

Quality of Working Life and Organizational Development

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Abstract

“Quality of Working Life” is a term that had been used to describe the broader job-related experience an individual has. Quality of Working Life is not a unitary, but has been seen as incorporating a hierarchy of perspectives that not only include work-based factors such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and relationships with work colleagues, but also factors that broadly reflect life satisfaction and general feelings of well-being. More recently, work-related stress and the relationship between work and non-work life domains have also been identified as factors that should conceptually be included in Quality of Working Life. The holistic and eco-systemic conception views the world as an open, living system and emphasizes the interaction and interdependence of all phenomena, which implies that the individual organism always interacts with its physical and social environment. In a study of quality of work life, one could adopt an eco-systemic approach and try to list all possible variables, catalysts and influences with which someone could interact and which could contribute to his/her general state of being. One could also try to find and elaborate on a quality, which researchers have not yet exhausted, as a possible variable. However, perhaps it is as important to acknowledge that there are certain concerns that all people have in common, at least to some degree.

Keywords: Quality of Working Life (QWL); Organizational Development (OD)

Introduction

The quality of life is gaining increasing attention by organizations. Quality of life encompasses the sum total of healthy experiences that individuals experience in the various facets of their life. A big component of the quality of life is the quality of life experienced by organization members, at the work place. The quality of working life is particularly important and worthy of investigation since individuals do not compartmentalize their lives but carry over their satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced at work where they spend the major part of their time, their home. Thus the quality of life at work spills over to the quality of life experienced in the family. The key objective of the Organizational Development (OD) is to improve the quality of working life. The commonly measured indices of the Quality of Working Life (QWL) of employees is the extent of their job involvement at work, their sense of competence and job satisfaction, the supervision, coworkers pay, promotional opportunities etc. OD efforts are intended to enhance the QWL, not only from the employee's point of view, but also from the organizational and social perspective [1].

Quality of Work Life as OD Interventions

OD can be set of structured activities in which targets are groups or individuals engage with a task or a sequence of tasks where the task goals are related directly or indirectly to organizational improvement. The OD intervention has three different characteristics. OD intervention firstly focuses on the organizational activity, secondly OD would generally focus on work group as the unit of analysis and lastly the OD would view the change normally as an ongoing process. Now it is the strategy to be designed to bring the change. Traditional strategy can be through the rewards and punishments. This may be power coercive strategy. People willingly accept change when they realize that the change is in their own interest. If the people not only agree to change but also seek change actively it is called the empirical rational strategy. The third strategy aims at the attitudes and values of human beings. This strategy is called the normative reductive strategy which helps in improving problem solving capabilities of the system and fosters the growth of the individuals who make the system. OD programme may

use a combination of interventions using different strategies. OD efforts are useful whenever problems and tensions exist or arise [2]. Change cannot be made without considering the human side of the enterprise. OD interventions can be at the individual or intrapersonal level i.e. personnel counseling and career planning; at dyadic level solving problems in interpersonal communication and in superior subordinate relationship; at group level helping people to get along with each other and clarifying perceived incongruities in goals and even at the family level helping couples to get adjusted to transfers and relocations. Some of the people oriented ‘OD’ interventions are sensitivity training, transactional analysis, process consultation, and third partly peacemaking, team building individual counseling, role clarification and different kinds of workshops. Job evaluation, job redesigning are some of the job related interventions. An OD strategy used to assess and enhance the effectiveness of the organization is what is known as organizational mirroring. The managerial group and techniques are also other strategies to increase the organizational effectiveness [3,4].

Structural Interventions: Optimization of Social and Technological Systems of Organization

Most of the structural interventions we have reviewed seek a joint optimization of the social and technological systems of organizations. Applications are properly called OD to the extent that the latter is true; they use the participant action research model, and other characteristics are congruent with how OD has been described till now. OD label would not be applied whenever structural interventions are carried out

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Received April 30, 2013; Published May 20, 2013

Citation: Gupta A (2013) Quality of Working Life and Organizational Development. 2: 687 doi:[10.4172/scientificreports.687](http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/scientificreports.687)

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without attention to the social system or to humanistic values. Though OD seems to have a promising future, there are certain factors that have the potential to make the future of OD uncertain. These include nature of organizational leadership and value of top management, knowledge of management about OD, interdisciplinary nature of OD, dissemination of OD techniques, integration of techniques in the field of OD with those in other fields on the recording and maintenance of the future working of OD. Structural reorganization is becoming necessary to make the organizations competitive [5]. Organizations are becoming more flats, more decentralized and more organic. Flat organization structure reduces the level by widening the span of control. It reduces the administrative cost. Fewer levels improve the communication. Wider span of control makes the manager to decentralize his subordinates. Decentralized decision making is a popular OD intervention. Decentralization gives lower level employees greater control over their work. Pushing down the authority helps people to take the decisions at the situations. OD intends to make the organizations more organic. The organization has to be less bureaucratic to make them to respond quickly to the changes in the environment. Employees should actively participate in the reorganization process [6].

