

Content and process theories of motivation

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Concepts Definition

The content and process theories of motivation provide human resource managers with the basic understanding of personal needs deficiencies, and how these needs can be transformed into motivated behavior. Content theories of motivation (also referred to as needs theories) focus on the needs that motivate behavior. The content approach focuses on the assumption that individuals are motivated by the desire to satisfy their inner needs. Needs reflect either physiological or psychological deficiencies. They attempt to explain those specific issues, which actually motivate the individual at work. These motivating issues are concerned with identifying people's needs and their relative strengths, and the goals they pursue in order to satisfy these needs.

Process theories of motivation (also referred to as cognitive theories) focus on how behavior change occurs, or how a person comes to act in a different way. The theories center its attention on the cognitive processes underlying an individual's level of motivation. There is less emphasis on the specific factors (or content) that causes behavior. In sum, content theories attempt to determine the specific needs that motivate individuals, while the process theories seek to analyze, how individual behavior is initiated, sustained and halted.

Strength of Content Theories

Aswathappa (2005) claims that content theories are very useful if an organization wants to understand what individuals' particular needs are, and thus provide opportunities (rewards) to satisfy those needs so that individuals are motivated to join, work hard for, and remain with the

organization. Content theories are more useful to create a detailed picture of work motivation because they regard motivation in more general terms. Additional insight into factors that influence employees' job satisfaction is also provided by the content theories of motivation.

Weaknesses of Content Theories

A major weakness in content theories of motivation is their culture bias. It can be argued that Maslow's theory is Western-oriented, as self-actualization is an individualized, Western concept, not necessarily prevalent in other cultures. While the content theories are concerned with the factors that motivate the worker (i. e., personal factors, such as individual needs, or organizational factors, such as the task assignment and rewards), they do not explain how individuals choose one behavior from the several open to them. Also read about " Contemporary theory of management"

Strength of Process Theories

Compared to other theories of motivation, the primary advantage of process theories is that they provide a more detailed view of the mechanisms underlying motivation. To use an analogy, Jex (2002) described that process theories have allowed human resource managers to put work motivation under a microscope. Rather than simply knowing that an employee will work hard to fulfill esteem need, process theories help managers to understand the choices and decisions that employees make during this process. Thus, process theories have most definitely enhanced managers' understanding of work motivation. Process theories are also more obviously compatible with the view that people can choose, and act accordingly (Maclagan, 1998). Also read Motivational Approach to Work Design

Weaknesses of Process Theories

Despite the value of understanding the processes underlying work motivation, one might ask whether some cognitive process theories have reduced motivation to such micro level that it is counterproductive. Such fine-grained analyses have the feel of being scientifically rigorous and objective, but it may be unrealistic to think that managers can understand something as complex as human motivation in detail. This also increases the danger that such theories will be perceived as inaccessible to human resources managers in organizations.

WORK CITED

Aswathappa, K. (2005). Human Resource and Personnel Management. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Limited.

Jex, S. (2002). Organizational Psychology. New York: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Maclagan, P. (1998). Management and Morality. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.