

# ADMINISTRATIVE THINKER

MPA Semester II

Unit II

Topic Covered : Chris Argyris

(Prof. Nand Lal Bharti)

**Prof and Head**

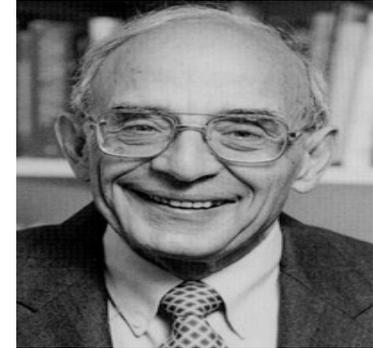
**Department of Public Administration**

**University of Lucknow**

# Chris Argyris (1923-2013)

## INTRODUCTION:

1. American Behavioural Theorist and Management writer
2. Degree in Psychology, 1947
3. M.A. Psychology and Economics, 1949
4. Ph.D in Organisational Behaviour



## Notable Work:

1. Knowledge For Action: A Guide To Overcomming Barriers To Organisational Change(1993)
2. The Applicability Of Organisational Society(1972)
3. Management And Organisational Development(1971)
4. Intervention Theory And Method: A Behavioural Science View (1972)
5. Organisation And Innovation (1965)
6. Integrating The Individual And The Organisation (1964)
7. Personality And Organisation(1957)

# INFLUENTIAL IDEAS/CONCEPT

- Maturity-Immaturity Group
- T-Group Technique
- Single Loop and Double Loop Learning
- Organisational Learning

# Maturity- Immaturity Model

Argyris Maturity Theory, presented by Chris Argyris in *Personality and Organization*, is one of the many theories that seek to explain the human nature and behavior. According to this theory, a person's development is processed along a continuous break of an immaturity situation to a maturity situation. A mature person is characterised for being active, independent, self-confident and self-controlled. On the contrary, an immature person is passive, dependent, has lack of confidence and feels need of control by others.

Argyris believed that managers who treat people positively, and are responsible adults, will achieve the highest productivity. He thought that common problems of employee avoiding work, lack of interest, alienation and low morale may be signs of mismatch between management practice and mature adult personality. His solution to the problem is to expand job responsibilities; allow more task variety and adjust supervisory styles to allow more participation and promote better human relations.

According to Argyris, seven changes should take place in the personality of individuals if they are to develop into mature people over the years. The seven changes are:

# Maturity- Immaturity Model...

Seven Dimension/Characteristics given by Chris Argyris

S. No	Immaturity(Childhood)	Maturity(adulthood)
1.	Infant (Passivity)	Adult(activity: well thought activity)
2.	Dependence	Relative independence
3.	Limited Behaviour	Many Different Behaviour
4.	Erratic and Shallow Interest	Stable and Deeper Interest
5.	Short-Termed	Long-Termed
6.	Social Position- Subordinate	Social Position- Equal or Superordinate
7.	Lack of Self awareness	Self awareness and Self Control

# Maturity- Immaturity Model...

In Argyris opinion, these changes reside on a continuum and that the “healthy” personality develops along the continuum from “immaturity” to “maturity”. These changes are only general tendencies, but they do give some light on the matter of maturity.

## **Limitation of Maturity-Immaturity Model:-**

A big limitation of this theory is that it relies on each individual’s personality, therefore given that everyone is different there can be so many different results as when someone will reach all the seven stages . Also another important limitation is that the theory is based on the development of healthy child, and does not take into account those with disabilities and their development.

# Improving Interpersonal Competence

Organisations have been emphasising upon improving the competence involving intellectual or mechanical skills. In organisations, ranging from research establishment hospital to business firms and civil services, Argyris found that competence involving interpersonal skills has been woefully neglected. Organisations are presumed to be able to function better, the more interpersonally competent their members are. Interpersonal competence refers to the ability to deal effectively with an environment populated by other human beings. Argyris is definitely the most persuasive advocate of the pursuit of the goal of interpersonal competence. He postulates three requirements for the development of interpersonal competence.

