

The organizational effectiveness: the problematics of the concept and the interpretation models



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Abstract:

The concepts in sciences in general, and in sociology in particular, are characterized with instability and transformability as they are subject to the historical tendency are get affected by many factors. This raises many issues such as the inability to achieve an exact, clear, and full concept. This applies to the concept of the organizational effectiveness that we shall focus on in this study. In this regard, the study focuses on the various definitions attributed to the organizational effectiveness and the similar concepts, and identifies the models that interpret it.

Keywords: effectiveness; organizational effectiveness; organization; efficiency; models that interpret the organizational effectiveness.

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Introduction:

Studies related to the organizational effectiveness got a wide attention from the scholars of different fields who see that the effectiveness is not just a concept; rather, it is a feature related to the organization. Despite this wide interest, there is still a hot debate regarding the concept of the organizational effectiveness and the method of its measurement, as shown in most of the literature. In this context, the absence of a comprehensive, clear, and exact definition increased the complexity of this issue, and the various suggested views and alternatives reflected various perceptions of different people; which may take the personal nature sometimes and very relative criteria.

The organizational effectiveness is one of the basic structures in the organizations and their theories because the evaluation of the organizations aims finding the quality of effective or ineffective. Besides, it gives a criterion to guarantee their survival in the competition market. In this line, the organizational effectiveness is one of the topics related to the 1st studies in the field of organizations, mainly the study of Kim Cameron that focused on the different meanings of organizational effectiveness and detailed the diversity of its measurement models.

Undoubtedly, the effectiveness is one of the topics that need more studies by different disciplines due to the multidimensional nature of this vague concept. Thus, the concept depends on specific criteria according to the field of study and on a specific side to determine the measurement criteria and the different models. This is reflected in the diversity of the intellectual schools that tackled the subject, which resulted from the diversity of the researchers' methods and difference of their views; even for those who follow the same method.

The first beginnings of the effectiveness studies completely differ than the current studies as the early ones focused on specific sides of the organization and neglected the others. Nevertheless, many researches adopted a more comprehensive and complementary vision in studying the effectiveness of the organizations to cope with its development, complexity, and the various modern related concepts, mainly after the economic changes that are based on the economic openness. In this line, the issue of the absence of a common and exact definition for the organizational effectiveness triggered the issue of the similarity of the concept to other concepts such as the efficiency, performance, and productivity, mainly after the rapid development that affected the activities, size, and quality of the organizations.

This similarity hugely contributed to the complexity and vagueness of the concept and brought about the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of finding one model for measuring the effectiveness. Studies proved the limitation and inability of the models of measuring effectiveness in facing the criticism because it may suit

certain organizations unlike others. Besides, it focuses on only a specific side and neglects the others; knowing that the organizations are a whole that includes a set of internal related elements, without denying the existence of relations with the external environment.

To cover this issue, this paper shall analyze the concept of the organizational effectiveness through tackling the main definitions set by the researchers from different angles. Then, the paper discusses some concepts that need explanation to distinguish them from the concept under study. Finally, the paper sheds light on the various models to measure the organizational effectiveness based on many previous studies.

1. THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

it is one of the important topics studied by the organizational thought, as it is a basis for the ancient and modern organization theories, a cause for the existence, development, and survival of the organizations, and a criteria for determining their position within the market. In addition, it is one of the vague and inexact concepts because despite the diversity of the scientific studies in this field, they could not solve this vagueness due to the correlation of this concept with the concept of the organization. The latter is one of the complex concepts, per se, due to the diversity and difference in the nature, size, activities, and goals of the organizations; hence, it is difficult to identify the degree of the effectiveness and indexes of measuring it.

Consequently, we find many definitions for the organizational effectiveness. Another cause is the diversity of the fields and methods of the scholars who study this issue and the bases on which the concept of effectiveness is built. In this line, these bases include the productivity, the growth rate, the profits, and the achievement of the objectives, etc.

Bernard is the first who attempted to set a definition for the effectiveness. He sees that the effectiveness of any activity is related to the success in achieving the goal of the activity (Mansouri, 2016, p 142). On the other hand, Etzioni is one of the pioneers of this research. He sees that the effectiveness is the tool with which the organization achieves its underlined goals (Ben Bertal, Baadj & al 2017, p 201). This cannot be achieved only through the optimal exploitation of the available resources and the external environment. In this regard, Costa Eleni agrees with him and defines the effectiveness as the degree of achieving the goals by the company (Costea, 2005, p 113). Based on what has been said, the effectiveness is that concept through which the organization achieves its underlined goals and the results it works for (Akppebe E. R, Baridam L, 2020, p 597) .

