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ABSTRACT

The basis for developing vital, team-like characteristics in contemporary pluralistic America lies in the understanding and building of new interpersonal norms and skills. The new norms accept human collaboration and human diversity as basic facts for problemsolving, survival, and growth. These norms support the intent that interpersonal and intergroup conflict should be confronted openly and dealt with collaboratively in a problemsolving way. They must be accompanied by particular interpersonal and group skills -- skills such as communicating unambiguously in a two-way fashion, setting goals clearly, uncovering conflicts constructively, solving problems systematically, and making decisions collaboratively. (Author/EA)

DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT TEAMWORK: NATIONAL OVERVIEW*

Richard A. Schmuck

As we move toward our 200th birthday, we Americans are literally gasping for what our forefathers called a perfect union. Indicators of psychological alienation and social disintegration are frightfully high; our hopes, faith, and trust are strikingly low. We are breathlessly searching for human groups, organizations, and communities in which economic effeciency is coupled with interpersonal trust, openness, collaboration, and supportiveness. We are gasping partly because of the many dehumanizing trends in our government, corporations, and some schools. But I think more importantly we are out of breath because fundamentally we are at a serious turning point in American history.

Two powerful, and to a great extent, competing social trends hold many of us in tension. On the one hand, we are experiencing the continuing trend of people pressing up closer and closer to more and more people. This can be referred to as the Press of Interdependence. It is fashioned out of the continuing movements of people into larger and larger cities and suburbs, the ever expanding networks of our large corporations, the speed and efficiency of air travel, and the immediacy and realism of television. For all of America's vastness, most of our contemporary technical achievements are moving us closer together and are therefore pressing us to somehow collaborate with one another.

On the other hand, we are experiencing a significant Press Toward Pluralism and cultural diversity. This force is fueled by a continuing knowledge and technical explosion, increasing distance between generations, and a rising awareness on the part of Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Native-Americans, women, senior citizens, and even youngsters that they should obtain their own rightful places in American society. This trend is taking America away from cultural homogeneity and conformity and it is now powerful enough to be supported by a majority of Americans.

The press for interdependence has been largely caused by gradual but very significant ecological and economic changes. For example, major changes have occurred in the geographic distribution of the American population and its accompanying mobility. New centers of population have developed rapidly, especially in cities close to new areas of economic growth. In addition to mobility occasioned by shifts in work and living sites, Americans now move about a great deal in pursuit of their leisure activities. The number of passenger miles traveled has more than doubled over the past 10 years, and this increase in air travel testifies to the large-scale migratory character of contemporary America. The economic changes generally have followed a rural to urban pattern of area development and an entrepreneurial to bureaucratic pattern of social organization. Increasing demand exists for technical, clerical, and service personnel to work in urbanized, complex, large-scale organizations. These bureaucratic structures and occupations necessitate communication and interdependence with colleagues and basic interpersonal competencies in dealing with the public.

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The press for pluralism has been especially nurtured by a revolution in the world of knowledge and our access to it. An increased scientific understanding of many aspects of our natural world has led to dramatic growth in an emphasis on the use of science in industry, government, and human affairs in general. Industrial researchers and developers plan not only new products and markets, but new forms of production and internal management. The public sector also invests heavily in basic and applied research in the physical and social sciences. It has become more and more important for Americans in all institutions to become informed of recent discoveries in their own fields and as new discoveries are made, more occupational specialities arise. This knowledge explosion threatens to make standards of the past -- especially standards of conformity and homogeneity -- irrelevant and outmoded; and calls into question many previously held assumptions. The result is that the contemporary American is called upon to change often, to take less for granted, and to maintain fewer unquestioned or unquestionable assumptions and behavior patterns. No matter what the area of belief, value, behavior, or traditions -- whether it is about the government, minority groups, women, sex, senior citizens, or children's rights -- the knowledge gatherers and researchers of the present may challenge accustomed ways of thinking and behaving with new information and implications at any time.

