Integral Management and the Effective Human Service Organization

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Human service organizations aim to address personal and social growth and development in the communities they serve. At the same time, these organizations must respond to increasing client complexity and diversity within a rapidly changing global environment. This includes the ability to respond to the needs of an ever-increasing aging population as well as the spiritual diversity within communities. There is also an increasing emphasis on interorganizational collaboration as a way to better meet the needs of disadvantaged populations. Integral Theory offers a map to guide the human service manager in handling these complex organizational interactions while aligning with the mission of addressing personal and social growth and development.

Introduction

There is discussion regarding the growing need for human service organizations to be able to respond to increasing client complexity and diversity within a rapidly changing global environment. In particular, human service organizations should be able to model high-level environmental negotiations and interactions, empowering clients served by the agency. Recently, more emphasis has been placed on open-systems perspectives and strategic management practices that deal proactively with environmental uncertainty.

Human services organizations, however, are lacking an integrative theory that can guide practitioners throughout the agency at all levels. There is also a gap in social work research exploring what facilitates collaboration by managers and whether this leads to more effective outcomes for clients and the communities in which the organization is embedded. This paper discusses skills managers must possess today, explores the specialized skills of the human services manager, and presents Integral Theory as the most useful framework to guide the human

service organization. Research questions are generated and a review of the literature is connected to Integral concepts.

Management

General Management

The manager's role is to lead the organization in achieving its goals. The study of management has traditionally come from a closed-systems view, focusing on the internal operations of organizations. These classical, behavioral, and management science schools of organizational thought are accurate in many ways but are nonetheless incomplete. It is increasingly recognized that managers must monitor and respond to the environment in order to be effective. Thus, it has become clear that all elements existing outside the boundary of the organization have the potential to affect the organization.[1] Daft and Marcic explain that the external environment includes two layers—the general and task environments.[2] The general environment includes the social, demographic, and economic factors that influence all organizations relatively equally. The task environment includes sectors that conduct day to day transactions with the organization and directly influence operations and performance. In contrast, the internal environment includes management, current employees, and the organizational culture.[3]

A manager's conceptual and interpersonal skills are among the most important in order to lead an organization effectively. The manager must possess the capacity to recognize the relationship among the parts of the organization and see the organization as a whole that has a place within the community and broader environment. Understanding these relationships assists the manager in distinguishing broad patterns and important circumstances in which the organization finds itself, allowing the opportunity for strategic planning. At the same time, however, the organization must be flexible and able to maintain connections within the environment as changes occur. In order to lead toward these goals, then, the manager must function with a high level of interpersonal skills. This means effectively communicating, coordinating, facilitating,

resolving conflicts, and empowering others within a group to move toward a shared vision of the future.[4]

Today, there are also increasing concerns regarding organizational ethics. Daft and Marcic point out that managers bring their personal traits with them, including their level of moral development.[5] This, of course, impacts how the manager leads the organization and contributes to the culture of the organization. Transformational or servant leadership is associated with the postconventional level of moral development presented by Kohlberg.[6] This type of manager leads from their own internalized principles, understands differing value systems, seeks creative solutions, and maintains an equilibrium between concerns for both individual and community. The manager concentrates on the needs of others, empowering employees to engage in their own reasoning and participate in organizational decision-making.[7]

Globalization is an environmental event that allows people to cross borders. Among other events, it has contributed to diversity in the workplace and our communities. Thus, managers must also possess skills to work with a variety of different people, drawing the most from the talents of diverse individuals and effectively serving people from different backgrounds. Mature moral development is especially important for the manager leading an organization in a global environment, navigating differing values across cultures. It is also related to the degree of social responsibility taken by an organization to contribute to the well-being of the environment within which it is operating.[8]

Daft and Marcic suggest that in order to thrive within an increasingly complex environment, organizations must embrace both operational changes and transformational changes.[9] When there is a discrepancy between actual performance and the ideals to which the organization aspires, managers may change business procedures or consider new ideas or technology. To understand when change is necessary, managers must monitor strengths and weaknesses within the organization in addition to opportunities and threats in the environment. Operational changes

emphasize upgrading fundamental work and organizational procedures, while transformational change entails renewal and redesign of the entire organization.[10] Daft and Marcic discuss the increasing focus toward engaging all organizational members in problem-solving and ongoing improvement based on learning.[11] Leaders of these organizations offer vision and empower employees through collaborative work and information sharing. Barriers between departments are broken down in order to redefine culture in such a way that people work together and share, and changes can also occur from the "bottom-up."[12]

Managing Human Service Organizations

The goal of human service organizations is to improve the lives and functioning of individuals within their families and communities. Thus, the human service organization in particular must model effective functioning within its general environment, task environment, and internal environment. The activities of the organization would then provide a parallel process to the "clinical" work with clients. Yet, similar to other organizations, human service agencies have historically been organized in a bureaucratic manner.

