

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Committees

One of the most ubiquitous and controversial devices of organization is the committee. Whether it is referred to as a “board”, “commission”, “force”, or “team”, its essential nature is the same. The committee is a group of persons to whom, as a group, some matter is committed. It is this characteristic of group action that sets the committee apart from other organization devices, though, we will see, not all committees involve group decision making.

Committees are a fact of organization life. Although committees are widely criticized, properly conducted committee meetings used for the right purpose can result in greater motivation, improved problem solving and creased output.

THE NATURE OF COMMITTEES

Because of variation in authority assigned to committees, much confusion has resulted as to their nature.

Group Processes in Committees

Some say that groups go through four stages: (1) forming (getting to know each other), (2) storming (determining the objective of the meeting; conflicts arise), (3) norming (the group agrees on norms and some behavior rules), and performance (getting down to the task). While these characteristics may be found in most groups, they may not necessarily follow the sequential steps.

You may also find that people in committees play certain roles. Some see information, others give information. Some try to encourage others to contribute, others are followers. Finally, some try to coordinate the group’s effort or to achieve a compromise in the areas of disagreement, while others take a more aggressive role.

To be effective in a group, one must not only listen to what is said but also observe the nonverbal behavior. Furthermore, noting the seating of members may give some clues of the social bonds among committee participants. Those who know each other often sit next to each other. The seating arrangement may have an impact on the group interaction. You probably have noted that the chairperson sits mostly at the head at a rectangular table.

Functions and Formality of Committees

Some committees undertake managerial functions, and others do not. Some make decisions, while others merely deliberate on problems without authority to decide. Some have authority to make recommendations to a manager, who may or may not accept them, while others are formed purely to receive information without making recommendations or decisions.

A committee may be either line or staff, depending upon its authority. If its authority involves decision making affecting subordinates responsible to it, it is a plural executive—a *line committee*; if its authority relationship to a superior is advisory, then it is a *staff committee*.

Committees may also be formal or informal. If established as part of the organization structure, with specifically delegated duties and authority, they are *formal*. Most committees with any permanence fall into this class. Or they may be *informal*, that is, organized without specific delegation of authority and usually by some person desiring group thinking or group decision on a particular problem. Thus, managers may have a problem on which they need advice from other managers or specialists outside their department and may call a special meeting for the purpose. Indeed, this kind of motivation, plus the occasional need for gathering together in one room all the authority available to deal with an unusual problem, gives rise to many of the numerous conferences in organizational life.

Moreover, committees may be relatively *permanent*, or they may be *temporary*. One would expect formal committees to be more permanent than the informal, although this is not necessarily so. A formal committee might be established by order of a company president, with appropriate provision in the organization structure.

However, the executive who merely calls assistants into the office or confers with department heads is not creating a committee. It is sometimes difficult to draw a sharp distinction between committees and other group meetings. The essential characteristic of the committee is that it is a group charged with dealing with a specific problem or problem areas.

The Use of Committees in Different Organizations

Committees are in wide use in all types of organizations. In government, one finds a large number of standing and special committees of every legislative body; indeed, state and national legislatures are committees, as are the cabinets of the chief executives of the federal and state governments.

In education, faculties of great universities, jealous of academic freedom and distrustful of administrative power, traditionally circumscribe the authority of presidents and deans with a myriad of committees. In one large university more than 300 standing committees share in administration or advise on policy, ranging from the academic senate and the budget committees to coordinating committees, and committees on alumni records, university welfare, and maintenance of order during examinations.

Religious institutions likewise lean heavily on committees, partly to encourage active participation by members and partly to delimit the authority of leaders.

Committees are also prevalent in business. A board of directors is a committee, as are its various constituent groups, such as the executive committee, the finance committee, the audit committee, and the bonus committee. Occasionally, one finds a business managed by a management committee instead of a president. And almost invariably under the president there will be a variety of management or policy committees, planning committees, wage and salary review committees, grievance committees, task forces for particular projects, and numerous other standing and special committees. Moreover, at each level of the organization structure, one or more committees are likely to be found.

