Analysis of Selected Aspects of an Organisation: The Organisation as an Instrument, an Interest Group and as a Process

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In this article, we discuss selected aspects of organisation: organisation as an instrument for achieving objectives, and organisation as an interest group, as well as defining the organisation as a process. Based on a literature review we have summarised the findings of different authors and presented what defines the organisation from the aforementioned aspects. The structure of the article follows the AIMRAD methodology: abstract, introduction, methodology, research and analysis, and discussion (Cargill and O'Connor 2009). The literature study research method was used. Findings are presented descriptively and in tabular form with a discussion and comments. Findings of this research are useful for the general, professional public, for the management of different organisations and for researchers from the fields of organisation and management, because selected aspects of organisations are intertwined, and their understanding is related to the basic management activities of each organisation such as planning, organising, leading and supervising and thus related decision-making.

Key Words: aspects of organisation, interest group, instrumental aspect, process aspect, analysis
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Introduction and Theoretical Background

Organisations can be studied from different angles, e.g. sociological, technological, psychological, as a business or machine, an organism, a brain, as flows and change, a system, as an instrument, an interest group or a process.

If we are interested in people's behaviour, we can study the organisation from a sociological point of view (Oh 2020, 558). The organisation as a social formation strives to achieve a common goal (Bavec and Manzin 2012,

27). If we are interested in the technology used by an organisation, we will be interested in the technological aspect of the organisation. This can be interesting from many perspectives. For example, today we are dealing with increasing use of information technology and thus related issues in organisations are: how is new knowledge created, how is knowledge shared within organisations, how do sharing practices between organisations support innovations (Chatterjee, Ghosh, and Chaudhuri 2020, 1261; Hutahayan 2020, 1289; Khawaya et al. 2020, 237; Veiga et al. 2021, 590).

If we look at an organisation as an environment of pressures and hardships, victories and defeats, cooperation and trust, the social aspect of employment, and how employees experience it, we will be interested in the psychological aspect of the organisation (Bavec and Manzin 2012, 27; Valitova and Besson 2021, 3).

Understanding the organisation as an instrument (a machine) is similar to understanding the operation of a well-oiled machine to achieve a goal. The organisation can also be an instrument of power in this respect. In such a machine, people (employees) are like its wheels. This kind of understanding was typical at the beginning of the last century (Taylor 1911). Because tangible and intangible assets flow through organisations, and because organisations create value for customers in these flows, they can also be understood as flows and change (Suárez-Barraza, Miguel-Dávila, and Morales-Contreras 2021, 29).

An organisation as an organism is comprised of people that change, trigger changes in an environment, and also respond to changes from the environment. From this perspective, organisations are living organisms, just like the human body. An organisation as a system changes the input quantities (people, raw materials, technology, energy, and information) into outputs (products and services). In the same way, we can also understand and study organisations as a process in which we transform inputs into products/services (Tavčar 2008; 2009, 107; Škrinjar and Trkman 2013; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Different authors worldwide (Kovačič and Bosilj-Vukšić 2005; Škrinjar and Trkman 2013; Trkman et al. 2015; Hernaus, Bosilj-Vukšić, and Indihar-Štemberger 2016; Latif et al. 2020; Kwayu, Abubakre, and Lal 2021; Lodgaard and Dransfeld 2020) have studied organisation as a process. In the literature there are missing studies about specific aspect of an organisation, such as the organisation as an instrument for achieving objectives, or the organisation as an interest group and thus related comparison studies, which has been detected as our research gap.

The aim of this study is to emphasise importance of understanding organisations from different angles and to describe instrumental, interest aspect of organisations and process-oriented organisations.

In this article we have limited our study to selected aspects of an organisation such as: organisation as an instrument for achieving goals, an interest group and an organisation as a process. From research methodology aspect we have limited ourselves to the literature review approach.

This paper is organised as follows: (1) introduction, (2) research methodology, (3) research and analysis, (4) summary of the findings, with discussion and (5) conclusion with possible further research in this field.

