Applications of Organization Development Techniques in Improving the Quality of Education

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Abstract

Purpose:
Organization Development (OD), is still an emerging concept in developing countries. Since universities are the places where the future of the countries is being nourished and developed. Thus if universities of a country are made up to date and fully equipped in terms of trained human resource, other physical facilities, Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Management Information System (MIS) the future of country can easily be predicted as prosperous and emergent. In developing countries education is always given a very less importance specifically in terms of budget allocation e.g. only 2% to 4% of budget is allocated to education in the developing countries.

Revisions of curriculums, increasing the pays of university employees, library improvements, improvement in infrastructures and labs and much more has been done in the name of improving the quality of education for the universities but this had never proved itself to be a remarkable effort as far as the quality of education is concerned. The possible problems in any organization can be at individual level, group level or organizational level which can overall mar the organization. Therefore the main purpose of the research is the design of a model which can help changing the quality of education at university level using OD techniques.

The researchers have designed model by using the techniques of OD including business process reengineering which, in a sense, is also a part of OD, for improving the overall quality of education in public sector universities of Pakistan. The model if implemented with few changes with respect to the culture and environment can not only be applicable in Pakistan but also in all universities of the world.

Method of Study/Approach:
Historical/ Descriptive research method is used for the research.

Value of Paper:
The paper, if implemented, is very useful as it is meant for improving the quality of education at university level. Since it is applicable at all universities of the world (with some alterations) so it is not confined only to the prosperity of a single country rather it

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can help in overall improvement of the world by improving every university existing in it.

Key words:
Organization Development techniques, quality of education, university level, developing countries, improvement model.

Catergorization:

General review

Introduction:

Education which is generally becoming more of a commercial business than a social objective is very critical for an overall development of a country. People are establishing educational institutions for financial gains rather than for improving the education and learning. In short, education has become a business nowadays. However, the functions of the educational institutions are to develop the people physically, mentally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually. (Memon, 2007)

Much of the work is done in the field of improving the quality of education. Tons of papers have been utilized to write literature about improving the quality of education by improving the overall conditions of university environment. But nothing different has ever come up by the research which ever has produced drastic changes for improving the quality of education at large. The researchers here are not at all, by any means, saying that all the work ever done in this field is a wastage but are trying to emphasize the fact that all efforts done before were not long lasting. They deteriorated with time and/or with change of the personnel in implementing body.

The researchers have taken Organization Development (OD) as a focal point for improving the quality of education, since "the quality of an organization's human resources is key to success, and much of it is a function of training and development", (Epie, 2001). And OD is improving the output by means of improving at individual, team and organizaion level taking human resource has the means for achieving the target.

About OD:

There are multiple definitions of OD. Richard Beckhard defines organization development as an effort (1) planned, (2) organization-wide), (3) managed from the top, (4) to increase organization effectiveness and health, through (5) planned interventions in the organizations processes using behavioral science knowledge". (Beckhard, 1969). Similarly OD is also defined as a systematic process for applying behavioral science principles and practices in organizations to increase individual and organizational effectiveness (French, 2008).

So OD is improvement of the organization by developing its human resource through planned change efforts/interventions at all levels using human behavior approach. The

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researchers in their research have made a model to improve the quality of education at university level by following the foot steps of OD. Since, an educated and skilled workforce is essential for the effective functioning of the economy, the competitiveness and wealth of the nation, as well as for the overall well-being of society (Beardwell, 1997). So the researchers have viewed the whole workforce of a university under a microscope by dividing them in two categories for the planned change. One of the categories is related to education members and the other is administration. The education members include all the personnel of a university related to education they include students, teaching assistants, lecturers to Rector/Dean and administration includes all levels of working staff from janitors, supervisors, library/lab staff, and student's affairs' personnel to Rector/Chief Administrator. However, the model presented, applies equally to both parts as independent entities and as a single entity.

Since OD takes up human development as a core issue for improving an organization so our improvement model will device a model for improving the human capital for improving the quality of education at university level.

Human Capital at a University:

Since universities in any country is operated by following members of the society

1. Private (Organizations including Trusts, People etc)
2. Public (Government)
3. Both (Semi-government)

Every one having different departmental categorization. However, all the universities can mainly be categorized in three departments catering the human capital which are

1. Faculty Members
2. Administration
3. Students

Faculty members are pivotal in improving the quality of education as they are the dissimenator of the education however, administration is also a key factors without its participation the overall objective of quality of education can not be met. Students are the key stakeholders.

