LEADERSHIP AND TEAM BUILDING

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Article 6: Factors That Can Influence The Group or Team Behaviour

The Variables That Influence Group and Team Behaviour.

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The Goals and Strategies:

The organization's vision, mission and goals (scorecards) determine a group's goals and the means of attaining them. The strategy of an organization at any given point in time will influence the power of various groups and determine the resources that are allocated to each of them.

The Policies, Procedures, Rules and Regulations:

Groups are expected to follow the policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the organization in which they operate. If these inhibit creativity and innovation they will have a negative influence on group performance. On the other hand, sensible policies, procedures, rules and regulations can speed up group development and prevent excessive conflict.

The Organisational Resources:

The allocation or the lack of resources; such as suitably skilled people, finance, raw materials, equipment and information-has an important bearing on group performance because, in order to complete their tasks successfully, groups must have access to the necessary resources. Furthermore, resource availability influences a group's inter-action with other groups. Groups have to negotiate with each other to ensure that they get their fair share of the resources. The potential for conflict increases if the groups use the same or similar resources, or if one group influences the availability of resources to the other groups.

The Performance Management System:

The behavior of group members is influenced by the performance management system in the organization. Performance evaluation and reward allocation can either encourage or discourage group performance because of the behavior reinforced by the system. Performance management systems also determine whether group members are individ-ually appraised and rewarded or whether they are individually and collectively appraised and rewarded; which is a prerequisite for the effective functioning of work teams.

The Physical Work Setting:

The physical layout of the workspace can either create barriers to interaction within groups, or it can create opportunities, depending on the nature of the group and its task. The greater the proximity of the group members, the more they will interact. Informal groups are more likely to develop if people work in close proximity to one another. Managers can manipulate the pattern of group interaction by the way they allocate offices to individuals and groups in the organization.

Group Member Resources:

For a group to perform well, its members should possess the necessary technical knowl-edge and skills, but also be skilled in inter-personal issues, such as conflict management and resolution, problem solving, and communication. Managers also need to be able to manage diversity.

Which Are The Seven Factors That Influence The Group Structure?

i).   Leadership:

Leadership in the group is a critical factor. In both formal and informal groups, a leader is someone who motivates his or her subordinates and gives them direction. It is important to note that in teams, leadership roles are often shared. We should also note that leaders can actually obstruct high performance when they interfere with self-managing teams.

ii).   Roles:

Each member in a group fulfils a role, and each role carries a role expectation; the way that others believe a person should act in a given situation. In addition, each group member has his or her own view, or role perception, of how he or she is supposed to act in a given situation.

Apart from their regular role expectations and roles perception, individuals also fulfill different roles at the same time, because they belong to different groups.

iii).   Norms:

Norms can be formal, in the form of prescribed behavior or informal as a result of the interaction between group members. A group attaches different values to different norms. Certain norms must be observed while others are marginal in the sense that, although members are not expected to conform to them, the group regards them as important. Norms may also be negative. Norms may be written, communicated verbally, or even be shared unconsciously by members of the group. When a member rejects the group important norms, he/she may experience a great deal of pressure to conform, since significant nonconformity threatens the group standards, stability and survival. Such pressure can be very strong.

Conformity takes two forms: compliance, which means that an individual changes his or her behavior, does not personally agree with the group's norms, and internalization, referring to a change in behavior and to personal acceptance of the group's norms. The degree to which group member conform to group norms influences the success of the group in the achievement of its goals.

iv).   Status:

Factors such as knowledge, aggression, power and seniority determine the status of each individual member in a group. Members of a group evaluate the position of each position of each person in the group in terms of status and importance, among other things and so a group hierarchy develops. In formal groups, status is based on the position of the individual in the formal organization, while in informal groups it is based on anything that is appropriate.

For example, the person who can communicate most easily with management may have higher status in a specific group that the other group members. In certain cases, a particular status is assigned to a person on the strength of factors such as seniority or age.

The oldest worker in a group of bricklayers may be regarded as the best artisan by the group because of his years of experience, and will have the most status in that particular group. This acquired status may have no connection whatsoever with formal status. In this particular example, a young bricklayer could be appointed foreman of the other bricklayers, but they will not regard him as their senior.

v).   Cohesiveness:

Group cohesiveness develops as a result of the attraction that the group holds for the individual, and this attraction is related to the individual's needs.

In order to encourage group cohesiveness, managers can:

v   Make groups as small as possible.

v   Encourage individuals to identify with the goals of the group.

v   Stimulates competitions with other groups.

v   Include people who are similar (bearing in mind, however, that diverse groups usually make better decisions).

v   Ensure that the group is not dominated by one or a few group members.

v   Motivate the group to become successful.

vi).   Size:

Small groups are usually more productive than groups with more members, although the later are better at problem solving. Group size and individual productivity are inversely related, which means that the larger the group is, the less strong the individual effort is likely to be. The term coined for this phenomenon is *"social loafing"* it refers to the tendency of people to work less hard in a group than when they are working as individuals.

vii).   Diversity:

Diverse groups with a variety of skills and knowledge tend to be more effective than homogeneous groups. Although diversity create by racial and national differences interferes with group process in the short term, it contributes positively to group effectiveness in the long term.

