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# Organisation analysis: Instruments and methods

**Structure:**

**1. My experience with data/organisations**
**2. Organisation-diagnostic approach in an educational way**
**3. Instruments, e.g. (the) JDS**General
**4. Qualitative or quantitative approach**
**5. Evaluation**


**1.      My experience with data/organisations**

I am an educational scientist and organisation psychologist, which is why I will try to present my ideas and my experience by way of an organisation analysis and its mode of procedure on the basis of psychological-educational science.

According to an ideal-typical definition, psychological organisation analysis is concerned with "the systematic, science-based registration, analysis and description of the regularly occurring behaviour and experience of the members of an organisation or part thereof including the interdependence of its effects" (Kühlmann & Franke 1989, p. 632).

A psychology-based approach used in educational institutions and institutions of further education implies, in my opinion, an additional responsibility in that it should aim at "learning" as well as supporting motivation, because those involved shape and enable learning arrangements, which is why they have to possess a comprehensive knowledge of the learning and training process, something they should, if possible, experience on themselves in order to know what works and what doesn't.

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**2.      Organisation-diagnostic procedure in an educational way**

Unlike the normal sequence of phases as in Kühlmann & Franke (1989), my approach comprises an organisation diagnosis supplemented by the "survey-feedback approach" (cf. diagram 1). "Following an analysis of the status quo of the organisation (survey), the results are fed back to the members of the organisation

(not just a few selected members!) either completely or in the sections of particular interest" (Gebert 1993, p. 484). The literature on organisations shows "that the motivation of the members of the organisation to come to grips with their own situation by actually changing it increases perceptibly following the survey-feedback processes" (ib).
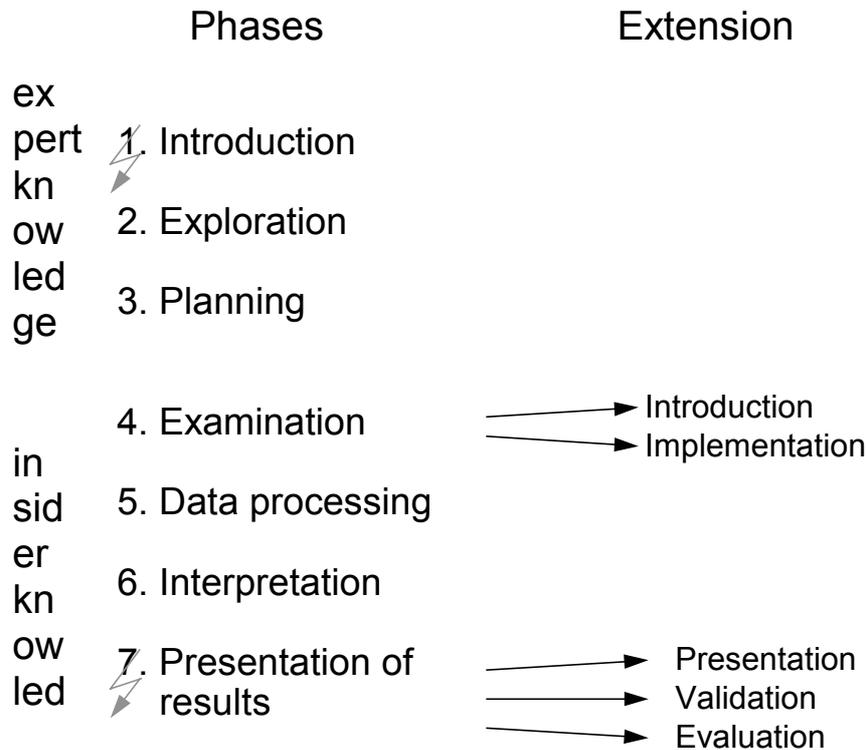
Phases          Extension

expert knowledge

1. Introduction

2. Exploration

3. Planning

insider knowled

4. Examination    → Introduction
           → Implementation

5. Data processing

6. Interpretation

7. Presentation of results    → Presentation
           → Validation
           → Evaluation

Diagram 1: Psychological-pedagogic organisation diagnosis

An Example of the purposed stages of the research processes is shown in the next chart:

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- o acquisition, first contact, personal presentation/discussion, research contract with adult education management
- o discussion with staff: presentation of the project, coordination, inquiries, e.g. research contract and distribution of questionnaires
- o organisation of postal course teacher survey
- o questionnaires returned by full-time staff; data input and evaluation
- o presentation of questionnaire results in each adult education institution
- o postal feedback to course teachers
- o focused interviews with key persons/representatives of staff groups
- o written final report to management (summary documentation of research cooperation and results), final discussion

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Diagram 2: Example of Stages of organisation research process

This process has so far been discussed for *organisation development processes* and represents a novelty for organisation diagnosis and the employment of *organisation research* (not for organisation counseling) in institutions of further education. However, there are differences, there is a lot in common:

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| Features of organisation counseling in adult education | Organisation (development) research |
|---|---|
| related to adult education practice | yes |
| reflections on changes and conditions | yes |
| reference to needs, interests of those actively involved | yes |
| helping practitioners on the spot | depends |
| starting point: actual needs | no |
| distance to staff abandoned, in order to provide a communicative field with equal-ranking partners | depends |
| co-decision by those involved on concept, methods and constant feedback | depends |
| involvement in evaluation and exploitation of data | depends |
| results not only of the informative-cognitive kind, but also enlightenment on (political) interdependencs and actual measures of assistance | no |
| discursive procedures | depends |
| siding with those affected (no neutrality) | no |
| learning to understand the language and the expectations of those involved in the process | yes |
| hypotheses can be exchanged during implementation | depends |
| generation of action-guided schemes and sustainable structural change | depends |
| results cannot be prognosticated and repeated | no |

Diagram 3: My own apporach towards defining adult education counseling against organisation (development) research

In this context, organisation diagnosis is not yet a strategy for change, but a "harbinger of change" (ib.). This is why it is to be separated from forms of "organisation counseling", too. As for the research field of "further education", there are as yet no specifically developed valid research methods on organisation

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diagnosis. The use of actual-state analyses for the installation of quality management systems and/or the implementation of peer review methods is becoming increasingly important in further education practice - by means of answering question grids, attempts are being made to achieve comprehensive transparency on organisation processes - but they are not based on theoretical constructions, but adapted from other scientific communities (engineering).

Organisation analyses offer a great variety of possible applications, which also appear more or less linked with each other in this research project and are also expected by their initiators and the funding bodies. Organisation research is thus similar to organisation counseling. The following diagram (No. 4) shows the respective degrees of usefulness (here condensed according to Büssing 1993, p. 449f.) for three different groups who are interested in the respective organisational data and results. At the same time, the diagram contains references to threatening, ambivalent and intimidating "possible effects" (shaded areas in diagram 4). This aspect has so far been a blind spot in the respective literature. However, resistance against organisation research becomes understandable if the "other" side becomes transparent. For the members of the organisation concerned it can, therefore, be understood as legitimizing "top-down strategies", as well as meaning additional technologization, causing fear and having a demotivating effect. The principals concerned may use organisation analyses to decide on cuts, streamlining operations and eliminating legal frameworks and provisions. From the perspective of organisation research, there is also the danger of selectivity if organisation diagnosticians show, as it were, an interest in taking on follow-up organisation counseling assignments. [The perspective in the middle is very important in Germany: Adult Education is state and "Laender" funded]

| Interested parties | | |
|---|---|---|
| A: member of organisation | B: Owners of equity, funding body | C. Organisation research |
| Workplace layout | Bases for investment decisions | Review, development of organisation theories |
| | Decisions on cuts | Confirmation of organisation counseling |
| Preparing, legitimizing changes | Basis for assessing criteria of humane workplace layout | Comparisons of organisations |

| Legitimation for top-down strategy | Streamlining of operations | |
|---|---|---|
| | Development | |
| | Elimination of legal frameworks and provisions | |
| Highlighting human resources Rationalization | | |
| Analysing of weak spots Demotivation | | |