REASONS FOR USING COMMITTEES

One needs not look far for reasons for the widespread use of committees. Although the committee is sometimes regarded as having democratic origins and as being characteristic of democratic society, the reasons for its existence go beyond mere desire for group participation. Committees are widely used even in authoritarian organizations, such as Soviet Russia and Communist China.

(1) Group Deliberation and Judgment

Perhaps the most important reason for the use of committees is the advantage of gaining group deliberation and judgment a variation of the adage that "two heads are better than one". A group of people can bring to bear on a problem a wider range of experience than a single person, a greater variety of opinion, a more thorough probing of the facts, and a more diverse training in specialized aspects.

It should not be inferred that group judgment can be obtained only through use of committees. The staff specialist who confers individually with many persons in a given phase of a problem can obtain group judgment without the formation of a committee, as can the executive who asks key subordinates or other specialists for memorandums analyzing a problem and making recommendations thereon. At times group judgment can thus be obtained more efficiently, in terms of time, without the long deliberations of a committee. The keen manager can usually grasp ideas and the reasoning behind them more quickly from a concise written memorandum than from an oral presentation.

However, one of the advantages of group deliberation and judgment, not to be obtained without an actual meeting, is the stimulation resulting from discussion of ideas and the cross-examination techniques of the committee meeting. Leading, as it does, to clarification of problems and development of new ideas, this interchange has been found to be especially enlightening in policy matters. It is true that sometimes the results obtained by group judgment are superior to those obtained by individual judgment.

(2) Fear of Too Much Authority in a Single Person

appropriate to their position. However, this is not possible in every instance, and some matters call for the exercise of authority that the manager at the level concerned does not possess.

One way to handle problems of this sort is to refer them upward in the organizational hierarchy until they reach a point at which the requisite authority exists. But this place is often in the office of the president, and the problem may not be of sufficient importance to be decided at that level.

The informal use of the committee gives much flexibility to organization. However, consolidating splintered authority through a committee should be watched carefully to ascertain whether the organizational structure itself might not be changed to concentrate in one position the appropriate authority to make *recurring* decisions.

(6) Motivation through Participation

Committees permit wide participation in decision making. Persons who take part in planning a program or making a decision usually feel more enthusiastic about accepting and executing it. Even limited participation can be helpful.

The use of committees to motivate subordinates to get behind a program or decision requires skillful handling. It is by no means certain that deliberations of this kind will kindle enthusiastic support, for they can also result in the deepening of existing divisions among participants. On the other hand, there are people who seem to be against every move unless they have been previously consulted. Thus, it requires a skillful chairperson to direct conflicting interests toward common objectives.

(7) Avoidance of Action

It cannot be denied that committees are sometimes appointed by managers when they do not want any action to ensue. One of the surest ways to delay the handling of a problem and even to postpone a decision indefinitely is to appoint a committee, and sometimes many subcommittees, to study the matter, particularly if the membership is carefully selected with delay in mind. In organizations of all kinds, skillful managers resort to this delaying action when they see fit.

DISADVANTAGES OF COMMITTEES

Certain dangers of committees have been so widely publicized that many managers make little use of them.

(1) High Cost in Time and Money

The cost of committee action in time is likely to be considerable. A committee may require members to travel some distance to reach a meeting. During the meeting, all members have the right to be heard, to have their points of view discussed, to challenge and cross-examine the points of view of others, and to analyze the reasons for a considered group conclusion. The spoken word, though valuable for emphasis and clarification, is seldom concise, and the "thinking out loud" that takes place is sometimes a waste of time for those who must listen. If the committee is supposed to reach a unanimous or nearly unanimous decision, the discussion is likely to be lengthy. And if a decision can be reached quickly, the meeting may have been unnecessary in the first place.

The monetary cost of committee discussion can also be very high. One must consider not only the cost of executive time but even more the cost to the organization of loss of the executive time that would otherwise have been devoted to other important duties. However, it is quite possible that the cost of executive time in a group meeting might be less than when a superior meets individually with subordinates.

