

BOOK REVIEW

Inside Organizations : Understanding the Human Dimension. Edited by Michael Owen Jones, Michael Dane Moore & Richard Christopher Snyder. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, California, 1988. pp. 304, \$39.95.

Organizational and behavioural science had to wait for long to whet its appetite for a breakthrough, in the form of an "Organizational ethnography"—which opened new vistas of learning the inside of organizations with new content, theme, focus and methodology.

This new field of organizational research examines not only explicit behaviours or observable events but also what is implicit and tacit about it. The change is clearly towards the content of culture, symbolism and folklore and the themes of language, metaphors, stories, legends, rites, rituals, ceremonies atavistic roots and the fantasied future. The time horizon includes,—present, past and future. The focus covers work as well as non-work situations ; more of expressive and aesthetic ways of responding rather than instrumentalistic, multidisciplinary view rather than single academic disciplinary view. The methodology is more of a mix of the qualitative and quantitative research rather than quantitative alone.

The volume is a unique masterpiece in the sense that research pieces of masters from diverse fields, such as humanists and social scientists, academics and practitioners, ethnographers, management theorists, etc. have been diligently interwoven to give a just treatment for the depth and the breadth of the subject matter. The book deservingly begins with a forward by Ian Mitroff, author of the seminal article "Stories managers tell"

(Mitroff and Killman, 1975) and "Organizational symbolism. A topic to expand organizational analysis" (Dandridge, Mitroff and Joyce, 1980).

The book is divided into five parts. Part I is entitled 'Doing Ethnography'. The word 'ethnography' essentially means 'portrayal of people'. The methodology relies on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the documentation of traditions—the so-called qualitative methods of research. The first article by Jones compares qualitative and quantitative methods and emphasizes when and where what methods need to be employed. The second article by Christensen is able to identify how internal organization processes could be understood following the analysis of stories, rituals and metaphor employees express in a health-care organization. The third article by Hamford highlights—how an employee dealing with energy bill inquiries is able to find the solution for a vexing problem for the organization through an understanding of the subcultures and using innovative ways of communicating with public. Siehl and Martin in the fourth and the last article of Part I make a good case as to how qualitative method and quantitative method could be used complimenting and enriching each other.

Part II is entitled as 'Functions of the Dysfunctional'. Chester Barnard who is credited with the introduction of the concept of informal organizations says that informal organizations are necessary to the operation of formal organization as a means of communication, of cohesion, and of protecting the integrity of the individual (Barnard, 1938, p. 23). According to him, an organization of any kind (whether spontaneous informal or formal) comes into being whenever (1) there

are persons able to communicate with each other (2) who are willing to contribute action (3) to accomplish a common purpose (Barnard, 1938, p. 82). The article by Wells highlights how the deviant behaviour of the staff of a girl scouts camp was more of a reaction to their isolated, stressful and even hostile work environment. The second article by Fine suggests the importance of play at work in the case of restaurant workers. Runice in the third article in this part explains what is known as Group-defined "bad" or deviant behaviour in the case of assembly line workers. In the last essay, Beyer & Trice deal with the subject of power as expressed through the rites of passages, enhancement, degradation, conflict reduction, integration, and renewal.

Part III entitled as the Art of organizing consists of five articles. This section treats managing and participating in organizations as aesthetic phenomena. The contention is that organizational participants are crafts-people and aesthetes. They take pleasure in experiencing and feeling the excellence of form. Thus organization are created, challenged, changed and recreated. The basis is an art model. Various articles in this section present a narrative on the art of organizing in as diverse situations as Los Angeles Olympic organizing Committee, one Committee within a large university, aircraft manufacturing firm. Computer software firm and the organizing experience with former participants of a folk dance institution.

Each article in this part makes a wonderful reading of symbolic, proverbial and aesthetic meanings associated with the process of organizing. Shivley Arora's piece on proverbial speech and leadership, of course, outclasses the rest.

Part IV deals with creativity, commitment and community. Drawing from the classic article 'Banana Time': 'Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction' by Donald Roy (1959-60, pp. 158-168), the Editors identify four vital components of working (1) playing, largely implying freeing of impulses; (2) the art of working—positive aesthetic experiences and artistic production of performance; (3) ambience—the mood, character, quality or tone of a milieu—something akin to climate or atmosphere and (4) community—connoting mutuality of interests, sharing and even unity. The five articles in this part do prove the above points. One really starts feeling what organizational research so far has missed—the paradise is there, one only needs to reach out to experience feel and enjoy it.

Essays in the last part uncover the existence of varied conceptual frameworks inside organizations, and reveal numerous dilemmas or paradoxes in management, worklife and organizational functioning. Meehing and Wilson demonstrate the ambiguities, contradictions in the symbolic categorization, norms and values of the organization as experienced during a picnic day. Tommerup presents how contrasting world-views or set of assumptions, beliefs or values about people could be revealed by stories told by employees about the founder and a longtime general manager of an electronics firm. Rustid similarly observes paradoxes of qualitative and quantitative data in a service organization and reports how themes of stories, rumour and gossip about the reality of organizational life contradict the long-standing assumption about the believed 'ideal'. In the final essay, Wolfe reports a situation in a military hospital where people were neither talking nor listening to one another. The top leadership was characterized by the term "command bunker". Using a modification of 'fishbowl' intervention technique, Wolfe discovered the perceptions

of powerlessness among various groups. The intervention provided the simulated situation to share perceptions of each other which established more open and free communication and problem solving structure with fresh commitments.

The volume very competently establishes the point of an alternative approach towards understanding organizational behaviour, that is, organizational ethnography. It's a great appeal and a simple challenge to organization researchers, management consultants, students managers and employees. One can only wait and see whether the nineties will take it or not.

Each author of the essays and the Editors are eminently worthy of our heartfelt admiration for the great leap.

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