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***MANAGING EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND  
THE COMPETING VALUES APPROACH***

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**Introduction**

As we begin to develop the curriculum of public administration for the next century, one fundamental question remains unanswered. By what standards do we judge the effectiveness of government agencies? Our students will be leading some of the most important organizations in their countries, if not in the world. Our charge is to prepare them for distinguished management careers in which through thoughtful redesign they will be responsible for the creation of far better organizational structures and processes than existed in this decade or the last. To design curriculum appropriate to this challenge, we must be guided by a better understanding of effective and ineffective performance in the public sector.

In an earlier review of the public administration literature, Rohrbaugh (1981) noted that theorists and researchers typically had offered rather narrow and conflicting standards for judging the effectiveness of government agencies. Hatry (1978) argued that students must be prepared to achieve organizational productivity, since office efficiency (the extent to which the government produces a given output with the least possible use of resources) and effectiveness (the amount of end product, the real service to the public that the government is providing) should be the measures of successful performance. In contrast, Golembiewski (1969) proposed that the level of office openness, trust, shared responsibility and self-direction were the appropriate indicators of effectiveness, that is, the overall development of human resources in an organization. This contrast in emphasis between commitment to task and responsiveness to people is a long-standing and widely-noted tension in the literature on leadership education (Yukl, 1987).

Another increasingly common view of effectiveness was reflected by Levine (1978), who focused on how well a government agency was able to survive the latest series of budget slashes and hiring freezes, the other side of the push in past decades for organizational growth in personnel and capital resources. Should we prepare our students to be as skillful entrepreneurs as their counterparts in business schools, fighting against cutbacks through creative marketing and promotion strategies? Felsenthal (1980), in contrast, focused on the importance of stability and certainty of agency operations, praising high levels of coordination and system control, consistency and reliability in information and responsiveness to internal process problems. If effectiveness emanates from the core of well regimented organizations, then boundary-spanning skills in prospective public administrators are not so critical. On the other hand, top managers frequently fail because the organizations they lead are too routinized and inflexible to respond to new opportunities and challenges (Quinn, 1988).

### **The Competing Values Approach to Organizational Analysis**

The Competing Values Approach (CVA) to organizational analysis (Quinn, 1988; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Lewin & Minton, 1986) was proposed originally to clarify the construct space occupied by "effectiveness," the ultimate dependent variable that lies at the very center of all organization theory (Cameron & Whetten, 1982). The earliest work in developing the CVA was a multidimensional scaling project that identified three axes undergirding judgments about the similarity of 17 commonly used criteria for assessing organization performance (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981); the same three-dimensional space was found again as the result of a larger, replication study of organizational researchers and theorists (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983).

We can graphically illustrate the coordinates of the 17 assessment criteria provided by the replication study. The first dimension (the horizontal or x-axis) was interpreted as reflecting differing collective preferences for focus by representing the contrast between an internal, person-oriented emphasis (toward the left) and an external, environmentally-oriented emphasis (toward the right). The second dimension (the vertical or y-axis) was interpreted as reflecting differing collective preferences for structure by representing the contrast between an interest in flexibility and change (toward the top) and stability and

control (toward the bottom). The third dimension (a depth or distality axis) was interpreted as reflecting the degree of closeness to desired collective outcomes or a means-ends continuum, by representing the contrast between a concern for ends (nearer and larger) and a concern for means (farther away and smaller).

Research on the CVA has demonstrated that the criteria commonly used to assess effectiveness reflect alternative priorities for any group or organization. The need for flexibility competes with the need for operational control; attention to internal organizational issues competes with attention to conditions external to the organization; and an emphasis on process and procedures (as means) competes with an emphasis on outcomes or objectives (as ends). Of course, these dimensions are not unique to the CVA, since they define three sets of competing values that have been long recognized in the study of collective performance. For example, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) identified these dimensions as structure, interpersonal orientation, and time, and used them to explore and explain differences that were observed in the way that managers think and work.

The emergence of the first pair of competing values, flexibility versus control, reflects one of the most basic dilemmas of organization life. The differing viewpoints in considering order and stability as opposed to innovation and change are at the heart of the most heated debates in sociology, political science, and psychology. While many social theorists have emphasized authority, structure, coordination, and central control, others have stressed diversity, delegation, adaptability, and individual initiative. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) centered their landmark study around this dilemma and argued that managing the tension between integration and differentiation was a core issue in the history of organizational design.