# Improving Interpersonal Competence...

Three requirements of Improving Interpersonal Competence

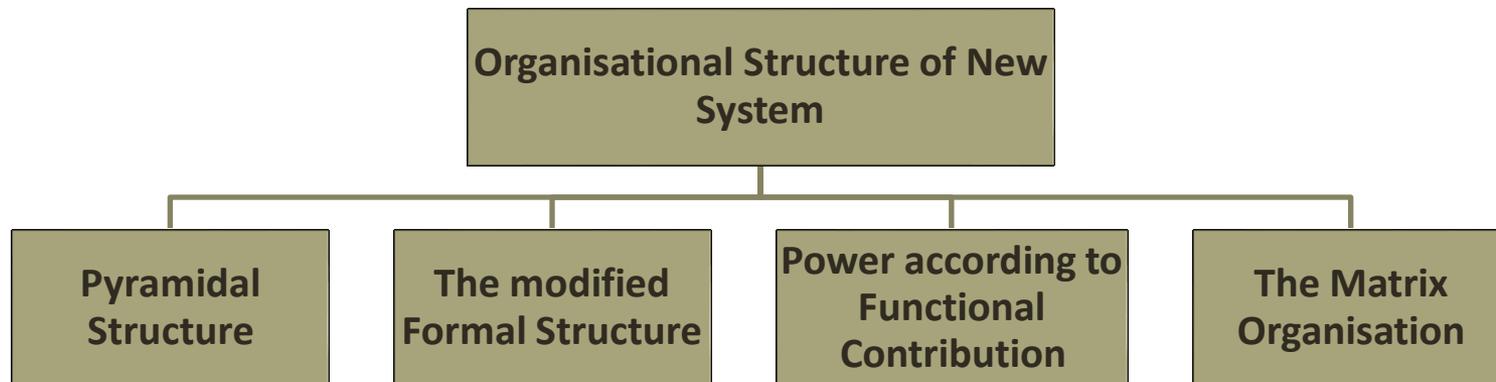
1. **Self Acceptance** : Degree of which the person values himself
2. **Confirmation** : The reality testing of one's own self image
3. **Essentiality** : One's opportunity to utilise the central abilities and express his central needs

In attempting to operationalise the concepts of interpersonal competence, Argyris specific kinds of behaviour that he regards as concrete evidence of interpersonally competent behaviour. These four types of behaviour are arranged roughly in order of decreasing frequency of occurrence and increasing potency for contribution to competence. They are: -

1. **Owning up to/** accepting responsibility for one's idea and feelings
2. **Open to ideas and feeling** of others and those from within one's self
3. **Experiment with new ideas and feelings**
4. **Helping others**

# The organisational Structure of the New System

Chris Argyris believed that Future organisation will be the combination of both old and new forms. Hence he given 4 structure of new system



# The Organisational Structure of the New System...

- **The Pyramidal Structure:** Should be used in the performance of routine operation
- **The modified formal organisational structure:** this is close to Likert's link-pin concept which enables a subordinate to be a member of the superiors' decisional unit.
- **Power according to functional contribution:** Each employee has equal opportunity to be provided information, power and controls, depending on his potential contribution to the problem. This strategy may be applied in situations involving teamwork , group incentives, new product development, Inter-departmental activities and long-range planning.
- **The Matrix Organisation:** Under this each individual has equal power & responsibility & he may not relinquish it. A matrix organization is expected to eliminate superior-subordinate relationships and substitute for them individual self discipline
  - A matrix organization would be rid of internal monopolies. It is less designed around power and more around who has relevant information.
  - Project teams are created to solve specific problems.
  - The matrix organization enables jobs to be enlarged.

# The Techniques of Programmed Learning

- **The T group technique or sensitivity training** is a technique suggested by Argyris for improving personal effectiveness of employees.
- It consists of a laboratory program designed to provide opportunities for individual employees to expose their behavior give and receive feedback, experiment with new behavior and develop awareness and acceptance of self and sensitivity to personality of others.
- T group sessions enable participants to forget hierarchical identities and develop distributive leadership and consensus decision making

# T-group and Public Administration

Chris Argyris suggests the widespread use of T-group technique or sensitivity training in public administration . His assessment of the United State Department of State is illustrative of the pathologies in governmental organisations as well as the need for intervention in organisational socio-emotional processes. According to Argyris, reforms in governmental organisation should aim at providing employee with higher order need satisfaction. This require long range change program, which would focus on the behaviour and leadership style fo senior participants anss the introduction of organisational changes that would culminate in the enlarging of responsibilities and adopting innovative behaviour. He also suggest the radical revision in the personnel practices in order to reduce the system's defenses. It is observed that the characteristics of the US state Department are common to most publicly administered organisations in the west or non-west. While Argyris' recommendations stem from a specific research study , Frederickson considers them relevant to all governmental organisations.

