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Organization operating system (OOS): Unifying foundation for organization studies

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Abstract

In this age of computers, robotics and artificial intelligence there is an underlying hidden system which holds the key to every service that is realized - The Operating System. It manages, the physical resources, knowledge resources, external interaction, resolves conflicts and threats as well to create value. It is not difficult to realize that it is modeled on a human being, and the attempt to replace humans is the most sought-after intellectual objective, because it provides greater flexibility without problems of disagreement or limitations of fatigue, ageing in a general sense though there are other limitations of obsolescence, failures or wear and tear. The same operating systems are customized to manage innumerable specialized activities, competencies and capabilities, complex physical and intelligent functions including act, move or behave like a human or an animal. Expanding the scope further, can an automated system run a complex organization completely, perhaps not, because an organization is what it is because of participation by individuals, although many business organizations do run automated mechanical activities without much human intervention. A more important question would be to ask if we have an organizational operating system, at least to make it run seamlessly as an integrated entity. It has not been so in decades of Management and Organization Studies research, although the studies have discovered significant organizational dimensions for exploration. The theme of this article is to primarily understand different facets of organization studies like a user of an automation system unaware of the presence and role of its operating system much like the organization research seem indifferent to realizing the concept of an Organizational Operating System (OOS) being experiential and issue resolution oriented. At the end, we put forward a conceptual integration of organizational phenomena around an Organizational Operating System (OOS).

Keywords: Organization studies, organization theory, organization operating system, organization design, organization structure, marketing, organization identity, organization culture, communications

Introduction

The earliest commercial company which is still operating under the same name started in Japan in sixth century CE. There are over 5000 companies more than 200 hundred years old and more than ten companies over a thousand years old still functional mostly in far east and a few Europe (List of oldest companies, 2025) ^[57]. India does not figure among such nations but records of shipping and international trade of manufactured goods like ornaments, clothing, or other processed natural products across seas indicate matured and organized commercial activities existed in India as far back as the times of Panini's Ashtadhyayi (Agrawala, 1953) ^[1] or Kautilya's ArthaShastra (Shamasastri, 1951) ^[93] of 3rd to 5th Century BCE which mention hierarchies, administrative roles, taxation etc. Socio-religious institutions like the *Mutts* of Sankaracharya, temples or the Universities Takshasila existed as far back as the 5th Centuries BCE.

Management and Organization Studies (MOS) as systematic discipline, however, evolved in the west emerging from Industrial revolution to ever growing complexities in organizations for finding answers to problems in performance and returns. Organization theory as a field trace to 'Organizations', a book by James March and Herbert Simon published in 1958. They saw organisation as 'a system of coordinated action among individuals and groups with varying knowledge, preferences. They raise the question as to how individual humans being boundedly rational, organizations composed of individuals can accomplish so much? Although the question points to the organizational structure and hierarchy which dominated the field's subsequent developments (Davis & DeWitt, 2021) ^[25], a concerted effort to look

for a single, multipurpose theory of the firm still remains a vision. Core intent of every theory of the firm, as an abstraction of the real-world business enterprise, designed to address a limited set of its characteristics and behaviours' (Machlup, 1967) ^[59], has not changed substantially in six decades.

The uncertainties and constraints of the internal and external environments have been the focus of organizational studies and critical need to be adaptive resulted in analysis of different organizational aspects through theoretical and empirical studies, to identify patterns for symbolic generalizations for wider acceptability in designing and managing operations, to satisfy the expectations of the customers, stake holders and the larger society. An organization is hostage to its internal and external environments created by the aspirations of the owners, leadership and stakeholders by way of dependencies, relationships and transactions. External environment remains the dominant force in dictating what the organization does and how its internal environment develops. These environments are a mix of different aspects which need to be in sync for the organization to flourish (Neilson *et al.*, 2015) ^[71]. An organization has to work hard to gain its share in fulfilling its aspirations by creating value without which it fails to sustain or even survive as an organization. Knowledge plays key role in understanding the environments and in the organization's ability to fulfil its objectives as a specialized asset to create value.

Organization studies diversified into multiple theoretical streams more of out of segmentation and exclusivism. Main stream labelled under 'Organization Theory' primarily looked at how organizations are assembled, managed and operated looking into functions, interrelationships, dynamics, and performance covering different aspects of the organization from efficiencies, human resources, costs, economic, technological and social influences or vulnerabilities to changes in environments etc., Independent theoretical streams emerged around significant organizational phenomena such as marketing, culture, communication, strategy, identities. It is difficult to identify any specific reason why these organizational aspects emerged as independent theoretical streams, but for their extensive methodological and empirical focus and proliferation of academic and research contributions or the practicability issue that organization theories are so widely variable in their basic assumptions that these phenomena find it impossible to integrate or lack of convergence. We posit that OT should encapsulate all of these into one framework more so when the structure or design cannot exclude these streams.

Objective: The objectives of this article are firstly to engage in a study of theoretical contributions to organization studies of all the organization phenomena including the independent streams of marketing, identity, culture, communications, structure and design and assess the need for a comprehensive unified theory to integrate all the organization aspects. Secondly, to make a preliminary conceptual proposal of framework for a unified organization theory using the analogy of a Computer Operating System based on the inherent triad of Tangible, Intangible and Transient components.