OD change agents favor a significant portion of an employee's compensation might be calculated on the productivity of his or her work. The year-end bonuses are prepared on the overall profitability of the company. Job redesign interventions include job rotation, enlargement, enrichment and autonomous work teams. Job redesign is similar to structural reorganization except that the structural reorganization focuses at organizational level and job redesign focuses at job level. Socio Technical System is largely associated with experiments attempted to create better fit among the technology. The technology deals with the tools, techniques, procedures, skills and knowledge used by employees to do their jobs. The social system comprises the people who work in their organization and their interrelationships [7]. The OD interventions are directed at changing the attitudes and behavior of the people in organizations. The change in attitudes can be achieved through communication, decision making and problem solving. Sensitivity training is widely used by psychotherapists, counselors, educators, social workers, organizational trainers and consultants. This training is a method of changing behavior through unstructured group interaction. Sensitivity training is designed as a 'stranger's lab' or a cousin, family lab. In stranger lab the participants are from different organizations and they do not know each other. In the cousin lab, the participants are from the same organization but not from the same division. In the family lab they are from the same division. Cousin and family labs are frequently used for 'OD' [8].

The sequence of events in a sensitivity lab may be as the following. Members are brought together in free and open environment in which participants discuss themselves loosely directed by a behavioral scientist. The group is process oriented i.e. the individuals learn through observing and participating rather than being told. The participants learn about their personal styles, how they communicate and how they are perceived by others. Different individuals react differently to the T group or sensitivity training session. People, who are more open to feedback, learn more about themselves and acquire increased self awareness. T group sessions would help aggressive individuals to become friendly, shy persons to be more assertive. T group effects more realistic self perception, greater group cohesiveness, and a reduction in dysfunctional interpersonal conflicts. This helps the individual to identify himself with the organization. Different individuals react differently to the T group session. People, who are more open to feedback, learn more about themselves. They become more attentive to the

feeling of others. T group sessions have helped aggressive individuals to become friendly, timid persons to become more assertive. The successful T group can affect more realistic self-perceptions, greater group cohesiveness and a reduction in dysfunctional interpersonal conflicts. It will ideally result in a better integration between the individual and the organization [9,10].

Interventions and Survey Feed Back

The survey feedback is a good diagnostic tool. The findings of the survey feedback can be used for several types of interventions. Attitude surveys and data feedback are basically used for the survey feedback. Whenever the organization contemplates introducing a change, it is necessary to do an attitudinal survey of individuals and groups at all levels in the organization. These surveys provide a useful data for future trends. Everyone in the organization can participate in survey feedback. A questionnaire is usually completed by all members in organizations or unit. Organization members may be asked to suggest questions or may be interviewed to determine what issues are relevant. The questionnaire typically asks members for their perceptions and attitudes on a broad range of topics such as decision making practices, communication effectiveness, Co-ordination between the units, and satisfaction with the organization job, peers and their immediate supervisor [11,12]. The data from this questionnaire is tabulated with data pertaining to an individual and to the entire organization and distributed to employees. This data then becomes the spring board for identifying problems and clarifying issues that may be creating difficulties for people. The objective of the survey feedback is to encourage discussion and that discussions focus on issues and ideas and not on attacking individuals. Group discussion in the survey feedback approach should result in members identifying possible implications of the questionnaire findings. It is to be ascertained that whether the survey feedback has improved the listening people, generation of new ideas and improvement in job assignments. It is found that survey feedback meetings can lead to attitudinal changes by participant's satisfaction, positive attitudes toward work and one's supervisor and involvement in organizations. The survey feedback approach changes attitudes, long-term changes in behavior have not resulted from mere group discussion of the results. However, it cannot be said that survey feedback alone leads to changes in individual behavior [13].

