

NOTE ON THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF "SYSTEMS"

In its most abstract form, a system is the sum total of the dynamic interrelationships between all the elements in a defined situation. Any management situation can be regarded as a mixture of technological, mechanical, administrative, social and psychological processes. Because these processes overlies and inpenetrate each other in complex ways, the situation is difficult both to understand and to control. But the situation can be analysed: understanding and hence control of it is made easier if each process within it is regarded as a system and these various systems are analysed separately.

The term system has a number of meanings: There are systems of numbers and of equations, systems of value and of thought, management systems and central systems. A model of a community, national or world society or any social system can be viewed as a conceptual system through which people try to represent and relate day to day events. The structure of any social system can be defined as consisting of people and non-human resources grouped together into sub-systems. These interrelate among themselves and with the external environment, and are subject to certain values and a central guidance system. This may help provide the capacity for future performance.

System has become an overused word but this does not detract from its value. Systems theory is a specialization which offers possibilities of synthesizing the results of the activity of disciplines such as psychology, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history and geography.

The systems approach inclines the investigator in the direction of a dynamic analysis of an organization, a community, or a nation and the people and bodies with which it interacts. It draws upon the resources of a variety of disciplines and makes it easier to perceive the evolutionary aspects of the world system. The systems approach is neutral with regard to the analytic tools that are used in conjunction with it. (Donald, A.G., A2; Scott, A., A3; Gross, B.M., A4, A5)