The Research Methodology

Based on the study of domestic and world literature from the field of management and organisation, we researched selected aspects of organisations: organisations as an instrument, an interest group, and as a process. The systematic review was conducted within the following list of sources: Emerald, JSTOR, and Springer. Keywords such as: interest, instrumental, mechanic, organic, process, and aspect organisation were used. Based on the study of the literature in this field from 1990 onwards and citations of different authors, which includes also the latest sources from 2020 and 2021, we present and discuss findings as defined in the research questions. Comparison of the findings by different authors are presented and discussed. In this research we answered the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1 *What defines an organisation as an instrument?*
RQ2 *What defines an organisation as an interest group?*
RQ3 *What defines an organisation as a process?*

By synthesising the findings, we prepared summaries, brought them together in a tabular form, and provided comments. The findings are interesting for the general, professional public and the management of service and production organisations, as selected aspects of organisations are intertwined, and their understanding is related to the basic management activities of each organisation such as planning, organising, leading, and supervising as well as the related decision-making.

Research and Analysis of Selected Aspects of Organisations

According to the research questions, we present three selected aspects of the operation of each organisation in the following: (1) an organisation as

TABLE 1   The Conception of Management Activities from an Interest and Instrumental Aspect

The activity of management	The organisation as an interest group	The organisation as an instrument
Planning	Conceptualizing ideas	Developing plans
Organizing	Connecting	Arranging, designing
Leading	Leading people	Managing business
Supervising	Assessing, judging	Measuring

NOTES   Adapted from Tavčar (2009, 24).

an instrument, (2) an organisation as an interest group, and (3) an organisation as a process.

THE ORGANISATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING GOALS

Every organisation can be observed as an instrument (machine, device) for achieving objectives, first and foremost subordinated to the interests of owners (Biloslavo 2006, 18; Tavčar 2008; 2009, 107; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b). This affects the company's core management activities, which are planning, organising, leading, and supervising (table 1).

Planning as part of management activities in instrumental terms is based on short-term results. It focuses primarily on fulfilling of the owner's interests. Managers put regulations on the front line and analytical decision-making prevails (Tavčar 2009, 107). In this case, planning focuses on existing services, existing products, maintaining current processes, high productivity, short term financial benefits and financial resources, and not on creating new core capabilities, new processes or new products and services (Tavčar 2009, 221–2).

Organising as a part of management activities in the instrumental aspect is called arranging (designing) and means primarily formalising, standardising work tasks, and sanctioning violators. Division of tasks among employees puts the needs of the organisation up front. Interests and wishes of employees are not so important. Process arranging (designing) is focused on determination of employee responsibilities. Achieving efficiency and high productivity of employees and processes predominate (Tavčar 2009, 328–9). Leading in the instrumental aspect focuses on business (documentation) and results. Financial decisions play a key role. Consequently, it also affects the core and supporting processes in an organisation, material flows, strategy, and quality.

The leading style is autocratic, and management tries to circumvent co-workers' resistance. The focus is on existing products, not developing new ones. The organisation responds poorly to environmental influences (Tavčar 2009, 474–5). Supervising, as part of management activities in the instrumental aspect, is called measuring. Quantitative measurement of business performance is in the forefront. Employees are constantly supervised (controlled, monitored), the emphasis is on costs, economics, and the highest possible returns, is short-term oriented and oriented on quick wins (immediate results) (Tavčar 2009, 537).

Each organisation is not only an instrument for achieving goals but also an interest group (interest-based society) which we present below.

THE ORGANISATION AS AN INTEREST GROUP

The understanding of an organisation as an interest group is related to a social understanding of the purpose of organisations. Organisations perform better if they consider the interests of external participants (customers, suppliers and partners) and the interests of internal participants (employees, management and owners). The interest aspect emphasises the organisation as a society of interests of different participants (Biloslavo 2006, 18; Tavčar 2009, 107–8; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Planning as a management activity within the aspect of interest can be called conceptualising ideas. Conceptualisation is subordinate to the interests of all participants (suppliers, employees, customers, managers, owners, and other market participants). It is oriented towards the long-term growth and performance of the organisation. Conceptualisation focuses on acquiring new knowledge and basic abilities, and in implementing goals and strategies, and emphasises coordination with as many participants as possible (Tavčar 2009, 222–3; Trkman et al. 2015, 250–66; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Organising as a management activity within the aspect of interest is called connecting. Relationships between employees in the company are based, in this respect, on their interests and also on the interests of other participants (e.g. suppliers, customers), and create opportunities for creative cooperation between employees; cooperation between different participants is flexible (Tavčar 2009, 329–30). The interest aspect emphasises people (employees) and is therefore called leading people or co-workers (employees). It is characterised by dealing with employees and other participants of the organisation as a source of new knowledge and ideas for further growth (Nodeson et al. 2012, 466; Gošnik 2019a;

2019b). Organisations that in-corporate external knowledge are more likely to achieve product innovations (Hernández, Nieto, and Rodríguez 2021, 155). Knowledge generation and knowledge flow have a central role in achieving innovation and company performance and competitive advantage (Hutahayan 2020, 1289; Obeso et al. 2020, 1859; Ramayah et al. 2020, 1021).