Recent environmental occurrences are heightening the need to make changes in systems designs. There is recognition that global demographic changes will lead to a large number of older clients presenting more complicated health care and social needs as they live longer with chronic illnesses.[13] This coincides with an increasing concern that the most vulnerable populations with multiple complex problems—including the elderly, homeless people, dually diagnosed individuals, and severely emotionally disturbed children and families—are not well-served by current separate human service delivery systems.[14]

As a result, the social work literature about human service delivery has begun to speak to the need for organizations and their staff to collaborate with other organizations, disciplines, and the community in order to reduce service duplication and provide the most efficient and effective

care to persons in need.[15] Simultaneously, in its efforts to treat people in a holistic manner, the social work profession is becoming increasingly concerned with addressing the spiritual aspect of the person along with the bio-psycho-social aspects.[16]

An Integrative Theoretical Approach

Managing Human Services Today

In the past, a bureaucratic or rule-oriented mode of discourse was dominant among organizations. Working within bureaucratic systems (which did not take the environment into consideration) led to a more individualistic, clinical orientation with clients, making it extremely challenging to develop collaborative relationships within the environment or to operate from a more holistic perspective. Even the development of natural systems theories, which recognizes the role of informal relationships in organizations, did not take the environment into account.[17] Managers of organizations are now increasingly expected to adopt more open systems organizational perspectives in today's information society.[18] However, the organizational theories guiding administrators of human service organizations still lack the relevant concepts to promote healthy development. Until now, human services managers have been guided by different theories than clinical practitioners, and social workers have identified themselves as "macro" or "clinical." Yet it seems that the manager leading the human service organization into a vision of the future ought to be guided by the *same conceptual framework that steers the practice of the organization*.

In summary, human service managers must possess certain levels of cognitive and ethical development in order to grasp these complex relationships and effectively handle current organizational demands. In addition, these managers need an orienting theory or framework to guide them in handling complex interactions while aligning themselves with their organizational mission. Integral Theory can handle and help explicate these complex interactions.[19] Therefore, Integral Theory is proposed as a framework to support human service managers in their work.

Integral Theory

Wilber is a modern-day philosopher and metatheorist who presents an integrated approach, transcending and including all theories and the worldviews from which they emerge.[20] Rational, natural, and open systems perspectives represent the different theories that guide administrators.[21] Integral Theory is relevant to social work because it includes the environment, society, culture, and embodies a truly global perspective.[22] In fact, as a metatheory, the Integral Model is relevant to all professions.[23] Since the study of organizations is already a transdisciplinary endeavor, Integral Theory links organizational studies to their respective professions while also integrating the professions themselves.[24]

Wilber's concepts of holons and holarchies are relevant to organizations. "A holon is a whole that is part of other wholes."[25] Each level transcends and includes earlier stages of development. Meanwhile, every holon has a social aspect—the individual and the social co-evolve, bringing forth new holarchical levels of both. This interaction continues at each stage of development.[26] It is important to make the distinction that employees are *members* of the organization but are not transcended and included as *parts* of the organization.[27] Integral theory explains that social holons may have an official mode of communication, such as the corporate culture that is often set by the leader. At the same time, various sub-cultures often exist within the organization. There are individuals who are members of social holons at all levels of the organization, and these levels inter-relate with various others. In other words, employees have relationships with various co-workers, bosses, and subordinates, while the organizations of which they are members are inter-related with other organizations and communities. Understanding these vertical and horizontal inter-relationships requires a map like Integral Theory that takes them all into account and therefore provides a three-dimensional map of a three-dimensional territory.

