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Circumplex Model at the Management Level of the School Organization

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Abstract: The article presents a model of the managerial approach to organizational culture from the perspective of the Circumplex Model that began to crystallize in the 70s when several psychologists founded the complex concept of human synergy (Human Synergistics). The circumplex model measures 12 distinct thinking styles that either contribute to or hinder people's effectiveness at work and overall life satisfaction. Thus, the Circumplex Model can be used as a measurement tool at the individual, group, or organization level. For the management of the school organization, this model can be the fastest indicator of the force of change it has and how ready the school organization is for the next level of evolution, development, and performance.

Keywords: organizational culture; circumplex psychometric model; management

1. Introduction

The circumplex model is a conceptual framework used in psychology to organize and understand emotions, personality traits, or behaviors circularly. It allows the relationships between them to be analyzed. It is used in various fields, such as studying emotions, personality, or social interactions.

The circumplex model was first introduced to psychology in the early 1950s, particularly in personality and interpersonal behaviors. The original contribution is attributed to psychologists Timothy Leary and Jerry Wiggins, who developed the first circumplex models of personality and social interactions.

The interpersonal circle or **interpersonal circumplex**² is a model for conceptualizing, organizing, and assessing interpersonal behavior, traits, and motives. The interpersonal circumplex is defined by two orthogonal axes: a vertical axis (of status, dominance, power, ambitiousness, assertiveness, or control) and a horizontal axis (of agreeableness, compassion, nurturant, solidarity, friendliness, warmth, affiliation, or love). In recent years, it has become conventional to identify the vertical and horizontal axes with the broad constructs of agency and communion. Thus, each point in the interpersonal circumplex space can be specified as a weighted combination of agency and communion.

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² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal_circumplex.



Key moments:

1950s: Timothy Leary was one of the pioneers who applied the circumplex model to interpersonal behaviors, attempting to classify personality traits and social interactions.

1970s: Jerry Wiggins expanded and refined this model, becoming known for the Interpersonal Circumplex Model of personality traits. He systematized the idea that personality traits can be organized along dominance-submission and affiliation-hostility.

1980: James A. Russell developed the circumplex model of emotions, organizing emotions along two main dimensions: valence (pleasure-displeasure) and activation (level of arousal or energy). This model has become popular in studies of affectivity.

These models developed over time, have had a profound impact on contemporary psychology. They have significantly enhanced our understanding of the intricate relationships between emotions, personality, and behaviors, making them highly relevant in the field.

The circumplex model of emotions (Russell, 1980)

This model organizes emotions along two axes. First, valence (positive vs. negative affectivity) measures an emotion's pleasant or unpleasantness. The second refers to activation level (excitement vs. calmness) and measures the intensity of emotion, whether active or passive.

Thus, emotions are placed in a circle, where joy is a positively valenced, high-activation emotion, and sadness is a negatively valenced, low-activation emotion.

The circumplex model of personality traits (Wiggins, 1996)

This model is used to analyze personality traits according to two main dimensions:

Dominance vs. Submissiveness

Affiliation (heat) vs. Antagonism (hostility)

These two dimensions create a circle in which various personality traits can be located. Thus, a dominant and warm person would be described as a leader, while a submissive and hostile person could be described as shy and resentful.

The interpersonal circumplex model

This model is used to analyze social behaviors, suggesting that interpersonal interactions are based on two fundamental dimensions:

Power (dominant vs. submissive)

Condition (Hot vs. Cold)

These dimensions intersect to create four quadrants, each representing a different type of social behavior.

2. Application of the Circumplex Model in Management

The circumplex model in management is used to understand and organize leadership behaviors and styles or workplace interactions. As in other fields, it is used to classify and analyze the relationships between managerial behaviors or leadership styles by placing them in a circle based on two main dimensions. In management, these dimensions can vary, but the most common are:

a) Power (dominant vs. submissive)

This dimension refers to how a leader or manager exercises authority and control over the team. It can vary from an authoritarian (dominant) to a participatory or collaborative (submissive) leadership style.

b) People orientation (relational vs. task)

This is a dimension that reflects how much a manager focuses on interpersonal relationships and employee well-being (people orientation) versus a focus on goal achievement and efficiency (task orientation).

- Dominant and task-oriented: The authoritarian style. Leaders are very focused on results and demand high performance from the team. They are directive and make decisions without consultation.
- Dominant and people-oriented: The charismatic style. Leaders in this category use their power of influence to motivate and inspire the team with a relationship-building approach and open communication.
- Submissive and task-oriented: The delegative style. This type of manager gives the team a significant level of autonomy and responsibility, emphasizing results but with less direct control. He does not actively intervene in the day-to-day decision-making, which can make the team feel trusted and empowered.
- Submissive and people-oriented: The supportive style. Leaders of this type are concerned with team cohesion, encourage collaboration, and focus on employee well-being. They are willing to leave decisions in the hands of the team, providing support and resources.

