Role of the change agent in organisational development

This paper had been concluded in order to interpret the importance of the organization development and how achieving the organizational development process is going to affect the welfare of the organization. The paper identifies the main methodologies and theories that are concerning with the way the changing process are going to be achieved. Through the paper, there would be a identifying to the role of the change agent and the main characteristics that should be available at this person. The paper will also highlight the main dilemmas and the opportunities that are going to face the organizational development agent through the changing process, and how the agent should get rid of the barriers and how the agent are going to seize those opportunities.

Introduction

The changing nature of the market had influenced the ways that many managers used to think. Many organizations now seek to cop with the change that occurs in the market place and in the management methodologies. This changing nature had derived the companies to lean to changing their old theories and to maintain new ways to run their businesses, and their institutions in many ways. However, the changes in the market nature are considered to be challenges for the companies and the managements, it also can provide them with new opportunities. That's why it is important for the managers and the businesses' owners to be continuously aware with the newest methodologies and theories that help them manage their institutions more efficiently and effectively.

Literature review

What is the organizational development? Before interpreting the organizational development recently issues, there would be a discussion about the nature of the organizational development process and how this process started. The organizational development is a process that includes developing both of the organizational internal capacity in order to achieve effectiveness, to ensure its sustainability. Sometimes companies seek achieving the organizational development processes for maintaining certain missions, goals, or to cop with the development of the company's competitors. (Thomas G. Cummings, Christopher G. Worley)

The organizational development is based on the idea of changing the current state of the company. This change could be through restructuring, or re-engineering the internal structure of the company. Also, sometimes the company seeks changing the operations' processes at the company. Those characteristics of organizational development process led Adam smith to come with a broader definition, stating that the organizational development is considered to be the processes that the organization are achieving, through the usage of the behavioral science approach, system improvement, planning, and self-analysis, in order to reach the highest rate of effectiveness. (Smith 1998)

How to discover the need for change? The organizational management should develop an understanding of the need for change and create awareness and legitimacy, by seeking out and understanding both of the external data and the internal data, making sense of the perspectives of other stakeholders, and evaluating the organizational management concerns and perspectives. After maintaining those activities, the organizations should

identify whether the organization is ready for change or not. This issue will be answered through reviewing the previous change experiences, identifying the organizational degree of openness to change, measure the executives support, and whether there are fair and satisfying rewards for change or not. When the organizational management successfully realizes that the organization is requiring change and is ready for maintain an organizational change process, the organizational management should assign the agent, who is going to develop the organizational development process. (Thomas G. Cummings, Christopher G. Worley)

Who is the organizational development agent? The organizational change agent, who also called the organizational development practitioner, is the one, who performs the process of change in the organization. The agent should have some characteristics that would enhance his ability to achieve the process effectively. One of the main characteristics are his wide knowledge about the behavior of the people within the organization, this knowledge can be gained through his interaction with the employees personally, or by his observation to their behaviors. It is prefer that the agent has an academic study in sciences that study the human behavior like; psychology, sociology, and human resources management. The organizations have the freedom to hire the change agent from outside the company in order to change the company's system, or to develop the performance of the company's operations. In this case the change agent is called to be an OD consultant. (Thomas G. Cummings, Christopher G. Worley)

Some organizations prefer to choose one of the inside employees to be responsible for the change process, as he will always has wider knowledge about the company's employees and also because the inside agent will be more caring for the interest of the company. The inside agent usually are chosen from the top management, as to be aware of all of the company's operations, values, and objectives. On the other hand the external agent will has some advantages over the insider, as the external consultant will hold different perspectives, views, and different experiences that the external agent had gained from dealing with other companies. Those advantages will give the company the opportunity to be able to get rid of the restrictions and constrains of the old regime. (Thomas G. Cummings, Christopher G. Worley)