These definitions focus on the criterion of achieving goals to judge the effectiveness of the organization. The common goal in most of the organizations is

making profits, i.e., focusing on the financial performance of the company and the use of the financial measurement indexes such as RoI and RoE. Thus, they are among the indexes of measuring the organizational effectiveness of the organizations (Venkatraman .N, Ramanujam V., 1986, p803). The previous definitions are all classic and rely on the criterion of goals achievement instead of profits making that had been used in the beginning, and, then, had developed with time.

In addition, Steers & Mahoney defines it as the high productivity, flexibility, and adaptability with the environment, and the ability to settle and create (Hairout, 2020, p 225). Moreover, Gibson et al see that there are three levels or views regarding the effectiveness in each organizations. The 1st level is the individual effectiveness that is made by specific employees and is evaluated by the administration using the process of performance evaluation. Nevertheless, because the individuals of the organization cannot work individually, and work in groups most of the time, the second level that is "the effectiveness of the group" emerged. It refers to the contributions of the employees. In this context, when the total of the individual contributions is higher than the collective, there is cooperation. The last level is a mixture between the two first ones and is the highest level because its effectiveness exceeds the two first together. The relation between the three views depends on the organization's type, results, and used technology (Chokekanoknapa, 2011, p 39).

On the other hand, Peter Drucker sees that the organizational effectiveness is the ability of the optimal use of the available resources to achieve the goals. In this line, the organizational effectiveness refers to the competency and ability of any organization to achieve its goals and views. It is one of the indexes of evaluating the development and vitality of the organization. As for the organizational performance, it denotes the quality, quantity, competency, and profitability of the organization in a given period. Based on the definition of Drucker, the range of the organizational effectiveness is wider than the organizational performance (Yunfei .X, Jian .Z,& al, 2022, p 2419)

2. SIMILAR CONCEPTS:

The complexity of the organization and the development of its theories led to the enlargement and similarity between the related concepts. As a result, the problem is no more about the differences between these concepts; rather, it is about the relations between them. The vagueness of the effectiveness and its relation with the concept of the organization with its modern meaning led to the emergence of many concepts that make us think that they are similar or have the same meaning, such as the efficiency and the performance. However, a deep reading in their core shows the difference between them and our study concept.

a. Organizational efficiency

The organizational efficiency is one of the criteria used in measuring the performance of the organization. Despite its importance and the diversity of the studies that shed light on it, there is no consensus about a common definition that can be used to measure the organizational efficiency. Like the effectiveness, it is related to the achievement of the organization's short and long-term goals and the ability of the organization to survive and develop to satisfy the stakeholders. The organization that is characterized with the efficiency is competent with bigger outputs than the inputs. Furthermore, it can maximize the benefits from the limited resources and has high technical and economic potentials (Abou Hassan, 2017, p 335).

To determine the concept of the organizational efficiency, it is important to understand its meaning in general. The Australian Government Productivity Commission issued a report in 2013 where it perceived the concept of efficiency as having three dimensions, namely the productivity, the specificity, and the dynamics. In this line, the productivity is that dimension where the goods and services are produced with the least possible costs. The perceived productive efficiency implies the extent in which it is technically possible to minimize the inputs without minimizing the outputs or maximizing the inputs. As for the specificity efficiency, it refers to guaranteeing the achievement of the highest return from the scarce resources. Finally, the dynamic efficiency denotes devoting the resources with time, including those meant for the improvement of the economic efficiency and the generation of more resources (Ramathankibirge .A, kaawaase .T, & al, 2019, p 1). Thus, it is the rate between the amount of the inputs and outputs that allows achieving the best possible result for an organization.