A high-impact innovation developed 45 years ago and revised and refined since then, the Circumplex has been used and recommended by millions of clients around the world. This global acceptance is the best proof of its validity, relevance, and value, providing reassurance to those who adopt it.

The Circumplex is typically integrated into Human Synergetics assessments, such as the Organizational Culture Inventory®, Life Styles Inventory™, Group Styles Inventory™, and Customer ServiceStyles™.

Culture is the main differentiator of top organizations. It influences performance, engagement, and the ability to create a positive and innovative work environment. Leaders can measure and drive culture through the development of tools and methodology so that we can choose the right solution for your change.

3. Benefits of the Circumplex Model in Management

The circumplex model helps to understand and evaluate management styles according to the relationship between power and task/people orientation, which leads to clarity in evaluating managerial behaviors.

By identifying where a manager fits in this model, he can understand his strengths and areas of development and adjust his leadership style to be more effective.

Circumplex models are also helpful in improving team dynamics and adapting managerial behaviors to the specific needs of employees and the business context.

Application examples:

In a highly competitive environment, a dominant and task-oriented style can effectively achieve quick results and meet tight targets.

In a creative environment, a submissive and people-oriented style can drive innovation and collaboration across teams.

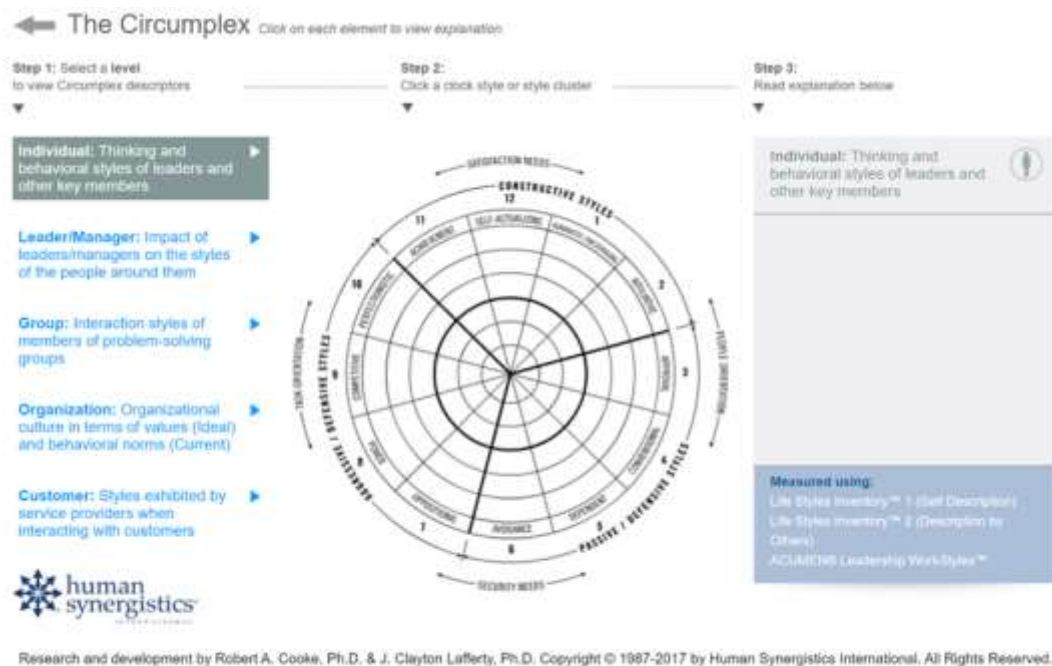
This circumplex model can be adapted according to organizational needs, providing a more flexible perspective on leadership styles and management behaviors.

Since its establishment in 1971, Human Synergetics has been a global leader in organizational development, supporting organizations worldwide in enhancing their people’s performance through cultural change, leadership development, and team development.

Human Synergetics International was founded by clinical psychologist J. Clayton Lafferty, Ph. D., and is led by Robert A. Cooke, Ph. D., CEO and organizational culture expert. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, it works with organizations of all industries and sizes through offices in 19 countries around the globe.

Human Synergetics specializes in measuring and developing organizational cultures, leadership strategies, team synergy, and individual behavioral styles. It measures this through more than 35 products, including the renowned Organizational Culture Inventory®, Life Styles Inventory™, and Desert Survival Situation™.

Organizational Culture Inventory



4. The Advantages of the Circumplex Model in Educational Management

The circumplex model brings several benefits to educational management, facilitating the understanding of leadership styles, improving relationships between teachers, students, and staff, and optimizing interactions at the level of educational institutions.

Clarification of leadership styles

Thus, the Circumplex Model helps educational leaders, such as school principals or departmental coordinators, to assess their leadership styles based on two fundamental dimensions:

- Power (dominant vs. submissive)
- People orientation (relational vs. task)

This clearly shows how they lead their teaching teams and administrative staff. For example, a dominant and task-oriented leader might be more effective in implementing educational policies and projects, while a more submissive and people-oriented leader might be more effective in building strong relationships and supporting team morale.