Diagram 4: Use and ambivalence of organisation diagnoses and counseling

The adult education/further training institutions involved in my research project were able to use the data collected as well as the interactively conceived feedback phase in a variety of ways:

- Managements and staff members receive, between them, a depersonalised systematic insight into their adult education institution by way of the staff group results
- It is possible to make comparisons between other adult education instititutions for their own definition and discharge
- This is followed by an appreciation of the work performance of all staff groups of the organisation
- Resources and strengths of staff members become transparent
- It will be easier to put the adult education institution's case before the representatives of local government
- Further training needs and motivation potential by way of workplace layout measures are highlighted, especially for administrative staff.

Now: Demands made on organisation analysts

Organisation analysts are confronted with manifold interpersonal processes in their work for the organisation if they proceed in this manner. They are in receipt of inside information and can thus encounter psychosocial problem cases which supervision processes should cope with. Dealing with this problem requires not only skills and abilities on the part of the organisation scientist, but also a behavioural orientation, as it were, which is itself oriented on basic ethical human values. To start with, ethically problematic modes of behaviour must be avoided (Schuler 1982, p. 344):

Now I seek to make an attempt to postulate the abilities and skills of an organisation scientist. Accordingly, the professionality of organisation scientists - analogous to that of organisation counselors - is to consist of the following examples:

- possessing field knowledge
- possessing extensive knowledge of methods including their effects

- being aware of one's model and exemplary function, i.e. being able to guarantee credibility with regard to the postulated transparency claim instead of representing a "restrictive" concept of man by means of s suspiciously control-orientated research orientation

The repertory of an organisational diagnostician should, of course, include the assignment to have a good look at gender differences and their effect on work-related action. Essays dealing with the basics of this subject, however, do not deal with this constituent component of organisations, i.e. the gender asymmetry (Büssing 1993). Thus myths, stories, celebrations, the introduction of new staff are evaluated as symptoms of a corporate culture (Rosenstiel 2000, p. 227 ff.), while the handling of gender-specific phenomena (pregnancy, educational leave, dress, career development, dealing with cleaning staff, worktime arrangements ...) creates cultural patterns - which say something about "changes" and "learning" in the respective organisations - are not raised to the status of an explicit subject of observation. The authors concerned might, of course, maintain that it is impossible to consider all constituents or observation categories and that every organisation-analysis concept requires its own design. This defence is only partly acceptable because the category of "gender" has anything but a marginal existence in an organisation. In this context, it would appear to be particularly problematic to leave practising organisation analysts to themselves and to "unconsciously" adopt the "blind spot" of their scientific community rather than "consciously" focus on the subject of gender. This behaviour has consequences for subsequent reforms and processes of organisation counseling and develment processes (cf. Kil & Uhtes, 1998).

This can be shown on the example of results of organisation analyses conducted at adult education centres in North Rhine-Westphalia: 10 adult education centres with all their staff groups were involved in the overall surveys. It was shown that there was evidence of huge deficits in the field of work motivation and/or the motivation potential to be found at the place of work: in the adult education centres concerned, staff members had evaluation rates which are comparatively low, i.e. comparable with workers engaged in the industrial production of components (cf. Schmidt et al. 1985; Kil 1998, p. 137ff.). These evaluations of subjective work content operate to the detriment of the organisation the subjective attributions among the staff groups: "Pedagogues think that administration is one level farther down, and there is the claim that it works if it doesn't work: 'They are not quite bright.' Some only play stupid

so as not to get more assignments." (interview quotation from Kil 1998, p. 179). There is no need to elaborate at this stage on the fact that such motivation potentials and personal attribution patterns have an adverse effect on coping with work assignments, especially in an educational institution.