Generally, the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness are confused because the efficiency is one of organization advantages that are generally tackled in economics, scientific administration, and administration sciences books. Its concept is identified in the economic terms. Hence, it is used to denote the outputs compared the inputs. We can say that the concept of the efficiency is related to the question that says: "what are the least inputs needed to achieve the required outputs? Or, what is the maximum level of outputs that can be achieved using a specific level of inputs? Thus, the question is related to the amount of the outputs and the costs. This is based on the hypothesis that states that there is an enough knowledge about the target outputs and an agreement between the various actors in the organization about them. In this context, the importance of any questions related to the nature of the organizational goals does not appear (Lowe E. A, Fong Soo .W,1980, p6). Thus, the core difference between the two concepts emerges, as the effectiveness questions the organization's achievement of its underlined goals. It focuses on the individual and collective value of the outputs unlike the efficiency that does not take into consideration the nature and value of these outputs only from the market perspective. Nevertheless, this does not deny the fact that the confusion between the two concepts emerges in reality and that it is not easy to

distinguish them experimentally, mainly when the effectiveness measure is based on a quantitative evaluation, as pointed to by Catherine Paradeise (Paradeise, 2012, p79).

b. The performance:

It refers to making the work and the way it is made so that the organization reaches its goals (Zarnouh, 2017, p.p. 28-29). It is the most important index of the competitive advantage of the company since it allows improving the profitability, growth, strength, and position within the market. Besides, it is still difficult to give a clear definition to this concept due to its multiple dimensions and different angles despite it had widely developed with time in various scientific studies since its appearance in 1979. In this line, it was an advantage for the contemporary Western societies and organizations that reflects their social development (Bessire, 1999, p 128). The concept is still relatively so vague that it is used in the daily life. Moreover, it is widely used in most of the studies and in the organizations environment to refer to a specific level of the organization's excellence in its environment; as Stephane Jacquet points, it is a complex and hard to define concept with multiple meanings (Jacquet, 2011).

In this line, Barouche discusses the concept of performance saying that it is the ability to achieve the underlined goals. On the other hand, Bourguigon sees that it is the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizations. Hence, it includes the concept of the effectiveness that refers to making the work until its end, and the concept of efficiency that implies that the tools used to execute the work until it send have been used based on economic data. Therefore, the performance denotes the ability of the organization to take measures to achieve results according to the underlined goals through minimizing the costs and resources of the executed processes (Driss, 2017, p 444).

Zineb Issor shares the same view, as she says that the performance is a complex and hard to define concept with multiple meanings. She adds that the performance of the company relies hugely on the effectiveness that is most of time limited in reality to the financial dimension; in an era where the competition is based on various factors and the risks increase, making the success of the company less dependent on the profits and the high RoI. Therefore, the performance of the company becomes multidimensional and requires identifying the various measurement indexes (Issor, 2017, p 94).

As for the classical and administrative method, the performance refers to three basic notions as follows (Jacquet, 2011):

- It is a result that represents the level of goals' achievement.
- It is an act that implies a real production that includes processes.

- It may be a success as an advantage for the performance, leading us to make a judgment of subjectivity.

This is also the attitude of Gilbert (1980) who sees that the performance gathers three concepts, namely the effectiveness, efficiency, and suitability, which rely on three other concepts that are the tools, results, and goals as shown in figure 01:



Figure 01: Gilbert's model, 1980

Source :NILS C, Soguel (2008). **La budgétisation au service de la performance avant et après la nouvelle gestion publique.** Working paper de l'IDHEAP. p2.

- The axis of results-goals: It defines the concept of effectiveness as the use of the tools to get results in the frame of fixed goals, i.e., achieving the goals.
- The axis of the tools-results: It defines the concept of the efficiency as the rate between the outcomes and the total resources used in a given activity, i.e., the achievement of the goals with the least possible costs.
- The axis of the tools-goals: It defines the concept of the suitability as the rate between the used tools and the target goals, i.e., devoting the good resources.

In this regard, we point to a similar concept that is "the productivity", it is a concept that allows measuring the monetary efficiency of the used material, financial, and human tools through a specific economic process that shows the relation of results/tools (Conso, Hamici,1999, p 60). Through this definition, the productivity is related to the tools meant for achieving specific goals and for determining which are the most suitable to achieve the company efficiency.