# Organisational Learning

The work of Argyris and Schon has contributed to the emergence of the idea of a 'learning organisation'. An organisation develops frameworks, norms and strategies for carrying out its activity. In a healthy organisation these are continuously being tested, thereby enabling employees to learn new ideas and practices. As a result, the organisation itself changes/ transforms itself, to be called a 'learning organisation'. Argyris devotes considerable attention towards a systematic analysis of learning in organisations. He refers to two types of learning: (1) single-loop learning (Model I behavior) and (2) double-loop learning (Model II behaviour). Single-loop learning occurs when a manager responds to a problem by recourse to the routine 'application of rules'. Double-loop learning takes place when the Manager / employee questions the assumptions on which the response is based. Argyris explains his theory in the following words:

Learning can be defined as occurring under two conditions. First, 'learning occurs when an organisation achieves what is intended, that is, there is a match between its design for action and the actual outcome'. Second, learning also occurs 'when a mismatch between intention and outcome is identified and corrected, that is, a mismatch is turned into a match.' Single-loop learning occurs when matches are created, or when mismatches are corrected by changing actions. Double-loop learning occurs when mismatches are corrected by examining and altering first the governing variables and then the actions. Defensive routines are minimized in double-loop learning, thereby facilitating learning. In this, errors are detected and corrective action is initiated (Argyris, 1995, 20-22).

# Critique of Herbert Simon:

Argyris is critical of Herbert Simon for his emphasis on the importance of authority structures, for paying limited attention to the emotional side of man and for ignoring the negative feelings of a typical employee towards the organisation and its goals. He states that Simon's concept of 'intendedly rational man', with its focus on the consistent, programmable and organized thinking activities' of an employee, accords primacy to goal-relevant behaviour and ignores the more salient aspect as to how the purpose itself has emerged. Argyris considers that the concept of 'satisficing man' would promote status quo in organisations. Besides the exclusion of variables like self-actualization, reliance on mechanisms of organisational influence would tantamount to the view that human beings can be motivated by the authority system.

# Critique of Chris Argyris

There is a subtle inconsistency between Argyris' commitment to the benign view of man and his belief in self-actualization on the one hand and his advocacy of the need for flexibility in finding a match between the nature of the task and the structure of the organisation on the other. Herbert Simon (1973, 348) takes serious objection to Argyris' antipathy to authority, which is considered to be without any parallel. According to him the view that 'structure is evil' is influenced by Argyris' obsession with the need for power. Simon further points out: Argyris ...tended to choose de-emphasis of authority relations as the way out but at the price of neglecting the consequences for organizational effectiveness...what corrupts is not power, but the need for power and it corrupts both the powerful and the powerless." (Simon, 1973, 349).

Attention has also been drawn to lack of sufficient empirical support to Argyris' contention that employees are always antagonistic to authority. On the contrary, there is considerable support to Herbert Simon's view that many employees seem to accept authority and organisation goals because such acceptance is in congruence with their values and interests. The T-group training experiments initiated in the 1960s by Argyris and several others were reported to be an astounding success. The experimenter were excited about their power to unfreeze the rigid, authoritarian behaviour of many managers. However, with the passage of time and thousands of T-group experiments, it was noticed that the effects of T-groups experiments were short-lived and the behavior change could not be sustained for long as the employees reverted to their pre-existing behavior patterns.

# References

1. Argyris, Chris - Personality And Organisation
2. Manoj Dixit; et. Al - Public Administration
3. Maheshwari, S.R. - Administrative Thinkers
4. Prasad & Prasad - Administrative Thinkers