The next pair of competing values, internal versus external, represents another basic dilemma of organizational life. From an external perspective, the organization should be viewed as a well piloted ship with the ultimate goal of accomplishing its mission and acquiring resources by successfully navigating in often turbulent or uncharted waters. From the internal view, the ship and its crew deserve primary consideration; their maintenance and well being must be carefully attended. When the external value on overall organization productivity and growth is maximized, the internal emphasis on

cohesion and equilibrium may be reduced; and when the emphasis on internal harmony grows, it may tend to shift attention away from overall competitiveness, as Aram (1976) has illustrated.

The final basic dilemma, means versus ends, is a difficult problem, especially as organizations elaborate their functions. As Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum (1957) have noted, the means by which organizations sustain themselves and attain their objectives frequently become functionally autonomous, that is, they come to assume the character of end and function as organizational goals. Organizational resources may be more directed at supporting planning than at rewarding productivity or more heavily invested in more accurate cost accounting than in better service delivery. Katz and Kahn (1978, 252) specifically pointed to this difficulty of balancing organizational means and ends in their classic textbook.

While each of these three continua has been recognized and discussed as problems for managers to solve, the unique contribution of the CVA, however, lies in the connection drawn between the three value dimensions of organizational analysis and Parson's theory of functional prerequisites for any system of action (Parsons, 1959; Hare, 1976, 12-15). The orthogonal representation of the first two dimensions of competing values (i.e., focus and structure) yields four distinct models of organizational analysis in quadrants that parallel Parson's specification of functional prerequisites:

- o the human relations model (where the primary function is pattern maintenance and tension management);
- o the open systems model (where the primary function is adaptation);
- o the rational goal model (where the primary function is goal attainment); and
- o the internal process model (where the primary function is integration).

The third value dimension, the means-ends continuum, is reflected in each model, since each model is concerned with both process and outcome effectiveness. For example, from the perspective of the rational goal model, better planning is the means by which greater efficiency is achieved; the effectiveness of a group or organization would be assessed with attention to both its planning processes and its efficiency outcomes.

The human relations model (see Golembiewski, 1969, for example) places a great deal of emphasis on flexibility and internal focus, and would stress such criteria as

cohesion and morale (as means) and human resource development (as an end). The open systems model (see Levine, 1978, for example) places a great deal of emphasis on flexibility and external focus, and would stress such criteria as flexibility and readiness (as means) and growth, resource acquisition, and external support (as ends). The rational goal model (see Hatry, 1978, for example) places a great deal of emphasis on control and external focus, and would stress the effectiveness criteria as planning and goal setting (as means) and productivity and efficiency (as ends). The internal process model (see Felsenthal, 1980, for example) places a great deal of emphasis on control and internal focus, and would stress the role of information management and communication (as means) and stability and control (as ends). This model would commend an orderly work situation with sufficient coordination and distribution of information to provide organizational participants with a psychological sense of continuity and security.

Because each model is embedded in a particular set of competing values, it has a polar opposite model with contrasting emphases. The human relations model with its effectiveness criteria reflecting flexibility and internal focus stands in stark contrast to the rational goal model's value-based stress on control and external focus. The open system model based on flexibility and external focus runs counter to the internal process model, the effectiveness criteria of which reflect a focus on control and internal focus. Because the criteria of organizational effectiveness are embedded in a set of competing values, it might be argued that the resulting effectiveness construct provides an inherent contradiction in terms. That is, since certain pairs of concepts are located at opposite poles in the spatial model, they can share no place in a consistent and convergent theory of organization. The argument might content that, for every proposition that could be derived from such an analytical approach, its contradiction also could be derived.

It is true that the spatial model described here is a type of oxymoron, a combination of seemingly contradictory or incongruous concepts. However, the critical point to be made is that, although certain pairs of concepts are at opposite locations in the value space and, therefore, paradoxical in nature (Cameron, 1986), this does not require that they are empirical opposites, mutually exclusive in actual organizational environments. Indeed, an organization might be cohesive and productive or stable and flexible. For that matter, stability might be as likely to contribute to flexibility as it

would to inflexibility or vice versa. Propositions derived from the CVA need not be contradictory; they need only take into account the possible contradictions in every organizational setting.

### **The Competing Values Approach to Group Decision Making**

More recently, the application of the CVA framework to the performance literature at the group level of analysis (McCartt & Rohrbaugh, 1989; Rohrbaugh, 1989; Reagan & Rohrbaugh, 1990) has led to the identification of four perspectives concerning the effectiveness of group decision processes:

- o the consensual perspective (corresponding to the human relations model).
- o the political perspective (corresponding to the open systems model);
- o the rational perspective (corresponding to the rational goals model); and
- o the empirical perspective (corresponding to the internal processes model).