Getting Ready for OD:

Change is always considered something that will lead to downsizing, cutting of pays etc, thus it is never welcomed. At the same time change is very important since in today's business environment more than at any time in history, the only constant is change (Brown, 2006). The organizations which do not change consequently are banished so an organization must develop an adaptive orientation and management style that is geared to its environment (Brown, 2006).

A team comprising of early middle career professionals from educational members and administration be made. In the start the be given an insight about OD through extensive training. Consequently the team members will come to know about the need, importance and type of change required in their departments back in their offices.

After the training they should start talking about OD and the change which should be there without harming the sanctity, importance of any other office bearer. This activity will slowly and steadily incorporate in the minds of the educational members and administration about the positive change which is coming.

This activity will get the educational as well as administration members ready intuitively about the change that should come (or is coming) to overall improve their own organization, in this case university.

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The Confrontation Meeting 1:
The confrontation meeting is a one-day meeting of the entire management of an organization in which they take reading of their own organization health (Beckhard, 1967).

After continuous slow poisoning about the positive change by the team, the rest of the professionals should be almost ready for the change program and the call for the change program will not come as a surprise for them which otherwise would be a great deal.

After the confrontation meeting which is attended by almost all the professionals of the university, the team would have had gathered a data regarding the problems and concerns about the change (OD) program, prioritized the problems and a well laid action plan for improvement.

At this point the OD team has gathered the data regarding the main problems faced by the members of the university.

The data gathered from the confrontation meeting would be about the collective/faced-by-many problems. The need is required that every one is interviewed so that data regarding problems at individual level must also be gathered.

Confrontation Meeting 2:
Confrontation meeting 2 will not be like the usual confrontation meetings as described by Beckhard, 2001. It will be a real confrontation type of meeting in which all the workforce confront with their issues in a true sence.

Confrontation meeting 2 comes within the first week of the first confrontation meeting. During confrontation meeting 2, when all the members of the organization are known about the latest development in the organization and its intention and they have no doubt about the positive change, its time to confront in true sence.

All the problems at individual level, team level and at organization level should be addressed and noted down. Confrontation meeting 2 is a sort of meeting in which all the employees come up with their grudges, problems that they think they have with others, all the things that they feel are not their, including pays, benefits, hygience factors issues, interpersonal issues – every things that is a hinderance in their performance.

Atleast two sessions are required for the such a meeting because the problems will be so many that it may take multiple days listening and understanding the causes and gravity of the problems.

The outcomes of this meeting are very important. The outcomes will tell the higher ups whether the current scenerio of the organization is alligned with the vision, mission and objectives of the overall orgnaization. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to the top management to see what are the ground realities in a clearer manner. It will set the mind of the higher ups about the change which is required in the organization. The

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second meeting will also show seriousness of the management towards change – positve one. The meeting will also get ready the employees for major and drastic changes which will overall pump energy and enthusiasm in the whole orgnaization.

At this level most of the problems would still be unidentified specifically by the younger staff and faculty members. This problem can be mitigated by individual and team interviews.

Individual and Team Interviews:
The OD team should interview each and every individual and team of the university who either fall in educational-member category or administration category or both.

Individual of each category will have different problems pertaining to nature, attitude and qualitifactoin, etc. Some of the responces of such interviews would likely to be as listed below.

From Education Group:

1. No time for further studies.
2. No time for research
3. Too muck extra work load.
4. Problems in class
5. Non availability of lower staff
6. etc

From Administration Group:

1. Students need to be disciplined.
2. Faculty must be given lessers powers than what they enjoy now.
3. Lesser pay than faculty
4. etc

Common problems to both groups:

1. Compensation in terms of pay.
2. Problem of no-recognition.
3. Too much distance between administration and faculty.
4. Discriminatory Problems
5. Problems with colleagues and/or students.
6. No or less fringe benefits.
7. Too much management levels
8. Bureaucratic Culture
9. Lack of Co Curricular Activities
10. etc

OD Solution to All the Problems mentioned above are given as follows

Career & Life Planning:
Career life planning is the process of choosing occupational, organizational, and career paths. There are several different approaches to career life planning. All of them use the idea of goal setting and achievement motivation to gain greater control over one's future career development.

