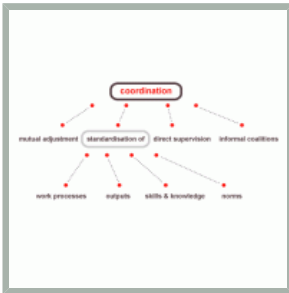


six coordination mechanisms



characteristics

author:	Mintzberg, Henry
country:	Canada
period:	1979
type:	model
role:	consultant
activity:	analyse and design
topic:	org. design & development
abstr. level:	organisation
perspective:	rational
status:	under review
module:	classics I
comments:	0

description:

The Canadian academic, Henry Mintzberg, distinguished six coordination mechanisms from organisational design literature. Any group of individuals that needs to accomplish a complex task faces two opposing requirements: the division of labour of the task into subtasks to support specialisation, and the coordination of these subtasks to accomplish the overall task. Mintzberg defined organisational structure as 'the sum total of the ways in which its divides its labour into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them'.

The six coordination mechanisms are:

1. Mutual adjustment

Coordination of work is made possible by a process of informal communication between people conducting interdependent work.

2. Direct supervision

Coordination is achieved by one individual taking responsibility for the work of others.

3. Standardisation of work processes

Coordination is made possible by specifying the work content in rules or routines to be followed. Coordination occurs before the activity is undertaken. Mintzberg adopted Taylorism: procedures are usually specified by work-study analysis.

4. Standardization of output

Coordination is obtained by the communication and clarification of expected results. The individual actions required to obtain a goal are not prescribed. This goal setting method is closely related to Drucker's Management by Objectives.

5. Standardization of skills and knowledge

Coordination is reached through specified and standardised training and education. People are trained to know what to expect of each other and coordinate in almost automatic fashion.

6. Standardisation of norms

Norms are standardized, socialization is used to establish common values and beliefs in order for people work toward common expectations. Mintzberg added this cultural based mechanism at a later stage.

In political organisations, fractions form temporary coalitions to achieve their sub-goals. Mintzberg did not categorise these activities as a specific coordination mechanism.

assets:



four organisational environments

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seven coordination methods ranked

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seven pulls on organisations

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six coordination methods

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cons:

- The consultant must keep in mind that Mintzberg's classification of coordinating mechanisms in organisations lacks empirical validation. The previous research on which Mintzberg based his classification had studied a single coordinating method in isolation.

references:

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