While individuals evolve within this overall context, the social holons of which they are members change as well. In this way, the organization undergoes a parallel process of

development to its membership. However, while a person's overall self is made up of all of its selves from earlier stages of development that each new stage has transcended and included, an organization changes depending upon its membership. Its dominant mode of discourse can change along with variations in leadership and employees, since its organizational members are at a range of developmental stages. Second-Tier thinking can value the functions of each level, referred to by Beck and Cowan as "vMemes" (or value memes),[28] recognizing them all as playing important roles. Thus, Integral Theory explains that Integral management involves understanding exactly where people are and matching them with a job congruent with their skills.

Higher level thinking is integrative and holistic: "Good governance facilitates the emergence of entities through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy)," and this thinking would recognize that any organization is infused with interaction on numerous levels.[29] Thus, Integral Theory is ideal to guide an organization, particularly an organization engaged in facilitating human development. Integral Theory provides the manager with the conceptual framework to recognize the relationship among the parts of the organization and see the organization as a whole that has a place within the community and broader environment.

If the theory were applied and learned, the most competent employees would emerge and become leaders. Knowledge and practice of the theoretical framework would facilitate the growth of the leader, enhancing the human skills necessary for management of organizations in a global society. These skills will assist the manager to distinguish broad patterns and important circumstances in which the organization finds itself, allowing the opportunity for strategic planning and movement toward a shared vision of the future. In addition to the ability to cognitively grasp the relationships of communities and sub-communities, the postconventional level of moral development is critical for the manager leading an organization in a global environment and navigating differing values. The leadership in an organization can set the tone

of a corporate culture and set an example. If leadership consistently leads from an Integral, postconventional level of development and sets an example for their members, then they will attract similar employees to their organization. Corporate culture often grows around leadership in a way that reflects it. This influences the organizational climate and the degree of social responsibility the organization takes for the environment within which it is operating.

Research Questions

- How do leadership and organizational characteristics combine so that a human service agency will engage in effective collaborative practices within its larger environment?

- To what extent do organizational factors relate to the degree of organizational collaboration?

- To what extent do leadership characteristics relate to the degree of collaboration within and outside of the organization?

- To what extent does variation in staff characteristics relate to the degree of organizational collaboration?

- To what extent does increased staff and client diversity relate to the degree of organizational collaboration?

- To what extent does the degree of organizational collaboration relate to greater program success at goal attainment?

- Do certain leadership and organizational characteristics contribute to greater effectiveness when collaborative efforts are made?

Literature Review

Organizations, Management, and Integral Concepts

The social work profession's increased emphasis on collaboration is in keeping with Integral Theory, which recognizes organizations as social holons that are intricately connected with their members, the community served, and their larger environment.[30] At the same time, the social work literature is increasingly speaking to the need to address spirituality as part of a holistic approach to practice.[31] Religious diversity is also being recognized as an aspect of client diversity.[32] Churches are among the helping networks in existence within communities that can be utilized and strengthened through agency linkages.[33] Since it is not faith-based, Integral Theory offers an opportunity to integrate the spiritual perspective into social work services, supporting all faith denominations. This not only facilitates an ability to therapeutically address the spiritual dimension of the person, but it also offers a theoretical framework by which the organization-as-a-whole can connect with the community on all levels, including linkage with the spiritual aspects of the community.

Staff and community involvement are important issues to address within collaborative research. According to Cohen, agencies characterized by bureaucratic structures are less able to engage in client-centered collaborative service delivery, and their staff tends to be unsatisfied with their work.[34] Furthermore, organizational capacities and priorities are mirrored in staffing characteristics.[35] Positive work environments and a sense of personal power may influence staff to carry out their work effectively.[36] Workforce and structural characteristics of an organization also explain employee turnover.[37] In this way, the membership of the organization offers a wave of being and knowing that is available to the staff as they develop toward higher potentials. Turnover can be also be explained by development—when either the developmental level of the employee surpasses that of the organization or the dominant mode of discourse in the organization is higher than the employee can developmentally manage.

Hopkins and Hyde found that collaboration, empowerment, and multiculturalism were not echoed in choices made by managers who were more focused on immediate crises than on future planning.[38] This may be the result when organizational managers are chosen based on power, rank, or status rather than emerging within the organization based upon competency. In these cases, employees who surpass the developmental level of the organization may then feel the need to leave the organization rather than being able to emerge as a leader in the organization. Another possibility is that managers, without an adequate theory guiding them, do not have the map necessary for future planning, nor the framework to facilitate their own healthy development as a leader and their empowerment of others.