3. THE MODELS INTERPRETING THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

The organizational effectiveness has many criteria that allow its measurement using different characteristics that take into consideration the target goals, ability, and efficiency of the institution of taking advantage of its internal and external resources. Furthermore, it may be related to the degree of the stakeholders' satisfaction without affecting the ability to ensure the competition in the market or the safety of the internal processes. On the other hand, others see that it is related to the identification of the elements that represent an obstacle to the achievement of the organization effectiveness, or the elements that guarantee the commitment of the organization to the criteria of legitimacy. In general, these criteria are classified into modern and traditional models that we shall detail chronologically.

a. The goal model:

It starts from the notion that the organizations are social entities that aim at specific goals. It is the first model for the measurement of the organizational effectiveness. It lasted during the 1950s as a clear and simple model. It defines the concept of the organizational effectiveness based on the degree of the company's achievement of its goals (Robbins, 1990, p 50). Hence, we deduce from this definition that the model is based on a set of assumptions, mainly:

- The institution aims at achieving a goal or a set of goals.
- The achievement of the final goals allows measuring the organizational effectiveness of the institution.

However, despite the simplicity of this model, it faced criticism related to the goals and, thus, it became difficult to use because the institution is made up of elements that have different goals. Therefore, it may be complicated and difficult to give answers to some simple questions as "whose goals?," "Do the goals mean the short-term or long-term ones?," and "Are these goals the official or real goals of the institution?"

To answer these questions, we can rely on some thinkers and scholars of the economic side of the organizational effectiveness through some indexes such as RoI, the market share, the market value, and the growth index (Daft, 1992, p 48). Kochan et al point out that the structural distinction in the companies has a relation with the diversity of the goals. In addition, since most of the companies are different organizational structures, the multiplicity and insufficiency are evident institutional points (Bouhelal, Kerbouche, 2015, p 429).

b. System resource model:

Yuchtman & Seashore suggested this model and defined the organizational effectiveness as the ability of the organization, regarding the absolute or relative value, to use its environment to get the scarce and valuable

resources (Eydi, 2015, p 461). The basis of this model is the ability of the organization to get the resources from its external environment to guarantee its ability to survive because the resources are required to perform the activities and achieve the goals of the organization. In this context, the increase of the resources increases the organizational effectiveness. This shows the ability of measuring the outputs based on the inputs.

This model invites the organizations managers to look at the organization as a part of the whole, instead of the whole. This is similar to the functional constructivist view, mainly regarding the bases of this model that says that any part of the organization activities has an influence on the other parts (Giti, Suhaida, 2012,p 81). On the other hand, the focus on the quantitative side (inputs/outputs) to judge the effectiveness and performance of the organization is not sufficient, mainly in the 1st beginnings because it is difficult to judge an institution in the beginning of its activities. For instance, the effect of the investment of ideas and new discoveries needs time and more contributions, funding, and support (Altschuld, Zheng, 1995, p210).

c. The internal process model:

Bennis, Lickert, and Argyris are pioneers of this model. They see that the organizational effectiveness is the complementarity between the organization and its human resources, which leads to the quality of the management of the internal processes (Bouhellal, Kerbouche, p430). It is defined as the model that gives much attention to the internal transformation process and focuses on the official use of the resources to provide services or produce goods (Schermerhorn, Hunt, &al, 2004, p7). This model sees the effectiveness as the organization's maintenance of the internal processes and procedures to be internally safe and efficient. The work of Cameron (1981) studied the model and confirmed that the effective organization is the one that is characterized with flexibility and organizational health and has no effect of tension and exhaustion. Moreover, the members are part of the whole system as the latter works automatically in a smooth way without obstacles. As for the relation between the elements, it is based on the trust and good will. In addition, the information flow is horizontal and vertical (Cameron, 1981, p.p.25-47).

Furthermore, the model mainly focuses on the human resources because they determine the interaction and treatment process. Besides, the model knows some deficits mainly that it did not have the same interest and application as the goal and system resources models (Ursula, P.M.Wilderom, 1996,p 8); because it considers the organization a closed system and denies any influence from the external environment.

d. Competing values model:

Quinn & Rohrbaugh suggested it in 1983. It is a synthesis and extension of the previous models, not a new one. It aims at creating adjustment between the previous models to study the organizational effectiveness and set a comprehensive model based on the rational goal, the internal process, the open system, and the human relations (Henri, 2004, p 98).

The study of the organizational effectiveness lasted more than two decades and found out that some organizations may be effective if they show a flexibility and an adaptability with their environment. On the other hand, some organizations may be effective if they show stability and dominance, others show effectiveness when they maintain the efficiency of the internal processes, while others show effectiveness if they maintain a stable external competitive situation for the customers. These differences represent the multidimensional goals that form the basics of the competing values, namely the creativity, the innovation, the cooperation, and the command (Cameron, Quinn, 2016).