Career and Life Planning is a very important aspect for every individual of an organization. Career, as mentioned by Hughes, consists, objectively, of a series of status and clearly defined offices . . . subjectively, a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees his [sic] life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and things which happen to him (Hughes, 1937).

In the university scenario the OD team will meet with every employee of the organization to device ways with the concern employees to help improve and develop their careers. Special initiatives like compensation, leave, low burden, etc must be taken to help improve their education.

Career planning can provide employees with information that will enable them to make better career decisions (Brown, 2006). Consequently the employees will be then made part of the project teams which will be in line with their defined careers and life plans. This will make them satisfied and enthusiastics about the projects.

Empowerment:
Empowerment is the process of giving employees the power to make decisions about their work (Brown, 2006) and it is an act of leadership (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2006). As a university is an amalgam of people with different and multiple expertise and interests therefore, by empowering the employees of a university their would be no limit to what good can happen to the quality of education in particular and to the university in general. Mostly people think that empowerment can cause serious problems, however, by having responsibility of all the actions can keep the problem issue low as described by Townsend and Gebhardt in2006, according to them, responsibility is the obligation to act; authority is the power to act; and accountability is the measuring and reporting the act and accepting the consequences. When authority and responsibility match, accountability is unambiguous, and you have empowerment.

Empowerment is a very important tool as employees who are empowered are more proactive and self-sufficient in helping their organizations to achieve their goals (Brown, 2006). Similarly if the employees of the university are empowered they will do their job in a better, expected and desired manner which will cause improvement not in their day to day matters pertaining to university but also quality of education.

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Wellness Programs (Brown, 2006):

Wellness programs means to improve the overall state of health of an individual. This include provision of sports complex, availability of doctors, psychiatrist, psychologist etc to improve it. Many companies are already spending a lot on wellness programs e.g Xerox, has $3.5 million fitness and recreation center in its Virginia training facility, and General Foods has health and fitness efforts for 50,000 employees in 30 locations (Brown, 2006). Similarly a university should create wellness programs. Every member of the organization be allowed to be the part of it and must be trained and must be motivated to improve the their health, day to day activities, personal life (by Emotional Intelligence programs, psychology etc), phsycial fitness exercices etc.

Improvement of Hygiene Factors & Motivators:

Hygiene factors are the factors seeming to make individuals feel dissatisfied with their jobs and motivators are the factors seeming to make individuals feel satisfied with their jobs (Bartol et al, 2003). This is one of the main reasons of turnover in an organization.

The hygiene factors and motivators must be identified with the help of the OD team during the individual meeting with the workforce. Consequently the hygiene factors and motivators must be improved. In this way overall improvement and less turnover can be guaranteed as according to Herzberg's two-factor theory according to which hygiene factors keep workers from feeling dissatisfied, but motivators help workers feel satisfied and motivated (Bartol et al, 2003).

Family Culture:

Family culture is the one that lacks the most in most of the organizations. In high context cultures people respect each other not because what the people are capable off, but because of age, designation etc. The workers come to their organization, do their part of the job and leave. In order to make an organization competitive and growing people need to think about their organization beyond their selves. The workforce must think of the organization as their home and the people working in their organization as their family members in order to be competitive and growing. This can be achieved if a person is empowered, the person's future is secured with the organization (Career and Life Planning), recognition, wellness programs etc. By incorporating the family culture, synergy is guaranteed which can be used to achieve the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the university.

Recognition:

Recognition is very important as it motivates and encourages the workforce to work with more enthusiasm "even when people know something is right and best thing to do, they still need encouragement, examples, and rewards to maintain a desired behavior (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2006). Absence of recognition can cause serious damage to not only the workforce but also the overall process the workforce or individual is involved with. All the workforce must be recognized accordingly may be alone in the office, in meeting, during important events like convocation and gathering, notice boards etc.

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Recognition brings good input from all the workforce. According to Townsend and Gebhardt, 2006, if the employee hear thank you the odds are good that they will continue to help the company improve. Similarly to improve performance by considerable amount on and off workforce should be regarded. But the regard and recognition should not become so frequent and at-surface-only that the workers think of it as something un-genuine. Every recognition program must be prevented from becoming seen as an entitlement, something that is expected no matter what the contribution or effort on the part of the recipient (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2006).