Organization studies

Theoretical generalization in organization studies evolved from interdisciplinary studies from sociology, economics, psychology, philosophy based on limited experiential studies

and their practicability in influencing organizational objectives. Gareth Morgan (1986) ^[67] presented eight metaphors to study organizations as machines, as organisms, as brains, as cultures, as political systems, as psychic prisons, as flux and transformation, and as instruments of domination illustrating the bewildering views, theories and conjectures pointing to the diversity in contemporary organization theory (Groth, 2011) ^[35]. Organization studies seem to make an organisation a little bit of many things and cause to wonder if there are any defining features of organization left at all (Reed & Hughes, 1992) ^[86], more because of exclusivist theoretical debates on how organizations are actually built and run (Kenis & Raab, 2020) ^[50] than an urge to develop a foundation for an integrated organization. Organization theories have been classified based on chronological, systemic, theoretical premises and philosophical models or based on taxonomical classification. We look at the chronological progression which is also not a strict demarcation of a time period but generally follows a progression of thought process over time.

Classical organization theories: The classical denomination is attributed to three approaches during the times of mass worker-oriented production. Fredrick Taylor's scientific management is built around the concept of planning of work to achieve efficiency, standardization, specialization and simplification. Key objectives of the scientific management are science, harmony, cooperation, and maximum output with an almost equal work and the responsibility between the management and workers. Max Weber's bureaucratic approach is structure oriented with rigid rules, division of labour, clear authority to serve the objectives of management. Its principles are clear definition of distinct areas of competence through training, hierarchy where every position is accountable and supervised. Lastly, Henri Fayol's Administrative approach was manager oriented with centralization of authority for planning, organizing and coordination but with a personnel orientation in collaboration between individuals. The concepts of line and staff, committees or functions and responsibilities of management enumerated in fourteen principles of management are widely used by practising managers.

The core of classical approaches, to increase management role, efficiency and productivity, have created a strong basis for operational orientation of organization studies, stressed a formal, structured and rational organization with well-defined processes, authority, specific goals of efficiency. These principles are in vogue in spite of changes in the mode they are implemented.

Neoclassical theories: This phase focused on social nature of individuals, group and participatory effects with humanistic approach as a result of famous Hawthorne studies on productivity. Chester I Barnard's (1938) ^[7] cooperative systems approach identified the role of informal group communications making the organisation 'well integrated' (Brown, 1974) ^[13]. He contributed to understanding management and executive responsibility and the need for a clear channel of communication. Individuals driven by feelings, sentiments and their own particular interests and the social relations between individuals have come into focus and recognition that individual interests could be quite different from what classical theories presupposed as the organization goals of efficiency (Groth, 2011) ^[35]. The neoclassical

approaches recognised an informal social organization within, emphasizing individual as a distinct social being, with distinct aspirations beyond a few economic goals of the organization.

Modern theories: Modern organization theories consider organization as a system of systems, with a structured process between systems in which individuals interact to meet objectives. In systems approach it is important to first define the organization, identify the links between the organization and others with which it interacts or influenced (Hatch, 2013) ^[40].

The Systems approach: The systems approach proposes a framework of components of interdependent parts either individual or the physical environment, linking processes for operating and connecting different parts, communications for eliciting information, coordination and control for decision making or maintaining balance altogether working for the goals of the organization for stability, performance and growth. Different theoretical versions emerged based on focus most of which remain as management solutions for different issues.

Socio-technics theory identifies the system with social and technical external environment (Pasmore, 1988) ^[76] of customers and other participants. *Sociological or structural approach* (Perrow, 1972; Hall, 1972) ^[79] combines classical management with human resources approach with primary emphasis on organizational variables such as technology, centralization, and formalization and structure is considered the cause of individual behaviour. *Transaction Cost Analysis theory* focused on optimizing the cost of transactions through material and vertical integration (Williamson, 1985) ^[107]. *Population ecology theory* draws on isomorphism, attention on 'survival of organisations exhibiting compatibility' in their forms (Scott, 1987) ^[89] focusing on the influence of technical, physical, and economic sectors of the environment of similar organizations. *Institutional theory* is similar to population ecology and proposes that environments vary to impose conformity pressures. *Enactment theory* assumes environments are socially constructed at the organizational level and hold sway at times during evolution. *Ambiguity theory* assumes that individuals cognitively construct the conflicting and contradictory contexts causing ambiguity in decision making, objectives and the interactions with the external environment. Ambiguity can be helpful in a general level of preparedness for the organization (Hatch, 2013) ^[40]. *Contingency theory* by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) ^[55] is one of the most popular theories and remained contemporary for addressing the actions on hand while conceding that organizations vary in their abilities based on the role of knowledge (Victor, 2020) ^[100]. The main goal of the contingency theory is to tailor the structure of the organization to external sources of uncertainty and complexity (Perrow, 1967; Thompson, 1967; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) ^[78, 97, 55] based on the survival of the fittest premise, though it is conceded that defining every possible contingency is not possible. The fact that many of the Fortune 500 companies fifty years ago do not figure in their list today is a pointer whether Contingency theory is a theory of any operational value or a hypothesis of risks. *Network theory* is design oriented and portrays the importance of division of labour and integration of effort across the value chain for an organization to be functional (Puranam, 2018) ^[81] as

differentiation and integration, considered important aspects of design.