The Group Process:

How can an organisation ensure that its branches or departments located physically somewhere improves on productivity and efficiency? The processes that may enable them to improve on their performance are group decision making, communication, leader's behavior, power dynamics, and conflict interaction.

i).   Group Making:

Group think occurs when individual group members do not express their own realistic assessment of a decision in cases where the group consensus differs from their own.

Group shift occurs when group members take group decisions that carry either more risk (adventurous) or less risk (conservative) than the decision that individual members would make on their own. This happens because the discussion of an idea by a group may lead to a significant departure from the original point of view and the decision taken reflects the dominant decision –making norm that has developed during the group discussion. The dominant norm will determine whether the shift is toward greater caution or more risk.

ii).   Communication:

Communication has a strong influence on group member's behavior and it plays an important part in their motivation to achieve the group's goals. Effective communication reduces ambiguities and clarifies a group tasks.

iii).   Power and Politics:

Power refers to the capacity that person **A** has to influence person **B** to do something that person **B** would not do otherwise. Power plays an important part in group processes because certain group members have more power than others and as a result can influence other group members to do things they would not have done otherwise. This can have a positive or a negative influence on group decision making, depending on the inclination of the individual who possesses the power.

Political behavior refers to an attempt to influence the distribution of advantages in the organization. *"Playing politics"* is an integral part of any organization or a group in an organization. Managers need to manage internal politics by ensuring that all members hold the same goals and interests.

Scarce organizational resources are optimally deployed.

Performance outcomes are completely clear and objective.

iv).   Conflict:

Although organization structures are designed to promote co-operation, more organizations experience internal conflict. Conflict need not always be negative, but it has the potential to affect the goal attainment of group negatively. Many conflicts are the result of disagreements between the various groups in an organization. However, if correctly dealt with, conflict can prevent stagnation, stimulate creativity, allow tensions to be released and initiate change.

ELECTORAL

Networks etc. In a word, contrary to beliefs that there is too much history or memory politics involved, the Party also sought to give hope to the Namibian electorate.

SWAPO Party also used the Media, which includes the press, radio and television effectively. The party was visible all the time at all places, including on TV with paid air time. Touring the country with all the leaders and other activities such as polytainment, a combination of Politics and entertainment, were aimed to ensure that the leaders always receive media attention and coverage while also attracting a huge crowd of followers, especially the Bornfrees. SWAPO Party visited even the remotest of areas unlike others who were hardly seen campaigning.

'The ruling party's campaign strategy then, certainly as it was presented to the public, was the opposite of the opposition strategy.

In other words the ruling party's approach was to adopt a positive campaign with exercised restraint and respect for law enforcement agencies as well as the electoral commission, contrary to the use of spin-doctors by the opposition and the recognition of this seems to have been made by the writings of some 'garbage men ' as they are called in Australia or the USA, notorious of negative campaigning tactics. The opposition campaign lacked any guiding thread or vision except that it was anti-government and anti-SWAPO and playing on emotional vulnerabilities and victims' arguments with no proposed solutions as alternative. Instead they belly-ached and threw tantrums as usual with very confusing messages which shows that they are not ready to govern.

The Namibian People were not hoodwinked into believing the witch-hunt stories or misled into believing cheap political propaganda. Just imagine a malicious disinformation campaign launched out of nowhere purely seeking for sensationalism? Fabricating stories, as the editor of Namibia Today Ntinda said, is taking freedom of expression to the absurd. For the sake of honesty and fair play, the editor continued and I fully agree with him, that apology must come. There is indeed honour and magnanimity in accepting that you have erred and as the saying goes, to err is human but from there to stick to your guns even after been given a chance to apologize is plain carelessness and lack of journalistic ethics that violates the right to privacy of someone, according to Article 11 of the Namibian constitution and liable for defamation of character. The embattled editor of the weekly tabloid *Informanté* who has become known for courting controversy, finally …"his chickens come home to roost" said one reporter of the Windhoek Observer and I would like to hear the Namibian newspaper who vaunt themselves with "telling it like it is" and MISA Namibia and the Self Regulatory body of journalists saying something. I will not be surprised to hear one day that there was a politician behind this story from which even two reporters, who were alleged to have worked with the editor on the story, have since distanced themselves from the report, according to inside sources, as reported by the Windhoek Observer.

Indeed, whatever begins in anger ends in shame or as Buddha said "holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned". I should hasten to quote Mr. S Haindongo here who wrote an article in the Friday's edition of New Era also quoting Guy Charleston that "Wisdom, unfortunately, often comes from the knocks of life, gleaned from personal suffering and learning the hard-way-by making mistakes. Seldom can it be taught because there is a profound difference between hearing something intellectually and owning the truth emotionally and spiritually."

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