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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Managerial Functions	3
3. Why Controlling is Essential	4
4. Management Theories and Models Related to Controlling	4
5. Challenges Associated with Controlling	5
6. Strategies for Mitigating Controlling Challenges	6
7. Examples of Controlling	7
8. Conclusion	8
9. Reference	9

1. Introduction

Management is of essential importance, just as leadership is; as noted by Robbins and Coulter (2018), in addition to planning, organising and leading, management also controls the activities of an organisation to ensure that organisational objectives are being met and that the resources of the organisation are being utilised in an economical method. Some of the characteristics of control are accountability of employee behaviour, resource efficiency, stability within the organisation. There are several reasons why control is provided within an organisation: efficient work practices, protection of assets from theft, reduction of risk and learning within the organisation. However, control also has some negative consequences such as high levels of performance control which can lead to organisational-wide employee resistance, ethical problems, and unintended consequences like technological failure as seen with the cyber disruption experienced by Tesco, (Olof Arwinge, 2012).

This essay will explore the theory and practice of control, methods of management and the types of organisations associated with it, and ways in which managers can achieve a balance of formal and cultural control to achieve organisations that are efficient, ethical and flexible.

2. Managerial Functions

Management as a “Practice Managers” carry out a variety of duties to ensure that the organisation functions successfully and efficiently. According to Henri Fayol (1916), despite the time, his theory has been developed, management remains the process of directing activity and it includes four main functions such as: planning, organising, leading and controlling. Planning involves establishing objectives for an organisation, assessing the opportunities and threats arising from the environment and deciding on the actions to be taken to achieve planned goals. Planning motivates and guides the work of employees by creating an organisation's goals. Organising involves the management of people, financial and physical resources within an organisation. It involves the design of the structure of the organisation; the delegation of work and the relationships between departments and employees to utilise resources in an efficient way and to coordinate work activities efficiently. Leading is concerned with the direction, motivation and inspiration of employees to achieve the goals of the organisation. It is concerned with communication, culture and the work environment.

According to Kotter (2012) “leadership is the art of getting objective accomplished through the aid and co-operation of others”. It means that the leader moves the organisation in the required direction by motivating employees. Controlling is concerned with checking that the organisation's activities and processes are working in accordance with the organisation's goals and standards. It involves the identification

of the criteria to be used for measuring, monitoring, comparing the measured with the planned performance, and taking correct action if there is a discrepancy. For example, in the NHS, budgeting, performance measurements (**Matron's Handbook**), and reporting mechanisms (**SystemOne / EPR Systems**) are examples of management control systems. Overall, this indicates that controlling links the planning and the activities; and provides accountability, efficiency and stability in the organisation (Robbins and Coulter, 2018).

3. Why Controlling is Essential

Control is an important managerial function that ensures that all the activities carried out by all the individuals in an organisation are directed towards the goal of the organisation. It involves checking the performance of the individuals with some standard and taking corrective action wherever the performance is not up to the standard. Robbins and Coulter (2018) say that the control helps in reducing inefficiency, increasing the coordination and thus, the achievement of organisational goals.

Many organisations, like Toyota, control materials, machines and products within certain standards to ensure high quality products with the least number of defects (UKEssays.com, 2018). Auditing and risk management are also practiced in the banking and healthcare sector to protect the image of the organisation and to avert any legal issues. Examples of operational controls are budgeting, cost control and inventory control as seen in the case of Walmart (Smithson, 2024). Although controls increase the efficiency and the feeling of accountability in an organisation, the measurement of the performance and high standards of evaluation tend to stifle the efforts of employees. Thus, it is a managerial task to control the controls, motivation and employee development in such a way that the controls in an organisation are geared towards increasing the performance of the employees rather than restricting their creativity.

4. Management Theories and Models Related to Controlling

The management function of control is supported by many management theories concerned with behaviour, performance and results within an organisation. The classical management approach as exemplified by the work of Fayol also included control as one of the five main management functions (Mullins, 2019). Fayol recommended that control was concerned with the implementation of the planned

activities with reference to the principles of authority, discipline, responsibility and unity of command (Fayol, 1916).

Control, based on the principles of the classical school of management, is useful in achieving coordination and responsibility within the organisation and thus ensures that activities are carried out in an acceptable manner. However, the control may restrict individual personal freedom and therefore could act as a barrier to individual motivation during change. Control in the systems management approach is a part of the system and is made up of input, process, output and feedback. System control provides management with feedback information and enables management to correct deviations which are affecting the performance of the organisation (Daft, 2021).

In a scientific management approach to control, the management must be close to employees to enforce the plans and procedures that have been laid down. This aspect of scientific management is a barrier to employee motivation. A similar approach to control is evident in systems management, the control function is more of an analysis activity. It analyses information to provide the data required by management to take an appropriate decision (Daft, 2021).

Leadership is also concerned with the control function within an organisation. For example, an autocratic style of management involves a high degree of control and implies an element of employee monitoring (Wheeler, 2008). As previously mentioned, this aspect of control can act as a barrier to motivation. A democratic style of management also implies a degree of control, but the implementation of this style is slowed down as employees are included in the decision-making process. However, a transformational leadership style implies value-based control, and employees are motivated by an internal drive to achieve the desired goals as well as being committed to the organisation's objectives (Robbins and Coulter, 2018).