Neo-modern approaches : They consider organisation as the operating ground for social sciences methodologies and participative work culture exhibiting dominant human relations focus encouraging learning, creativity through creative management practices to achieve homogenous organisation through cultural de-randomization. It is the neo modernist assumption that human relations focus encouraged participation of people willingly in achieving organizational goals (McAuley *et al.*, 2007) ^[62].

Configurational approach is more of a theoretical model of identifying a specific combination of certain aspects of the organization such as efficiencies, bureaucracy, hierarchy, objectives, competitive advantage, resources, costs, communication, management to study and to derive generalized approaches for specific combinations. Based on one's perspective, the potential number of such configurations can be many to establish patterns from those that fall into coherent groups. Factors that define age, growth or decline, administrations, structure, human resources, environment and technologies represent different elements of key configurations widely theorized (Douglas & John, 1993) ^[27]. Different Systems theories are essentially configurational approaches, which have been useful in empirical studies of configuration of different aspects, although they provide segmented vision of the complex organizations and barely support in comprehending the organization as a whole.

Post-Modernist approaches look at organizational environment as complex managerial challenge subjected to sense making with focus on de-differentiation. Postmodernism identifies the limitations of rationality because role of language is central in constituting 'reality' (Clegg & Kornberger, 2003) ^[18], and truth is a form of discourse (Parker, 1992) ^[75]. This philosophical approach brings epistemological and ontological division in organization theory based on hard facts and perceptions with reference to knowledge and reality. Resource-based view of the firm (RBV) is a performance oriented theoretical framework for understanding how competitive advantage is achieved and sustained when organization's resources become special and non-replaceable which provide benefits of competitive advantage through unequal value creation (Conner & Prahalad, 1996; Wernerfelt, 1995) ^[19, 103]. RBV has been one of the most successful theoretical approaches in the field of strategic management and achieved a dominance in research and teaching in business strategy but less visible in organization theory (Davis and DeWitt, 2021) ^[25]. Nexus of contracts approach views organization as a complex of contractual relations among the agents who make up the organization including suppliers and customers. It leads to inquiry about why certain contractual relations arise and how those relations respond to changes in the environment.

Life cycle theories identify that organization passes through multiple stages (Quinn and Cameron, 1983) ^[85] as entrepreneurial, delegation, formalization, and collaboration stages like a human being going through different stages from birth dominated by a different focus in each stage. At any stage survival threats bring about revolutionary changes through which the organization passes into the next developmental stage (Hatch, 2013) ^[40]. Life-cycle theories

are considered abstract concepts rather than for practical devolution (Scott, 1987) ^[89].

Practitioners' Approach: Managerial goal focus having the determinant edge in the practitioners' agenda their approaches are no less complex but are less diverse. Practitioners were ahead to understand the organizations and its human aspects than in academic research. While research seem to have projected from a limited experiential study focusing on further limited configuration of organizational parameters, practitioners focus was broad and deep. Their focus rests predominantly on design and operationalization than theorizing with wider variety and spread of organizations. Understandable that Organisation Design model (Nielson *et al.*, 2015) ^[71] of PwC or the McKinsey 7S framework (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) ^[101] of integrated organization design approaches or the Boston Consulting Group (Tollmann *et al.*, 2016) ^[98] focus on aligning the individual behaviour with the organisation objectives show considerable similarities. For practitioners, organizations are homogeneous at some level of analysis which has not been deciphered and seen from an integrated perspective yet by the multitude of organization theorists (Grunig, 1975) ^[36].

Marketing Studies

Marketing is a very complex function 'not easy to define (Converse *et al.*, 1965) ^[20] and attempts to answer 'what is marketing?' is going on for over a century (Lusch, 2007) ^[58] and research is still engaged in the 'debate as to what constitutes the proper conceptual domain' of marketing (Ringold & Weitz, 2007) ^[87]. Efforts to create a 'widely acceptable definition of marketing' (Hunt 1976, 2002) ^[42, 43] seem to persist ever since. Marketing as a function reverberates through consumer, organization and society but has not been supported by a 'unified body of marketing thought' (Wilkie & Moore, 2003) ^[106] nor has there been efforts to integrate it into the organization theories. Universality of marketing theory remained exclusivist and remained work in progress, more out of academic compulsions. As such, influence of academic research in marketing is low outside the narrow confines of its own journals (Hunt, 2017) ^[44].

