JAQUES' CONCEPT OF REQUISITE ORGANIZATION.

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Jaques takes a hard line on work organization.

His basic questions for organizational design are,

- what work really requires doing ?
- what people, with what capabilities, are needed to do the work ?
- what relationships do people need to form in order to get the work done ?

[Footnote. Jaques' first question presupposes that we have already answered Drucker's famous question, "What business are we in"?}

In the absence of a clear answer to this we cannot determine what work is 'really required'.

He maintains that if you get the right answers to these questions you will get 'the requisite organization' for pursuing your mission or objective. If the structure is right then "process follows structure"p6

I agree with him, whole-heartedly.

However, many would say from their experience that the processes that follow from some of the organizational arrangements that Jaques recommends are not 'requisite processes' .I think this is so but only because Jaques persists in two very dubious assumptions: -

a) that the master- servant relation is a 'task- mediated' relation

b that an employee can be held personally responsible only when they are the servant in a master- servant relation. These are under-stated assumptions in this book but were quite explicit in his 1976 book on The General Theory of Bureaucracy.

In this book we still find that process follows structure but structures are not always what they seem as Jaques writes of manager- subordinate relations as if they were primarily task mediated relations and he writes of the importance of team-working whilst denying that true teams can exist in an organization of employees. Organizational design is about putting tasks and people together i.e. establishing role relationships that are 'TASK MEDIATED' relations That is a case of answering question three after making first approximate answers to questions one and two. Approximate answers, as trying to answer the third question can be expected to revise the first answers to questions one and two.

It seems to me that Jaques is saying that in his section 7.

In task mediated relations persons A and B are primarily related to each other by what each, with their capabilities and circumstances, can contribute to the joint accomplishment of the task. The objective requirements of the task constitute objective constraints on how they relate to each other. Those requirements frequently dictate a measure of mutual trust and respect but they rarely require that A and B like each other, or extend their mutual trust and respect beyond the requirements of the common task. In task mediated relations personal relations are irrelevant unless they threaten to disrupt the relations required by the task. On the same grounds, if people are prepared to accept the responsibilities and accountability defined by their task mediated relation then it is no business of the organization if they choose to relate personally to each other. In this I also agree with Jaques when he condemns the greater part of the work of Organizational Development and Organizational Effectiveness consultants for focussing upon the emotional development of .people in organizations when "(it) is no business of the organization".(pp41 ; see also 59 & 128).

Jaques, however, does not appear to recognize that the superior- subordinate relation in modern bureaucratic organizations is still a master- servant relation. The master-servant relation is not a task mediated relation; it is a power relation, a relation of subordination to a superior power. It is a relation that can be fully defined without reference to any particular task or task characteristics.

By proceeding as if the manager-subordinate relation were a task mediated relation Jaques introduces an alien, unexplained element into his consideration of organizational design (an element of 'irrational' hostility and mistrust that could explain the popularity of OD consultants).

Let us develop this point.

In a task mediated relation both A and B, and others in the same task orientated group, accept that the task has to be done and the task defines a shared objective environment. Arguments about methods of work and relative contributions can be settled against practical, objective outcomes. In a master-servant relation the task does not define a share objective environment. The master decides what the task is; the servant does it. With that division of responsibilities they confront different tasks, not a joint, shared task. The task of the servant is to cope with whatever is demanding, arduous, boring, noxious or dangerous in the performance of the task. In like manner the task of the manager is that of supervising the proper performance of his subordinates and