This cost in time and money becomes all the more disadvantageous when a committee is assigned a problem that could as well, or better, be solved by a single individual or by an individual with the help of a smaller and lesser-paid staff. Thus, the advantages of committee action must be considerable to offset the costs.

(2) Compromise at the least Common Denominator

Where committees are required to come to some conclusion or to reach some decision, there is danger that their action will be watered down or may even be meaningless. If the matter under consideration is so simple that differences of opinion do not exist, the use of committee time is wasteful. If differences of opinion exist, the point at which all or

a majority of the committee members can agree will tend to be at the least common denominator. Most often this is not as strong and positive a course of action as that undertaken by an individual, who has only to consider the facts as he or she sees them and then reach a conclusion. Because of the necessity for seeking out common ground, committees often take innocuous action or defer action entirely.

There is the danger of compromising at the level of the least common denominator of agreement. Even committees whose authority delegation requires only majority agreement sometimes develop traditions of unanimity. Small groups of people frequently seek-from feelings of politeness, mutual respect, and humility to reach conclusions on which all can agree. Since committee members are ordinarily picked from organization equals, reluctance to force a conclusion on a recalcitrant minority is understandable, increasing thereby the probability of weak decisions.

(3) Indecision

Another disadvantage of committees is that the time required for through deliberation, the discussion of peripheral or tangential subjects, and the difficulty of reaching agreement often result in adjustment without action.

Committee meetings are often characterized by an official and a hidden agenda. The *hidden agenda* pertains to the disguised individual motives of members. It is not unusual for these motives to prevent the committee from reaching agreement on the official topic of discussion since, if desires and feelings of members are not candidly discussed, members may not really know what the committee, as a group, concludes.

(4) Tendency to Be self-destructive

Indecisiveness may give the chairperson or a strong member an opportunity to force the committee into a decision the way he or she wants it to go. Almost invariably, one person in a group emerges as the leader. But when an individual becomes dominant, the nature of the committee as a decision-making group of equals changes, and there actually emerges and executive with a group of followers or advisers. Executives often delude themselves into believing that committees

operate on group management principles as a group of equals, when as a matter of fact, the "team" is composed of subordinate advisers or even yes-sayers following a leader.

(5) Splitting of Responsibility

When authority to study, make recommendations, or arrive at a decision is delegated to a group, the fact is that the authority is dispersed throughout the group. Thus, individual members hardly feel the same degree of responsibility that they would if they personally were charged with the same task. This splitting of responsibility is one of the chief disadvantages of a committee. Since no one can practically or logically feel personally accountable for the actions of a group, no individual feels personally responsible for any action within it.

(6) Tyranny of the Minority

As has been pointed out, committees tend to seek unanimous or near-unanimous conclusions or decisions. Minority members are therefore in a strong position. By their insistence upon acceptance of their position or of a compromise position, they may exercise an unwarranted tyranny over the majority. The minority members of a jury have such power. We recall an important committee of nine members in which a tradition for unanimous agreement developed. One member actually controlled the committee, not through force of leadership but through power to withhold his vote. The matters which he blocked or on which he forced a watered-down conclusion fell in the area of committee authority and responsibility; the committee, though having failed because of his tyranny, provided cover for him. Had he borne individual authority and responsibility for his actions, he could hardly have been the obstructionist he was.

THE PLURAL EXECUTIVE AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Most committees are nonmanagerial in nature. However, some groups are given the power to make decisions and to undertake one or all of the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing,

leading, and controlling. It is this latter type of committee that is referred to as the "plural executive".

Origin

The plural executive may be established by law, or it may result from a managerial decision. Examples of the former are the board of directors of a corporation and the plural executive (commission, board) established by various legislatures to operate one of their agencies. In the case of the business corporation, legislatures have traditionally required that the board be elected to act for the stockholders. State and federal legislatures have, especially in recent years, provided for direction of most government agencies by a single manager, but in many instances plural executives are still operating.

Authority

The extent of authority to manage and to make decisions held by a plural executive is not always easy to ascertain. Some, such as the board of directors, clearly have this power, although they may not exercise it. Some companies have been managed from the top, on a day-to-day or weekly basis, by a plural executive, but this is rare.

