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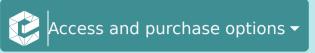
Advanced search

Healthy organizations: toward a diagnostic method

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to propose, from the way in which an allopathic physician makes a diagnosis of a person's health, an organizational diagnosis metaphor that can contribute in the search for an increasingly more integral way of qualifying an organization as healthy.

Design/methodology/approach

The methodological approach is essentially functional and is based on the cybernetics of W.R. Ashby with respect to the concept of a model and especially on "iso-" and "homomorphisms." In this way, similarities are found between the behavior of the components observed by the physician in a person, according to his diagnostic guidelines, and the functioning of an organization.

Findings

The paper finds that various authors recognize the value and power of the use of metaphors, following the spirit of L.V. Bertalanffy, in the search for a better understanding of the organizational phenomenon, particularly that of human health, including the definition of the World Health Organization, from which a way is proposed here to understand a healthy organization and a general model of organizational diagnosis. It is estimated that one of the most significant finding made so far is the need to formalize structurally dependencies meant to apply "organizational awareness" as a way of permanently reflecting on the organization, helping its members to distinguish what

points in time. Strategic planning, coaching higher executives, and empowerment of employees have gone in that direction, but still show insufficient efforts.

Research limitations/implications

The work done so far has consisted in the theoretical development of homomorphism and some applications about which it is not yet possible make a report because of their scarcity. However, this method of work has made it possible to refeed the initial model and make some adjustments according to the divergencies seen between the theoretical and the practical. Consequently, this is a proposal that requires discussion – the purpose of this communication – and further experimentation that may lead to its eventual validation.

Practical implications

The proposal of a general model for making organizational diagnoses.

Originality/value

Some degree of originality is considered with respect to known work, because the idea is to articulate a model having an integral character that allows an organization to be qualified as healthy, trying to go beyond partial views that attributed that condition to organizations that were seen from a particular perspective, such as the health of its workers or its economic-financial performance.

Keywords

Organizational structures   Cybernetics   Organizational culture