

Department of Preparatory Training

Level: 1st Year

Module: Human Engineering

Module Leader : Arzazi Mohammed

Course n°5: Limited rationality (Strategic Analysis)

Course outline

Introduction

- 1- Definition of strategic analysis
- 2- The principles of strategic analysis
- 3- The fundamental concepts of strategic analysis

Conclusion

Academic year: 2025-2026

Introduction

In the world of social sciences and humanities, sociology of organizations is dominated by the paradigm of strategic analysis developed by Michel CROZIER and ERHARD FRIEDBERG in 1977. The founding idea of the strategic analysis, and probably the reason for its success, was to rethink the organization as a political field structured by power relations between its main actors. Indeed, beyond the technical vision, the strategic analysis highlights the nature of the power relations that structure the organization. Because organizations are not abstract entities, nor natural data but they are social constructions. Every organization is the result of the individuals who compose it. These individuals are responsible for strategies as actors with the power to change things.

1- Definition of strategic analysis

Strategic analysis is a model of organizational analysis and an approach whose central purpose is power relations within organizations, and favoring the strategic choices of the actor.

2- The principles of strategic analysis

The strategic analysis is based on four principles:

- 1- The organizational actor is a strategist.
- 2 - The actor has a rational behavior limited (by the time, knowledge and means at his disposal).
- 3- Power is an exchange relationship that is negotiated (the actors have leeway, autonomy and own interests).
- 4- The interaction between the actors leads to the constitution of action system (The organization is a social construction, it is the result of the actions of individuals).

3- The fundamental concepts of strategic analysis

A- Actor

The actor is an active individual, able to intervene on a given problem and he has his own objectives. The actor does not accept to be treated as a means by the organization.

Assets (the resources of an actor): Resources can take many forms:

- Technical expertise (operate, repair)
- Information, knowledge (know how to analyze, anticipate)
- Hierarchy (giving orders, imposing sanctions)
- Legitimacy (formal role, seniority)

B- The stakes:

The stakes are the goals that guide the actors' behaviour.

The stakes are often contradictory:

- * positive stakes = what you think you will win
- * negative stakes = what is expected to be lost

C- Power:

Power is a relationship, not an attribute of the actors. It is the ability of one individual or group to act on another.

The power sources

Power in an organization is divided into four areas:

- Hierarchical area: authority status. Ex: The union delegate.
- Expert area: competence in a given field. Ex: computer scientist, maintenance worker.
- Information area: knowledge of key information. E.g. Secretary, Chief Personnel Officer.
- Environment area: link with actors on the periphery of the organization. Ex: the sales or business manager in connection with competing companies or partners.

D- Strategy:

The strategy is a coherent set of behaviors that an actor adopts in order to preserve his interests.

The strategy is an adaptation of behaviour according to:

- * Opportunities that arise,
- * Assets that stakeholders have
- * Perception of possible behaviour of others

E- Uncertainty area

The uncertainty area is a space of power controlled by a strategic actor toward a situation of indetermination; each actor has margin for maneuver in one situation or another.

Uncertainty areas are assets for the individual. Controlling uncertainty areas is a stake in the organization.

Example: "In a factory, when a workstation becomes available, the shop manager cannot decide who takes over the position, he must appoint the oldest person first." Mr Crozier

F- Concrete action system

This is the result of different strategies. This system corresponds to the way in which the actors organize their system of relations to solve the concrete problems posed by the functioning of the organization.

Conclusion

The strategic analysis revealed the notion of actors who implement individual and collective strategies to increase their power and develop their identity.

The actors act in a direction that aims to go in the direction of the goals they have set themselves. So they have strategic behaviour.

Finally Crozier and Friedberg focused on the notion of power and they neglect other forms of influence such as: the relations of trust that unite individuals, the absence of any reflection on the notion of legitimacy between the actors (legitimacy in power relations between actors).