There are, however, many boards of directors and executive committees of organizations which potentially have the power to manage but actually do not, since decisions are made by a prominent stockholder or a strong leader in the group. Usually, the president is the dominant figure, with the other members often little more than advisers. In other words, the plural executive is not always what it seems, and a single executive often in reality makes the decisions. Then there are other committees established with advisory authority only. Sometimes these actually operate as plural executives if, through tradition, weakness of leadership, or insistence of the chairperson on agreement before a decision is made, they actually make decisions or undertake managerial functions as a group.

Role in Policy Making

The plural executive is often found in the field of strategy of policymaking. Many organization have an executive or management committee to develop major plans and adopt basic strategy.

The extent of authority of these committees varies considerably, although their influence on decision making is perhaps greater in strategic planning than in any other area. These committees also engage in control, for their concern with strategic plans must be followed up to make sure that events conform to decisions.

Furthermore, these committees are often useful in settling differences of opinion or in the settlement of questions of organizational jurisdiction. The plural executive is an ideal arbitrator of disputes since a determination by a group will usually be accepted by contesting parties as being more impartial than that of a single arbiter. Besides, personality clashes in a given situation are more easily submerged in group action.

Where committees are successful in strategy formulation, they are dependent upon accurate and adequate staff work. A committee can hardly develop proposal, forecast probable profits and costs from alternative courses of action, or investigate the numerous tangible and intangible factors influencing a basic decision. These are matters for study, and the committee is a notoriously poor study or research device. Therefore, if group deliberation is to be productive, facts and analyses must be developed and presented so that the members have readily available the data upon which to base a decision.

Role in Policy Execution

Many organization and management experts distinguish between strategy/policymaking and execution. It has been said that the former is concerned with the establishment of broad principles by which administration is guided, while the latter is concerned with the daily conduct of the company's affairs-setting standards and procedures to guide and govern execution of policies, establishing controls to ensure adherence to standards, solving interdivisional disputes, improving interdivisional coordination, and meeting various emergencies as the arise.

PLURAL VERSUS INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE

Committees without managerial authority are far more numerous than those which are true plural executives. While much experience exists in organization with committees and with plural executives, the benefits of group management, as compared to individual management, have not been widely studied.

Evaluation

The foregoing discussion of the plural executive points to certain conclusions. The plural executive succeeds fairly well in helping to coordinate the activities of managers. It has a high potential for aiding in defining objectives, selecting alternative ways of achieving them, and measuring the success attained. In terms of managerial functions, the plural executive is thus especially useful in planning and in certain of the broader aspects of control. However, all the disadvantages of the committee form apply with special force to the true plural executive.

MISUSE OF COMMITTEES

The committee form has often fallen into disrepute through misuse. The five following abuses should be avoided when committees are set up and operated.

1. As Replacement for a Manager

The weakness of the committee as a managing device has already been noted. Leadership is essentially a quality of individuals. If decision making is to be sharp, clear, prompt, and subject to unquestioned responsibility, it is better exercised by an individual, as is the leading of subordinates.

There are times, it must be admitted, when managerial effectiveness is not an overriding consideration. In certain government agencies the danger of putting too much authority in the hands of an individual may be so great as to supersede questions of pure efficiency. As a matter of fact, before criticizing the waste, duplication, and inefficiency of governmental management, one should face the

question of whether these costs are a fair price to pay for curtailing possible abuses of authority.

One can hardly say that a committee has no place in management, but the advantages of group thinking and participation in policy questions can be gained in most cases through advisory committees. Most business committees function this way, leaving the real decision making and managing to the line executives to whom they report.

2. For Research of Study

A group meeting together can hardly engage in research or study, even though it may well weigh and criticize the results of these. When the solution to a problem requires data not available to a committee, no amount of discussion or consideration can turn up the missing information. This is essentially an individual function, even though, of course, individuals may be coordinated into a team with individual research assignments. Most committees, therefore, need a research staff, providing at least analyses of alternative courses of action, historical summaries, or well-considered forecasts.