This study also considered - by way of qualitative material - the degree to which staff members were open to change, because this readiness is of decisive importance for the successful acceptance of organisation development measures that are to be taken. Among administrative staff, there are chiefly "constructive" descriptions of their low motivation potential, while the managements - all but one were male - gave "stable" descriptions (ib. p.185). These findings have far-reaching consequences if an educational institution seeks to increasingly present itself within the framework of a service- and client-oriented organisation. The gender-specific differences provide managements and those in charge of organisations with valuabe suggestions for interventions to be initiated.

## 3.   Instruments, e.g. the JDS[General]

In order to be able to demonstrate the limits and the fields of application of **organisation theory positions**, Sperka developed a systemisation (1996), according to which microscopic or macroscopic "filters" can be placed before the researcher, and behaviour in orgainsations can be explained from four perspectives. My own motivational approaches are to be located between a psychological and a closed systemic perspective.

The mechanistic view is based on external determination and thus on the possibility to control working relations. Principles of so-called Taylorism can again be detected here, albeit in modified form. Theoretical concepts dealing with quality management, for example (Hackmann/Wageman 1995) or benchmarking (Walgenbach 2000) can be classified under this heading.

By contrast, a psychological perspective starts with the internal determination and motivation of individuals. Thus, meanings, i.e. cognitive work processes which staff attach to their working conditions, become relevant. For example, the so-called job characteristic model of Hackmann/Oldham (1980), which can be recorded wih the aid

of a workplace questionnaire, the Job Diagnostic Survey, JDS[General], and which has been extended to cover the services sector (Kil/Leffelsend/Metz-Göckel 1997, 2000) can be classified under this heading. I will explain it after describing the four perspectives in the following.

The closed system view considers all the persons of a system simultaneously. From an integral perspective, psychological mechanisms generate new effects and constructions, e.g. organisation culture (symbols generate identity). Thus, Cummings/Blumberg (1987) start with the assumption that the conditioning factors of the market/product sould correspond to or be contingent on the problem-solving potential on the part of the staff (from Ulrich 1994, p. 245):

It is from an open systemic perspective that organisations are considered in their interaction with their environments. Open systems consist of continuous, structure-maintaining processes which continue to develop over time. In this context, it is, among other things, phenomena of selection and structure formation which become a subject of research. The theory of "structural adaptation processes" (cf. Di Maggio/Powell 1983), for instance, uses the term "mimesis" to describe the copying of allegedly successful problem-sovling patterns of other organisations, while great uncertainty characterizes the way the viewer's own organisation is seen.

The internal cohesiveness of the measures derived therefrom and of the instruments vis-à-vis each other, however, becomes a decsive predicator of the success of measures to change things as well as of the results of an organisaion analysis (Gebert 2004). By contrast, Neuberger (2000, p. 618) states with regard to Gomez/Probst (St. Gallen): There is a concept of precise abstract and verbal systems logic in the analysis (open systemic perspective), but this is followed by a "casual" and "idealistic" intervention mentality (mechanistic perspective). Thus organisation counseling/research should also harmonize theoretical approaches with their interventions in the service of further education.

| microscopic | | macroscopic | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **mechanistic** | **psychological** | **closed systematic** | **open systemic** |
| | | | |
| MOTIVATION THEORIES | | | |
| **Business administration** | **Psychology** | | **Sociology** |

Diagram 5: Perspectives of organisation analyses

In the service and administrative sectors, e.g. adult education organizations, we needed new systematic diagnostic instruments for job analysis, because there are great changes in this sector and we don't know much about the workplaces there and we have no theory about the functioning of these organisations. The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) might fill this gap a little. I propose to give you a comprehensive overview of this instrument and the underlying assumption (the job characteristic model). This is important, because until now it has mainly been used in the production sector in Germany. Here, we use (including Stefanie Leffelsend and Hellmuth Metz-Göckel, my colleages from Dortmund University) the JDS in a slightly modified and extended version. Following a sample of 691 employees of different service/administration enterprises, the test quality and structural attributes of the instrument were determined. Next, the extension of the job characteristics model was tested. Using linear structural equation modeling, a significant improvement of the model-fit was seen when the variables "goal clarity", "organisational commitment" and "stress" were included.

