



Enhancing Critical Thinking through Creation of Learning Organizations within the Confines of an Overarching Mechanistic Organization

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DoD as a Mechanistic Organization

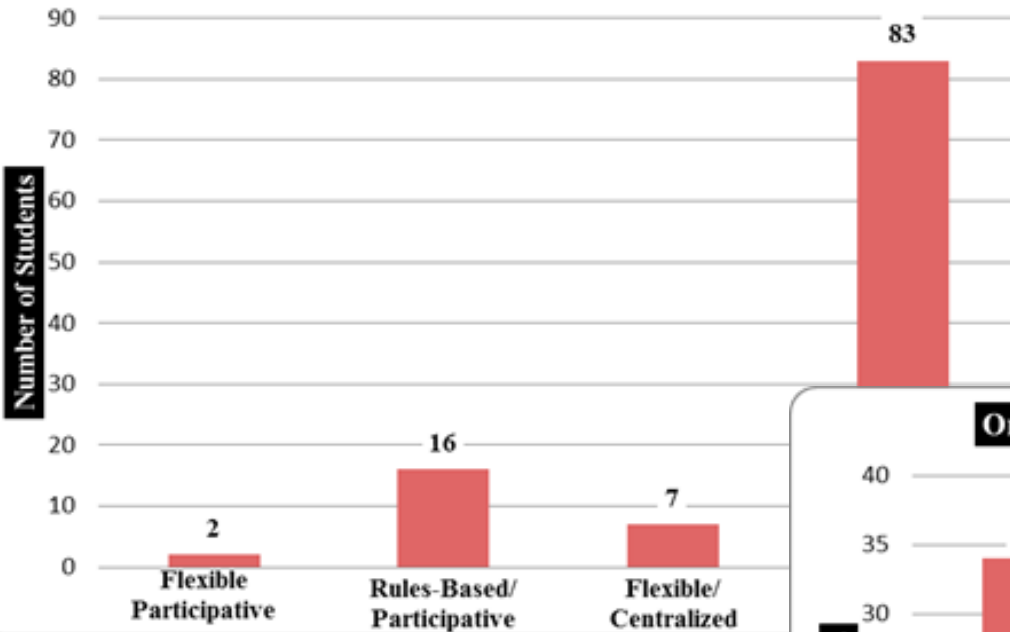
- Characteristics of a mechanistic organization
 - High levels of hierarchical structure and control
 - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
 - Written policies and procedures
 - Specialized, standardized tasks
 - Centralized decision-making processes
 - Higher efficiencies through lessened variation and improved predictability
 - Restricted innovation, flexibility and creativity
- History
 - Frederick the Great of Prussia
 - Frederick Taylor's scientific management
 - SECDEFs Robert McNamara and Donald Rumsfeld
- Calls for change
- Today's acquisition workforce
 - 2014 Acquisition Policy Survey report
 - Acquisition Workforce Questionnaire