Improving interactions at the organizational level

The circumplex model helps improve the dynamics of interpersonal and collaborative relationships in the school. By evaluating and adjusting the behavior of leaders according to the different needs of the team, interactions between teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents can be optimized. For example:

A principal who is too dominant and task-focused might learn to be more responsive to the needs and opinions of teachers and students by learning to be more collaborative. Adapting leadership styles to the needs of the educational context

Educational institutions operate in dynamic environments where the needs of students and staff change frequently. The circumplex model allows leaders to adapt their leadership styles to these contexts. For example, in times of crisis or the implementation of major educational reforms, a dominant and task-oriented style may be necessary to maintain discipline and adherence to goals. Conversely, a more relationship-oriented style can support collaboration and innovation in times of stability.

Sustaining a positive educational climate

A leadership style that balances power and people orientation can create a healthy educational climate where teachers and staff feel supported and valued, and students benefit from a positive learning environment. For example, a submissive and people-oriented leader can provide emotional support and build an environment based on collaboration and mutual respect, which is essential in an educational institution.

Flexibility in conflict management

Flexibility in conflict management is key in the educational environment. The circumplex model provides a framework for understanding and managing conflict. For example, leaders in the dominant-people-oriented quadrant can resolve conflicts through firm but empathetic interventions while supporting the team's and students' interests. Conversely, leaders who are more submissive and task-oriented may choose to delegate conflict resolution to other team members, thereby promoting collaborative resolution.

Leadership development at the team level

In educational management, not only formal leaders have an essential role. Teacher leaders and other teaching staff who have an informal role in leading school projects and initiatives can use the circumplex model to develop their leadership style. They can better understand how to balance control and empathy to impact peers and students positively.

Encouraging innovation and creativity

A healthy learning environment with people-oriented leaders who adopt a submissive or collaborative style can foster creativity and innovation. In this framework, teachers and students feel freer to express their ideas and contribute to developing new teaching and learning methods. Management styles that provide autonomy can encourage teachers to experiment with new educational methods or initiate innovative extracurricular projects.

5. Applications of the Circumplex Model in School

Leadership assessment and development

Principals and teachers can use the circumplex model to assess their leadership style and how they manage interactions with peers and students. For example, a principal who is very dominant and task-oriented may find that this style can inhibit teachers from expressing their ideas and creativity. The model, by promoting dialogue and collaboration, can help adjust this style to encourage more open and engaging interactions, fostering a more connected and participative leadership process.

Improving interactions between teachers and students

Teachers can use the circumplex model to analyze how they interact with students. For example, an authoritarian (dominant and task-oriented) teacher may elicit compliance but not creativity or emotional involvement from students. A teacher who adopts a more supportive (submissive and people-oriented) style can encourage greater student collaboration and involvement in the educational process, providing a more open and safe environment for learning.

Conflict management

Within the school, conflicts between students or between educational staff can be managed more effectively using the circumplex model. For example, a leader who is people-oriented and adopts a collaborative style will approach conflicts with empathy and try to find solutions through dialogue and mediation. Conversely, a more task-oriented leader will be able to resolve conflicts more quickly but may be less attentive to the emotional needs of those involved.

Creating a positive educational climate

A balance between control and support can contribute to a positive educational climate. For example, a manager or coordinator who is dominant but people-oriented can ensure an organized yet supportive environment. This promotes cohesion in teaching teams and creates a friendly and safe learning environment for students.

Motivating students and teachers

The circumplex model can be a key tool in creating a supportive environment for both teachers and students. For instance, a leader who is submissive and people-oriented can foster an environment where teachers feel heard and valued, leading to innovation and professional growth. Similarly, a teacher who effectively balances academic demands with emotional support can inspire students to be more engaged and productive.

Improving collaboration between teachers and work teams

Collaboration among teachers is essential to implementing effective educational programs in an educational environment. The circumplex model can be used to analyze and adjust the styles of

interaction and cooperation among teachers, allowing them to adapt their behavior to support teamwork and achieve common goals.

Flexibility and adaptability in different educational contexts

Schools often face diverse educational contexts and specific challenges. The circumplex model can adjust management and teaching styles to these contexts. For example, in times of rapid change or crisis (such as a transition to online learning), a more dominant and task-oriented style could ensure the continuity of educational processes. During times of stability, leaders, and teachers can return to a more collaborative and people-oriented style to foster innovation and engagement.

6. Conclusion

The circumplex model applied in the school brings multiple benefits, including a better understanding of leadership styles, improved interpersonal relationships, and a positive educational climate. By evaluating and adjusting leadership and teaching styles, school institutions can become more effective, collaborative, and adaptable to the needs of students and teachers, thereby supporting learning and development. Being flexible and adaptable, this model allows leaders to adjust their behavior to effectively respond to the specific challenges of educational institutions, thus contributing to their long-term success.

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