A high degree work motivation and qualitatively high-value task fulfilment can, therefore, only develop if the work activity contains the following features: closed tasks, importance of tasks, feedback through work, change of requirements, autonomy, cooperation, feedback by others and clarity of goals/objectives. In the process, it is not "objective" measurements which are employed to evaluate attitudes of the staff themselves which form the basis of how the latter respond to the respective motivation potential in terms of performance (cf. Collins et al. 2004).

**Path model: relation of core variables, mediator variables and result variables (Kil/Metz-Göckel/Leffelsend 2000 ZfAO)**
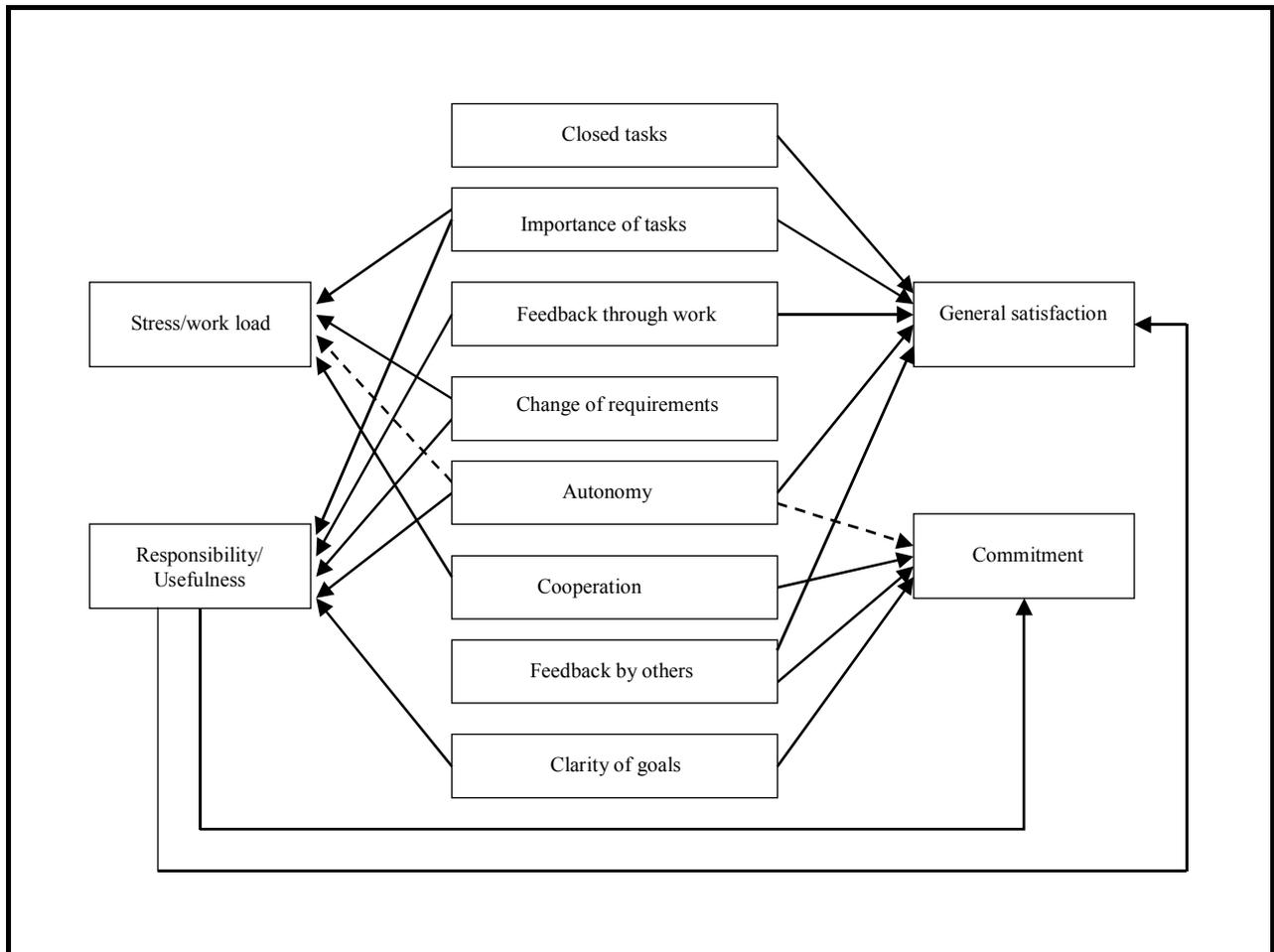all paths significant (p<.01); dotted lines mark negative interdependences