Marketing acquired larger stature due to its importance in the organization's survival or growth and focus on substantive business issues to achieve economic objectives. Marketing theories have been more of operational methodologies due to disengagement with the organizational core and alienation from main stream organization theories. This is evident in American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition of marketing which has been changing periodically for decades adding greater microscopic features giving rise to new marketing theories more as methodologies for managing the marketing function. The variability affected the 4Ps marketing mix (McCarthy, 1960) ^[63] which made paradigm contributions with 'academics and practitioners' (Anderson & Ruth, 1995) ^[3], also faced concerns around its usefulness, opening the marketing processes to alternative constructs related to actors, relationships and processes. Marketing philosophy changed from 'to market' to 'market(ing) to' to 'market(ing) with' bringing up variety of marketing approaches relating to positive side of society (Kotler, 1972) ^[52] ethical practices (Nicholls, 2002) ^[73], environmental protection (Peattie & Crane, 2005) ^[77] or negatively perceived manipulation (Nader, 1965) ^[70] promoting materialism,

affecting cultural values, emphasizing private consumption (Wilkie & Moore, 2003) ^[106], or self-serving the economic objectives of producers or to influence customer preferences and needs (Maslow, 1943) ^[61]. Intervention of philosophical concepts brought forth new marketing methodologies to address marketing strategies and consumer focus which also raised concerns on theoretical proliferation. Functional approach 'grounded in economic theory' relying on 'efficiency' (Wilkie & Moore, 2003) ^[106] established its usefulness in analysing marketing related activities and problems. Social sciences became significant player in marketing studies. Sociology driven 'consumer segmentation based on culture and social structures' (Solomon, 2019), psychology provided insights into the 'cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes influencing consumer decision-making' (Putra & Aylee, 2024) ^[83], rational decision making at 'system 1 and system 2 levels' (Gardner, 2012) ^[31], 'Marketing myopia' (Levitt, 1960) ^[56], culture and symbolism from anthropology, 'homogenizing and cultural appropriation' (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) ^[4] and manipulation of customers have all become reason for new methodologies for marketing management assuming theoretical proportions. Organization theories have been 'contributing to strategic marketing thought' and influenced marketing to the extent of building 'synergies between marketing and organization theory' (Ketchen & Hult, 2011) ^[51], but not ventured to integrate the two.

Marketing as a function has been studied, researched and evolved in multiple directions independently, on its own, without a strong integration in to organization theory nor with clear perspective of 'what market is', the space in which marketing exists. Marketing theory can seamlessly integrate with organization theory, comprehensively address marketing function when it emerges from a comprehensive definition and scope of market and its interplay with the organizational objectives (Guntupalli and Jampala, 2025b) ^[38] based on foundational principles.

Identity Studies

Organizational identity (OI) as a concept is as old as the organization itself, but acquired the status of subject of study and gained importance ever since Albert and Whetten's (1985) ^[2] conceptualization with 'core, distinctive and enduring' (CDE) as its characteristic attributes. Identity studies are still evolving around some very fundamentals. However, we include this because Identity is as significant for an organization as the identity for a person, and plays a key role in the organization's survival struggles or growth. OI also evolved independently like marketing, with far fewer connectivity with the mainstream Organization theory for similar reasons.

Theory developments around OI flourished from a variety of perspectives such as individual, collective, shared belief, interaction among members or with the organization or with stakeholders (Corley *et al.*, 2006) ^[22] or as a property of the organization (Whetten and Mackey, 2002) ^[105]. Instead of proliferating in operational mode, identity studies are confined to defining and refining the concept itself owing to concerns on 'construct clarity' (Suddaby, 2010) ^[95] on CDE attributes or being 'confused with organizational image, culture, reputation' (Foreman and Whetten, 2022) ^[29] which identity studies tried to distinguish from. Ongoing revisions of basics of identity causes concerns that identity is losing its own identity and lacks clarity whether identity is a dependent

or independent variable. Much like marketing, Identity concept also has many definitions differing in the 'very basic assumptions concerning the ontology and epistemology of the phenomenon' (Puusa, 2006) ^[84]. Despite of these deficiencies and differences in the basics, identity studies have attracted wide conceptual perspectives in theorization. Identity studies acquired inadequate focus on operationalization, as a concept of interest with generative potential (Brown, 2019) ^[11], but became considerably fragmented (Côté & Levine, 2002) ^[23] and remained of descriptive category than an analytical tool of practical use, in spite of being significantly influenced by multiple theories (Bysh *et al.*, 2023) ^[15] as functionalist, social constructionist, psychodynamic or postmodern and social sciences (Brown, 2022) ^[12]. Bringing many organizational features such as legitimacy, categorization, organizational change, transformation, culture, values, mission, image, reputation, history, founder's legacy (Scott and Lane 2000; Gioia *et al.*, 2013; Foreman & Whetten., 2022) ^[90, 32, 29] to drive the distinction for identity underlines strenuous efforts to clear ambiguity (He and Brown, 2013) ^[41] in identity construct makes one think the concept of organizational identity lacks a strong foundation.

Identity formation or evolution is a 'complex process subject to multiple influences outside and inside the organization' and is deeply embedded and inextricable from organizational routines, practices, knowledge, skill, and capabilities' (Gioia *et al.*, 2013) ^[32]. Whetten's (2006) ^[104] proposition that multiple organizational attributes would have evolved to reach the level of maturity to be recognized as identity appeared to be right approach but has not been pursued methodically since the basis of the identity remained stagnant with CDE, albeit with some revisions yet to be agreed conclusively. Guntupalli and Jampala (2025a) ^[37] proposition, the IPEAC framework, for Organization Identity, its evolution, management and operationalization based on an altogether different theoretical platform defines the process where any of the tangible, intangible or the transient aspects of the organization can evolve into simple or complex identities for the Organization and how they are managed based on their impact and influence on the organization. IPEAC model brings a new direction to identity discourse, as a significant organization phenomenon integrated into Organization Theory and opens the doors for identity as an independent subject of study in management.

