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ABSTRACT

Scarce resources have facilitated increasing interdependence among organizations. This paper describes the group dynamics of the cooperation and collaboration models and examines which one is most suitable for maintaining effective group involvement. The cooperation model is comprised of two organizations that reach a mutual agreement; however, their work does not progress beyond this point. The collaboration model reduces conflict, diffuses power, promotes effective participation, and facilitates an abundance of rewards for each individual in the organization by eliminating the competitive, hierarchical arrangement found in the cooperation model. Despite the extra effort required, the collaboration model is argued to be most suited to the Western ideology of competitiveness.
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THE COLLABORATION MODEL: THE EFFECTIVE MODEL FOR THE INCREASING INTERDEPENDENCE OF ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Since my three years of participation in the Genesee County Literacy Coalition of Michigan, as both a volunteer and as a literacy coordinator, a reoccurring theme pertaining to membership often emerged: membership and participation fluctuated greatly, despite admirable efforts by the coalition. Curious as to the reason why cooperative efforts of organizations experienced continual fluctuation in the area of membership, and in the area of participation, prompted this investigation of various researchers in the areas of group dynamics and cooperation. This report examines the dynamics in the currently accepted practice of cooperation, denoted as the "cooperation model" in this report, in the increasing interdependence of organizations due to scarce resources. The "cooperation model" is compared to the denoted, "collaboration model". The "collaboration model," although arduous in its initial implementation, clearly is worth the consideration for an alternative method in addressing cooperation difficulties, such as the aforementioned membership and participation problems.

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Due to the scarcity of resources, organizations have become more interdependent. Such an increase in interdependency has brought forth many difficulties, specifically, but not limited to, the areas of conflict, power, participation, and rewards. The Cooperative Model, that is when "two individuals or organizations reach some mutual agreement, but their work together does not progress beyond this level" (Hord, 1986, p. 22), is not effective in addressing these problems because a radical change is needed "in current organizational structures and practices" (Kraus, 1980, p. 18). These changes would require:

...differential value systems, encompassing resocialization on the part of individuals, and major change in expectations and assumptions toward their social systems on their part and on the part of social systems toward individuals immersed in them (Kraus, 1980, p. 18).

The Collaboration Method, that is the "development of the model of joint planning, joint implementation, and joint evaluation between individuals or organizations" (Hord, 1986, p. 22), is by nature a much more difficult model to implement than the Cooperation Model, nonetheless the benefits of resolving the aforementioned problems of conflict, power, participation, and rewards make the Collaboration Model "highly recommended as the most appropriate model for interorganizational relationships" (Hord, 1986, p. 26).

The current Cooperation Model of interaction between organizations is extremely different in the way that it operates as compared to that of the Collaboration Model system. The Cooperation Model emphasizes the following attributes:

Contemporary organizations stress exclusive achievement of the organization's objective, cognitive rationality, and a lack of support for emotions as viable variables in human and organizational interaction. They also facilitate unilateral direction, coercion, and a reward system consistent with these values. Hierarchy and competition are two of the major organizational variables that reinforce this value system (Kraus, 1980, p. 155).

The Collaboration Model, on the other hand, suggests the following attributes as an alternative method:

In organizations that operate in a collaborative manner, there should be a general reduction in the elevation or raising of certain roles to a position of greater control, authority, or status in the organization. The organization assumes a 'flatter' shape, with more specialization. But it also exhibits more generality across functions, with a greater pool of individuals performing each of the functions (Kraus, 1980, p. 164).

As the size of the group increases, in this particular case of study the term "group" refers to the cooperation of organizations, difficulties immediately arise that distinguish the dynamics between the two outlined model systems (the following is typically what happens when the Cooperation Model is implemented):

...members of larger groups are less attracted to the group, experience greater tension, and are less satisfied than are members of small groups. The lack of time for each member to participate, the increasing domination of the groups' activities by one or few members, and the increased difficulty of maintaining interpersonal relationships in larger groups obviously contribute to negative feelings about the group (Shaw, 1971, p. 158).

As the group begins to grow, the values, as defined by the Western Culture (and imbedded into the Cooperation Model of organizations as well), of competition begin to undermine the knowledge and skills offered by such a large group, and the aforementioned problems of conflict, power, participation, and rewards begin to emerge:

This behavior (competitive and hierarchical) is counterfeit because it does not maximize productivity, does not maximize development of individual potential, and is generally inconsistent with goals and purposes professed by the organization. Much research has indicated that competitive behavior is of limited usefulness in organizational settings, and that the carry-over into other settings makes it extremely difficult for people to cooperate when cooperation is indeed extremely appropriate behavior (Kraus, 1980, p. 23).

The Cooperation Model perpetuates the competitive and hierarchical order and values, and thereby perpetuates conflict as well:

Individuals protect themselves and their power to move toward a position that minimizes losses. A hierarchical arrangement of authority is perpetuated because someone *outside of the individual* determines what needs and task priorities are important. *External control* is being imposed on the individual; at the same time, *internal control* from the individual or the task diminishes. Individuals and groups accumulate feelings of being *out of control* with regard to their perceived impact on others (Kraus, 1980, p. 194).

Members eventually become frustrated by their efforts, and thereby become negligent in performing their duties. Members are merely surviving, instead of achieving goals.