These countervailing presses for interdependence and pluralism give rise to interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. Anxieties arise as large numbers of people in close physical proximity view the very same actual events from very different points of view. The various cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal differences that arise from such sociological diversity cannot help but produce a large number of virulent conflicts under conditions of human crowding. There is some reason for hope, however, in the belief that the tensions that are stimulated by presses for interdependence and pluralism offer the energy needed for the emergence of a more humanized America. But the question then arises, how can a new level of human community featured by both task effectiveness and interpersonal support be reached?

Part of the answer to this query is captured in the theme of this conference and particularly in the concept of effective team-work, team-work that involves the sociological pluralism of American life. The basis for developing vital team-like characteristics in contemporary pluralistic America lies in the understanding and building of new interpersonal norms and skills. The new norms accept human collaboration and human diversity as basic facts for problem-solving, survival, and growth. They support the values that interpersonal and intergroup conflict should be openly confronted and collaboratively dealt with in a problem-solving way. These norms must be accompanied by particular interpersonal and group skills -- skills such as communicating unambiguously in a two-way fashion, setting goals clearly, uncovering conflicts constructively, solving problems systematically, and making decisions collaboratively are keys to successful team-work.

Few American institutions have felt the presses for interdependence and pluralism more than the schools. They have been on center stage, offering an arena for many of the interpersonal and intergroup conflicts that pervade American life. In many American cities, secondary schools constitute some of the most highly populated organizations and since they draw upon a cross-section of the entire population they are made up of the sociological diversity of the region. In most American school districts, unconscious institutional racism and sexism characterizes the administrative structures. Moreover, the knowledge and technical explosion in the larger society clearly also

typifies the schools. During the 1950's when the federal government began funding school improvement programs in a major way, behavioral scientists by the hundreds were quickly drawn into attempting to solve the complex problems of public education. The private foundations supported still more efforts at school improvement and ten years later in the 60's American industry too was attempting to take a role in efforts to upgrade schooling. As a result, the last 20 years have been characterized by an unprecedented number and variety of educational innovations. Virtually every school district that I have had any contact with during the past 15 years has been attempting a new idea based on the district personnel's beliefs that legitimate knowledge producers were behind the idea, and that innovation was a valued activity. And currently, many districts are self-consciously attempting to grapple with their racism and sexism problems.

In relation to the presses for interdependence and pluralism, the most basic innovations have had to do with modifications in the organizational arrangements of schools. Among the most popular are new pre-school arrangements, variations in scheduling to support individualized instruction, informal primary schools, differentiated staffing patterns, team-teaching, pupil personnel teams, curriculum development committees, the multi-unit school, the middle school, houses within schools, small schools within large schools, schools without walls, community schools, open-space schools, and now the management team concept within schools, within areas and within whole districts.

The list could go on and on; indications are that we have only just seen the beginning of such organizational innovations. A recent study of school architecture, for example, indicated that during the past two years 63% of all new school buildings were designed with an open space concept in mind. The data indicated, moreover, that in cities in states such as California and Florida to which large numbers have migrated during the past decade virtually 100% of the new schools are open-space schools. On other fronts, the University of Wisconsin R & D center on Cognitive Learning is estimating that there will be over 2,000 multi-unit elementary schools forming during the next few years and the Kettering Foundation continues to stimulate interest in its type of multi-unit organization. The state of North Dakota requires its elementary teachers to receive some inservice training in informal education processes and virtually every large city in the United States is experimenting with some form of alternative education for high school students. The magnitude of interest in new organizational patterns for schools is indicated in a recent analysis of the educational literature issued by the ERIC Clearinghouse of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon. More than 150 references are cited having to do with "alternative organizational forms".

Concepts of team-work are integrally embedded in virtually everyone of these suggested innovative arrangements. The themes of interdependence and pluralism underlie most of them. Still many of the basic issues associated with team-like characteristics remain very ambiguous within the minds of educators. Team-work is in search of an operational definition. Even a casual look at some schools gives evidence of the ambiguities of educational teaming. Take these examples, for instance:

-- Even though open space schools are built to facilitate increased staff collaboration, many teachers discover ways to undermine the design by using mo cab e walls, bookcases, tables, and desks to restore a self-contained physical arrangement.