5. Challenges Associated with Controlling

Control is a very important managerial function, but very difficult to implement in practice. This is due to a few variables that are difficult to quantify such as the variables of measurement, staff reaction to controls, the organisational culture and values etc. An unsatisfactory control system can do more harm than good. Control of staff performance is one of the major difficulties for managers (Atlantic International University, 2024). As has already been mentioned, performance indicators such as sales, productivity and earnings usually make up only a small proportion of the total contribution of a staff member to an organisation. Hence a manager who achieves the

target, may well be missing the point (Robbins and Coulter, 2018). The principal-agent relationship which we discussed earlier, also has a bearing on the difficulty in controlling the behaviour of employees. The information allows the employees to behave in several ways such as:

- selectively presenting their performance in the most positive light
- ignoring the goals of the organisation in their behaviour
- engaging in dysfunctional behaviour to enhance their own performance in relation to the organisation's goals.

These are the issues that were highlighted previously of the problems of target setting in the NHS in the UK. These issues were also the source of many of the problems encountered in the target setting introduced by David Cameron (2010) in the UK to attempt to improve the performance of public services in the UK (Office, 2011). The control of employees is increasingly being implemented with the aid of electronic monitoring technologies. The benefits of these systems are many, such as ensuring that staff work to the required standards and meet the expected behaviour in the workplace. However, there are also many drawbacks:

- invasion of privacy
- lack of trust in staff
- erosion of well-being.

According to Daft (2021), the control of employees is becoming an even more complex issue for managers due to the increase in global supply chains, remote working and the multicultural organisation. In common with other aspects of management control is required to ensure that employees carry out their work and act in accordance with the expected standards of behaviour in the workplace. However, the control systems need to be implemented in a way that the needs of both the organisation and staff are met.

6. Strategies for Mitigating Controlling Challenges

The management challenge is to achieve sufficient control over workplace activity to allow work to be carried out while at the same time giving sufficient autonomy to enable that work to be undertaken. The use of balanced performance measures, which seek to reflect a few aspects of organisational performance, can be one way of achieving this balance. For example, the use of the balanced scorecard allows the management of both short-term and long-term performance as well as tangible and intangible performance (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). Formal controls such as rules, audits and performance reports can be combined with cultural or clan controls in the form of a

shared organisational culture that motivates individuals to police their own workplace behaviour (Daft, 2021).

Different leadership styles have several different effects. Participative leadership is associated with management by objectives where employees are involved in the planning and evaluation of their work (Zaleznik, 1977) whereas transformational leadership involves the management by example where employees are also expected to accept the values of the organisation (Burns, 1978). For example, an incident reporting scheme with associated post-incident reviews may be seen as creating a very unsafe workplace environment in that it appears to be a 'trap' set for the employee to fall into. However, it can also be seen as an opportunity for learning. Thus, incident reporting and reviews can motivate employees and improve workplace performance. Finally, the use of systems thinking to achieve control over workplace activity can be achieved by considering the workplace as a system and using a set of control mechanisms, including monitoring, feedback and continuous improvement. Von Thiele Schwarz et al. (2016) in the context of management, control systems should be dynamic and flexible and motivate ethical workplace behaviour and learning (as exemplified in the Kaizen approach to management).

7. Examples of Controlling

Control is one of the main management tools used by managers. Formal controls can include procedures and rules, inspections, audits, mandatory reporting of defects or any other number of features that a manager may choose to impose to ensure that the activities undertaken by others within the organisation are aligned with the goals and objectives that the manager has set for them. In addition to formal controls, it is also possible to use feedback systems and performance measurement points. An example of this can be how in Toyota, formal controls are combined with cultural controls using the mechanism of Kaizen, where workers are involved in a continuous process of improvement of current practices, reduction of waste and, hence increasing productivity. Implementing controls that demand a high level of organisational and employee effort can outcome in a higher level of organisational and employee engagement, but they require a high level of investment in terms of training (Toyota, 2013).

Performance controls have been used for a long time in the NHS in England through the medium of national targets and performance indicators designed to reduce patient's length of stay within the health care system. The targets and indicators have led to a greater level of accountability and efficiency in the health care system, but

managers can be more concerned with playing 'gamesmanship' rather than improving the care provided to patients.

The retail sector also makes extensive use of inventory controls. Walmart and Tesco have, for example, been leaders in the development of inventory control systems in which inventory levels of products, quantities ordered and quantities received are monitored and shrinkage is reduced to the minimum to protect corporate assets. Although the implementation of digital controls has been shown to enhance organisational performance, it can also result in a few negative technological risks. An example of such a risk occurred at Tesco, when a cyber-related disruption to their digital controls highlighted the level of organisational exposure and the need to enhance controls to prevent similar disruptions from occurring in the future (Lipscombe, 2021).

The banks also make use of controls to manage financial and compliance risks. The anti-money-laundering procedures, audits and the requirement for regulatory reporting can be costly and highly bureaucratic (Olof Arwinge, 2012). Although controls can be beneficial to organisations in terms of enhancing accountability, efficiency and the management of risk, they can also have several negative consequences. Overly controlling an organisation and its employees can lead to a reduction in trust and autonomy, as well as the potential for a decline in the level of innovative activity undertaken by the organisation's employees. To mitigate the negative consequences of formal controls, managers need to balance the use of formal controls with cultural and ethical controls that are based upon an understanding of ethical behaviour.

8. Conclusion

Control is a managerial function in an organisation which ensures that all activities are carried out in line with the objectives of an organisation and that resources are used efficiently and effectively and that learning occurs (Robbins and Coulter, 2018). Some examples of unintended consequences of control in the NHS have been cited by NHS England (2022) as including measurement problems, employee resistance and ethical issues. The most effective way of exerting control in an organisation is using a combination of formal and cultural control with a range of performance indicators, participative management and learning culture. An integrative control approach will yield organisations which are adaptable, flexible, innovative and which motivate their staff within an ethical framework.

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