Process Consultation: Organizational Change

The organizations seldom operate effectively. Managers often feel that their unit's performance can be improved but they are unable to identify what can be improved and how it can be improved. If the process of getting things done is understood, it leads to organizational effectiveness. If proper attention is not paid to process, it results in more problems. Structural and the procedural aspects are important to organizations to run smoothly. The process consultation is done by an outside consultant to assist the client, to deal with problems like work-flow, informal relationships and formal communication channels. Process consultation is similar to sensitivity training. Both the interventions deal with the interpersonal problems which in turn improve the organizational effectiveness. Organizational system specifies the channels of communication, which helps the people to know whether they can communicate only through hierarchy or horizontally or both. A manager has to pay attention to the process by which the communication takes place. The manager has to understand whether people understand each other and are friendly with each other. Process consultation requires a combination of skills in establishing helping relationships, knowing what kinds of processes to look for

in organizations, and intervening in a way to improve organizational process. In the process are consultation, consultant works with the managers, individuals and groups in the system to develop their process skills that is diagnose, understand and resolve process related problems [14]. This involves sensitizing the individuals involved about issues such as how people get along with each other, how conflicts are resolved, styles of interaction among departments and so on. The members of the organization are made aware of organizational processes that enhance and obstruct their effectiveness. They also learn how to bring about necessary changes so that the organization becomes a more effective system. The process consultant need not be an expert in solving the problems. The consultant should be able to diagnose and help in developing a relationship.

Team Building

In an organization people are required to work together to achieve the goals. OD has focused considerably on team building. Team building can be applied within groups or at the intergroup level where activities are interdependent. Team building is applicable to the case of interdependence. The objective of the team building is to improve the co-ordination among the team members which will result in increasing the groups' performance. The team building helps in goal setting and development of interpersonal relations among team members. It helps to clarify each member's role and responsibilities and team process analysis. Team building helps to increase the interaction among members of the group which increases trust and openness. Organizational members have to define the goals and identity the priorities of the group. Different perceptions of the group's purpose may be surfaced and group members can evaluate their performance. This would help them to identify the potential problem areas. This would help the group members to exchange their views which may initially take place in smaller groups followed up by sharing of their finding with the total group. Team building also helps in clarifying each member's role in the group. Each role can be identified and clarified. Previous ambiguities can be brought to the surface. It may help the individuals to understand their job thoroughly and the specific tasks to be carried out to increase the groups' effectiveness. This would lead to the effectiveness of the group. Team building is effective in increasing the member involvement and participation in group activities and in improving the effectiveness of the meetings [15].

Third Party Peace Making and Inter Group Development

Third party peacemaking is the process of resolving a conflict by a third party. The third party should arrange for the face to face contacts between the conflicting parties and make them realize that the conflict among them is improving the effectiveness of both. The consultant should be able to use the right kind of intervention to surface the issues involved in the conflict. The consultant has to choose a right place, a proper environment, appropriate agenda for a meeting. The consultant may help the conflicting parties to own the solutions to the problems. The consultant should help to restructure the perceptions and facilitate the understanding between the parties involved. The dysfunctional conflict that exists in every organization is the concern of OD. The efforts of change are directed towards this to reduce the conflict. Intergroup development may help to change the attitudes, stereotypes and perceptions that exist between groups. Stereotypes about others create a negative impact on the coordination among the group members, problem solving is the popular method used to improve the intergroup relations. Each group meets separately to develop the lists of the alternatives generated by them. Then the groups share their ideas,

discuss the similarities and differences and they finally identify the causer for the disparities. The causes of disparities thus identified may be because of the conflicting goals, misunderstanding and distorted perceptions because of stereotypes. The identification of the causes of the differences would help the groups to develop solutions that will improve relations between the groups.

Organizational Behavior Modification: A Corrective Behaviour Strategy

Organizational Behavior (OB) modification is the recent addition to the 'OD' interventions. People learn to behave so they get something they want or avoid something they do not want; Behavior is assumed to be learned. Skinner advocated creating pleasing consequences to follow specific forms of behavior. People will behave positively if they are positively reinforced for doing so by rewarding. The behavior can be shaped by reinforcing systematically each step that moves the individual close to the desired responses. The essence of the OB modification is that the desired behavior can be shaped or changed by using the change agents that can manipulate environmental contingencies. The productive behavior of the people at every level of organization, are to be positively reinforced. This would result in goal congruent behavior of the total organization [15].