Section 1. This is a profound confusion. Jaques makes a major distinction between voluntary associations and employee organizations. The latter have to be Accountability Hierarchies; according to him. He claims that he is the first to have clearly identified the essential nature of what others have called "the bureaucracy, the organization, the hierarchy, the organization chart, the pyramid, the family tree."pp2. The principle he is enunciating was formulated years ago (Feibleman, 1945 , and Emery 1967). More importantly the distinction he draws is false. He assumes that it is in the nature of the voluntary relation that people can enter into genuine team relations and that is in the nature of the employee relation that people can only organize themselves into 'Accountability Hierarchies". Unlike serfdom the employee relation is at least a semi-voluntary relation, the employee can seek work elsewhere. In the employee relation people constantly seek out voluntary association, in trade unions, ~professional associations and in informal work group arrangements. Jaques' AcH's do not arise naturally from the employee relation but are devised to help managers restrict voluntary association. If they were a natural property of employee relations books like this would hardly be needed. This distinction between voluntary association and employment that Jaques makes as his first axiom, as he did in his book on The General Theory of Bureaucracy, is a pragmatic distinction. In a voluntary organization the Leader may have to permit teamwork but in an employee organization it is possible for the Leader to enforce the organizational principle of AcH. Even here Jaques' advice for C.E.O.'s (Chief Executive Officers, ~f corporations) is far short of adequate. He fails to mention that the necessary condition for an effective hierarchy of accountability is that managers prevent their subordinates making decisions about co ordination of their activity. If they are allowed to help each other they can cover up for each other and effectively move control of the individual into the hands of their peer group. In these circumstances the manager does not know whether an individual subordinate's performance, normal performance, is a measure of the individual or of the control the informal work group exercises over the individual. This can, and does happen at any level in a so-called hierarchy of accountability.

In most organizations of employees, most of the time, the individual is held accountable by his/her peers. Jaques is writing about an ideal organization where this will not be so.

As might be expected Jaques sees the disease of current organizations as "delegating downwards" i.e. as abrogating authority, determining how their efforts will be coordinated. The ends to which the efforts of his subordinates are directed are his business and he/she alone is accountable for them. These section ends are no business of the individual subordinates; their business is to mind their own business and get on with their allotted tasks. This is what Jaques applauds as the basic design principle of "hierarchies of accountable individuals)"(pp69). We discussed this, a quarter of a century ago, as the design principle of asymmetrical dependence, or of 'redundant parts', and identified it as the system principle of bureaucracy (Emery, 1967; also Feibleman. 1945).

Jaques forces himself into defending this principle of organizational design by posing the dilemma of "inevitably non- accountable groups" vs "hierarchies of accountable individuals" pp69.

I think one has to agree that every individual employee must be in some way accountable to the organization (otherwise one has anarchy or freeloading parasites, such as firemen on the footplates of a diesel locomotive). That does not mean, however, that each and every individual must work directly and primarily to a boss-person. If that

were so then it would mean that it was impossible to sustain a situation where most of the work of an employee organization was achieved in task-mediated relations. Not even if we observed all of Jaques' many sound pieces of advice could we begin to approximate such a desirable state of affairs. And, from the first section of the book onwards it is clear that Jaques sees this as the desirable end of organization design.

Contrary to Jaques' belief, groups can be made accountable, and held accountable. Individuals can be made accountable, and held accountable to their peers. If work groups have accepted responsibility for achieving clear objectives that are agreed with higher management then they can hold the individual accountable; provided that the work groups have some real say in their membership and the allocation of responsibilities and rewards. Individuals in such self-managing work groups ca-n expect to spend the overwhelming portion of their working day in task mediated relations with peers. Managers can expect to be under pressure to negotiate agreements with the workgroups that relate to the broader real tasks of the organization.

Jaques has made assumptions that confine him to trying to make bureaucracies work. His assumptions are false and hence his attempt at a general theory is a failure. Nevertheless, he has had an. unusually vast experience of getting work done in organizations and we can expect to find many valuable insights. Therefore, in the following, we take a look at each section in his book.

As might be expected Jaques sees the disease of current organizations as "delegating downwards" i.e. as abrogating authority, giving way to the authority of the informal peer group.pp5. From the alternative viewpoint the disease would seem to be the elimination of, task mediated relations by the abrogation by managers of the decisions' regarding coordination of activities that could be more effectively made by those performing the activities.

Section 2. Jaques identifies the hierarchy of functions with a necessary hierarchy of superior-subordinate relations. i.e. a hierarchy of domination. No one would deny the existence of a hierarchy of functions in the operation of an organization, even a small organization. However, this translates into a hierarchy of superiors and subordinates only if we assume that only a few people-have the ability to understand the higher functions. Jaques is firmly of this belief, whilst rejecting IQ tests as a measure of this ability. The fact remains that provided the organization respects the hierarchy of functions e.g. that a course of action should be planned before it is executed, nothing more is dictated other than the order in which decisions are made. Execution might well require a much higher order of talent than the planning. What a hierarchy of functions dictates is an ordering of decisions not an ordering of social statuses. This applies to a voluntary association as much as it does to an employee organizations; which sort of makes Jaques' fundamental distinction between types of organization look a little sick.

