

Lillian Matiza

ID:UB1820203BBU26036

COURSE NAME: SOCIOLOGY AND ORGANISATIONS

BACHELOR'S SOCIOLOGY AND ORGANISATIONS (Research, Evaluation, Policies and Strategies)

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SOCIOLOGY AND ORGANISATIONS

How a Basic Research is Conducted and Evaluated. How Policies and Strategies are used to Improve Work Place Moral and Potential of Staff.

Course Description

The course simplifies the fact that strategic organizational behavior involves all individuals in the organisation. The skills and knowledge that the people have are managed strategically so that the organisation stays ahead of its competition.

Introduction

Sociology involves a study of the social tendencies of people at work, as individuals or towards each other and the effects this behavior might have on the organization in terms of performance and success. According to Lambert, Stephen E. (2009) the study is mainly on people as a group rather than individuals. The actions and attitudes result in some behavior and observing these gives a character of the whole environment. Therefore an organization can create a strategy on improving or staying ahead of competition depending on the result of the research.

Sociology of work involves analyzing or examining how the organization is managing through use of technology and how it has influenced the world to be a village. Technology has been changing fast and this has changed a lot in the industry creating a different perspective in terms of labor markets, work organization, managerial practices, and employment relations. This means that there is a change in how things are handled within organizations as relations are shaped by the environment and experiences of individuals.

The behavior of employees or management is definitely shaped by the environment but at the same time the management is responsible for the structuring of its organization.

Research Methods

A research is a process to collect information/data in order to make sound business decisions. There are various methods used to research the behavior of people. An organization makes a choice of methods they want to use that gives results according to the organization's line of work and structures. The methods used to collect the information may include interviews, surveys, publication research and many others. Some of the methods used are;

- Archival research:

This research makes use of the secondary data in historical archives and records of the organisation like biographies and journals. According to the Australian Academic & Research Libraries (2011) the information is usually of original records created by the organizations and placed under archival control. The researcher would normally use this information to forecast the trends of data in the organization.

- Content Analysis:

This involves recording interviews and analyzing its contents in a set manner of a document or publication form. This is information that is used to give the analysis of a given investigation.

- Experimental Research

The researcher gets different participants to test out a product/people or service. These participants are just there to try the products or the researchers may do it. For example graduated M.B.A accounting students were investigated under the assumption that they “were a good proxy for non professional investors”. According to the Accounting Review, Jan (2007) this research gave positive results that it was valid a method.

- Observation

The researcher would record some social behavior tendencies which might include the researcher participating or not participating. Some researchers if participating they would become part of the organization and participate in the activities to be researched on for a set time to gain some understanding and manage to make a record of it either qualitatively or quantitatively. This method is mainly to measure the interactions of customers with the given products/services in their environment.

Mainly when this research is being done the customer is not aware of the observation and this gives the observer an upper hand to observe without any restrictions.

Participant Observation.

This research is unstructured interactive; it involves participating in the daily routines or activities of the organization, what they say, how they say it and what activities they do. The researcher does not impose the activities but makes a choice in which activities they would like to participate in and follows what they do and they choose the frequency they would like to appear in the activity and the questions they would like to ask in the activity to fulfill the research. This method is all about what the participants or people involved say or do about the activities and includes also how the researcher feels about what they have experienced from the activities. Sometimes the researcher only accompanies to observe and collects data through qualitative or quantitative methods.

- Longitudinal study

With this method a targeted individual or group is studied and examined over a set period of time.

- Survey

With this method the researcher uses questionnaires or interviews to gather information from targeted people. The questionnaires or interviews offer open-ended or closed-ended questions on how people think and act. For example a survey on the organization's products or services with questions like, "which products or brands do the employees or customers find effective or like better".

Brace, Ian (2008) encourages that a questionnaires should have short and precise questions and that long ones should be carefully considered. The questionnaires come in different designs like the slider scale, write in boxes and the drop down boxes. Some of these can be done on line or on paper with pen and paper.

