Reflection Paper

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LI805XC Organization Theories for Administering Information Agencies

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Considering Hatch’s statement at the very beginning of our text that “organization theory is not an easy sell,” I must admit that I can completely identify with it as my previous understanding of the theory of organizations was limited to a very narrow comprehension (Hatch, p.3). However, by the end of the first class weekend I was more aware of how the organization processes work and how the theories discussed applied to almost every aspect of life. I was also shocked to find out that many theories could be applied to an organization as a whole and to its individual components as well, and that more than one theory could be used in one organization.

The conceptual model on page 19 of the Hatch text and the slides shown in class were essential in my understanding these subtle relationships and how they work together and share aspects in regard to social structure, culture, physical structure and technology.

In cooperation with the readings, the classroom discussions and case study activities really made the various theories we discussed easier to recognize within my own organization. Although I had regarded the University of Colorado as a very traditional hierarchical organization with formal reporting relationships as described by Weber in the hatch text, I started to distinguish the smaller organizations that were working within the university, separately and in conjunction, and that these were not necessarily in the same style, and yet they still worked together. Similar to the counter-culture scenarios in the article by Jones, in which they state that, “people may develop specific subcultural practices as a way of adding meaning to their lives or by developing norms and
values that advance personal rather than organizational ends” (Jones, et. al, p.217).

In addition, The University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is in the process of a consolidation with the Downtown Denver Campus, not physically, but administratively, and there is also a concern about the business or commercial identity of the Health Sciences Center versus the Downtown Denver Campus as one campus. This consolidation process has provided me with a very detailed view of Weber’s “traditional authority” hierarchy with its formal reporting relationships as well as Fayol’s theory of administrative principles with its span-of-control; exceptions to routine; departmentalization; unity-of-command; and hierarchy (Hatch, p.34).

However, the lines of communication are breaking down throughout this process and the level of stress being felt throughout the ranks of staff is not being recognized. The articles that I was assigned to review, *The Impact of Technology on Relationships within Organizations*, which is an assessment of how technology “impacts individuals and groups in organizations, and the organization in its entirety” addressed specifically several issues the campus is experiencing concerning communication between the administration and the staff (Montano & Dillon, p.227).

Although the campus receives monthly and, occasionally, weekly emails from a variety of administrative resources (i.e. emails from the president, emails from chancellor) the staff still feel “out of touch,” because the mass emails are very impersonal and often are not specific to either campus. Within the library,
much of the information is coming from other sources, not immediate supervisors, and several library specific news items were written about in school paper first before staff were notified. Without even realizing that the campus communities have been applying the aspects of contingency theory as each “if” situation has made itself known (Hatch p.41). The social construction theory can also be seen here as both the stability of the hierarchy and the instability of communication conflict “emphasizing the potential for change” (Hatch, p.43).

I can apply the resource dependent theory to a very specific scenario currently happening in the library, as the existing library structure has altered dramatically due to a critical loss of staff in several departments due to illness, reassignment, retirement and resignation. The stress of the relocation to a new facility has only been compounded by this as the departments that would be most effected by the “scarcity of critical resources” are primarily public focused, (Hatch, p.258). To compensate for the closure of the library during the relocation, a satellite library was opened to provide minimal support to the remaining students and is being managed by one of the previously mentioned reassignments of critical staff, making the already stressed staff take on additional duties.

The group projects were not only fun, but informative and helpful, not only in distinguishing visually the various theories, but seeing how they were interpreted by each group. As we were arranged according to our interests (public library, academic, special, school), it was interesting to see how the same theories could be interpreted so differently, and yet they all worked.
Having an improved understanding of organizational theory and its foundations has allowed me to better appreciate the structure and beliefs that differ throughout any organization. I think Mary Jo Hatch says it best in her closing summary as I am able to take away from this class, “…an appreciation of how others know their work even as I construct my own” (Hatch, p.341).
Bibliography

