Chapter 2
Designing Visionary Leadership Teams

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ABSTRACT

Nigel Sykes' 3E's concept is examined against established theory and recent work in Organizational Behaviour. The possibility that this concept offers a way of developing social synergy in work groups is explored, and considered in the context of socio-technical systems. 3E's is based on the categorisation of people in the workplace into roles labelled "Envisioners" "Enablers" or "Enactors". Role theory is explored, and its relevance to organizational success. The importance of the affective component in motivation and decision-making is identified. A research study is reported testing the 3E's concept which shows that it corresponds with measurable differences of motivational need, personality factors, and decision-making between individuals. The characteristics of successful group decision-making are linked with the 3E's differentiation. The 3E's model offers the possibility of improving person-role fit, and thus organisational performance. It proposes an integrated design for the selection and operation of teams, offering a person-role fit, optimal decision-making behaviour, and consequent social synergy.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership teams have been explored extensively, and a number of different schemas have been proposed – including that of Belbin (1982), but also Holland (1985). The main finding of these researchers has been that leadership teams need to contain a diversity of members, with different skills. Collins (2001) reports that successful organizations have balanced leadership teams whose members possess different capabilities, while Miller (1990) shows that unbalanced leadership teams are connected with organisational failures. The inference is that enduring organisational suc-

cess depends on the ability of leaders to identify and maintain a diversity of capabilities within their teams, thus creating social synergy (Whitworth, 2009).

While leadership teams traditionally develop over a period of time, a range of current working practices preclude the direct personal contact and relationship-building that normally precedes and informs appointments into organisational roles. This includes such things as online collaborative work groups or geographically-separated teams working on short-term projects for multi-national organisations (e.g. using enterprise information systems). The technical aspects of this kind of work arrangement are usually designed to ensure speed and security of information, together with customised databases ensuring efficient system or project control.

This leaves open how one can assess people's fitness for roles. Neglect of the social aspect (role expectation, person-role fit) of work groups using information systems and technology is a potential cause of problems. The fact that modern work teams are almost inevitably socio-technical systems is not widely appreciated, but 3E's offers the possibility of social contextualisation leading to the "higher level system" proposed by Whitworth (2009). There is an obvious problem in attempting to achieve the social synergy arising from a credible person-role fit where technology serves to obstruct traditional human contact. There is nowadays extensive use of psychometric systems as an adjunct to team-building (e.g. the Myers-Briggs test) in the hope that this type of analysis and feedback can help determine the person-role fit within teams, and accelerate the acceptance of personality differences between team members.

Various psychometric tools have been devised to try and produce measures of difference between people, mainly with ambiguous results. As far as personality factor research goes, the most confident finding is that the "Conscientiousness" factor is the only one that consistently correlates

with individual performance (McCrae & Costa 2006). The reader might be forgiven for thinking this was (a) a statement of the obvious, and (b) a good example of circular reasoning!

This present study is based on the work of Nigel Sykes[1] (Warwick Business School, Centre for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)). He has proposed a team structure for developing organisations which he argues could represent a critical success factor. This proposal implies that it is possible to establish a "human psychological process of meaning exchange" (Whitworth 2009) as a result of acknowledging the differing psychologies of people occupying different organisational roles. (And therefore differences in their styles of behaviour and communication).

There is little obvious difference between the team sizes involved in developing SMEs, and work groups with operational autonomy formed within larger organisations for various purposes. All such groups or teams are, in effect, attempts to create autonomous workgroups (a term for groups combining a socio-technical systems perspective with group based job enrichment design – Furnham, 2005). This concept is therefore being explored because of its potential relevance to all such work groups. If valid, this offers an approach particularly helpful for the social synergy of (geographically) remote work groups reliant on information systems for coordinating joint working.

Sykes proposes the categorisation of people in the workplace into roles labelled "Envisioners" "Enablers" or "Enactors" (3E's) corresponding with intrinsic differences between individuals. His taxonomy is based on the Biblical roles of Prophet, Priest, and King,[2] which he argues reflects the fundamental diversity of the optimal work group.

3E's prescribes the basis for building an integrated leadership team and its critical internal relationships. These roles are balanced around a shared "idea" (Figure 1). It will be shown that the emotional component of decision-making is very significant, and that the 3E's model could

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