The four perspectives reflect competing values because they emphasize what often appear as conflicting demands on any system of group decision support. Consistent with Parsons, the values most salient to the political perspective (instrumental, external concerns) differ strikingly from those most salient to the empirical perspective (consumatory, internal concerns); similarly, the values undergirding the consensual perspective (instrumental, internal concerns) are distinct from those undergirding the rational perspective (consumatory, external concerns). For this reason, managers might be expected to create and rely upon group decision processes that most reflect their own values.

The consensual perspective. Managers who take a consensual perspective (primarily focused on internal, instrumental concerns) on group decision processes expect full participation in meetings allowing for open expression of individual feelings and sentiments. Extended discussion and debate about conflicting concerns should lead to collective agreement on a mutually satisfactory solution. As a result, the likelihood of support for the decision during implementation would be increased through such team building. This very interpersonally oriented perspective is dominant among managers who have been especially influenced by the study of organization development.

The political perspective. Managers who take a political perspective (primarily focused on external, instrumental concerns) on group decision processes encourage flexibility and creativity in approaches to problems. Idea generation ("brainstorming") would be judged on how attuned participants were to shifts in the problem environment and on how well the standing of the group was maintained or enhanced. The search for legitimacy of the decision (i.e., its acceptability to outside stakeholders who are not immediate participants but whose interests need to be represented) would be notable through a fully responsive, adaptable process.

The rational perspective. Managers who take a rational perspective (primarily focused on external, consumatory concerns) on group decision processes emphasize clear thinking as the primary ingredient for effective decision making. From this very task-oriented perspective (particularly common among managers who have studied management science and operations research), any decision process should be directed by explicit recognition of organizational goals and objectives. Methods that efficiently assist decision makers as planners by improving the consistency and coherency of their logic and reasoning would be highly valued.

The empirical perspective. Managers who take an empirical perspective (primarily focused on internal, consumatory concerns) on group decision processes would stress the importance of accountability in a decision process. Particular attention should be directed to securing relevant information and developing large and reliable data bases to provide decision support. Proponents of this perspective, typically educated in the physical or social sciences (especially those who have specialized in information systems, financial management, or data analysis), believe that to be effective a decision process should allow thorough use of evidence and full documentation.

Associated with each of the four perspectives in the CVA framework are two criteria used either explicitly or implicitly to gauge the effectiveness of group decision processes. One criterion provides a standard for the nature of the process (i.e., empirical--data-based, rational--goal-centered, political--adaptable, and consensual--participatory); the second assesses the ends or outcomes achieved (i.e., empirical--accountability, rational--efficiency, political--legitimacy, and consensual--supportability). Altogether,

eight indicators of group decision process effectiveness are identified; these criteria and the perspectives to which they pertain are juxtaposed as the CVA quadrants.

The recognition of four distinct perspectives concerning effective decision processes is not unique to the CVA. Churchman (1971), for example, suggested four basic forms of inquiring systems: dialectical-conflictual (Hegelian), synthetic-representational (Kantian), formal-deductive (Leibnizian), and empirical-inductive (Lockean). In a similar vein, Mitroff and Mason (1982) contrasted four aspects of group policy making: existential, interpretive, rational, and empirical. Drawing on Jung's (1959) identification of cognitive functions, Taggart and Robey (1981) noted four dominant decision-making styles as sympathetic (sensation/feeling), insightful (intuition/feeling), logical (intuition/thinking), and matter of fact (sensation/thinking). Zakay (1984) even offered initial evidence of these perspectives with a factor analysis of 25 items comprising his Decisions' Goodness Questionnaire. He reported that four factors explained about two-thirds of the variance in the evaluation of decision processes by 145 industrial managers, and he labeled the factors "feelings and social compromise," "realism and resources," "subjective rationality," and "information utilization."

Tensions between the four perspectives frequently affect organizational work. For example, when a dominant coalition of managers successfully advocate the importance of the empirical perspective (the lower left quadrant in the CVA), an organization can be drawn into decisions that are dictated solely by available information about historical performance, whether or not such data are pertinent to future initiatives in a changing world. In fact, a strictly empirical perspective may cause an organization to ignore informal forecasts of possibly stark developments in its environment simply because they are at odds with past experiences or established trends. Demands for thorough accountability (especially fiscal routines) in decision making also can regiment organizational initiatives so completely that all creativity or freewheeling methods of problem solving are extinguished like a candle flame under a snuffer.

