



Intergroup Development Interventions

Chapter 11



Learning Objectives

- Identify problems of intergroup conflict and suboptimization.
- Experience the negative effects of competition on organization effectiveness.
- Observe and develop strategies for collaborative intergroup relations



Changing Relationship in Today's Organizations

- Managers are concentrating their efforts on shared responsibilities among teams.
- Organizations create situations of team interdependence where the performance of one group is contingent upon another group.
- People and groups often fail to cooperate with others and may be in open conflict.



OD Interventions

- Aim at improving interdepartmental interfaces and intergroup operating problems.
- Aim at developing effective working methods between teams.



Collaboration and Conflict

- An organization, consisting of departments and divisions, requires cooperation to be effective.
- Differences in objectives, values, efforts, and interests occur between groups.
- It is evitable that conflict and competition between groups will occur.
- The dysfunctional nature of the conflict can be reduced with an emphasis placed on collaboration and cooperation.



Intergroup Operating Problems

- Conflict between groups depends on how incompatible the goals are, the extent to which required resources are scarce and shared, and the degree of interdependence of task activities.
- Suboptimization occurs when a group optimizes its own subgoals but loses sight of the larger organizational goals.
- Intergroup competition involves groups with conflicting purposes or objectives.
- Perceived power imbalance between groups occurs when there is a perceived imbalance between units or when previous established relationships are altered.



Intergroup Operating Problems

- Role conflict and role ambiguity
 - Role conflict occurs when an individual belongs to two or more groups whose goals are in conflict.
 - Role ambiguity exists when an individual of a group is not clear about his/her function, purposes, and goals.
- Personality conflict arises from interpersonal differences between members.



Cooperation Versus Competition

- Though competition is often perceived to be beneficial, the research results of completion and cooperation among groups is mixed.
- Members of competitive groups have more self-esteem for their groups.
- Groups competing with one another are more highly oriented toward accomplishing the task, but there is a lack of evidence that competition will increase productivity.
- Research indicates that cooperation promotes productivity between groups when the task is complicated and requires coordination.



Managing Conflict

- Organizational conflict does not need to be eliminated but instead managed
- Diagnosed conflict situations involves learning the basic conflict styles used in dealing with interpersonal or intergroup conflict.
- Conflict style are based on 2 dimensions
 - Desire to satisfy self
 - Desire to satisfy others



Five Styles/Cooperative vs. Assertive Behavior

- Avoiding- low concern for both self and others
- Obligating – low concern for self and high concern for others
- Dominating- high concern for self and low concern for others
- Compromising – moderate concern for self and moderate concern for others
- Integrating – high concern for self and others.



Several OD Intergroup Techniques

- Dealing with conflicts openly provides a way to manage tension creatively.
- OD techniques for dealing with intergroup problem include third-party consultation, the organization mirror, and intergroup team building.



Third – Party Consultation

- Use a third party, usually an outside practitioner, to help open communications, level power, and confront problems between groups.
- The their party provides diagnostic insight, is nonevaluative, and is a source of emotional support and skills.



Organizational Mirror

- Gives work units feedback on how other elements of the organizational view them.
- Normally using a practitioner, the work group obtains specific information from other groups that it comes in contact with
- The units meet together to process the data with the objective of identifying problems and formulating solutions



Intergroup Team Building

- Key members of conflicting groups meet to work on issue of interface.
- The meeting usually involves the following steps:
- Step 1. Working separately. Two work groups makes three lists:
 - How we see ourselves
 - How we think the other group sees us
 - How we see the other person
- Step 2. Meeting with the other group, a spokesperson from each group presents their lists.
- Step 3. Group meet separately to discuss the information
- Step 4. Subgroups of five or six are formed by mixing members of the two groups. Their objective is to develop problem-solving alternatives with action plans.
- Step 5. A follow-up meeting is held to evaluate progress.



References

- Brown, D.R. & Harvey, D. (2006). *An experiential approach to Organizational development*, (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.