BASIC RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The research method done by the organisation is of their choice depending on what they are looking to achieve. A basic research would include an analysis or investigation to bring understanding of a particular subject.

To evaluate the results of the research the researcher has to create a research proposal. This document would describe the chosen topic ideas, the proposal outlines and the stages of the whole process from beginning to end. The proposal should be very clear as it may be used to request some finances to upgrade the project and give it ability to perform as expected from the research results. This proposal is done before beginning the corrective measure for the current or the new project.

While it might be difficult at work to research on one specific task, industrial sociology is a field that can be researched on, within sociology of work while examining the changes in technology, globalization, managerial practices, employment relations and many others. The research normally aims at looking at how to make relations and use of technology better in organizations. The organisation can be easily molded by the workers through their own contributions or systematic patterns that they create at work.

When you look at technology and how it affects the species of the earth and controls it. Communication has become easier through use of internet, telephone, printing and many more. This has allowed free communication and interaction at a larger scale for good use in most businesses. It has resulted in globalization of world's markets and businesses putting all these together through connectivity of technology.

The internet has contributed highly in globalization hence improving most economies and also increasing competition. To research any work related subjects like management in planning, staffing or controlling an organisation technology has made easier and faster. Management is all about achieving goals through use of human capital.

Review through Peers

The peer review process is when the editor of a journal gets help from other people maybe in the editorial team with a background of the concerned subject to read. The reviewers are mostly unaware of the gender or names of the people who wrote the article. This reviewing method is not biased; eventually the editor gets to

accept or rejects the article. Peer review as far as I am concerned brings out the best quality of an article. Although according to Justice, Cho, Winker, Berlin and Rennie they all say there is no value in blind review as it does not enhance quality.

Disseminating Findings/Information.

There are various ways to disseminate articles or information. After taking a survey the results of these are put into a journal form to disseminate the findings or investigation results. They are increasingly being used to get information at work either via the e-mail or hard printed copy.

Journals are also a better way of publishing articles. Other scholars or interested parties can easily get access to these published articles by simply typing the name of the person that they want to read on. Most journals are now on the internet and some readily available and some other for a fee, still this makes it a world view article to anyone with internet access.

Summary

Journals articles have a long way to go in terms of presenting the results of social work research. They reach more readers quickly and with the use of blind peer review good quality work without any prejudice is published. This is as important as the quality of work is not determined by a topic but by its value. In the social work academic community journals have more value as they bring in Money through subscriptions.

HOW POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ARE USED TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE MORAL AND POTENTIAL.

Business Formation of the Business Policy

All businesses require policies that help guide them according to the right field of the business. There are a few guidelines on how these policies are created. Each organization has the following;

- A mission or purpose of business, for example designing furniture.
- A vision that shows the organization's direction of its intended destination.
- Some objectives that show the activities and how they will be executed.

The policies are created to give guidance to rules and regulations and objectives of the organization and help management in decision making. The policies are usually easy to understand so all employees can follow. There are procedures that are set to implement each policy explaining how to apply to the customers, employees and products. There are also usually instructions on taking these. For example in human resources, ethics, accounting and customer service department of the business is where some policies are instituted.

For example in the Human resource department policies would address issues like hiring, termination, benefits, salaries, discipline, promotion and when to hire. An example could be "any new employees are entitled to no benefits during probation period of three months". The Ethics policies would address fairness, integrity and respect at workplace. For example, "Honesty is our middle name" could be an organization's policy.

Policies like strategies are more or less coordinated in order to bring together the results of the said vision and objectives. Strategies work as a guide to managers as this helps them in associating who does what and what are the expected results. The person responsible for developing the strategies is usually called the "workplace strategist". They are responsible for requirements of the organization and finding solutions to any rising issues in the organizations. Strategies that can be looked at are improving the culture or facilitating to meet objectives like improve profits or bringing in a new change. To have strategies implemented can be a daunting task although this can be done especially when an organization decides to move to a new place or join another organization or branch.