Leading employees in the interest aspect takes into account employees' needs and is based on knowledge. It is less authoritarian. Cooperation between participants is oriented towards the common benefit and satisfaction of different interests. Management consider the abilities of employees and communication between different participants, based on trust (Tavčar 2009, 476–9). The interest aspect of supervising can be called assessing (judging). Goals are the result of the interests of different participants. Business goals are assessed based on relative comparisons and understanding, through participant satisfaction and longevity. It is less strict than measuring and includes the intuition of the decision maker (Tavčar 2009, 537; 539; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

THE ORGANISATION AS A PROCESS

We can also look at any organisation through the prism of interconnected processes, and not as a hierarchical organisational structure. Until recently, the prevailing opinion was that the most important thing for the successful operation of an organisation is to define the organisational structure. These days it is true that we put processes in the foreground and those organisational structures and rules, as elements pertaining to the orderliness of the organisation, follow processes (Bavec and Manzin 2012, 13). Vila (2000, 81) says that if the processes in an organisation cease to function, the organisation also ceases to function, regardless of the fact that the structure still remains in place. This, therefore, requires organisations to focus on processes rather than structures. We are increasingly replacing the traditional view of the organisation as a hierarchy with a process view, which states that every organisation is a process (Markič 2003; Škrinjar and Trkman 2013, 48). An organisation as a process is like a system that responds to inputs and generates outputs. Processes in an organisation direct managers to consider who customers are, what they expect, what value they expect, what we can offer them, what else to improve, what processes would enable us to meet customer expectations and what resources we need to do so.

Processes also guide managers to consider new strategies and produc-

tivity. More and more companies use process orientation also because functional organisation is an obstacle for organisations, as it prevents effective integration between individual functional areas (departments) and market responsiveness (Kovačič and Bosilj-Vukšić 2005, 32; Škrinjar and Trkman 2013, 48). Managing processes is today basic requirement for further development of companies, no matter their size and field of operation (Trkman et al. 2015; Hernaus, Bosilj- Vukšić, and Indihar-Štemberger 2016). From this perspective, managers should be primarily interested in the processes that take place in organisations (Gošnik 2019a; 2019b; Latif et al. 2020; Kwayu, Abubakre, and Lal 2021; Lodgaard and Dransfeld 2020). The process view of an organisation requires a flatter organisation and an integration of business functions in order to effectively develop new value for the market (Potočan and Nedelko 2015, 21). The processes within organisations also enable the more efficient servicing of customers, and improving existing and designing new processes; quality becomes a condition for successful business, it eliminates the problem of hierarchical business functions, and in the face of challenges sets the teamwork cooperation among employees (as well as suppliers and other market participants), just as business process implementation time is a key factor in competitiveness (environmental responsiveness, overtaking competitors) and similarly tailored strategies (Glavan-Milanović 2011, 25; Suárez-Barraza, Miguel-Dávila, and Morales-Contreras 2021, 29). According to Hrabal et al. (2020, 275) the human role presents the most important factor at bpm implementation.

Kovačič et al. (2004, 61) states that organisations that make the transition to a process oriented organisation experience the following changes (table 2).

There are several reasons for the transition from a classical (functional) to a process organisation: (1) complicated transfer of information along the vertical hierarchy; (2) large delays during the transmission of information, documents, material, etc. between functions, departments or services; (3) the danger that functional departments do not cooperate enough (Unterlechner, Meško Štok, and Markič 2009, 118–9).