-- In some multi-unit schools, teachers will speak about being a part of a team, while only occasionally meeting with their so-called teammates and then meeting

primarily to handle routine administrative details. According to my colleagues at CASEA who are studying multi-unit schools, it is rare to find a teaching team that is fully collaborating in planning and implementing the instructional program.

-- At the administrative level, the concept of the management team is being discussed and attempted in various ways all over the country. Yet it remains a fairly fuzzy concept for many administrators. District office administrators in large urban systems often speak, for example, of building principals who are not acting as part of the district management team even when the more than 100 building principals in such districts rarely meet and talk. In such situations, the phrase management team is meaningless. Unfortunately, the words educational team have become shibboleths with a variety of meanings whether they refer to instructional or management bodies. It is not surprising that teachers and administrators alike are asking for clarity on what it means to be a member of a team.

The primary intent of this conference is to elaborate on what is meant by the management team. Each of the presenters at this conference plans to discuss and demonstrate some of the group processes that take place within the effective management team. In the vocabulary of the applied behavioral sciences this conference will explore some of the concepts and strategies of team-building. A valuable starting point, it seems to me, is a general definition.

A management team can be defined as a task-oriented group of educational personnel who are representative of the important sub-systems of the organization, hold some organizational goals in common, interact through a formal role-structure, and have some degree of reciprocal influence over one another. The team should marry managerial interdependence and pluralism.

It is my hope and the hopes of my presenting colleagues to give some concrete answers to the question: "If management team members were operating in an optimally effective way, what would they be doing? Let me commence an answer to this question by laying a foundation for what will follow during the conference through a summary of some basic concepts about the management team.

First let me discuss some of the potential benefits that can be derived from adopting management teamwork in contrast to the continuation of the one-to-one hierarchial structures of traditional school administration. By listening to other administrators discuss their managerial problems and action plans, an increased understanding of how the district structure works can be obtained. Moreover, by encouraging that minority opinions are fully explained by increasing inputs from Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Native-Americans, and women and by using groups brainstorming techniques, many new more creative solutions for action planning can be developed. Also, by pooling diverse information from a variety of organizational vantage points (including the more pluralistic views of adverse membership), action-planning can increase in its rationality and effectiveness. And, finally, through collaborative participation in decision-making, an increased sense of psychological ownership in relation to managerial actions can be developed, making it likely that action plans, once decided upon, will more likely be fully implemented.

For potential benefits such as these to be actualized, a management team must be of a particular size. It must be large enough to incorporate the important sub-systems that

are administratively subordinate to it and in this sense be constituted of informed representatives from each of the organization's functioning units. At the same time, it must be small enough to allow for face-to-face problem-solving discussions and collaborative decision-making. With these specifications, the management team typically will not exceed 15 members.

It will be only in rather small districts where there can be a single management team. In most districts, therefore, it is a misuse of language to speak of the (single) management team. When such a phrase is used, it usually refers to a class of administrative personnel including assistant principals, principals, and district-office administrators and not to a functioning team. In large districts, the management team becomes a complex structure of interlocked management teams.

In other words, as the number of administrators in a district goes up, multiply management teams should be formed. They in turn would be connected to one another by what Renesis Likert has termed link-pin roles. Link-pin role-takers participate in the deliberations of at least two of the district's management teams, thereby being in a position to carry information from one team to another. As a typical example, area superintendents take the link-pin role when they participate as members of the superintendent's cabinet and as they convene a team of field administrators. Or, as another example, principals serve as link-pins as they participate within an area team while also convening a building decision-making team.

In larger districts, we should think of the structure of management as including several different teams, some of which are permanent, such as the superintendent's cabinet, an area secondary team, a variety of school building management teams; and others of which are temporary such as specialized curriculum bodies, workshop planning groups, and recruitment committees. The permanent teams can be interlocked by link-pin roles. Thus, a central office management team is articulated with an area team by an area superintendent and area teams are articulated with school management teams through the linking behaviors of principals.