Examples of strategies

Strategies are designed according to the business operations. For example;

- Product Differentiation Strategy

This strategy is used when the organisation has a competitive advantage like quality or service. This helps the organisation build a brand and create loyalty. For example a company that manufactures plastic bottles can set itself apart through its engineering designs and expertise.

- Growth Strategy

This strategy involves the introduction of new products, new features or look of an existing product. To keep up with competition an existing product can be modified. For example cell phones keep getting new features and designs and to stay in competition the organizations should also adopt similar trends or face closure. Also growth strategy can be implemented in finding a new target market altogether like cell phone applications for teenagers and sell directly to them via the schools.

- Acquisition Strategy

This would be buying another organisation in line with what the organisation does already. For example a grocery store would purchase an existing greenhouse with produce that they are selling. So instead of buying to resell they would be easy access and even maybe a wider variety of products to produce. Or they could purchase a similar grocery store in a different location to grow its business.

- Price skimming Strategy

When an organisation introduces a new product they can price it very high such that it brings confidence to its customers. Although this is usually done to cover expenses encountered during the production and advertising phase. For example whenever apple introduces some of its products the prices are high and customers buy in huge numbers due to belief that there is something special about the product.

How to Manage Implementation of Policies and Strategies

Most business have the greatest ideas ever but when it comes to implementation it becomes difficult to do so. However there are a few steps that an organization should take in order to manage implementation. These are;

1. Involving all stakeholders involved in the organization in the initial stages of strategizing and creation of policies.
2. A written plan for each department must be put in place.
3. Knowing when to implement the policies.
4. Understanding by management of the key areas to implement the policies and strategies.
5. Contingency plans should be put in place in case of any unexpected changes.
6. All involved should create a good working atmosphere.
7. Progress should be monitored often to stay in touch with the situation.
8. A SWOT analysis should be carried out to view the position of the organization.
9. All concerned parties should meet regularly in order to ensure consistency of all plans.

These strategies and policies are there to direct the organization and all involved parties like the managers and even employees have an idea of where the organization is going. As they do all the planning a framework is created that gives room for decision making and planning.

MANAGING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE STRATEGICALLY TO STAY AHEAD OF COMPETITION

Participation of all Stakeholders

To stay ahead of competition requires great participation of all involved parties. Daniel Fleming, Henrick Soborg (2010) researched on Malaysia's growth in its economy. The Malaysian government and all those involved worked together to meet the international competition. They focused on their labour sector by transforming their economy to a more knowledge-based economy. Their key strategy was aimed at capacity building, vocational training, skills upgrading, public and private partnership. The government intensified its efforts on the labour market and educational policy that would provide the manufacturing industries an abundant, cheap and stable workforce with general skills. Some private companies in Malaysia in specific industries took upon themselves to train in-house or on the

job training. Fleming and Soborg (2010) mention that Malaysia has an abundance of skilled workers due to a “large-scale” of educational efforts, (Altenburg, Schmitz, Stamm (2008). They also mention that unlike Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia has planned better in its policies giving it a greater benefit through its knowledge and skill formation in education and human resource development. This success has only come from Malaysia’s knowledge based-economy. This has all been depended upon the recruitment to the educational sector involving tertiary education, labour related courses and on upgrading initiatives (Brown, Green, and Lauder 2001).

Planning

Planning is one of the critical components required in order to achieve a place in competition. Activities should be structured with given guidelines to implement these activities. Strategic policies like a marketing plan with guidelines to achieve the plan, required resources like money and human capital can be set.

Community Involvement

Getting involved with the community in activities that meet the communities’ needs like water and social activities. It is strategic in that the community stays aware of the company and benefits from it. For example a mining company can improve road networks and water problems in its community area and this benefits both parties.

Online Discussions

Another strategic policy is of a sports shop which on its website can create a chatting or discussion session on most popular teams or players and visitors to this site can easily get engaged in the discussions. The owner markets the products while the customers view and chat at the same time.