Culture Studies

Organizational culture is the sum total of the values, customs, traditions and meanings that make an organisation unique, called 'the character of an organisation', since it embodies the vision of the company's founders (Montana & Charnov, 2008) ^[66]. It is the web of tacit understandings, boundaries, consistency in common language and shared expectations-maintained overtime by organisational members. Spirit de corps, work structuring, general laws, formal organizations, hierarchies, rational accounting of the classical era came to be recognized as components of culture have been the components of human relations connotations. Cultural elements have been components of Organization theory but remained unacknowledged as such and relegated as noise. This has changed with the success of Japan and Germany rooted in culture and concept of culture has been placed at the forefront of mainstream organization studies.

Study of organization culture has gained significance because of its implications for organizational success and performance (Carvalho *et al.*, 2023) ^[16]. Dimensions attributed to culture have been anything and everything that is expressed as an individual's or collective orientation to work, team or the society, from individual mode of communication to participation in a creative and collective work of technology or innovation (Bogale & Debela, 2024) ^[10]. When organizations came to be seen as socially constructed systems of meaning (Barley & Kunda, 1992) ^[6] scholars explicitly began studying and referring to organizational culture, thus highlighting questions of meaning, worker satisfaction and commitment, and the nonrational aspects of organizations (Morrill, 2008) ^[69]. Organizational culture has been viewed from historical, behavioural, normative, functional, mental, structural and symbolic dimensions based on its origins or application. It is accepted that culture, in general, starts with leadership and reinforced with practice over time and is considered a powerful force that underlines human behaviour within the organization and in its interactions with the external world. A preferred combination of cultural elements is envisaged and pursued by the leadership and maintained through a multitude of ways and means as the culture of the organization. It is a paradox that during good economic times, organization theory heavily accents barebones technological rationalism, but it turns to culture when uncertainties about productivity, worker commitment, and managerial imagination set in (Morrill, 2008) ^[69].

Questions concerning the origins and ethical implications of events of organizational disasters like Enron, Anderson etc., (Zelizer, 2007) ^[108] have been investigated for cultural underpinnings. Cultural practices and assumptions not only frame organizational deviance but also what occurs in its aftermath. Potentially scandalous economic or social behaviour (Morrill, 1995) ^[68] can be traced to cultural disposition of people inside the organization. While such organizational disasters can be explained as individual practices, it is undeniable that cultural environment of basic values, ethics and norms mobilized right from top could have cut a different story and therefore a stronger support for wider role of culture in the organizations is imperative, beyond the rationalist theorizing.

The attempts to study organizational culture theoretically was to analytically capture organizational dynamics ignored by mainstream organization theory (Morril, 2008) ^[69] and concepts of culture has enabled richer images and understanding of organizations than could have been produced by rationalist theorizing alone. More emphasis on individual's participation is emerging towards a cultural organization theory (Binder, 2007) ^[9] but also a realignment of organization theory is bringing together theoretical approaches to integration of power, culture, and agency. Study of cultural organization (organizations as culture) has become a legitimate concern and part of the basic tool kit of many organizational scholars (Scott & Davis, 2006) ^[91]. Organizational culture research as a domain in organizational academic studies also fomented conflict within, fighting over differences in theory, method, assumptions about the unity or fragmentation of culture, and especially, cultural interventions into managerial practice (Frost & O'Neil 2006) ^[60].

Communications Studies

Communications and social interactions together create the phenomenon that is an organization from a mere collection of discrete infrastructure, people and materials. It is in communication processes that organizations are experienced, realized and identified (Cooren *et al.*, 2011) ^[21]. The key to the successful communications is when correct people get the correct information, in amount and quality, at the correct time (Hall, 1972) ^[39]. It involves transfer, discourse, conversation, narrative, the communication overtones as the organization itself (Izak M *et al.*, 2024) ^[45]. Classical perspectives hold communications as formal messages related to activities integral to command control for rational objectives. Acquisition and dissemination of information through individuals and systems as knowledge to bring the right kind of awareness about anything that reduces uncertainty in a situation leading to definite action is the core of communications. Different activities and functions in an organization exist by virtue of activities exchanging specified information in a prescribed way added with informal exchanges of human expressions. Communications motivate and shape the attitude of the persons as visible face of the organizational culture and assists in controlling and managing the processes or events across the organization.

Organization communication theories have been descriptive of information flows as the means of integration based on empirical studies with greater focus on information-dissemination than the more fundamental information-acquisition which builds the organization. Communications down the hierarchy get more attention than upward communication (Smith *et al.*, 1972) ^[94]. Communication theories have become handy tools for the leadership and managers to perform, support or even to manipulate the situations and their outcomes. Most theoretical concepts around organization communications are drawn from literature on communication theory, cognitive processes, organizational behaviour, and decision-making. Communication theories needed to deal with information acquisition, dissemination, storage and retrieval processes through the internal and external environments, across the different functions.