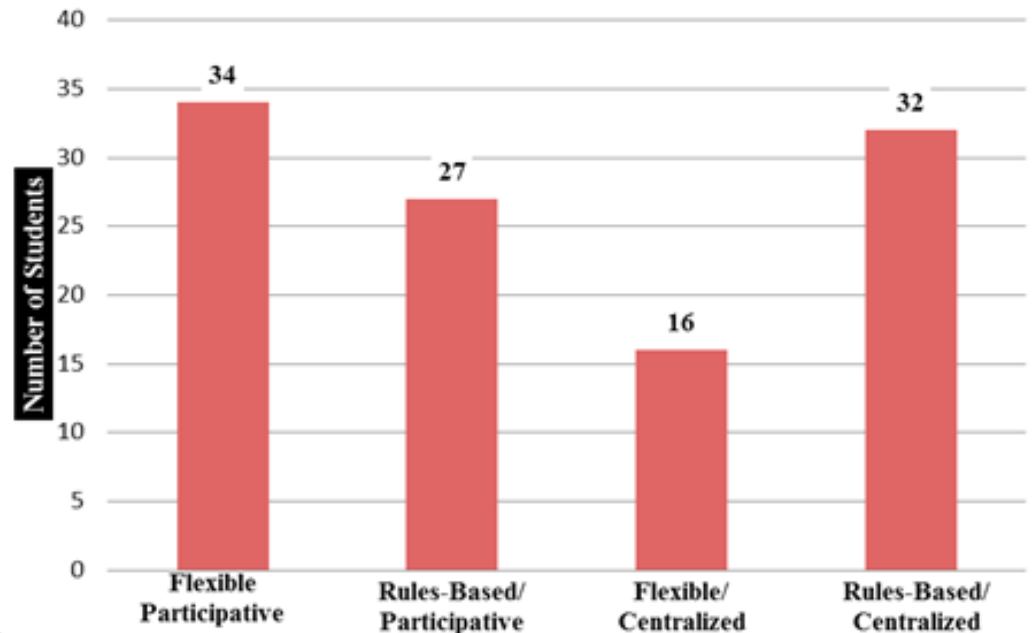
Organizational Behaviors

-- Survey Results --

Organizational Behaviors -- Top Organization



Organizational Behaviors -- Immediate Organization

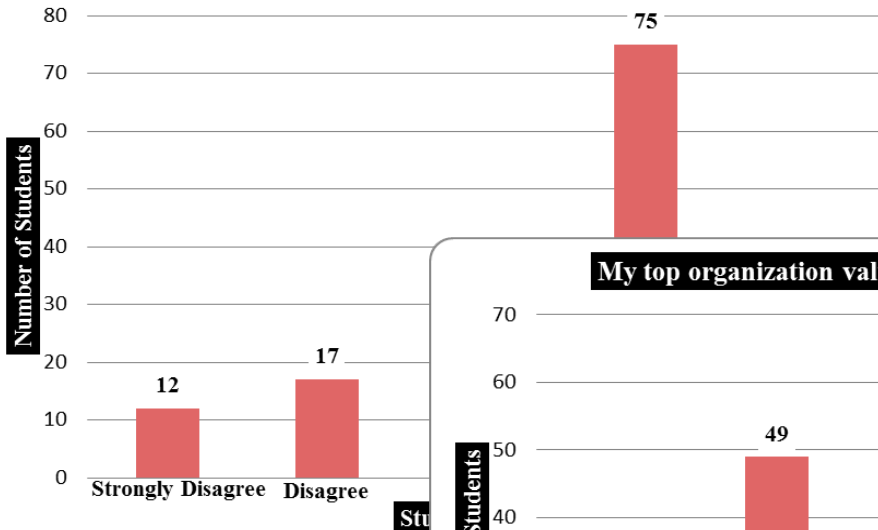