What are the OD agent's activities? The change agent or the OD agent, with the help of the top management of the company, should perform certain activities that lead an effective change management. One of the main activities of the change agent is motivating for the change, which can be concluded through creating readiness for change and by overcoming resistance to change. Also the change agent has the responsibility to create the organizational vision, through describing the core ideologies and creating the envisioned future. However the change agent plays an important role in the change process, the top management should also develop a political support for the change process, through assessing the change agent power, identifying the key stakeholders, and influencing the stakeholders. It is also essential that the top management manage the transition process, by planning for activities and commitment, and by structuring the change management. One last role that should be played by the management is to

sustain the momentum, by providing resources for change, build support system for change agents, and develop new competences and skills. Finally, Change requires time and many of the expected financial and organizational benefits from change lag behind its implementation. If the organization changed again too quickly or abandons the change before it is fully implemented, the desired results may never materialize. By concluding those activities, the company will ensure that the change agent is going to perform the organizational development process effectively and efficiently. (Dennis Stevenson)

What are the organizational development theories? This is considered to be the most fundamental question in the study of the organizational development. The methods that the organizational development agent is going to use are considering whether the agent will succeed in what achieving the change process effectively or not. There had been many methods that had been used by many agents and many organizations, but there are three main theories or methods that are considered to be the most successful ones for planned change. Those theories are the Lewin's change model, the action research model, and the positive model. (Alicia Kritsonis)

First, according to Lewin's change model, there are two particular groups, who hold two different attitudes about the change process. The first group is accepting the status quo and wish that nothing would change. This group of stakeholders restricts change and push employees away form change. On the other hand, the other group is actually pushing for achieving the change process. This group is facilitating change and pushes the employees toward the change process. (Alicia Kritsonis)

The German Kurt Lewin, who was considered to be the founder of social psychology, stated that the change process could be illustrated by a model, which is consisting of three main steps. The first step is to unfreeze the existing situation to overcome the strains of individual resistance and group conformity. This unfreezing action takes place through increasing the driving forces that direct behavior away from the existing status quo, decreasing the restraining forces that negatively the movements from the existing equilibrium, or find a combination of the both. The second step of Lewin's model is the movement process of the target system to a new level of equilibrium. This step can be achieved through persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, working together on a quest for new and relevant information, and connecting the news of the group to well. Finally, the last step of the model indicates the refreezing process, at which the change had been implemented by the change agent in to sustain overtime the change over time, not to allow the employees to return to their old state. The unfreezing step can be achieved through reinforcing new patterns and institutionalize them through formal and informal mechanisms including policies and procedures. (Alicia Kritsonis)

Second, according to the action research model, which had been introduced by Lippitt, Watson, and Westley in 1958, there are eight main steps to conclude change in the organization. Those steps are sequenced as followed. The organizational management should identify the main problem of the old regime, and then the management should ask for the help of a consultant with a behavioral science expert. The change agent should gather data and

maintain diagnosis for the data that had been gathered from internal and external resources. After maintaining the diagnosis the agent should conclude processes of feedback to the organization, jointing diagnosing of the problem, jointing the action planning, and then the actions should be concluded. However the action of change had been concluded the data should be gathered after maintaining the action in order to evaluate the progress of change and to ensure that the change had been achieved successfully. (Kritsonis, A)

Third, the positive model of change, which is also called the appreciative inquiry, had been established by David Cooperrider, who used the model to enhance a positively-focused perspective and an opportunity-oriented intervention. The proponents of the positive change model assumed that the organizational development models are considered to be too negative, as they focus only on the problems, neglecting the opportunities and its importance appreciative inquiry is considered to be focusing more in the humanistic matters, rather than being pragmatic and realistic. It is also considered to be more participatory; rather than being often top down driven. Appreciative inquiry had emerged over the past several decades as alternatives to the other models of the change to the shortly examined reasons. (Boyd & Bright, 2007) (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008) (Egan & Lancaster, 2005)