Recognition also stops/lessens the turnover. Even a sentence of appreciation can have drastic effects. People who feel appreciated stay longer at an organization and work harder while they are there (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2006). Recognizing good efforts and inputs of the employees will produce Nobel-laureates and this recognition will drill down to students as well in the form of improved quality of education and recognition by itself. Who, in return will do wonders.

Participation/Role in Administrative Activities:
Though every members of an organization is doing some aspect of administrative activities they must also be made realized of the importance of their part of work. Though this is not the main task of faculty members but faculty and other staff members should be given administrative roles. It brings ownership. With ownership the need to workhard and devotedly is guarenteed which in case of a university causes improvement in overall quality of education.

Training and Development:
Trainings and workshops must be a regular part of organization.

Training, as defined by Manpower Services Commission in 1981, is a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behavior through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization. The training and workshops should be on improvement and development of skills like interpersonal, leadership and management, decision making, stress management, emotional intelligence (EI), time management, teaching methodologies, conflict resolution, people management and most importantly OD as a whole. The question that who will attend which workshop will however depend on the critical importance of a person and similarity of the workshop and the problem.

The workforce must be told about the importance of their part of the whole process in overall achieving the goals of the organization and about the training program as a tool or source in improvement of the organizational goal through improved skills of the workforce. As this will substantially decrease the negative effect of training which, according to (Rainbird and Maguire, 1993) is … much of the training reported was for organizational rather than individual development, suggesting that many employees would not regard the training they receive as training at all, since it neither imparts transferable skills nor contributes to personal and educational development.

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This in turn will improve the productivity which means quality of education at a univeristy.

Problems at Team Level:
Up till this point the total workforce of university have gone through the OD training as mentioned above, this will cause a great amount of decrease in problems at team level. The possible problems that can arise at team level are

    i. Operating Problems (Brown, 2006).
    ii. Defining and Clarifying Goals Problems (Brown, 2006).
    iii. Interpersonal Differences, Conflicts, Misunderstanding (Brown, 2006).
    iv. Antisocial and Dysfunctional Teams Norms Problems (Brown, 2006).
    v. Decision Making Problems (Brown, 2006).
    vi. Cohesiveness and Groupthink Problem (Brown, 2006).
    vii. Diversity
    viii. Interpersonal Problems

Proposed OD Solution:
Since at this stage all the members of a university have received OD training, solving the problems at this level will be easier than that of any time before. All the workforce is aware of the interpersonal skills, have gone through the confrontation meeting, are now part of a family culture, have well defined goals and objectives, have their career and life planned and have been made part of the teams with respect to their planned careers and redefined objectives, are now more empowered than before, are enjoying good health through wellness programs and having better hygiene factors.

Organization Level Problems:
The main problems left with the university after it has gone through the above mentioned phases are

    i. Processes Problems
    ii. Quality Problems
    iii. Behavior Problems

According to Jacka and Keller, 2002, the classis definition of process is that it is a mixture of inputs, actions and outputs. And the accumulation of activities that takes place in each business process is what ultimately determines whether a business can meet its objectives (Jacka and Keller, 2002). Processes Problems are those problems that are related to lengthy processes, delays, unnecessary approvals, cycle time, idle time, useless processes (any process must add value (Jacka, J. M. and Keller, P.J., 2002) etc. They make the processes that long that no one bothers to initiate such processes. Sometimes they are initiated only in dire needs. Such processes also seize creativity and innovation. This is one of the major problems at organization level that most of the jobs are never initiated because of the length of time they will take to complete. Only those organization can achieve world class performance that continuously do business processes improvements/benchmarking/reengineering. Tenner and DeToro, 2000 has also

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emphasized the same fact. According to them, a culture conducive to achieve world-class excellence is one with a process oriented management team. Similarly business process reengineering is required for improving the overall performance of a university. For continuous improvement the university must do process improvements on regular basis and whenever the need be.

Quality problems and Behavior problems will automatically be swept away as the all the university staff including the faculty has already gone through training and development phase. By this all other organization level problems e.g finance, building etc will be automatically be poured through better admissions, seminars, trainings etc, in once the improvement in quality of education is attained, which according to authors is attained by the OD model presented.