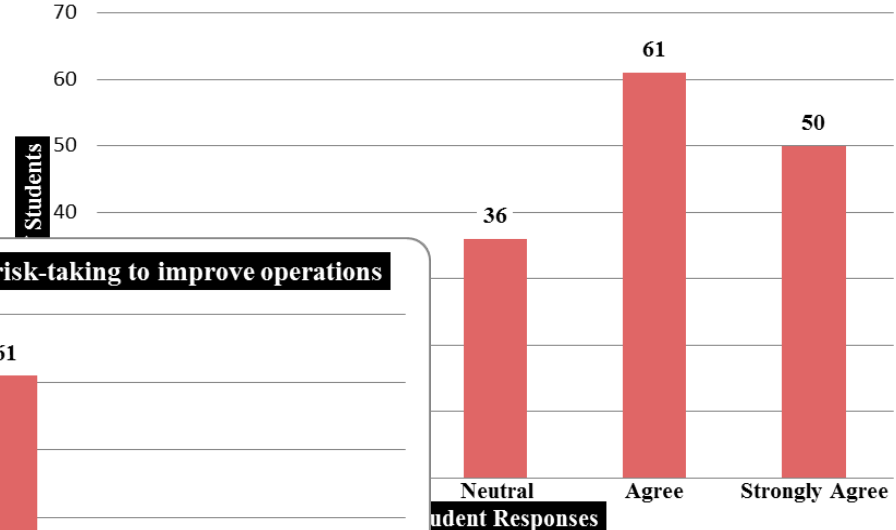
Five Distinct Questions

-- Survey Results --

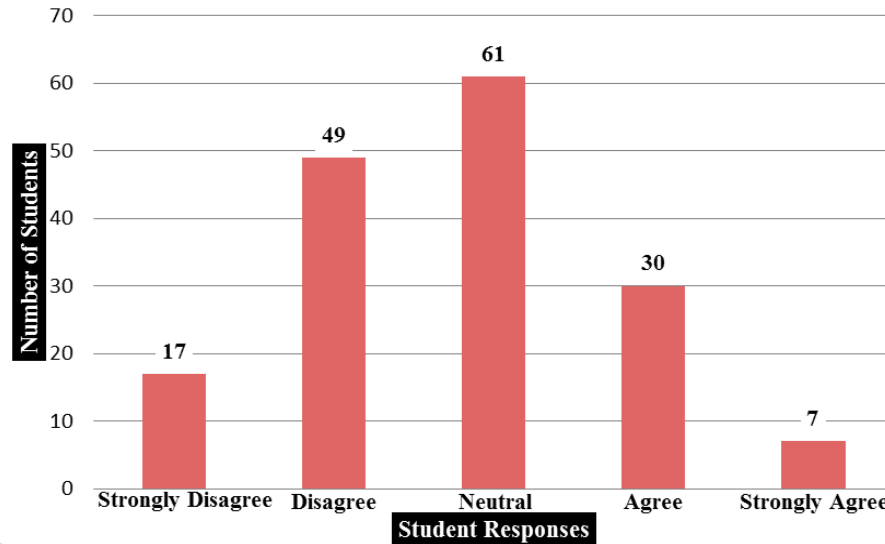
I am encouraged to think "outside the box"



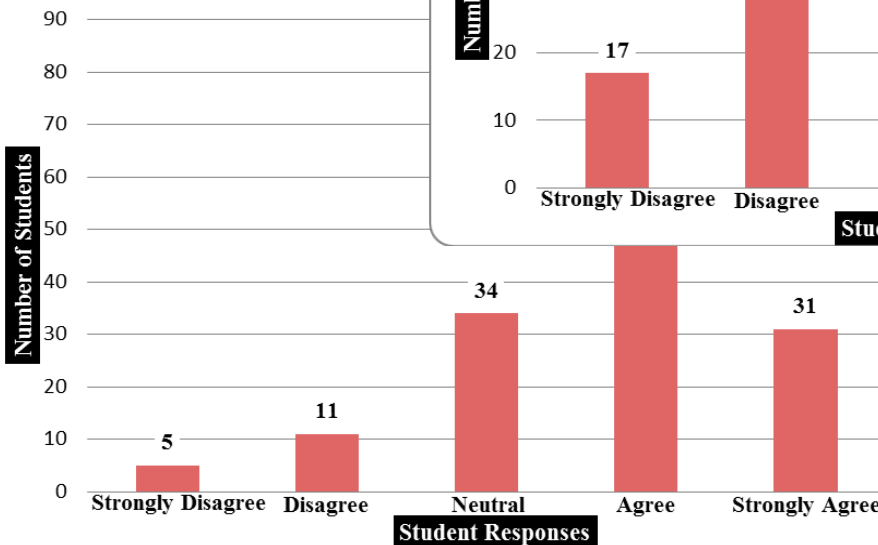
I am encouraged to follow policy "to the letter"