The social-scientific, quantitative approach is the first major tradition in organizational communication and bulk of research conducted today is in the same tradition. Organizational control theory (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) ^[99] holds that control and communication is more than just bureaucracy and determines how organizations exercise power within through communications. Managerialism identifies communication as the medium for the ideology of the managers and their right to control. This has been a significant perspective on communication beyond the mechanistic, bureaucratic processes and represents the natural evolution of control and communication.

The epistemological claim that communication is synonymous with organization extends into an ontological one and inquiring into its properties becomes imperative for organization studies (Izak M *et al.*, 2024) ^[45]. Organizational communication, predominantly viewed as a human exchange, leaves behind the main intent of communication, the core ingredient for functional processes which working for the organizational objectives. Communication theories and their evolution is an opportunity to integrate but appear to stand as a testimony to the scholarly urge to advancing their role with operational sub systems. Any attempt to move towards such

integration through communications should focus on the generalised elements of communication, models and systems of instruments which trigger information exchange and knowledge sharing.

Structure and Design studies

Organisation theory provides theoretical foundation to identify conceptual reality of what makes an organisation whereas the design is a model to translate the concepts in to an effective physical form to achieve its objectives (Galbraith, 1973) ^[30]. *Organizational architecture* is seen as the coherent whole of principles, methods and models that are used in the design and realization of an organization's structure, business processes, information's systems, and infrastructure (Lankhorst, 2005) ^[54]. *Organizational structure* is understood as a framework for allocating the human resources and allocate people for tasks and set up model for formal interactions for carrying out the organizational functions in the most efficient manner, which has two components; the physical structure related to material elements and the social structure related to people and their interactions. *Organization Design* is understood as the ways and means of achieving organization's objectives through the structural arrangements of people, their positions through division of work for efficiency. The relationship between organization structure and design takes different forms in different discourses and it's a difficult proposition as to affirm which one precedes the other and at times the terms are used synonymously.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) ^[55] and Thompson (1967) ^[97] conceived of structure as reflecting two key features: differentiation as segmentation of the organization into subsystems and integration defined as the quality of collaboration that exists among sub-systems to achieve unity of effort. Integration becomes a challenge where decomposability is reducing, enhancing the need for a greater understanding of adaptation and the emergent properties of organizational structures. Structure depends on application of coherent knowledge to achieve complex functionalities through interconnected activities (Victor, 2020) ^[100] while at the same time resource dependence has been the basis of span of control for integration. Structure is significantly influenced by the need of internal coherence rather than external environmental imperatives (Puranam, Alexy & Reitzig, 2014) ^[82], 2014). Sengul (2018) ^[92] proposed an external focus of organization design. Organization design is considered as an approach, a competitive choice and a choice of competitive strategy (John, Oliver *et al* 2020) ^[49]. Structure is known to follow strategy and evolve together (Joseph & Sengul 2023) ^[46] and making structure a more rational result of strategy (Robert *et al.*, 1980). Henry Mintzberg (1979) ^[64] models for organization structure are for creating internal coherence between five different layers of standard clusters of people, grouped by their nature and scope of work, based on the dominating layer for any specific organization. Usually, in practice it translates to a static work-people allocation chart before structural changes take place during organization evolution.

Organization design discourse is fragmented in the conceptualization of the organization, design choices, design determinants and their consequences, design's role in orchestrating a firm's overall decision making and in the organizational behaviour that follows (Burton & Obel, 1984; Mintzberg, 1979; Puranam, 2018) ^[14, 64, 81]. Configuration,

control, channelization, and coordination as conceptual foundations for organization design (Joseph & Sengul 2025)^[47] represent a specific view of the organization and the process of design. Organizations look to design changes for better 'fit' to reverberate with the changes in organization environments. In the normal course such design changes happen but at a slow pace due to the survive, sustain and fulfil (Prasad & Jampala., 2021)^[80] cycle. Changes are made with a view to overhaul the organization structure or as a precursor to transformational changes, such change of perception of the core business, adopt to environmental changes or for linking heterogeneity to performance. However, rapid design changes point to rapid growth or the organization is in an untenable crisis mode (Sven, Markus & David, 2020). Efficacy of designs can only be established based on the results when principles of design are consistent and are derived from strategic competitive goals.

Structure and Design frameworks

Katz and Kahn's (1966)^[49] open systems model indicates a very pragmatic and practical approach where structure initially develops out of technical needs which are core activities and later from internal integration pressures based on environmental dynamics. Structure and design theories are eloquent about teams, leadership with responsibility for specified tasks, prescribing roles of every person (Hatch, 2013)^[40] than defining the foundations. For the structure to drive the processes across the organization as the guiding force, in line with the nature and objectives, it should evolve from more basic foundation than operational imperatives or roles.