This model is based on three dimensions as follows (Yu , Quan Wu, 2009, p37):

- The organizational concentration: It takes place through shifting from the partial internal concentration on the people's well-being and their development inside the organization, into the full external concentration.
- The hierarchy: it refers to the shift from the concentration on the stability to the concentration on the flexibility.
- Distinction between the tools and goals, and between the processes and results.

Thus, we find many contradictions that influence the organizational effectiveness of the organization, mainly regarding the diverse environment that it faces, the different and contradicting goals, the different internal and external elements, and the effect of time on its activity. All this obliges the organization not to focus on a specific side instead of another, such as focusing on the internal environment and neglecting the external. Besides, we must look at the organizational effectiveness from different angles at the same time because this represents the most important positive element for this model that draws its importance from the participation of a group of experts such as Quinn & Rohrbaugh (Lee, 2004, p.p.23-24).

e. Strategic constituencies model:

The models of measuring the organizational effectiveness differ from one period to another. Thus, it is difficult to find a satisfying model. In this context, Kim Cameron sees that there are many models, namely the strategic constituencies model (Cameron, 1986, p 87) that relies on the effect of the institution on the stakeholders and their interests. Moreover, Schermerhorn et al point that the success of the institution includes the distribution of profits on the shareholders and settling the conflicts that may arise between the institution elements. This is

through a satisfying common agreement, harmony, negotiations, reinforcement of the relations between the parts, and efficiency; these elements contribute to the achievement of the institution effectiveness (Schermerhorn, G. Hunt, & al, 2002, p.p 135-137).

From another side, this model is characterized with some features that distinguish it from the other models. Hence, it sees that the effectiveness is made up of the organizational effectiveness and the social effectiveness; the latter had not been discussed in the other models. In addition, the model focuses on the elements of the organizations, either regarding the external environment of the institution or the internal. This model admits the inability of achieving the satisfaction of all the parts. Therefore, the effectiveness denotes the achievement of the minimal satisfaction of the constituencies related to the institution, including the services or products users, the suppliers, the managers, the main supporters of the organization, etc (Giti, Suhaida, p81).

f. Ineffectiveness model and legitimacy model:

Cameron et al pointed to two other models (Whetten, Cameron, 1984, p4), namely the legitimacy model and the ineffectiveness model. The legitimacy model is somehow modern compared to the previously mentioned models. It considers the survival of the organization as the ultimate and supreme goal. To do so, the organization must achieve the legitimacy with its audience to guarantee its continuity in the activity market and avoid its collapse. The legitimacy in this regard is making the correct things that suit the regulations and laws.

As for the model of the ineffectiveness, it focuses on the deficits inside the organization that negatively affect its effectiveness. Thus, the organization is effective as long as it can get rid of the negatives and deficits. Besides, Cameron (1984) provided this model to be used in special cases, namely when it is hard to identify the efficiency criteria, or when the organization wants to use new strategies to improve its effectiveness. Hence, it allows the organizations managers to diagnose the defects and overcome the organizational deficits (Whetten, Cameron, p5). Many evidences show that the organizational effectiveness of an organization can be better achieved if the deficits are known instead of focusing on the achieved success. Moreover, this model contributes to a good understanding of the organization and defines the organizational effectiveness as the absence of the ineffectiveness (Cameron, 1982, p15).

Conclusion:

Based on the previous diverse studies that tackled the organizational effectiveness, its formal concepts, and measurement models, we conclude that there is no agreement upon a common definition. This is natural since the effectiveness is related to the concept of the organization that is the most complicated because of the absence of a common complementary theory.

Therefore, we see that it is better not to rely on one model to measure the organizational effectiveness and evaluate the organizations because the organization may be effective according to one model and ineffective according to another. Besides, there may be organizations with common features; however, we cannot apply the same model on them in order to identify the degree of effectiveness, such as the case of the educational institutions whose elements pour in this topic. Consequently, we can say that the use of composed models in many cases is better for determining the situation of the organizations or studying their effectiveness. In this line, we study each organization separately in case it is not possible to study them together. Besides, there is an orientation towards a core question that is: what is the aim of the measurement? Or, what is the benefit of these models when the effectiveness is noticed in reality, not theoretically?

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