Transaction Analysis: An Integrative Approach to Psychology and Psychotherapy

Transaction analysis is another 'OD' technique. Transaction analysis is both an approach for defining and for analyzing communication interaction between people and theory of personality. Managers or trainers or consultants, who are in influencing roles will be able to develop others and help them to become self sufficient and capable of solving problems. Transaction analysis (TA) is one of the important tools to understand the personality style of the individuals. TA holds that an individual's personality is made up of three ego states the parent, the child and the adult. These labels have nothing to do with the age. The parent ego state performs functions, regulatory behaviour through prescriptions, and sanctions, and nurturing through providing support. It is an ego state of authority and superiority. A person acting in his or her parent state is usually dominant, scolding and otherwise authoritative. The adult ego state performs the function of collection of information, and the processing of such information like a computer. The adult state is rational and objective. It deals with reality and objectively gathers information. It is not prejudiced by the values of the parent or the natural urges of the child. The child ego state is concerned with several functions like creativity, curiosity and fun and with manipulation, rebellion and sulking. The child contains all the impulses that are natural to an infant. Acting in this state, one can be obedient or manipulative, charming at one moment and repulsive the next. Whereas the parent acts as he or she was taught, the child is emotional and acts according to how he or she feels at the moment.

The parent and child ego states feel and react separately while only the adult state thinks or processes transactional data logically before acting. In most situations, the ideal interaction is an adult stimulus, followed by an adult response. The parallel transaction i.e. parent-parent, adult-adult and child-child can go on smoothly. Parallel transactions leave communication channels open for further exploration of the relationship. The communication is short circuited whenever a cross transaction occurs. Transactional analysis is a personal method for analyzing and understanding behavior. TA is a useful technique for understanding how people communicate with each other and helps us to

identify ways of maximizing adult-adult transactions in organizations. TA also helps to quickly identify and untangle crossed transactions. An understanding of the ulterior transactions that occur in organization can be minimized by overriding authentic encounters. Transaction analysis training is to make people understand their own ego states, their mode of communicating with others and the effectiveness of complimentary transactions. Transaction analysis training is particularly useful in improving dyadic relationships between the superior and subordinate. Transaction analysis may help people to understand others better and assist them in altering their responses so as to produce more effective results.

Organizational Mirror: A Group-Analytic Approach to Organizational Consultancy

Organization's effectiveness can be assessed and improved by obtaining feedback from several other groups like employees, customers, suppliers, government agencies. The process of getting feedback for improvement is organizational mirroring. Key- persons from the various relevant organizations are being invited to participate to mirror or reflect back to the lost organization how it is perceived. The people who are attending the meeting are being interviewed by a consultant before the meetings. This would help to assess the magnitude of the problematic issues and facilitate the problem solving process [16]. The total group which meets thereafter identifies the critical issues and recommends needed changes. Organizational mirroring as an intervention technique helps the organization to improve its relations with external groups.

Grid Training: An Online Education Technique

Grid training is based on the managerial grid approach to leadership. The goal of the grid training is maximum concern both for production and people. Sensitivity training is a tool for OD whereas grid training offers a complete plan for OD. There are six phases of grid training. Participants are introduced to the overall concepts and materials used in the grid training. Grid training is structured and concentrates more on leadership styles than on development of self. In the second phase members are brought together to explain to them how they are going to attain position in the grid. Things learned in the orientation stage are applied to the organizational situation. The first two phases are aimed at managerial development. Intergroup development focuses on group-to-group organization development. Conflicts between groups can be identified and analyzed. The participants contributed to and agree upon the important goals for the organization as done in the management by objectives. This stage ensures the participant's commitment and self-control. Participants attempt to accomplish the goals which they set in the earlier phase. The participants get together and discuss the major issues. In the final phase, support is ensured for the changes identified earlier. Further the programme is evaluated. The grid training may take three to five years to implement. The grid training through its various phases helps the managers sharpen their skills and leadership abilities, and groups improve their intra and inter-team interactions [17].

Conclusion

Today's organizations are faced with the tremendous forces for change. The change can be managed systematically through the

process of the organizational development. The OD interventions used are sensitivity training, grid training, survey feedback, process consultation, third party peacemaking, team building, transaction analysis and organizational mirroring. OD has fairly good chance in solving some of the challenges facing today's organizations.

Biography

Dr. Abhishek Gupta (B.Com, MBA, Ph.D) is the Administrative-cum-Accounts Officer & Head of Office, Sardar Swaran Singh National Institute of Renewable Energy (Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, Govt. of India), Kapurthala (Punjab), India. Dr. Gupta is working in Finance & Administrative Department at management level since over twelve years.

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