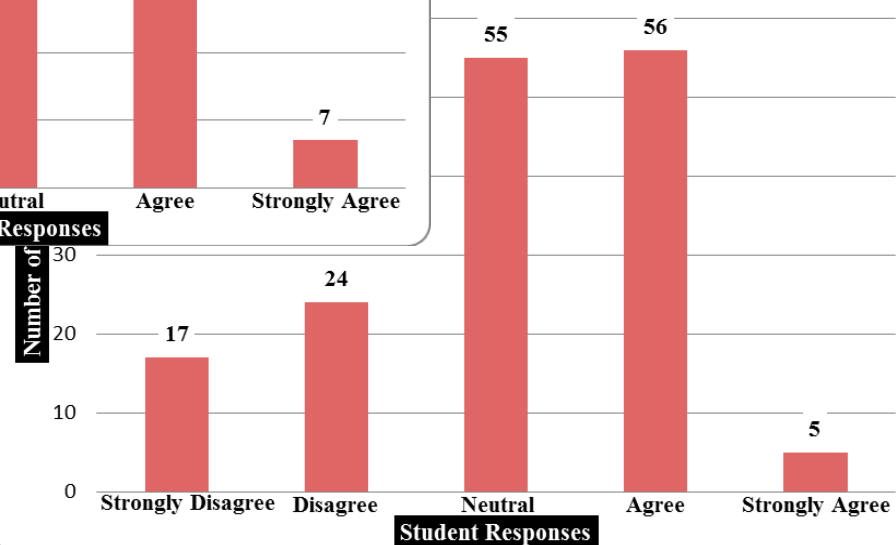
My top organization values risk-taking to improve operations



My inputs are valued



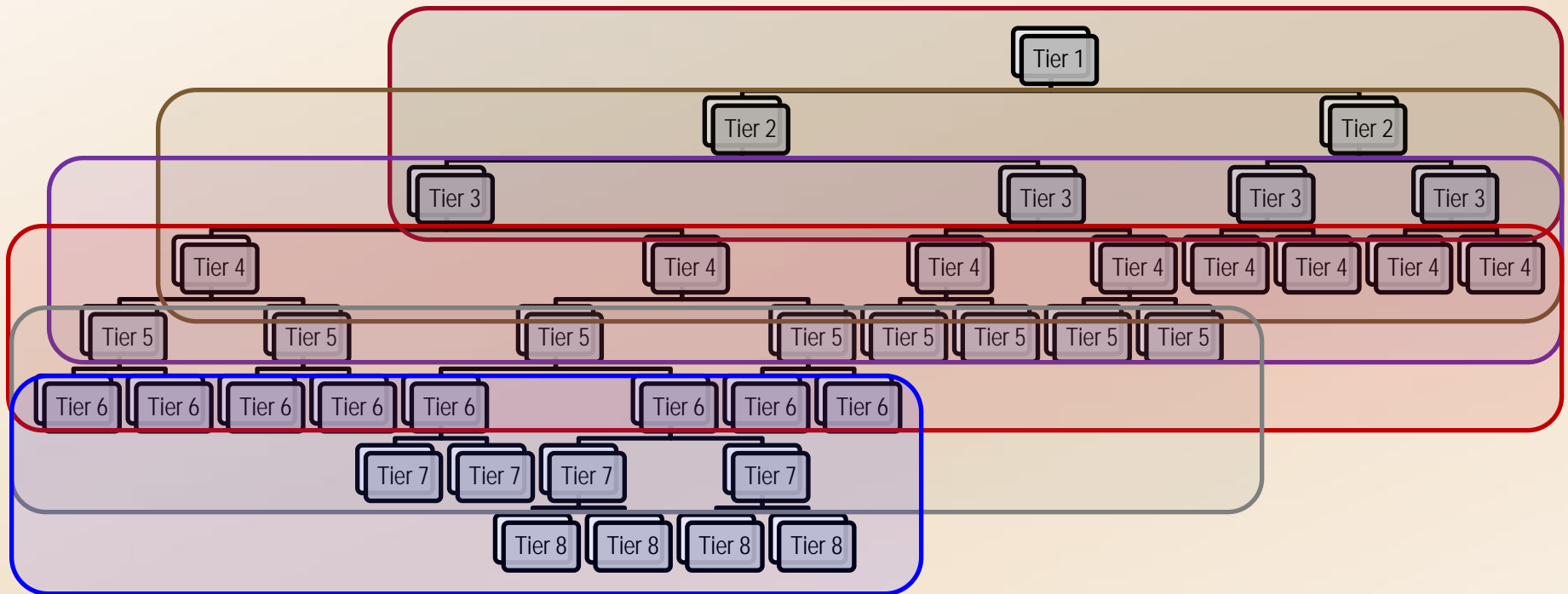
My inputs outside my functional area are valued