But as we all know matters of size and structure are only skeletal beginning points. It will be the social psychological climate of the team that will undergird its success or failure. Some of the basic ingredients of a team's climate are group processes involving interpersonal expectations, influence, attraction, norms and communication. Ideally, the climate of a management team will be one in which the members expect one another to be responsible and supportive; where the members share high amounts of potential influence -- both with one another and with the formal leader; in which some attraction exists for the team as a whole and between members; where norms are supportive of collaborative problem-solving as well as for maximizing individual differences; wherin communication is open and featured by dialogue; and where the processes of working and developing as a group are considered relevant in themselves for group reflection and criticism.

With this ideal picture for a management team's psychological climate in mind, let us enumerate some of the group processes that would be necessary to achieve it. As was indicated previously, success will lie in the team's communicative effectiveness. This requires maintenance of a two-way flow of valid information among the team members. It requires the execution of efficient meetings, before which agenda items are publically displayed and at which convening skills are adeptly applied so that problems are fully discussed and decisions are clearly made. The communication skills

of paraphrasing, behavior description, feeling description, impression checking, taking surveys, and giving and receiving feedback should form an integral part of the team's repertoire of skills. However, such group skills will only be hollow rituals if they are not also accompanied by group norms that support interpersonal frankness and collaboration. Also norms that support team members' tolerance and creativity in exploring various alternatives before taking administrative actions will be very important. To assure that such norms will emerge and are maintained, team members should expect to spend considerable amounts of time together discussing the dynamics of their own working relationships. Every meeting should include some amount of formal time set aside for team members to reflect together on their interpersonal processes.

Another very important ingredient for the effective management team is the development of a system of multiple accountability in contrast to the traditional system of hierarchical accountability. It has been traditional for superordinates to hold subordinates accountable for performing their jobs adequately and responsibly. Even in contemporary "management by objectives" approaches such an authoritarian structure defines the accountability process. For the management team to develop the sort of effective climate I described before, a more equalitarian system of accountability should be tried. In it, all team members would have formal opportunities to give all other members structured and constructive feedback about their job performances. Thus, the role performance of the formal team leader -- along with all other member's role performances -- would be open for discussion and review. Such a system of multiple accountability might also be referred to as a system of collegial supervision.

But perhaps most fundamental to the management team's success is a clearly worked out and formalized decision-making structure that calls for a maximum amount of member participation within the usual constraints of maintaining an efficient organization. Teams will be more likely to develop the sort of climate I described before as they strive to employ a consensus decision-making approach. By consensus decision-making I don't mean that team members must reach 100% agreement about an action before it is taken. Rather, by consensus I mean more a process of collaborative participation in reaching decisions. When trying to employ group consensus methods, all team members contribute their thoughts and feelings and all share in the final decision. No decision becomes final which is not understood by nearly all members; for this reason, consensus is difficult and at times impossible to obtain. It requires advanced skills of two-way communication, in coping with conflict, and in the use of paraphrasing and surveying the group.

Remember that consensus need not mean a unanimous vote, nor does it require that everyone agrees. It operationally means that (a) everyone can paraphrase the issue to show that he or she understands it, (b) everyone has a chance to describe his or her feelings about the issue, and (c) those who continue to disagree or to have doubts will nevertheless say publicly that they are willing to give the decision an experimental try for a prescribed period of time. Consensus is a condition in which every member is willing to go along without sabotaging the decision. This does not mean that the decision represents everyone's first choice. It means that a sufficient number of team members are in favor of it to carry the decision out, while others understand what is happening and will not obstruct it.

As you can readily see, such an approach to decision making requires most of the skills and norms that were previously enumerated.

The presentations and demonstrations that have been designed for the next 3 days will bear on virtually all of these points. Moreover, each presenter will offer some very useful information and practical strategies and techniques for building particular aspects of the climate of the management team. Let's hope that the sorts of events that are planned will steer each of us toward a better practical understanding of the management team and that each of us will be better able to cope with the presses for interdependence and pluralism in our lives.