Organization design theories includes operational steps such as scope, partition of tasks, coordination of activities (Mintzberg, 1983)^[65] in a process mode as a top-down or bottom-up approaches and iterated at different levels in different hierarchical models for managing knowledge exchange, task design (Goncalves, 2009)^[33] or other activities. Mintzberg proposed that organizations choose designs based on dominant coordinating mechanisms, environmental conditions, age, size, offering a kind of structural contingency logic. His framework has descriptive strength of the dynamism and representation of organization design forms rather than on what forces work to shape them or to understand how to evolve, adapt, or hybridize structures or guidance on how organizations can manage transitions between types.

Several operational factors such as hierarchies, authorities, locational factors, information processes, differentiation and integration and their interrelationships have been identified as design drivers which became popular with researchers, for empirical studies and with practicing managers. Studies also focused on adaptation (Baumann & Siggelkow, 2011)^[8], 'fit' to the internal and external enablers or task division, identification of triggers, consequences and motivators for the completion of the task with details of different situational variables (Kenis & Raab, 2020)^[50]. These studies contribute to resolution of specific aspects of organization design covering operational variables instead of a theoretically derived pattern for a structured approach. Organization theory contribute to the nitty gritty of the factors that influence (Goncalves, 2009)^[33] Organization Design in terms of a formal process for integrating people, information and technology. However, inability in determining cause-and-effect relationships between variables surfaces as a

shortcoming in structural integrity in organization designs philosophies (Ozgur, 2016)^[74]. Organization design being a function of environmental dynamism, needed to be aligned to strategy, to create and capture value across its operating units (Kunisch *et al.*, 2020)^[53].

Much of this eloquence on organization design theories can be seen as management check lists of operational imperatives than a generic design theory. The studies have not proved any one best organization design as it depends on boundary conditions of multiple internal and external environment factors (Burton & Obel, 2004)^[14]. This deficiency can be addressed best if we related as to how one best common design of a human being can accomplish billion things in a billion ways with a billion people. However, focusing on the visible complexity of operational factors influencing the design, there is limited possibility to construct a general theory of organization design. Notwithstanding, Organization design gets the recognition as a domain of study for practice.

Summary and Conclusion

As a glimpse of the organization theorization journey, Taylor's "scientific management" may have emerged as the most famous expression of earliest applied organization theory with clear demarcation of role, responsibilities which bear a lot of importance even today. Weick (1979)^[102] considers organizations are enacted, created by being talked about, primarily "sensemaking systems", incessantly create and recreate conceptions about themselves raising a concern that researchers write trivial theories because their process of theory construction favours methods aimed at empirical validation rather than broader criteria. Clegg (1990)^[17] considers Organizations are human fabrications made out of whatever materials come to hand and can be modified or adopted. Paul DiMaggio and Walter W Powell (2000)^[26] see a dominant institutional isomorphism while an overwhelming degree of homogeneity and bureaucracy have become common organizational forms but with fewer connectivity in organizational theorization. The disconnect and dispersion within the multitude of theoretical perspectives is evident that about half of organisation theory research publication do not subscribe to any of the named theories and there is little apparent consensus in the field about the central themes of research or underlying theoretical paradigms (Davis, 2006)^[24]. The variety makes the organisation studies look fictional to Paul Savage *et al.* (2018)^[88]. A vision of orphaned marketing, identity, communications, culture and to some extent even structure and design, all interrelated and integral to one organization entity in its 'Survive, Sustain and Fulfilment' (Prasad G & Jampala., 2021)^[80] journey, leaves a student of organisation studies concerned if they can converge to a common foundation.

One Theory for Integrated Organization - Organizational Operating System based model

While this is primarily a review article, a conceptual suggestion for a foundational organization theory that includes every aspect of the organization, may not be unwelcome. This is no way an attempt to do the impossible to fix the multitude of theories in to a single picture as a zig saw puzzle. The concept of an integrated theoretical organization emerges from computer systems, which are evolving far too fast with artificial intelligence (AI)

successfully mimicking human being and human being as a metaphor for organization study is not new, though the attempts remained circumscribed.