Division of Labour

To stay ahead of competition some managing skills need to be adopted. This can be done through social division of labour. According to Baker, Dan, Greenberg, Cathy, Hemingway, Collins (2006); this is dividing according to specialisation in particular production like farming. As these groups are put together there is more results due to expertise and as a result the organisation is at an advantage.

Although there are reparations concerning social division of labor like when a similar product is made with better features. This can force a shut down on the organisation as they would have no comparative advantage. Also workers can easily lose jobs due to specialisation and any new inventions can easily take them

out of business. For example implementation of robots meant traffic controlling officers would be reduced as they would not make the places unless there is a fault. Alternatively the organisation can rid or dismiss older employees due to salary and health costs that are higher than those for the young employees.

Commissions

Depending on the type of organization staying ahead could mean putting the employees or partners on commission. For example Baker, Dan, Greenberg, Cathy, Hemingway, Collins (2006) say law firms give salaries till partnership although some law firm paid its workers for two years and then put them on commission. The approach was so efficient in rewarding the efficient and helped in eliminating the non performers. This although has disadvantages in that instead of taking leave most workers do not take a break.

Engage with People

When everyone in the organization is involved in all activities required of them there is a feeling of responsibility. For example Waggener Edstrom's CEO, Melissa Waggener Zorkin, has a system of having each person to "sign out their work", this she says makes everyone produce good quality work as they are responsible for it and with each person's signature comes good pride. When each person signs their work it comes with responsibility and for any person that does not sign their work shows lack of confidence or interest of the work they do. When employees are engaged they feel appreciated more than when left out or just commanded to do work. It does not take much for employees really, general attitudes and good approach towards them and of course appreciation. According to Baker, Dan, Greenberg, Cathy, Hemingway, Collins "What Happy Companies Know" (2006) to connect employees to their work that would result in great organization's financial profits is to listen to them. They also give an example of executives who either read their e-mail or answer cell phones during meetings which bring failure even to any reorganizing that the company might take. Also the employees end up lacking confidence in the management and its motives.

To stay ahead of competition the organization should have visionary, inspirational, humble and inclusive employers. The employees also should be emotionally intelligent and adaptive among other attributes. This would bring profit to all contributors in making the organization a success.

Also to stay ahead of competition organizations should address issues of recruitment in the sense of having the right talents in place. Organizations should address issues of accountability and development of the organization itself.

Having team leaders or representatives to attend important meetings and give report backs and also putting some employees on profit sharing committee, this in return keeps the employees dedicated and the organization definitely stays ahead of competition. Wal-Mart has practiced this with its employees according to “What Happy Companies Know: How the New Science of Happiness Can Change Your Company for the Better by Baker, Dan, Greenberg, Cathy, Hemingway, Collins (2006).

Training

Training according to the needed services in the organization is another way of engaging employees. This is more effective when senior management trains the junior management or mentors them. This motivates and develops employees professionally especially when a new initiative or project is implemented. Internal training is more significant as it has more significance as it has more and immediate value to the business as the training is designed specifically.

Using a Balanced Scorecard

Any results in the organization need to be measured be it operational, financial, customer-focused and people performance results. These results can be measured through the use of a balanced scorecard developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton of Harvard in the 1990s. The scorecard measures the current skills against company objectives and this helps identifying other needs they have and need to improve on to stay competent. For example a company that targets to develop set courses would measure this by implementing training programs with an objective of improving the quality of staff. The same with having the right staff they can only measure this by hiring the best and best first choices.

Modern organizations publish the scorecard with results of CEO's. This is greatly appreciated by the employees as it encourages hard work and better results all the time. It helps create discipline and the reward system is a clear basis. It also creates accountability, shows transparency as everyone's efforts are displayed. Also all employees will recognize that their efforts are very important in order for the organization to meet their objectives and goals.

Return on the People

When the organisation makes a profit it is expected that it shares it reasonably. For the employees to feel they belong some meaningful rewards are a great incentive. Rewarding gives a sense human moral value, of great importance, gives a sense of

loyalty to employees and just from these rewards they work effectively for the organisation. The greatest way to achieve an organization's objectives is through its recruitment style, budget, equipment, technology investments and training. This would give direction to the organisation as it has all the necessary if not most to do business and result in making profit.