The positive model of change involves five main phases. The first phase is to initiate the inquiry, through emphasizing the involvement of the members of the organization in order to identify the organizational issue. The second phase is to gathering the information that determines the best of what is in

the organization. Then the third phase encourage the change agent should discover the themes; and examines the stories for identifying the set of themes that represent the common dimensions of people′s experiences. The forth phase will include the creation of the preferred future; by identifying the best theme, challenging the status quo, and describe a required future. The last phase will enhance designing and delivering several ways to create the future, through activities and plans that are necessary to achieve the vision. (Herb Stevenson)

There some differences between the three models. For instance, Lewin′s model differs from the other models as it focuses on the general process of planned change rather than the organizational development activities. Also, the Lewin′s model agrees with the action research model, in terms of level of the participants' involvement and the high degree of focusing on change. They also are more concerned with what the organization does wrong, rather than what are the main opportunities that the company has. (Herb Stevenson)

What is the general model of planned change? There is a general model of planned change. The model had been introduced by Cummings and Worley at 1993. This model consists of four main steps, which are taking place in a forward sequence. Those steps are entering and contacting, diagnosing, planning & implementing process and the evaluating & institutionalizing process. First, the entering and contracting stage, it involve making the top management of the organziation decide whether the organization need a planned change program or not. The management should define some resources to this change process. The managemnt should determine the

consultant, who is going to runn the change process, and to clearly illustrate the organizational issue into presenting the problem and symptoms. (Miriam Y. Lacey)

Second, the process of diagnosing that includes focusing on the understanding of the organizational problem, and the identification of the organizational positive and negative attitudes. Through the diagnosing stage, the management should choose a suitable model to understand the organization as a whole. The best model that many of the organization seek to use is the open system model, which is suggesting that the organization is operating within both internal and external enviroment. This open system gathers specific inputs from the enviroment and transforms those inputs into outputs through social and technological procedures. Then the output of the transformation process is considered to be returning to the enviroment and can be used as feedback to the organizational evaluation. (Miriam Y. Lacey)

The third stage of the general planned change model is the planning and the implementing process. This stage enhances the organization's members and the chanage agent to align together to plan and implement the orgaznaitional interventions that is required to achieve the change. The interventions' design can be implemented through creating the organizational visions and goals, and through making action plans to implement them depending on the organization readiness for change, current change capablilites, culture & power distributions, change agent's skills and abilities. There are four types of interventions that could be emplemented. The interventions could be human process interventions (process consultation and team building), techno-structural interventions

(downsizing), human resources management interventions (performance appraisal), or strategic interventions (transformational change, transorganizational change, continuous change). The forth stage would be the evaluating and the institutionalizing process. This stage involoves evaluating the effects of the interventions and managing the institutionlization of successful changes programs. (Miriam Y. Lacey)

How to evaluate the effectiveness of the change? This could be the most critical question that the top management should ask. The origination should maintain a full evaluation to the results of the change. The main goal of the change management is to close the gap between the planned outcomes and the actual outcomes of change.

There are differences in the evaluation process, this differences occur according to whether the change occurred by an internal or external agent. The external consultant rely on repeat business and customer, while the internal agent would prefer relying on repeat business, pay rise and promotion, considering them the main key measures of success. Also, the external consultant focuses on the long-term results, while the internal agent has a little recognition for a job well. (Miriam Y. Lacey)

Summary

The organization should focus on many issues to be able to survive in today's changing environments. The main issues are the continuously checking for the problems and the new changes inside their company and outside, in the other companies and the markets. This continuous monitoring leads to successfully recognition for the need for change. The organization

management should also carefully choose the most successful and

knowledgeable agent who is enriched with the highest experience and skills.

The successful choice of the internal or external agent will ensure the

success of the change process. Also change agent, should manage the

change process through the main issues and problems of the organization

through a way that will be compatible with the organizational goals.

However, the organization could manage the change process successfully;

the results may not be as same as planned, because of the continuously

changing nature of the environment. That's why the company should

develop an open system model that facilitates the continuous change

process.