According to Yoo, other factors, such as support from co-workers, may shield aspects of the organization from negatively affecting the outcomes of clients.[39] The beliefs of staff persons also appear to be important, impacting the extent to which they will actually engage in collaborative efforts with other organizations.[40] This is congruent with the idea that when client needs are in conflict with bureaucratic policies, staff might either reduce or increase attempts to address these client needs.[41] Integral Theory would explain that development is both horizontal and vertical—not only are holons transcended and included within increasing levels of the holarchy, but they are also interacting with other elements in each level. "Much of development—at least half of it—involves various types of nonhierarchical, heterarchical processes of competence articulation and application."[42]

Since there is a gap in research in this area, it seems important to systematically explore the various influences contributing to staff development and effective service delivery by organizations. It also seems important to explore what types of organizations encourage leadership within the organization based on competence; verify if this leads to a higher level of staff retention; find out if staff feel more empowered in these organizations; and determine if this leads to more effective outcomes in the community.

Integral Management

It has been suggested that human service agencies need to focus efforts to develop their own practice techniques and enhance agency performance in terms of service delivery, administration, and management, and that this emphasis will become a tool of empowerment for the organization.[43] Furthermore, the community-centered, collaborative approach to service delivery requires correspondence between the way services are initiated within the community and the way they are presented to staff.[44] An organization guided by an Integral framework from the clinical to administrative levels is in the best position to accomplish these tasks. This is congruent with the idea that administrators are also change agents, an area now given more consideration due to the greater value being placed on efficiency and effectiveness.[45] At the same time, a theory that supports management practices inclusive of diversity within organizations is critical today.[46] Barak identifies connections between outcomes (such as general well-being, commitment to the agency, and job satisfaction) and inclusion and diversity management.[47] Increasing recognition of the importance of administrative functions has led to the suggestion that education in social work should do more to ensure that students are provided the knowledge and skills to serve as human services managers.[48]

Human service agencies today find themselves in exceptionally turbulent environments created by the fast-paced change in modern society, making it challenging to foresee and plan for the events that may threaten the current way of operating.[49] Through interviews with executive directors, Menefee found that planning, management, and leadership were highlighted as strategic administration tactics likely to be most helpful for an agency to respond to these environmental forces.[50] It is also important to note that leadership, collaboration, and staff development have been found to support empowerment practice in organizations, suggesting ways that administrative behaviors contribute to an agency climate supportive of empowerment practice.[51] Integral Theory weaves all of these pieces together, embracing both transformational

models and translational models of management within the context of the environment in which the organization is embedded.

Conclusion

The review of current literature on collaborative efforts demonstrates the increasing focus and agreement on the importance of correcting fragmented or inadequate systems of care in order to provide effective service to the most disadvantaged sectors of our population and respond to the increasing complexity of the environment. The literature also points out the importance of going beyond collaboration with other organizations, considering collaboration within the organization and with the community as a critical component to the development of truly responsive systems of care. This is in keeping with Integral Theory, which explains the organization as a social holon.[52]

Collaborative efforts in service delivery have resolved some gaps, effectively addressing serious social issues by bringing services to those who need them most. It is clear that there is a trend toward collaboration to solve problems, and this deserves to be studied more carefully. To this point, however, there has not been a common use of an integrative theory, incorporating both administrative and practice efforts, to support the organizational work of all members. While collaborative models are being utilized by agencies, there is a need for more research on the subject. This brief paper has sought to present a theoretical framework appropriate to guide organizational practice and research in this area.

This is all work that needs to be done, and social workers must fulfill their mission as reformers to facilitate the provision of integrated social services, taking the lead in research on service delivery, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable populations and the increasing diversity of the global environment. Furthermore, a biopsychosocial-spiritual perspective recognizes the reality that a variety of institutions and professionals play a role in fostering

wellness in a person. This necessitates the use of an integrative theory to guide high-level negotiations and interactions that facilitate development throughout the environment. There is a need for information regarding effective policies and service delivery advancement to achieve desired social work outcomes. Although social service agencies have adapted certain structural arrangements, organizational innovation can help us to better serve clients and their communities. Integral Theory is especially helpful in guiding high performance leadership in collaborative service practices.

Endnotes

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[25] Wilber, *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*, 2000, p. 7

[26] Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution*, 1995

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