Professional Adhocracy, an Appropriate Design for Knowledge Economy in the Light of Mintzberg’s Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Success in the economy of digital age requires special capabilities. These capacities would be able to make the limited economical resources into valuable products. Among future limitations, limitation of super-specialized and expert human resources is very important and determining. Super-specialized human resources are considered as strategic factors and the structure of future organizations should be designed in a way to best utilize the capability of these resources. Therefore, the main problem of future organizations is exploiting and utilizing the knowledge of super-specialized human resources. In this regard, combining the flexibility of adhocratic organizations and expertise-oriented credit of professional bureaucratic tried to design a relatively appropriate structure in the light of Mintzberg’s perspective in order to succeed in future age or the knowledge-oriented age of digital economy.

Keywords: Adhocracy, Changing Environment, Continued Entry to Future, Knowledge Economy, Professional Adhocracy, Professional Bureaucracy, Super-Specialized Human Resources

INTRODUCTION

It seems that by gradual development of electronism, the number of virtual organizations will increase and new types of organizations will emerge which have a semi-virtual condition; a condition which will simultaneously provide them with the advantages of ordinary and virtual organizations. These changes will require specialty and expertise which gain importance with the passage of time and ever-growing development of electronism (Stebbins & Shani, 1995). It can be imagined that in these new organizations the importance of “expertise in system designing”, knowledge and skill in “computer sciences” and creativity in creating “new ideas” will increase and their efficiency can not be compared with other specialties.

The value of time and place for organizations will be changed gradually. In the past, the organizations belonged to a place and operated in a definite geographical area (Stebbins &
Shani, 1995). However, nowadays by the growing social and global changes, the role of place and space loses its importance, while the role of time is still distinctive and influential.

The group of organization principles which were influenced by geographical and structural variables (Robbins, 1987) gradually fade away so that geographical divisions are no longer the basis of organization. The problem is that in this ever-changing world, the common organizing methods will not be so efficient; therefore, the organizing and division of work methods will totally change, and the organizations will be obliged to combine professional organizations with adhocracies in order to survive in the global competition and the age of digital economy. In this way, organization with the structure of “professional adhocracy” will be formed in response to these emergencies.

The main characteristics of the future organizations and their environments are as following:

1. The requirement for very much flexibility in order to survive in a changing and agitated environment (which can be provided by the characteristics of adhocracies);
2. Over-reliance on knowledge and information-processing (which can be provided by professional bureaucracies of scientists).

In an ethnographic approach to the combination of human resources of the present organizations, it is understood that the structure of human resource is changing from manual worker to knowledge worker and knowledge personnel are substituting ordinary worker (Drucker, 1988; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Ramirez & Nembhard, 2004). Following these changes and transfer, the structural form of the organizations are also changing. Therefore, the age of large bureaucracies is ending and Bennis prediction from “death of bureaucracies” is envisaged (Bennis, 1967). However, it seems that bureaucracies do not die, but their shapes change. Large organizations, because of heaviness, tendency to being static, and inability to match with continual dynamisms, will not be able to survive, and the conditions of modern economy will lead to their extinction (Downs, 1967; Robbins, 1987).

As a result the heavy capital concentrate in the body of small organizations, this is while small organizations are formed gradually which can effectively perform all the activities of a large organization with the minimum amount of tools and capital and in the shortest time possible. For instance, in the past, a publication company required a large organization to be responsible for all the affairs of typesetting, pagination, lithography, press and warehouse units; but nowadays people can use a lap-top computer to do and control all these activities even in travel on a ship and establish and govern a “mobile publication company”. Even, sometimes in these kinds of organizations the heavy investments are avoided and the social credit of the leaders and founders are emphasized.

These agile and knowledge-based companies will require a diverse group of super-specialized human resources (Davenport, 2002) and will have to employ them in a sort of temporary work teams; in consequence, a kind of matrix structure is formed the personnel of which are mostly professional and expert. The expenses of these knowledge workers are very high and the main problem these organizations are faced with is temporary unemployment of these professional people. Therefore, with a goal-oriented planning, they should try to reduce this unemployment to the minimum amount possible because it can not be expected from these people to be limited to that organization. Their time, apart from their profession and expertise, is so valuable! They, in case of unemployment, might devote their time to projects outside the organization. If the organization can not tolerate this condition, it might face a kind of specialized force crisis. Because if it does not pay the unemployment expenses of these personnel, it can not have access to them at the time of need, and if does not provide job for them, can not use their creative thought in an appropriate way; this is the problem most universities of the world are involved with.
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