Looking at an organisation as a process is nothing new these days. Throughout history, humans have always dealt with processes. From the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of factories in the 18th century, the field of management also developed. Managers primarily focused on production processes. Among them was Henry Ford, who founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903 and designed a new concept for the pro-

TABLE 2   Traditional and Process View of an Organisation

Issue	Traditional organisation	Process-oriented organisation
Emphasis in organisation	Business function	Business Process
Organisational unit	Department	Working group/team
Description of the work	Narrowly defined	Wide
Focus	Supervisor	Customer/buyer
The role of leadership	Supervision	Mentorship
The key person	Business Director	The owner (administrator) of the process
Business culture	Conflict-oriented	Cooperation

NOTES   Adapted from Kovačič et al. (2004, 61).

duction of the car – the assembly line. Work was standardised, a limited number of versions were produced and of only one colour. Therefore, production costs were low and cars became more affordable. This also resulted in changes to other processes in the factory, to procurement, and suppliers (Unterlechner, Meško Štok, and Markič 2009, 120–6).

Mogensen and Rausa (1989) came to the realisation that the greatest loss in processes is the disregard for the professional and experience-based abilities of workers to implement changes in processes. He emphasised the need to measure processes, be open to change, understand processes, and understand and emphasise human relationships; the ability to take an analytical approach to problem-solving; a cleaner and tidier work environment; and the ability to accept improvements (Mogensen and Rausa 1989; Unterlechner, Meško Štok, and Markič 2009, 120). The manufacturer market was slowly transitioning towards a customer market. The supply of products was becoming greater than demand. This resulted in the need for organisations to introduce new changes into their operations and thus into their processes (Unterlechner, Meško Štok, and Markič 2009, 25).

In 1990, Rummler and Brache found that most problems in processes arise when work passes from department to department. As a solution, they presented the idea of managing the process as a whole. The term Business Process Reengineering (BPR) was developed (Rummler and Brache 1990). According to Champy (1995), BPR organisations needed to treat business processes as comprehensive, ranging from order activity to product delivery, and use the necessary information technologies

to help them interconnect. Many BPR attempts were unsuccessful. Managers had become more cautious. The advent of new data processing software made it easier to capture and process data and produce the reports needed to run businesses. That led to redundancies in management services. Under the pretext of BPR, organisations carried out a reduction in the number of employees, and so BPR gained a bad reputation and at the end of the 90s fell into oblivion. As an alternative, many organisations began to use new terms to describe business process rearrangements, such as Business Process Improvements (BPI) or Business Process Redesign (Unterlechner, Meško Štok, and Markič 2009, 25).

A period of business standardisation followed. Approaches such as Total Quality Management (TQM) have emerged. According to Edward Deming, TQM envisages the continuous improvement of all organisational processes, products, and services and is based on the assumption that quality improvement is a key factor in achieving business efficiency and effectiveness (Kovačič et al. 2004, 68; Chatterjee, Ghosh, and Chaudhuri 2020, 1261). TQM strives to ensure that there are no errors in processes, to continuously improve processes, employee cooperation and development, and quality as dictated by the customer. Findings of Babu and Thomas (2021, 157) show positive direct and indirect effects of TQM on employee satisfaction as well.

These days, the competitiveness of any organisation stems from the competitiveness of core processes (Gošnik 2019a; 2019b). The common features of core processes are: (1) core processes must have a recognisable benefit for customers; (2) core processes must be difficult to copy; and (3) core processes must be irreplaceable with other solutions (Sinur, Odell and Fingar 2013 in Potočan and Nedelko 2015; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b). Support processes, on the other hand, enable organisations to harmonise core processes with standards, legal requirements, and business instructions (Potočan and Nedelko 2015, 46). Supporting processes include (Smith and Fingar 2003, 53): guarantee implementation processes, information support, invoicing, data management, order preparation, business performance monitoring, market analyses, and market analysis, etc.

A Summary of the Findings and Discussion

Different definitions of an organisation have many aspects in common. They define organisations as dynamic formations in which people (employees) play a key role; they are focused on achieving goals and benefitting society. We can study organisations from different perspectives,