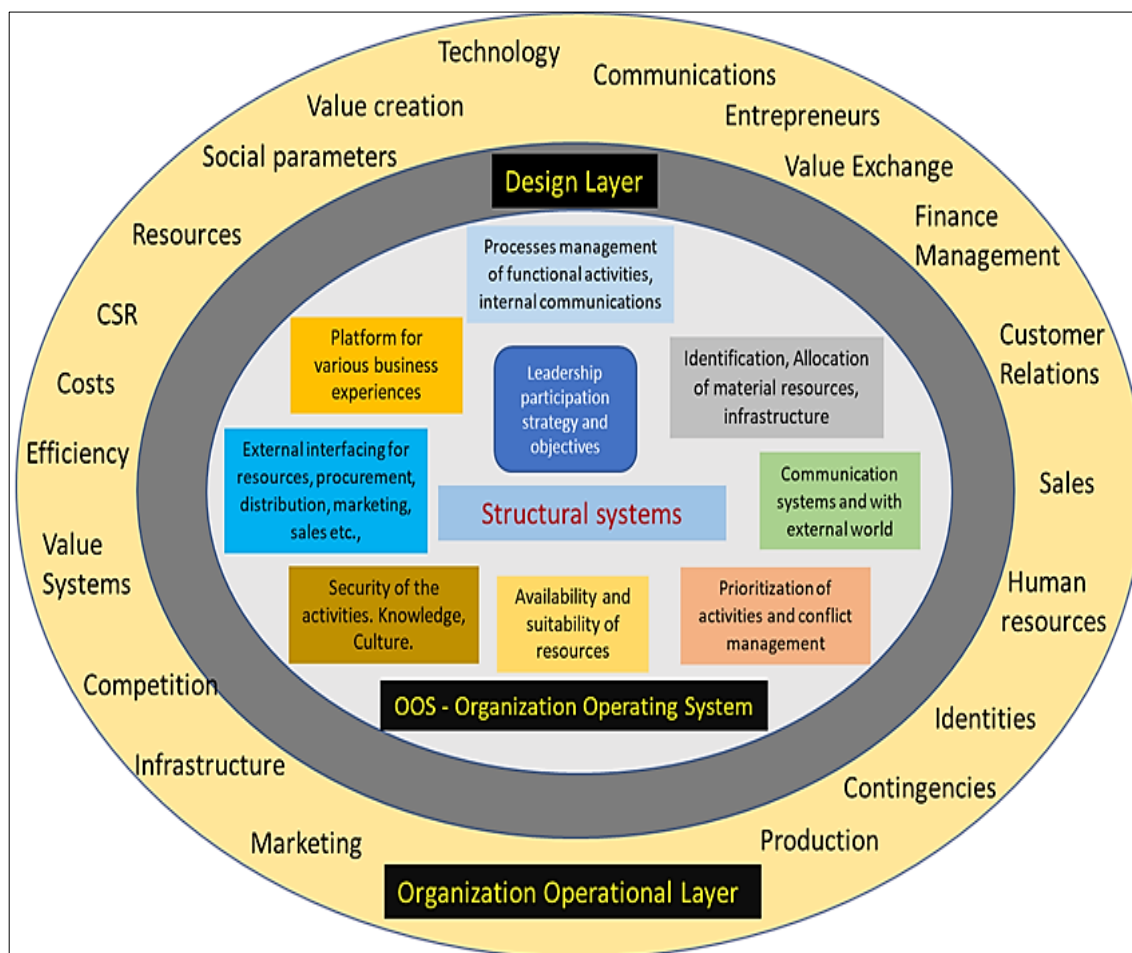


Fig 1: An Operating System model for Integrated Organization Theory. © Authors Own work

If an organization can be visualised as a computerised automated system, definitely utopian for a collective of individuals, it needs an operating system, a core or kernel around which interfaces and applications are developed and added, possible direction for the materialization of an integrated organizational Theory. Computers system as an analogy, a generic conceptual framework of an organization can be conceptualised as in the figure above an Operating System model with three layers. The structural systems in the innermost OOS layer are modelled on the computer operating system for clarity.

1. OOS layer depicts the integration of structural forms as a generic Organization Operating System - OOS, the inner core. The structural forms are essential, generic and common for any organization which represent the three-layer principle of tangible, intangible and the transient aspects (Guntupalli & Jampala., 2025b) ^[38], but their

components vary from organization to organization. The variability is like the same Windows operating system being used for a laptop or an ATM or a CNC machine depending on the nature of operations, tangibles and intangible it uses and interacts with.

2. Design layer to customize the interrelationships between the structural components at the OOS layer in tune with the nature and scope of the business operations as visualized in the operational layer.
3. Operational layer to manage different aspects of the organization, operations, functionalities and transactions both internal to and external to the organization.

A comparison of the basic structural systems of the organization with the features of an Operating system is presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Organizational operating systems in comparison with computer OS.

Computer operating system	Organization operating system
Memory management	Prioritization of activities and conflict management
Processor management	Senior management and Leadership participation for strategy and objectives
Device management resource allocation	Managing material resources and infrastructure, allocation of material resources
File management	Managing processes and functionalities of activities and internal communications
Security	Security of the organizational activities. Culture and knowledge management. Availability and suitability of resources
User interface	Managing processes for interaction with external world, procurement, distribution and marketing
Networking	Communication systems and with external world
Program execution	Providing a platform for various complex functionalities like Production, marketing, R&D, distribution, sales and other complex functionalities which use all the above facilities.

The OOS model provides a unified perspective of the entire organization. Specific case of operation of Identity and its relationship with the structural elements has been presented in previous research of (2025a) ^[37] while the externally focused marketing perspective is presented in Guntupalli and Jampala (2025b) ^[38].

Most of the organization theorization can be identified with some of the elements of the outer Operational layer radially exploring their connections to the structural forms of the OOS layer and their mutual dependencies. This three-layer framework gives a global picture of the organizational universe for further exploration from different operational and functional areas of the organization.

This review article on Organization Theory is different from the usual approach to OT from classical to the current, exploring the long list of theories from different sociological, economic and business environments and spans the other theoretical streams of marketing etc., connected with organization phenomena. A foundational necessity of a common unified approach to organization studies is presented as a conceptual based on Organizational Operating System analogic to a computer OS.

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