Role Effectiveness by Udai Pareek. New Delhi, Learning Systems, 1975. Rs. 60.00

This innovative work by a well known and experienced behavioural scientist, Professor Udai Pareek, has definitely enriched the consultants, trainers, and clients in understanding the most important aspect of human behaviour — 'role' and its different dimensions. 'Role' plays an important part in all kinds of adjustments for every normal human being. This affects social adjustment, work adjustment, family adjustment, emotional adjustment and even health adjustment. There have been a number of researches on role-clarity, role-set, role-diffusion, role-conflict etc., but such an instrument to help understand role and to help evolve a coping mechanism is rare.

Here Professor Pareek has designed a set of nine instruments of role dynamics to help an individual increase his role effectiveness. Measurement of role dynamics stands on two role systems — the role-space and the role-set.

'Role' has been used here "for any position a person holds in a system (organisation) as defined by the expectations various significant persons, including himself, have from the position". A person can occupy and perform a number of roles e.g. a leader, a committee chairman, a club president, a cricketer, an adviser, a consumer, a painter, a friend, a father, a son, a husband and so on. All these together denote "role space". In the centre of this configuration is the self. 'Role set', here, means "the system of various roles in his organisation of which his role is a part, and in which his role is defined by other significant roles". Here his role is in the centre.

The first exercise deals with the 'Inter-role Distance'. This is the distance between several roles an individual occupies and performs in his life. The conflict leads to such distance and vice-versa. Identifying such distance and dealing with a mechanism to help solve such conflict is really a big job.

The second exercise is preparing "Role Space Map" by locating various roles in relation to the self. 'Nearer the self' means more involvement and 'farther' means less involvement.

The third exercise deals with 'Self-Role Distance' defined as the distance between self and the role. Distance indicates lack of involvement of the person in the role due to a conflict between self concept (perhaps other personality variables too) and the expectations from the role as perceived by him.

The fourth exercise is to tap and tackle 'Intrarole Conflict' which means that several expectations may conflict with each other. This particular exercise is very useful as an individual is helped in coping effectively and meaningfully with such conflicts. That avoids role shrinkage.

The fifth exercise helps defining the role at the time when a new role is created or when a system is reorganised, or a new person joins an organisation and occupies a particular position.

Besides the above five exercises for role-space there are four exercises for role-set also. Here all other roles are also taken into account with the role of the actor or client in the centre.

Exercise number six helps the individual in "Preparing his Role Set Map". The distance denotes the gap between his own role and the other roles.

Exercise number seven identifies the factors causing distance between two roles. This is called here as "Inter-Role Image Sharing" which deals with one's own role, others' roles, and perception of how his role is seen by others. This is a complicated variable which has been very cautiously managed. This is presented in the table below.

	Role A	Role B
1	Own image	Image of A
2	Own image plus perception of B's image of his role	Image of A
3	Image of B	Image of A

Exercise number eight provides help to understand and cope with the role with which the linkages of the role occupant are weak. This is known as "Role Linkage". In such role to role distance, working with other role to understand the possibility and avenue of mutual help work as a tool for role effectiveness.

Exercise number nine, last of the set, helps achieve role enrichment by properly identifying and effectively dealing with "Role Erosion". According to the author, at the time when organisation expands, or is redesigned, or if its functions change then the new role may become less important and less satisfying to the role occupant.

Categorization of roles into various important dimensions is very excellently done. Under the role space four important stresses have been covered viz, self role distance, Intrarole conflict, Inter-role Conflict, and role growth. Under the role-set another four important stresses have been dealt with, viz., role ambiguity, role overload, role to role distance and role erosion. Such a clear classification is very helpful for the consultants, and trainers as this will help locate exactly where the stress lies so that proper and effective coping mechanism can be developed

accordingly. This has a great diagnostic value, and even clinical, and educational psychologists can use this meaningfully in their counselling work. A few of the above mentioned exercises are of value to family sociologists and social workers also in their counselling.

These exercises are meant to

    (i) help the individual and groups in an organisation identify and analyse the stresses ; and

    (ii) develop a coping mechanism to effectively deal with such stresses.

The first part has been very adequately dealt with and is self explanatory, so that any body can easily use it even without any formal behavioural science background. Regarding the development of coping mechanisms, there is a possibility that the user of those exercises might not be able to deal with the vast amount of data thrown up. Therefore, it would have been pragmatic to provide a theoretical framework with each exercises in order to provide a background against which the data would be analysed. These inputs are badly needed as the concept of role is complicated and abstract. Once such a vast amount of data is generated we must consider its manageability. In such cases no clear-cut structured guide-line is possible as coping depends much upon the type of stress, variables related with that stress, and the type of person occupying that role. As mentioned above what may be actually needed here, are some theoretical input and a broad outline of different mechanisms which could be used under different conditions.

At one point the author has mentioned, "when an organisation expands, or is redesigned, or if its functions change, most individuals are likely to feel that the new roles which are being created as a result of these changes are less important and less satisfying to the role occupant". The above hypothesis is very much dependent upon the conditions under which the person had been working and how much he was satisfied with the job. This is so individualistic that no such generalization is possible. A person might find his new job (when such changes are taking place) as more important and satisfying. Thus, for this person such changes work for role solidification and not for role erosion. Of course, such controversy do not go against the utility of this exercise (exercise 9 on role erosion) as we do not need to use this on such persons.

Inspite of such a great utility a possible user or a researcher might encounter with following methodological questions :

(a) Whether the test is measuring the same dimension or stress for which this has been designed ? If yes, then is it measuring only that dimension, or that plus some other dimensions ?

(b) Do we get the same result when applied at different times, under different conditions, and with different groups on the same person ?

(c) Do we get the same result if the technique is applied by different trainers on the some person ?

(d) Is it applicables on all samples irrespective of the differences in the background of the individual and the organisation? Will there be any difference caused by age, sex, maturity level, education, status, personality etc. ?

Of course, an experienced researcher like Professor Udai Pareek must have given due consideration to these minor methodological pre-requisities before standardising the instrument. Such questions on validity reliability, norm, etc. are not unknown to any researcher. What is suggested is that these data should have been provided here.

As a whole the instrument is very useful and unique. Development of such an instrument to deal with one of the most complicated and abstract concept in behavioural sciences is not an easy job. This is definitely a great coutribution which has enriched the consultants, trainers, counsellors, and researchers.

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