The dominance of the rational perspective (the lower right quadrant in the CVA) in an organization also can put the effectiveness of its decision-making processes at risk. Pressures for efficiency typically preclude the kind of thorough deliberation that allows for every stakeholder's contribution to an emergent solution. Decisions quickly taken and

summarily announced, even quite good decisions, rarely instill the level of ownership at lower organizational levels that contributes to successful implementation of essential actions. Furthermore, an excessive value on rational goals, that is, pushing the achievement of organizational objectives over consideration of its members' concerns, can prove to be a destructive long-term strategy. Especially in government agencies, public "servants" frequently are expected to accept without question hastily devised and ill considered policies from central office in response to fiscal or political crises in order to support a public good. The sacrifices required, not merely in salaries or personal time but, more importantly, in a genuine feeling of partnership in their organization, slowly erode valuable human resources.

### **Managerial Leadership and the Competing Values Approach**

There exists another version of the CVA framework, similar in many ways to the previous ones except that it focuses on managerial leadership effectiveness rather than on organizational or group effectiveness. Two leadership roles are defined in each quadrant, and short illustrations of the requisite skills are listed. Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, and McGrath (1990, 16-19) have provided clear descriptions of leaders who have been effective in each quadrant:

Human relations; consensual perspective. The facilitator and mentor: "It is like any company. The finance people and the operations people are always at war. He brings people like that into a room, hardly says a word, and walks out with support from both sides. Same with subordinates, he brings us together, asks lots of questions, and we leave committed to get the job done. He has a gift for getting people to see the bigger picture, to trust each other, and to cooperate."

Open systems; political perspective. The innovator and broker: "In a big organization like this, most folks do not want to rock the boat. She is always asking why, looking for new ways to do things. We used to be in an old, run-down wing. Everyone accepted it as a given. It took her two years, but she got us moved. She had a vision, and she sold it up the system. She is always open, and if a change or a new idea makes sense, she will go for it."

Rational goals; rational perspective. The producer and director: "She is everywhere. It seems as if she never goes home. But it is not just her energy; she is constantly reminding us why we are here. I have worked for a lot of organizations, but I have never been so clear about purpose. I know what I have to do to satisfy her and what the unit has to do. In some units around here, the employees really don't care; she has caused her people to care about getting the job done."

Internal processes; empirical perspective. The monitor and coordinator: "He has been here for years. Everyone checks with him before doing anything. He is a walking computer. He remembers every detail, and he tracks every transaction that occurs. From agreements made eight years ago, he know which unit owes equipment to which other unit. Nothing gets past him. He has a sixth sense for when people are trying to hide something."

When managers assume positions of leadership, however, they must be able to operate effectively, not just in one domain, but in all quadrants of the CVA framework. A manager who succeeds as a mentor and facilitator but fails as a producer and director, for example, quickly is labeled a "push over" who is indecisive and cannot take charge even when necessary; the organization starts to miss important targets and deadlines. Similarly, a manager who is an accomplished innovator and broker but lacking in monitor and coordinator skills may come to be viewed as "out of touch," always somewhere else at critical times; the organization begins to experience internal crisis after crisis. Some managers try to compensate for leadership weaknesses in certain quadrants by pressing their relative strengths too far. The highly diligent monitor and coordinator may become hated for imposing an inflexible structure and feared for enforcing absolute compliance. The producer and director roles, played out to extreme, may lead to a highly centralized authority structure, in short, a dictatorial regime.

### **Competing Values and the Curriculum of Public Administration**

The CVA framework for organizations, groups, and individual leaders makes clear that there is not a single model that truly establishes the criteria of effective performance but, instead, multiple models that are undergirded by competing values. Although the oppositions between flexibility and control, between internal and external

focus, and between means and ends produce severe difficulties for organizations, groups, and individual leaders, they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, these values need to be complementary. In the most creative of moments, two seemingly opposite approaches, used simultaneously, may prove to be the best solution to a pressing problem. According to Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, and McGrath (1990, 22), the CVA framework ...suggests three challenges: to use multiple mind-sets in viewing the organizational world; to learn to use competencies associated with all four models; and finally, to integrate the diverse competencies in confronting the world of action.

In this context, what is the status of public administration curriculum late in the twentieth century? What competencies do we insist that our students develop as they prepare for careers of managerial leadership?