Layered Learning Organizations

- Retaining overall mechanistic organization construct
 - Use of policies and statutes as tools versus obstacles
 - Age and size of DoD
- Why not build a layered learning organization within the construct of an overarching mechanistic organization?





Learning Organizations

- Characteristics of learning organizations
 - Little to no hierarchical social structure
 - Free flow of information to encourage new ways of doing business
 - Continuous improvement of established procedures
 - Change and risk taking supported
- Advantages of learning organizations
 - Maximum flexibility
 - Dynamically responsive to changes in the environment
 - Learns from mistake
 - Adapts to new realities more readily
 - Better decision-making in non-problematic situations, i.e., innovation
- DoDI 5000.02's new "framing assumptions"
 - Deepens learning from single-loop learning to double-loop learning



Adopting Learning Organizations

- DoD Cultural Change
 - Impractical to expect DoD as a whole to become learning organization
 - Develop a culture with low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance cultural value dimensions (CVDs) within each layer
 - Adopts America's cultural dimensions
- Requires change in cultural values and artifacts
 - Responsible risk-taking preferred
 - Failure acceptable
- Leaders need to incentivize the transition of the culture from one that desires hierarchical control to one that values innovation and encourages debate



Leadership Driven

- Autocratic leadership destroys double-loop learning
- Humility
 - Successful PMs readily admitted programmatic issues using honest, candid communication (2010 GAO Report)
 - Must be receptive to criticism and employees bearing bad news
 - Characterized by respect and a restraint of egotistical intentions
 - More apt to acknowledge need for help and extend trust
 - Leads to think open-mindedly -- acknowledging and evaluating alternate solution sets -- key sign of a well-cultivated critical thinker
 - Part 1 of “Level 5 Leadership”
- Professional Will
 - Part 2 of “Level 5 Leadership”
 - Focus on long-term goals
 - Must be coupled with ethical leadership
- Humility and professional will leads to organizational trust



Organizational Trust

- Crucial for learning organizations
 - Driving force allowing employees to experiment and adapt to changing culture
- Must take the place of daily, direct observation of workers' efforts
- Factors for building trust
 - Abilities
 - Benevolence, i.e., good intentions
 - Integrity
 - Trust propensity
- Enhanced by DoD's high in-group collectivism CVD
- Hindered by DoD's high power distance CVD
- Ops units may require high power distance, but do acquisition units?
 - Supports DoD organizational characteristic of differentiation
- Leads to environment where critical thinking can be cultivated



Enhanced Critical Thinking

- Purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed
 - Boils down to Socratic method of asking and answering questions, along with challenging assumptions
- Leadership must create atmosphere of reasoned questioning and active, respectful dissent
 - Hierarchical control limits critical thought as junior officers and civilians are reluctant to question their immediate supervisor or their supervisor's boss
- Functional conflict can be healthy and used as a change agent to drive growth in an organization
 - Requires foundation of interpersonal and organizational trust
 - Opens team up to new alternatives while taking all perspectives into consideration
 - Takes education and practice



Summary