3. For Unimportant Decisions

Even where the committee is clothed with advisory authority only, the advantages of this device should dictate that its use limited to important matters. Moreover, no intelligent specialist or manager can help feeling uncomfortable when time is wasted by a group deliberating at length on trivial subjects. This impatience reaches its frustrating climax when a committee member insists on considering at length a question upon which a certain decision is a foregone conclusion.

4. For Decisions beyond Participants' Authority

Where committees are used for decision making, if committee members with authority attend the meetings or send duly empowered representatives, and if the agenda deals with matters within the competence of the members, no authority problem will be encountered. But too often the executives with the requisite authority cannot or do not attend the meeting. Instead they send subordinates who have not

been delegated the superior' authority or who hesitate to bind the superiors. The result is that committee cannot function as intended. Delay results while the substitute refers questions to the superior and much advantage of group decision making and deliberation is lost.

5. To Consolidate Divided Authority

A disadvantage of departmentalization is that authority is so delegated that, in some cases, no one except the chief executive officer has adequate authority to do what must be done. Even within departments or sections, authority may be so splintered that group meetings are necessary to consolidate authority for making decisions. If divided authority can be eliminated by changing the organization structure and the delegations of authority, recourse to a committee is certainly misuse of the device.

SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF COMMITTEES

Managers spend a great deal of time in committees. In attempting to overcome some of the disadvantages of committees managers may find the following guidelines useful.

1. Authority

The committee's authority should be spelled out so that members know whether their responsibility is to make decisions, to make recommendations, or merely to deliberate and to give the chairperson some insights into issue under discussion.

2. Size

The size of the committee is very important. The complexity of interrelationships greatly increases with the size of the group. If the group is too large, there may not be enough opportunities for adequate communication among its members. On the other hand, if the group consists of only three persons, there is the possibility that two may form a coalition against the third member. No precise conclusions can be drawn here about the appropriate size. As a general rule, a committee should be large enough to promote deliberation and include

the breadth or expertise required for the job, but not so large as to waste time or foster indecision. The optimum committee size is thought by some to be at least five or six, but not more than fifteen or sixteen. An analysis of small-group research indicates that the ideal committee size may be five when the five members possess adequate skills and knowledge to deal with problems facing the committee. It is obvious that the larger the group, the greater the difficulty in obtaining a "meeting of the minds," and the more time necessary to allow everyone to contribute.

3. Membership

The members of the committee must be selected carefully. If a committee is to be successful, the members must be representative of the interests they are intended to serve. They must also possess the required authority, and be able to perform well in group. Finally, the members should have the capacity for communication well and reaching group decisions by integrating group thinking rather than by inappropriate compromise.

4. Subject Matter

The subject must be carefully selected. Committee work should be limited to subject matter that can be handled in group discussion. Certain kinds of subjects lend themselves to committee action, while others do not. Jurisdictional disputes and strategy formulation, for example, may be suitable for group deliberation. While certain isolated, technical problems may be better solved by expert in the specialized field. To make committees effective, agenda and relevant information should be circulated well in advance so that the members can study the subject matter before the meeting.

5. Chairperson

The selection of the chairperson is crucial for an effective committee meeting. Such a person can avoid the wastes and drawbacks of committees by planning the meeting, preparing the agenda, seeing that the results of research are available to the members ahead of time, formulating definite proposals or discussion or action, and conducting

the meeting efficiently. The chairperson of the meeting, integrates the ideas, and keeps the discussion from wandering.

6. Minutes

Effective communication in committees usually requires circulating minutes and checking conclusions. At times, individuals leave the meeting with varying interpretations as to what was agreed. To avoid this, it is good to take careful minutes of the meeting and circulate them in draft form for correction or modification before the final copy is approved by the committee.

7. Cost Effectiveness

The committee must be worth the cost. It may be difficult to count the benefits, especially such intangible factors as morale, enhanced status of committee members, and the committee's value as a training device to enhance teamwork. But the committee can be justified only if the costs are balanced by tangible and intangible benefits.