“What Happy Companies Know”, (2006) talk about measuring human factors which involves the output each employee produces although some CEOs at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland said an organization is measured by how much they retain talent, how they build intellectual property and how they develop the employees knowledge base. The market itself is all about the intangible assets which are employee knowledge, customer relationships, patents, trademarks, copyrights and brands and not mainly tangible assets.

According to the book “What Happy Companies Know”, (2006), attitudes of employees do drive profits. Some studies were made that show that the size of the office, the firm, nature of business and location of business made a small difference as emotional intelligence ruled the financial performance.

Making Appreciative Inquiries

Seeking inquiries can bring both positive and negative impact to the organization. For example some systems can bring complaints to the organization or victimization to employees. So the system to use should be carefully chosen so as to get the right inquiries that would help improve the business.

Advantages, Disadvantages and Considerations

Researching, policy making and strategic planning for any organization helps with decision making. Some of the benefits, disadvantages and considerations are listed below;

Advantages

- There is a greater market participation which is the ability to attract and win new customers and improve even the old on their participation levels as long as the research has been thoroughly done.
- There are benefits to the organisation in terms of cost management through talent and innovativeness of the people as this means the company spends

less on research and development of policies than on the money received/expected.

- Strategies and researches give an opportunity to the organisation to create great marketing and advertising strategies.
- Research and developing strategies brings a business to trend matching. For example manufacturing recyclable materials to adapt the environmentally friendly products.
- Some problematic areas can be easily identified from various points of view.
- The satisfaction of personnel can be measured through their benefits and wages.
- A simple way to measure the mood of the employees and their morale can be done.
- A communication advantage with the employees is improved through surveys.
- Measurement of how the goals and objectives can be seen if they are in line with the organizational goals.
- Surveys are a good provision for the latest results and are easy to create and issue to the relevant persons.
- Surveys are also very cost effective as they can easily be on paper or electronic via e-mail or on the company website. Maybe used to measure change too.

Disadvantages

- Surveys can reveal very disappointing issues for management as they could reveal misunderstandings from the bottom up. Although whatever the issues they should be resolved.
- Some managers do not like to be told where they are going wrong as they consider this as a weakness hence would give negative comments and attitude.
- Surveys can reveal problems that cause more problems as management may play blame games to escape real critical issues.
- Feedback to employees can easily be ignored.
- Information sometimes does not show any emotions, like feelings or bad behavior.
- Information can be limited without much explanation hence limiting the responses.

- There is no way of telling if respondents are telling the truth like opinions of a good taste to some it's a bad taste.
- The researcher imposes what is important and what is not hence making their own decisions while maybe missing the most important.

Considerations

- The research must hold questions that will guide management with the organization's management issues.
- To improve on the needs of the organization the management should help construct the survey as they have more information.
- Involving the employees in participating in survey taking is more of an incentive as this makes them more part of the organization.
- Surveys should always remain anonymous as some employees can make unsupported remarks about management and prefer to remain unknown.

Conclusion

Research is very important in any organisation especially if the organisation wants to stay above or within competition. The organisation needs to be sure of its needs. The process would include value analysis which involves all stakeholders understanding the value of leadership and how it brings success. Also the level at which these values align with all involved. The management in particular should understand that there are chances of trouble areas before they make any change therefore they should give room for criticism. The whole organisation must have a vision of its expected future so that any leadership development programs to be created will be able to improve capabilities of all leaders and would also help in the recruitment of new talent. The organisation should carry out a research accordingly in order to be aware of its position in the market. The correct research method should be carefully chosen as this would bring great relevance to the information and the targeted market. Policies and strategies that an organisation can operate with are many but the organisation chooses according to its kind of business. Like in the Malaysia's case it is very important for organizations to invest in human capital like training and education. Everyone gets more knowledge in their industry and is skilled with expertise which upgrades the whole country as a whole.

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