The Collaboration Model has a very different outcome when conflicts arise:

...conflict is perceived to have its origin in legitimate *individual differences*.... It is not a function of *system perpetuation*; rather, it is a function of system and individual enhancement and task accomplishment. Control and mastery are not gained at the expense of others (there is enough to go around; in fact, since functional dispersal is a goal, this is much less of an issue than in a competitive process). Individual and group boundary permeability increase. Differences provide variety and expertise rather than the threat of control. Differences are incorporated in the sense that they are included and respected and the process, task, and structure are modified to respond to them (Kraus, 1980, p. 195).

Differences pertaining to the issue of power within organizations also arise. In the Cooperation Model, there is a heavy concentration of centralized power. Since the Cooperation Model encompasses a high degree of competitiveness, there is the belief that there is only so much power to go around:

Individuals behave competitively to gain a share of the perceived limited supply of power and control, the hierarchical structure acts in a rewarding fashion, and the individual 'learns' that competition for limited power is an appropriate behavior pattern (Kraus, 1980, p. 207).

In the Collaboration Model, power is also present, but it is diffused:

Positive power is applicable to the uses of power in a collaboratively functioning organization, for while power does exist in a collaborative organization, it exists and functions in a *very different, in fact, revolutionary way*. Collaborative organizations would concentrate not on the elimination of power, but on its *equalization and disbursement* (Kraus, 1980, p. 209).

Vital to any organization is participation, specifically that of effective participation. Additionally, issues of perpetuating and maintaining member participation is an area of concern for any organization that wants to survive and be successful in accomplishing its goals. The Cooperation Model undermines participation through the underlying factor of competition, specifically when

dealing with issues of status and leadership. Furthermore, when the size of the group increases, the inherent competition within the Cooperation Model increases as well:

...the group member who aspires to be effective in the group must consider his status and what this means with respect to deviation from group norms. Either conformity or nonconformity may be indicated, depending upon the person's status in the group (Shaw, 1971, p. 397).

A member who has greater status will be more effective in participation, since a greater degree of nonconformity is allowed, but the member who does not have such a high level of status will only be effective in areas that are aligned more closely to his status, that is, what he feels more comfortable with in doing for the group in accordance with his status:

For example, the high-status group member is usually accorded greater latitude with respect to degree of conformity to group norms. Hence a high-status group member may be more effective under certain circumstances by *not* conforming to group norms, whereas the low-status group member may be less effective if he deviates (Shaw, 1971, p. 396).

As the group size increases, people tend to participate less, in accordance with the Cooperation Model:

The potential number of interpersonal relationships between group members increases rapidly with size; subgroups are more likely to form in larger groups and the potential for conflict is correspondingly greater. As size increases, relatively fewer group members participate in the group's activities and members are more likely to conform to normative group pressures. These organizational and interpersonal effects usually interfere with the effective use of resources (Shaw, 1971, p. 156).

Also as the size increases, the need for the development of structure increases. The structure most commonly adhered to is that of the Cooperation Model which embodies a hierarchical system. Leadership roles are assumed, meaning that fewer persons have the authority to effectively participate since

differences of opinion occur, usually due to one's status within the group. As a result, participation decreases as a member's efforts are shifted toward maintaining one's status within the group:

...if the group member has power in the group, it is important to remember that others may be responding in ways designed to maximize their own reinforcements, rather than in ways designed to ensure the achievement of group goals (Shaw, 1971, p. 396).

In the Collaboration Model, the situation is quite different when dealing with issues of participation because power is diffused:

An organizational structure that is collaborative in its outlook is based on *functional dispersal*. That is, the organization distributes functions to a variety of individuals based on the assumption that there are enough to go around, rather than on the assumption that functions are limited and must be distributed selectively as rewards for effectiveness (Kraus, 1980, p. 165).

The Collaboration Model suggests that every function is equally important, and that there is an infinite number of tasks to be completed. In the Cooperative Model, effective participation is based upon a reward system that stresses upward mobility, that is, a higher degree of status and of power. Such a reward system is based upon competition of scarce resources and is detrimental to the efforts of the group:

Competitive behavior is contrary to the development within the group or organization of feelings of responsibility for decisions, of creativity, and even loyalty to the organization... (Kraus, 1980, p. 24).

The reward system in the Collaboration Model bases the reward system upon the increased acquisition of skills, and eliminates the hierarchical system of

upward mobility as the reward for effective participation:

In hierarchical organizations, individuals are rewarded for performance, for making their superiors look good, and for conforming to the global expectations of the organization. In a collaborative organization, performance is expected (within very broad limits); thus, reward systems favor the acquisition of applicable skills and knowledge. They are also set up to establish mechanisms that promote the dispersal of skills and the creation of functions. Consequently individuals who facilitate the learning of other individuals and those who increase their function-complexity are rewarded in the organization. The more individuals keep 'working themselves out of a job,' the more they are rewarded in the context of a collaborative organization. The only remaining hierarchy might be something similar to a hierarchy of complexity in terms of skills to be mastered or knowledge to be transmitted (Kraus, 1980, pp.166-167).

In conclusion, the Western ideology of competitiveness within the framework of the Cooperation Model is antiquated. As organizations become increasingly interdependent, the need for increased effectiveness in obtaining goals is necessary in order for organizations to survive and to achieve its goals. Survival of these organizations depends also upon an entirely different model. The Collaboration Model perpetuates less conflict, diffuses power, and promotes effective participation and an abundance of rewards for each individual within the organization by eliminating the competitive, hierarchical establishment of cooperation. The Collaboration Model is not an easy model to achieve, but the benefits offered by it are certainly worth the endeavor.

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