District Health Coordinating Committee

As mentioned in chapter 1, the MOPH wanted to improve the efficiency of the co-ordination between Community Hospital and District Health Office. This is for the achievement of health service system and health resource allocation. In February 1983, The MOPH ordered all provinces to form District Health Development Committee (DHDC). In 1986, it was changed to the District Health Coordinating Committee (DHCC).

The structure of DHCC :

Chairman : The chief of District Health Office or the director of Community Hospital.

Secretary : Chosen from the representatives from Community Hospital or District Health Office.

Community Hospital	District Health Office
Director	Chief
Chief of each section	Vice chief
6 nominees	6 nominees

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Formulate health development plans at the district level.
2. Manage the Operate plans into action.
3. Follow up, monitor, supervise, and evaluate activities which operate under health development plans.
4. Co-ordinate and provide support to special projects launched in accordance with the MOPH and the provincial's policies.
5. Form and operate health information centers at the district level.
6. Perform other activities deemed appropriate by the committee.

Activities

1. Health Information Center at the district level
 - 1.1 Form health information center.
 - 1.2 Collect Health related data of the district.
 - 1.3 Analyze Data.
 - 1.4 Distribute Data to be utilized.
 - 1.5 Up date Data.
2. Public Health Plans at the district level
 - 2.1 Survey for primary data.
 - 2.2 Design health development plans.
 - 2.3 Present health development plans to District development Committee (DDC) and PHO.
 - 2.4 Set monthly and annual operational plans.
3. Following up, Monitoring and Evaluating
 - 3.1 Form a health team.
 - 3.2 Set monitoring schedule.
 - 3.3 Perform supervision in accordance with the monitoring chart.

- 3.4 Conclude obstacles and suggest possible solution to the obstacles.
- 3.5 Monitor the supervision.
- 3.6 Evaluate and report to the PHO.
4. Meeting
 - 4.1 Frequency of meeting.
 - 4.2 Body of the meeting.
 - 4.3 Contents/issues to be discussed in the meeting.
 - 4.4 Progression of issues discussed in the meeting.

Related Studies to DHCC

The District Health Coordinating Committee is a group of health personnel which is officially formed to operate specific tasks. It is headed by chief of District Health Office or director of Community Hospital alternately. A chairperson of the DHCC is fully responsible for both success and failure of the DHCC. Mission of the DHCC set by the MOPH is to improve public health in its respective district. Good quality of life is the impact from this mission. (MOPH 2524:13-14). The study of coordination between District Health Office and Community Hospital in 2526-2527 by Dr. Somroeng Yangkrathong (2526:13-14) revealed that 50% of DHCCs had good co-ordination. However, the co-ordination was done through either formal or informal channels and mainly through individuals, not yet through the DHCC itself. Therefore, it is evaluated that the MOPH did not succeed in setting up this organization. If the District Health Office and Community Hospital were well coordinated, or if they helped and encouraged each other, the Primary Health Care development would have succeeded. Dr. Outhai Sudsuk and team (2527:abstract) studied Team of Primary Health Care Development : case study in Thailand. He mentioned that the administrators at the district level are the most influential persons (key men). They must understand and believe in concept and process of Primary Health Care. Besides, serious actions must be taken. They must be responsible for both success and failure of the Primary Health Care in their respective areas. Their tasks include ordering, managing, administrating and supervising health related matters.

Mr. Somsarp Supatomkit (2532:Abstract) studied the problems and obstacles of the mission of District Health Coordinating Committee in Pranakornsriayutthaya. The results showed that factors affecting the DHCC's performance were the number of years a member served the government, the length of time a member worked in the respective area, the characteristic of the co-ordination, self confidence of district officer, chief of District Health Office and director of Community Hospital, and frequency of meeting hold. Ms. Maliwon Yuttitam (2531:Abstract) studied the opinion of district governor, director of Community Hospital and Chief of District Health office toward roles of the District Administrators. She found that the success of DHCC required good coordination both formally and informally. Therefore the chief of District Health Office, the director of Community Hospital and the MOPH should have a clear concept of DHCC in order to support its mission.



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