

WHAT MAKES FOR INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS?

Activity 6.0: Think about two organizations you know fairly well (Organization A and Organization B). They could be the same type of organization (e.g., two libraries) or different types of organizations (e.g., a school and a business). Rate the two organizations using the criteria below on a scale of 0 to 3 where:

- 0 = Not at all true
- 1 = Somewhat true
- 2 = Mostly true
- 3 = Very true

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Criteria for Organizations	A. Sullivan Middle School	B. Jefferson College
The power in the organization is widely distributed throughout the organization.	0	1
The individuals in the organization have a wide range of expertise across many areas of specialization.	3	3
Formal policies and procedures are de-emphasized and somewhat de-valued.	2	0
Communication in the organization flows quickly due to many "inter-laced" interpersonal networks.	3	0
Uncommitted resources are common and in good supply.	1	2
Totals:	9	6

Based on these ratings, is Organization A or Organization B more innovative? Using Roger's terminology, describe why the organization of your choice is more innovative than the other. Submit the table and your answers to the question to your instructor via the dropbox.

Using my ratings as the criteria, Sullivan Middle School (where I teach) is more innovative than Jefferson College (where my father teaches). However, the overall scores were fairly close, though each organization had its own areas of strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the rating system is probably oversimplified to the point that it may not be a very accurate assessment of the organizations' innovativeness.

In both Sullivan Middle School (SMS) and Jefferson College, the power structure is rather centralized. While Jefferson College's power structure is slightly more decentralized than SMS, it is a much bigger organization and as such requires many more individuals to run it. At SMS, the only people in authority are the principal and assistant principal. There are no department chairs or other sub-administrators. However, the principal and assistant principal work much more closely with their teachers at SMS than do the Jefferson College administrators. Therefore, while the survey rating places Jefferson College above SMS, I believe that Sullivan Middle School has the true advantage in the area of power centralization.

The second rating on the survey deals with organizational complexity. Rogers states that, "Complexity encourages organizational members to grasp the value of innovations, but it may make it difficult to achieve consensus about implementing them." Both organizations rated highly in this area because both are schools, and schools by nature are made up of highly knowledgeable and diversely specialized individuals. However, I have certainly seen evidence in my experience that this diversity presents challenges to implementation. Teachers with various backgrounds and subject areas have needs for different innovations. If resources are limited, this can lead to potential conflict over which innovations will be implemented and how they will be implemented.

All schools must have a certain level of formalization as required by law, but from my experience compared to my fathers, Jefferson College is much more formalized. Being a larger organization, bureaucracy has a firm hold. Paperwork is sometimes oppressive and getting approval for purchases or implementing new procedures is many times considered more hassle than it is worth. At SMS, we do have some rules, regulations, and procedures, but generally when we have needs, we can talk to our principal face-to-face and will usually get quick solutions.

Being that I chose SMS as my organization to survey for the previous communication network activity, I have already demonstrated that our school has a high degree of interconnectedness. However, the same is not true at Jefferson College. The school is divided into several buildings on a single campus, but the buildings have very little contact with one another. There are separate buildings for administration, student services, physical education, liberal arts, fine arts, and vocational studies. There are many college employees who my father has never met even after 18 years of employment. In fact, it is probably the students more than anything else that facilitates communication between the departments.

The final area of focus on the survey deals with organizational slack, or in other words, the availability of uncommitted resources. In this department, Jefferson College soundly beats Sullivan Middle School because of its greater size and level of funding. My father teaches a vocational program and has never had to worry about hardware, software, or other equipment. Whatever he asks for he is able to get. Sullivan Middle School is a different story. While we are not a Stone Age school, computers are used several years past obsolescence, textbooks are well worn, and many teachers put their own financial resources toward meeting their needs. As such, many innovations that might be beneficial to the school are financially out of reach.

In conclusion, based on my experiences, which may admittedly be biased, I must conclude that Sullivan Middle School, despite its smaller size, is a more innovative organization than Jefferson College.