First and foremost, the curriculum of public administration stresses the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information. This assertion is not intended to refer to required courses in the field of management information systems but rather to our emphasis on memorization and recall of facts--historical events, statistical formulae, accounting principles, legal precedents, microeconomic terms, Civil Service statutes, computer commands, not to mention at least 50 names of the most prominent writers in public administration. This apparent value placed on the mastery of information clearly defines the empirical perspective (or internal processes model) for curriculum in our field.

Perhaps we should look more closely at the focus of this memorization and recall of facts. What are the courses we most commonly require of our students? To name a few:

- o budgeting and financial management;
- o research methods and statistical analysis;
- o legal bases of public administration;
- o economic science (macro and micro);
- o computer use and management information systems;
- o cost-benefit analysis and other policy tools;
- o methods of accounting; and
- o personnel administration.

Such curriculum reflects the fundamental values of a field focused on internal organizational concerns and devoted to a structure of management control. Once more, our approach is rooted in an internal processes model.

Is it then surprising that we are not preparing our students for distinguished management careers in which through thoughtful redesign they will be responsible for the creation of far better organizational structures and processes than existed in this decade or the last? To accomplish such a goal, we must expand our repertoire of values, even to the point of creating tensions and conflicts in our departments and schools. Beyond the mastery of information we must insist on the mastery of skills. The future generation of managerial leaders in the public service must be fully competent in the full range of behaviors that are essential to effective organizations: facilitator skills, mentor skills, innovator skills, broker skills, producer skills, director skills, coordinator skills, and monitor skills.

Furthermore, the courses required of our students must take them beyond a strictly "internal processes" view of our field. There is no doubt that we should continue to offer courses pertinent to monitoring and coordinating roles. For example, a course entitled "Elements of Organizational Control" might cover many of the topics listed above, from budgeting and financial management to personnel administration, as well as promoting technical writing skills. The CVA framework suggests at least three additional requirements (see Faerman, Quinn, and Thompson, 1987): "Human Resource Management," "Organization Development and Change," and "Strategic Management and Organizational Performance."

Human Resource Management. From the consensual perspective (human relations model), our students need to understand the importance of individual differences and how to work effectively with others, especially in group situations. Methods of team building, conflict management, and participative decision making deserve careful attention. Effective mentoring depends upon the knowledge and use of contemporary performance appraisal and feedback systems, as well as an understanding of the role of targeted professional training for maximum human resource development in an organization. Successful approaches to employee selection, retention, and promotion

deserve considerable attention here. The improvement of students' interpersonal communication skills is paramount.

Organization Development and Change. It is not surprising that the political perspective (open systems model), opposite as it is to the empirical perspective (internal processes model) in the value space of the CVA framework, is perhaps the most neglected portion of the public administration curriculum. We tend to be embarrassed by the idea that our students should think seriously about how they might accumulate power as the means to influence essential organizational change. Are the most effective methods for marketing only of interest in business schools? What about the pressing need to sell new ideas that might reinvent government: better public programs, policies, or services? Students need to understand the fundamentals of effective bargaining and negotiation, not only intra-organizationally but especially inter-organizationally. Finally, as the structures and processes of public organizations are altered, perhaps dramatically, in the next century, managerial leaders must be prepared to assure that the transitions they initiate and oversee are successful.

Strategic Management and Organizational Performance. From the rational perspective (rational goals model), and certainly from the public view, the curriculum of public administration needs to better equip managerial leaders as directors and producers. How does one bring about efficiency in government? Topics in this course would include effective planning and goal setting, authority and reporting structures, and mechanisms of delegation. Preferred methods for problem diagnosis, resource reallocation, and implementation should be thoroughly learned and practiced. Because managerial leaders need to be decisive, a full repertoire of decision-making methods should be explored in practical ways from models for individual choice to innovative techniques for effective group deliberation. No course on organizational performance in government would be complete without a thorough consideration of the most feasible systems for successfully motivating public employees.

These proposals for developing the curriculum of public administration for the next century do not preclude the variety of other important subjects that we offer to our students nor do they argue for a single instructional style. As is true with most important ventures including educational reform, it is best not to rule out any thoughtful proposal or

established practice prematurely. Nevertheless, the CVA framework makes clear that the curriculum of public administration has become dominated in both method and content by the expression of a specific combination of values: internal focus and control structure. The effectiveness of organizations, groups, and managerial leaders in the next century is critically dependent upon the broadening of our values and our curriculum.

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