Practice On-line Essay OBGD 2020-2021

Exam instructions

This is an open-book exam, which means that you can use the course literature and lecture slides to answer the questions. The course literature is listed in the course syllabus, which is available on Nestor. All the information you need to complete the exam can be found within this course literature and the lecture slides. Thus, there is no need to look for other, external sources (Wikipedia, google) for completing the exam questions. I actually advise against using external sources, as the terminology and argumentation used in external sources may differ from that used in the course literature/lecture slides. Using external sources may thus result in a lower grade, as your answers are assessed based on whether they correspond to the insights given in the mandatory course literature/lecture slides.

Please note that there is a word limit for each question. A correct answer can be given well within this word limit. There is no need to keep typing until you reach the word limit. Only relevant arguments/information will earn you points. Going beyond the word limit and/or providing excessive irrelevant information in your answers will result in penalty points!

Part 1 – Organizational structure

Consider a situation in which you are tasked with developing an organizational structure for the operational division of a start-up company. The company's goal is to become a low-cost leader in the manufacturing of cardboard boxes that can be used for the shipment of goods across countries. The operational part of the company will comprise about 100 employees, whose main tasks will be (a) cutting cardboard, (b) making folding lines in the cardboard, (c) coloring the cardboard, and (d) applying customers' logos on the cardboard. There will be teams of about 10-15 employees, who will be supervised by a team leader. Team leaders, in turn, are overseen by the operations manager.

Questions:

a) What kind of level of standardization do you recommend for this company? Explain your answer (max 100 words).
b) What kind of level of (de)centralization of decision-making do you recommend for this company? Explain your answer (max 100 words).
c) What is your recommendation regarding how employees should be grouped in different departments (i.e., departmentalization)? Explain your answer (max 100 words).
d) What kind of integrative mechanism(s) do you recommend for this company? Explain your answer (max 100 words).

Part 2 – Organization decision making

A company is suffering from very lengthy decision-making processes. It can take up to 4 weeks before even simple decisions involving relatively little money (i.e., less than 10,000Euro) are made. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the company, the CEO of the organization wants to identify the root causes of these problems. He expects that the problems in the decision-making process emerge because a lot of irrelevant people are involved in decision-making. These individuals all want to provide their input in the decision-making process, which can cause needless delays in decision making. Moreover, the CEO has noticed that a couple of particularly knowledgeable people are overwhelmed by their decision-making responsibilities.

Questions:

a) The symptoms described by the CEO are indicative for problems in the informal organizational network used for making decisions. Identify and describe these problems. Explain your answer (max 200 words).
b) Describe the procedure you would use to determine whether the problems you mentioned in (a) are really present within the company. Explain your answer (max 200 words).
c) In case the problems mentioned in (a) are really present within the company, what would be the *best* way to resolve this problem for the company? Explain your answer (max 100 words).

Question 3 – Teams in organizations

A manager faces the task of designing a new team for dealing with particular complex problems within the organization. Specifically, the team will be tasked with dealing with unexpected problems, so that the company will be able to continue to perform well even when its operations are disrupted. To ensure that the team will work effectively, the manager wants to draw from theoretical insights from Organizational Behavior and Group Dynamics and develop a team that is capable to work in challenging circumstances on complex problems.

Questions:

a) What kind of team task design would you recommend to the manager? Explain your answer (max 200 words).
b) What kind of team composition would you recommend to the manager? Explain your answer (max 200 words).
c) What team size would you recommend to the manager? Explain your answer (max 200 words).
d) What kind of informal network should the team have in place to function well? Explain your answer (max 200 words).

Question 4 – Individuals in organizations

An organization is suffering from demotivated employees. When asked by their supervisors, employees have indicated that they find their work boring, repetitive, and not meaningful. This has demotivated employees and some employees have even left for a job elsewhere. The management team wants to deal with this problem and increase employees' motivation.

Questions:

a) Based on theory on Organizational Behavior & Group Dynamics, describe three methods that the management team could use to boost employees' work motivation (max 200 words).
b) Describe which method (listed in your answer to a) you prefer for the present case. Explain your answer (max 200 words).
c) Describe how you would implement this method within the organization (i.e., what things would have to be redesigned within the organization)? (max 200 words).