Proposed OD Model for Improvement of Education at University Level:
Chart 1, is the proposed OD model for improvement of education at university level and ellaboration of each step is given as above.
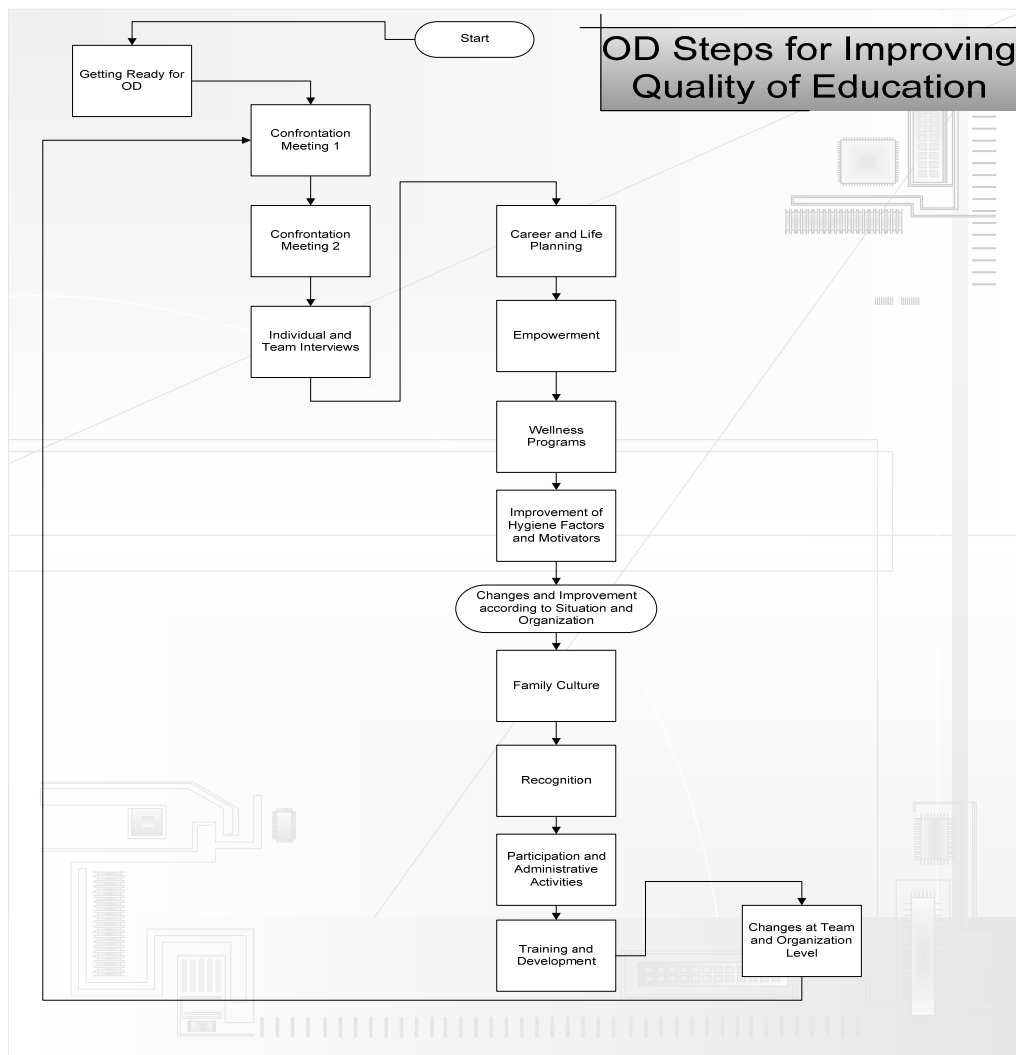

Chart (1)

Conclusion:
In this way when all the staff of an organization are satisfied as an individual, team and organization, they will serve their customers – in this scenerio the students and the country and the globe at large, in a better manner. OD will cause synergy, improve in processes, quality and better behaviour will ultimately be met. It is because of the fact that almost all the possible problems that can occur in any organization are mitigated by the OD model presented. The model presented is useable in any organization with some alteration for improvement. The model can also be used to overcome a specific problem e.g if in any organization turnover is the problem, the model can be used, similarly for improvement in processes the very model can be used and nonetheless it can also be used for quality problem either in service industry or manufacturing industry.

Room is there for further research e.g application of the model in organizations other than education can be made.

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