SPEAKER: DR. NORA AGUSTERO
PhD Information Studies, University of Sheffield,
United Kingdom,and Currently, Dean of Teacher Education, Arts and Science
Saint Columban College, Pagadian City

Topic:

Research Paradigms for Networked Libraries and Information Centers

ABSTRACT:

The understanding of strategic alliances from a business management viewpoint facilitates the understanding of collaboration in service organizations like academic libraries. A strategic alliance is defined as 'where two or more organizations share resources and activities to pursue a strategy' (Johnson et al., 2005:353) and is considered as 'logical and timely response to intense and rapid changes in economic activity, technology and globalization' (Doz and Hamel, 1998:xiii).

De Wit and Meyer (2004) believe that it is necessary for firms to interact with other organizations in their environment and establish inter-organisational relationships. They also stress that determining the nature of their external relations is an important part of developing strategy and one way is to focus on four aspects, namely: relational actors, relational objectives, relational factors and relational arrangements. They stress that relationships between organizations are determined by whom they are interacting, what they hope to achieve, other factors that have an impact on how relationships unfold, and the structure that ties them to other organisations. These aspects answer the questions on the who, why, what and how of inter-organisational relationships. It is suggested here that these aspects provide a useful framework for investigating library consortia.

This study developed a theory of collaborative behaviour in the substantive area of academic libraries. Using Grounded Theory approach, the concepts were identified and classified into categories and then it moves into making relational connections among categories. With the use of constant comparison, major categories were identified and situated in relation to the phenomenon of collaborative behaviour. A review of literature on the major categories followed to see the similarities and differences with the results and to relate the theory to it through integration of ideas.

This study identified the following major categories that all relate to collaborative behaviour: *scarcity, resource dependency strategies, trust, achieving service quality* and *building solidarity.* In relation to the theory, *scarcity* is as the main reason why academic libraries collaborate and as such is a causal variable of collaborative behaviour. *Resource dependency strategies* are conducted as a strategy of collaborative behaviour to solve the type of *scarcity* prevalent among members of the consortia. But collaborative behaviour depends on the level of *trust* an academic library accords its probable collaborators. *Trust* is seen as a dynamic process, but volatile such that it is identified here as a pre-condition to collaborative behaviour and at the same time an enhancer of collaboration. The ultimate goal or why academic libraries collaborate, is to achieve service quality, so that is considered a desired consequence of collaborative behaviour. The interaction of academic libraries with other entities results in building solidarity among libraries, librarians and other entities; thus building solidarity is another consequence of collaborative behaviour.

Definition of Terms

A strategic alliance is defined as 'where two or more organizations share resources and activities to pursue a strategy' (Johnson et al., 2005:353).

Bostick (2001a: 6) offered the following definition: 'a library consortium is a group of two or more libraries that have agreed to cooperate with each other to fulfill certain similar needs'.

Scarcity is defined as an an objective property of the situation. High scarcity exists when aggregate demand exceeds or nearly exceeds available supply. Conversely, low scarcity exists when the available supply exceeds or begins to exceed aggregate demand. This definition implies that rather than being a discrete variable, scarcity varies along a continuum from high to low based on the degree to which demand exceeds available supply (Aquino & Reed, 1998: 395).

Resource dependency theory suggests that internal resource allocations and senior management coalitions are important aspects of organizational effectiveness. Institutional theory suggests that firms conform to external expectations by developing formal rules and guidelines as well as isomorphic structures (Griffin & Dunn, 2004: 197).

The willingness to take risk coupled with accepting vulnerability made Sydow (2000: 35) consider *inter-organisational trust* as 'the confidence of an organization in the reliability of other organizations, regarding a given set of outcomes or events'.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, p. 48) defined service quality as 'a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions'. Expectations for quality are based on ideals or perceptions of excellence.