On the positive side Jaques draws attention to the distinction between task, role and work, the value of distinguishing the time span of responsibility, the irrelevance of number of subordinates as a measure of responsibility and the-need to separate pay levels from organizational grades.

Section 3. Here Jaques introduces a hierarchy of functions. If one grants his prior assumption of a necessary hierarchy of individual accountability then one could grant this as a definitive statement of a role hierarchy. We have already seen that his prior assumption is untenable. Levels I and II of his scale are quite within the range of competence of self-managing workgroups. Level III, departmental management is where the self-management of groups and the planning function of management should overlap (with workgroup representation being determined by rotation on choice by lots). Organizational efficiency does not in anyway call for a hierarchy of accountable individuals through these three levels. Organizational efficiency calls for the development and maintenance of task mediated relations- efforts that are directed to the actual performance of the section task, not pretending that each individual has performed their allocated task.

Level III is the level at which management and ~workgroups should be negotiating objectives for workgroup performance. , Section 4. For some reason Jaques, in Section 3, chose to identify task difficulty with complexity. If this were so then task difficulty at each level would be greater than at lower levels and less than at higher levels. That would be a nice rationale for justifying managerial rewards but it does not hold water. Complexity is only one component to task difficulty. Much more important are the centrality and unpredictability of the decisions the

manager has to make. The joint effect of centrality and uncertainty on organizational decision making can be encapsulated in the phrase "relevant uncertainty" (Emery, 1965).

In this section, Section 4. Jaques corrects himself about the role of 'uncertainty. He uses the concept of 'time span of responsibility' to convey the notion of centrality. This is a contrivance to save a concept that he invented for describing supervised face work. It works well there but is misleading for managerial work. The concept of relevant uncertainty helps us locate where management quality is critical for an organization; it is not necessarily at the top, as naval forces have generally recognized.

It is the heightened degree of relevant uncertainty that makes it necessary to be guided by values (Emery, 1965). It is correct that personal orientations are relevant to managerial roles. The best solution is to move toward collegiate methods of management for levels 3 to 6. There is no one personality type that would fit the range of organization- environment relations that are likely to emerge as critical in the~ manager's term of office.

Section 5. The theory of symbol usage is inadequate and does not provide proper support for his view, pp12B, that listening, persuasion and communication skills are "innate competencies in everyone"
Jaques observations on "time-horizon progression array" are sound but collegiate management is needed to identify that capability.

Generally, Jaques does us a service in emphasizing that managers -should not delegate all of their work, should not delegate any of their work lower that their immediate subordinates and should take the critical role in the preparation and promotion of subordinates one-removed.
These considerations take us to the end of section' 7. The rest is too detailed for consideration here.

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Section 8 serves as a summary of the first part of the book. It lists the steps to be taken to implement his proposals. This is a guide to cleaning-up and re-vamping a bureaucratic organization. It does not confront the task of restructuring an organization from being governed by design .principle one- asymmetrical dependence, redundant parts, individual accountability hierarchies- to design principle two - symmetrical dependence, redundant functions, self-managing groups.

However, Jaques' six nested steps, each prior to and including the following steps, are valid. The difference is that restructuring should be a second go at the same process of change. After an organization has undergone Jaques 'cleaning-up' the mission of restructuring should be explicitly adopted by the organization's leaders and steps 3,4,5 & 6 be undertaken according to design principle two.

In our experience it has always been advantageous to come into an organization after they have been 'done over' by McKinsey's or one of the other 'rational organization' consultants. This is partly because such engagements educate management in the logic of allocating authority and responsibilities but there is another reason.

To set the mission of restructuring before an organization has been cleaned-up is not only messy, like trying to repair an auto engine before steam-cleaning it, but it is to risk losing one's way in a thicket of organizational tangles.. Direction is lost and progress is snarled because so many of those tangles are not a product of following the bureaucratic principle but historically and situationally' unique subversions of that principle by people determined to create their own little pockets of relative freedom. Those who are benefiting from those acts of subversion will try to hang on and even resist changes explicitly directed toward design principle two on the grounds that "a bird in hand is worth two in the bush".

What I am suggesting is that if one wishes to restructure an organization it is wise to first understand the logic underling your existing organization, and your previous experience of other organizations. Jaques book is, a help with that but is no substitute for a process whereby one can focus on one basic design with the other in mind to provide a figure-ground contrast.

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