismatic grounds – resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it only by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office. In the case of traditional authority, obedience is owed to the *person* of the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is (within its sphere) bound by tradition. But here the obligation of obedience is not based on the impersonal order, but is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma.

1. The usefulness of the above classification can only be judged by its results in promoting systematic analysis. The concept of 'charisma' ('the gift of grace') is taken from the vocabulary of early Christianity. For the

Christian religious organization Rudolf Sohm, in his *Kirchenrecht*, was the first to clarify the substance of the concept, even though he did not use the same terminology. Others (for instance, Hollin, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt*) have clarified certain important consequences of it. It is thus nothing new.

2. The fact that none of these three ideal types, the elucidation of which will occupy the following pages, is usually to be found in historical cases in 'pure' form, is naturally not a valid objection to attempting their conceptual formulation in the sharpest possible form. In this respect the present case is no different from many others. Later on the transformation of pure charisma by the process of routinization will be discussed and thereby the relevance of the concept to the understanding of empirical systems of authority considerably increased. But even so it may be said of every empirically historical phenomenon of authority that it is not likely to be 'as an open book'. Analysis in terms of sociological types has, after all, as compared with purely empirical historical investigation, certain advantages which should not be minimized. That is, it can in the particular case of a concrete form of authority determine what conforms to or approximates such types as 'charisma', 'hereditary charisma', 'the charisma of office', 'patriarchy', 'bureaucracy', the authority of status groups,[1] and in doing so it can work with relatively unambiguous concepts. But the idea that the whole of concrete historical reality can be exhausted in the conceptual scheme about to be developed is as far from the author's thoughts as anything could be.

Legal authority with a bureaucratic administrative staff[2]

Legal authority: The pure type with employment of a bureaucratic administrative staff

The effectiveness of legal authority rests on the acceptance of the validity of the following mutually inter-dependent ideas.

1. That any given legal norm may be established by agreement or by imposition, on grounds of expediency or rational values or both, with a claim to obedience at least on the part of the members of the corporate group. This is, however, usually extended to include all persons within

1. *Ständische*. There is no really acceptable English rendering of this term – Ed.
2. The specifically modern type of administration has intentionally been taken as a point of departure in order to make it possible later to contrast the others with it.

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