Diagram 6 Job Characteristic Model revisited

### 4.    Qualitative or quantitative approach

I think that, generally, one could say that a qualitative research paradigm is prevailing in German adult education at present. More often than not, research findings cannot be verified on an interdisciplinary basis, being frequently of a merely descriptive nature. [Especially organisation research is susceptible to the so-called "style as theory" problem, which van Maanen has also identified in international organisation research.] By way of the development of MAXQDA Computer Program, a qualitative evaluation program developed a methodical approach to meet the relevant quality criteria. There have already been first applications in adult education (e.g. Robak).

The integration of participants in further education measures, who, as tempoary members, never produce the "product" there or, later, elsewhere, has so far not been

guaranteed in any oganisation-analytical process. In my opinion, there is as yet no appropriate or applied design for this purpose. In our new IfEB research project, which has been authorized and funded by DFG (German Research Association), we will, for the first time, try to provide organisational analyses involving the participation of course members.

What research strategies, therefore, offer what benefits, or: what are the problems? Under the focus of qualitative and quantitative methodology, the following problem areas and fields of potential can be identified:

| Problem areas/fields of potential | quantitative | qualitative |
|---|---|---|
| Data feedback | can be represented | too complex, too few persons, often too much Data per person |
| Entry into the organisation | difficult as comprehensive analyses are being made, causing a major "disturbance" | easy, as private interviews are highly acceptable, especially among managements |
| Artefacts on "impression management" | miminized | increased |
| Gender bias among staff | all staff members can be affected | gender topic frequently taboo in organisations |
| Gender bias at survey level | can be minimized | great influence in respect of reliability, validity |
| Participation | can be achieved | can be achieved (problems with selection) |
| Size variable | can be considered | can be considered via constrasting |
| Hierarchy | can be represented | hard to represent because of small number of cases |
| Representativeness/ Transferability | can be achieved (easily) | can be achieved with great difficulty |
| Participants | can be integrated | can be integrated |
| Mode of functioning/Operational knowledge | difficult | can be interpreted |

Diagramm 7: Problem areas/fields of potential in quantitative/qualitative methods

## 4.    Evaluation

On completion of the research project, an organisation-analytical approach must be subjected to evaluation in the same way as, for instance, an already implemented change or a long-term reorganisation-counseling process. Apart from classic quality

criteria used fo the evaluation of every single methodical element, Kühlmann & Franke list quality features based on the subject of diagnosis:

"- simplicity of use and application
- acceptance among organisation members (apparent validity)
- freedom from adverse effects (guarantee of anonymity)
- possibilities of adaptation to special organisational features
- financial, temporal and personal effort
- abundance of additional information
- demands on the selection of survey units
- selectivity/clear-cut of results" (ib, p. 647)

| | | **Quality of intervention** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Simplicity in implementation and application | Cost | Acceptance Freedom from adverse effects | Selectivity/ Clear-cut |
| **Indicators** | Organised learning | | | | |
| | Learning front stage | | | | |
| | Learning back stage | | | | |

Diagram 8

In addition, it is especially for learning institutions that "learning effects" should be found, i.e. indicators as to whether certain levels of learning (cf. Diesler & Nittel 2001) have been touched upon within the organisation and what conclusions are to be drawn after an organisation analysis:

- o organised learning (further education measures)
- o self-organised learning on the front stage (in discussions)
- o self-organised learning on the back stage (at the workplace, e.g. jokes, reminder notes at the workplace, other terms)

and

- o "refusal to learn" (Resistance, pertubation)