depending on the one we are interested in. We presented three selected aspects of the operation of organisations: the organisation as an instrument, the organisation as an interest group, and the organisation as a process. Every organisation is an instrument (machine, device) for achieving the goals of its owners. Understanding an organisation as an interest group is related to a broader social purpose of organisations. The interest aspect of an organisation emphasises the organisation as a community of interests of different participants. In every organisation, there is an instrumental (rigid, mechanical) and at the same time interest (soft, organic) aspect, regardless of the size, industry, or type of organisation. Long-term business success depends on the balance of these two aspects. This is reflected in all four basic management activities (planning, organising, leading and supervising). At the forefront of the notion of the functioning of organisations these days is the process aspect, with an emphasis on core processes. Core processes are comprehensive and dynamically coordinated sets of activities that enable the supply of customers (clients) with products and services. These take place in time and space, have clearly defined inputs and outputs (results), and must necessarily be coordinated. Consequently, in every company, it requires not only knowledge of the principles and mastery of general management, but above all the principles of business process management, with a focus on core business processes. Changes in business processes should be a constant practice and the work of managers in any company. When changing business processes, the connection of changes with the fundamental directions, goals, and strategies of each specific company must be taken into account. Successful management of an organisation as a process requires the involvement of customers, as products/services are intended for them, and processes must create value just for them. It should also involve employees as well as suppliers as they can be a source of ideas. Managing an organisation as a process with an emphasis on core processes is a particularly strategic opportunity for the development of new competitive advantages of organisations.

Conclusion

These days, there is a need for companies to simultaneously integrate different approaches into business process management, such as focusing on goals, customers, process control and quality; involving different participants; and standardising good practices, with the support of e.g., Six Sigma, Lean Management, and at the same time to manage basic sup-

port processes, e.g. Lean Administration. Management in organisations must also integrate processes, strategy development, and goals in business process innovation in an appropriately comprehensive manner, with an emphasis on customer benefits (Lei, Leaungkhamma, and Le 2020, 481). According to Mooi, Rudd, and de Jong (2020, 741) process innovation is a key determinant of business performance (Mooi, Rudd, and de Jong 2020, 741). Innovation strategy has a significant effect on financial performance (Hutahayan 2020, 1289). Consequently, in every organisation, it requires not only knowledge of the principles and mastery of general management, interest, and instrumental, but above all the mastery of business processes with focus on core business processes (Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Every organisation can be observed as an instrument (machine, device) for achieving objectives and it is first subordinated to the interests of owners (Biloslavo 2006, 18; Tavčar 2008; 2009, 107; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b). This affects the company's core management activities, which are planning, organising, leading, and supervising.

Each organisation is also an interest group (interest based society). For better performance organisations should consider the following: organisations perform better if they consider interests of external participants (customers, suppliers and partners) and interests of internal participants (employees, management and owners) (Biloslavo 2006, 18; Tavčar 2009, 107–8; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

The interest aspect emphasises the organisation as a society of interests of different participants. Conceptualisation as an instrumental aspect of planning is subordinate to the interests of all participants (suppliers, employees, customers, managers, owners, and other market participants). It should be oriented towards the long-term growth and performance of the organisation. Relationships between employees in the company in the interest aspect should be based on their interests and also on the interests of other participants (e.g., suppliers, customers), and create opportunities for creative cooperation between employees (Tavčar 2009, 222–3; Trkman et al. 2015, 250–66; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Leading employees in the interest aspect takes into account employees' needs and is based on knowledge. Knowledge generation and knowledge flow have a central role in achieving innovation and firm performance and competitive advantage. Business goals from the interest aspect should be based on relative comparisons and understanding, through participant satisfaction and longevity (Tavčar 2009, 537–9; Gošnik 2019a; 2019b).

Managing an organisation as a process is today a basic requirement

for further development of companies, no matter their size and field of operation (Trkman et al. 2015; Hernaus, Bosilj-Vukšić, and Indihar-Štemberger 2016). From this perspective, managers should be primarily interested in the processes that take place in organisations (Gošnik 2019a; 2019b; Latif et al. 2020; Kwayu, Abubakre, and Lal 2020; Lodgaard and Dransfeld 2020).

This research is limited to defining an organisation as an interest group, an organisation as an instrument for achieving goals and an organisation as a process. From the research methodology aspect, this research is limited on the literature review approach.

Despite limitations, the findings of this research are useful for the general professional public, for the management of different organisations and for researchers in the field of organisation and management, as the selected aspects of organisations are intertwined, and their understanding is related to the basic management activities of each organisation: planning, organising, leading and supervising and thus related decision-making, regardless of size and industry of the organisation.

Further research in this area could be focused on the relation between different aspects of an organisation and company performance. Also, further research could be focused on systematic research of the literature in the field of other aspects of organisations, such as an organisation as a sociological formation, psychological formation, technological formation, organisation as flows, organisation as change, organisation as a system or organisation as a brain.

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