Self other and social context management essay

To help build Departmental capability over the medium and long term the identification of needs should be directly linked to the achievement of the Organisational goals as well as on the broader career development needs of individual employees.

Numerous studies have shown that individuals process information differently. In today's educational environment the traditional educational delivery method of a professor standing in front of a classroom of students has been augmented, and in some cases supplanted, by various on-line, distance learning delivery methodologies. Studies have also shown that not all individuals learn at the same level when participating in courses which utilize different approaches.

GLOBAL REVOLUTION

A global revolution is taking place in the field of workplace learning. It is driven by the requirements of information explosion, increased globalisation, the changing nature of work and business as well as changing learner needs and aspirations. In the modern business environment, companies are forced to approach the way they conduct business activities with a more external focus. Not only the business partnerships extending across regional, national and continental borders, but international standards are also becoming the norm.

Preparing workers to compete in the knowledge economy requires a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the life cycle, from

early childhood to retirement. It includes formal, non-formal, and informal education and training.

- Formal education and training includes structured programs that are recognized by the formal education system and lead to approved certificates.

- Non-formal education and training includes structured programs that are not formally recognized by the national system. Examples include apprenticeship training programs and structured on-the-job training.

- Informal education and training includes unstructured learning, which can take place almost anywhere, including the home, community, or workplace. It includes unstructured on-the-job training, the most common form of workplace learning.

Recent knowledge and the accumulated stock of human capital are inputs in the production of new knowledge and wealth. The speed of change in the knowledge economy means that skills depreciate much more rapidly than they once did. To compete effectively in this constantly changing environment and globally, workers need to be able to upgrade their skills on a continuing basis. Change in the knowledge economy is so rapid that companies can no longer rely solely on new graduates or new labour market entrants as the primary source of new skills and knowledge. Schools and other training institutions thus need to prepare workers for lifelong learning. Educational systems can no longer emphasize task-specific skills but must focus instead on developing learners' decision making and problem-solving skills and teaching them how to learn on their own and with others.

Lifelong learning is crucial in enabling workers to compete in the global economy. Education helps reduce poverty; if developing economies do not promote lifelong learning opportunities, the skills and technology gap between them and industrial countries will continue to grow. By improving people's ability to function as members of their communities, education and training also increase social capital (broadly defined as social cohesion or social ties), thereby helping to build human capital, increase economic growth, and stimulate development.

Social capital also improves education and health outcomes and child welfare, increases tolerance for gender and racial equity, enhances civil liberty and economic and civic equity, and decreases crime and tax evasion (Putnam, 2001). Education must thus be viewed as

fundamental to development, not just because it enhances human capital but because it increases social capital as well.

ORGANISATIONAL REALITIES

This article examines the organisational realities. The perspectives appearing in the literature, the structural, the perceptual and interactive are identified and examined. Additionally, a perspective termed the organisational culture, the change leader approach and organisational reframing will also be discussed.

2. 1 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Realigning processes and roles to fit a new organizational reality is daily work for leaders. Planning and implementing changes is a fundamental set of skills at which all leaders must excel to ensure their teams and functions are

set up to do great work. Improving an organization's success through aligning its culture became a popular focus of work in the 1980s. During this time, many behavioural science researchers acknowledged the power and importance of organizational culture. In the last twenty-five years, organization culture has become a frequent topic of discussion among a broad audience of leaders including operational managers and organization development, human resources, and training professionals. Culture is now a regular consideration – or it ought to be – during strategic planning sessions and throughout change management initiatives.

Changes that go against a work culture or that are initiated without regard to the culture are likely to fail whereas culture-consistent changes ensure better results while reinforcing the most important workplace values and beliefs. Sometimes it is the culture that needs to change to support a new reality. Determining how to change a culture without wrecking intrinsic motivation or losing top talent is a delicate matter, indeed. To begin examining this challenge, let's first establish a common definition of organizational culture.

What is an Organization's Culture?

Many definitions of organization culture can be found in behavioural sciences literature. A frequently cited definition comes from organization development pioneer Edgar Schein. In his book, Organization Culture and Leadership, Schein described culture as being deeper than behaviours and artefacts.

" I will argue that the term ' culture' should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate

unconsciously, and that define in a basic ' taken for granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment." Schein emphasized assumptions and beliefs while others see culture as a product of values. In Culture's Consequences, Geert Hofstede wrote, " I treat culture as ' the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.' … Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture. Culture is to a human collectively what personality is to an individual."

Beliefs and values are linked. What about understanding? In the article, " Organizations as Culture-Bearing Milieux," Meryl Reis Louis wrote that, " any social group, to the extent that it is a distinctive unit, will have some degree of culture differing from that of other groups, a somewhat different set of common understandings around which action is organized, and these differences will find expression in a language whose nuances are peculiar to that group." These three descriptions of organization culture find root in collectively held individual thinking processes. In their piece titled, " The Role of Symbolic Management," Caren Siehl and Joanne Martin argued that " culture consists of three components: context, forms, and strategies." This description suggests a more systemic description of culture with both internal and external components. In Riding the Waves of Culture, Fons Trompenaars offers another systemic model and described three levels of culture:

1) the explicit layer made up of artefacts and products and other observable signs,

2) the middle layer of norms and values and,

3) the implicit layer, which is comprised of basic assumptions and beliefs.

In Corporate Culture and Performance, John Kotter and James Heskett acknowledge

internal and external components of culture, too. They see organization culture as having " two levels, which differ in their visibility and resistance to change." The invisible level is made up of shared values that tend to persist over time and are harder to change. The visible level of culture includes group behaviors and actions, which are easier to change.

Is it important, or even possible, to sort out these definitions and decide which is most accurate? Schein, for example, argued that artefacts and products " reflect the organization's culture, but none of them is the essence of culture." The differences and

Inter-connectedness of assumptions, beliefs, understandings, and values could be studied further to determine which are more elemental to culture, but would that be time well spent? Which is most important, that a definition be right or that it be helpful? Although we cannot determine the right definition, each of these descriptions adds value to our approach to strengthening organization culture. Based on the work of these and other researchers, we could make the following conclusions about organization culture:

- Each company has a unique culture built and changed over time.

- Beliefs, assumptions, values and understandings and the actions and norms they produce

are important components of culture.

- We recognize culture by observing actions and artefacts (explicit factors).

- While some call it a sub-culture and others a climate within the larger culture, there may

be cultural differences within subgroups of an organization.

- Observable behaviours and actions are easier to change than are beliefs and values.

- The observable elements of culture affect the invisible elements and visa versa. Change in

one cultural element will impact other elements.

Although not apparent in the above offered definitions, it is also important to consider how cultures external to the organization impact and affect the organization's culture. Employees sense their organization's culture soon after they join the company. They might have a hard time describing the culture, but they know it when they feel and see it. There may be similarities in particular industries but each company will have unique cultural attributes.

Improving the Organisation's Culture

A workplace culture can enable or hinder success. Leaders can impact the alignment of the culture with the company's mission and strategies. How? Culture is socially constructed and leaders need to initiate great conversations that tie cultural norms to the organization's goals. If the current culture is not in alignment with the new reality, leaders need to be the catalysts, or bridges, who create a new understanding and help individuals select new behaviours and, eventually, beliefs. Leaders must also define, clarify and reinforce understanding of the actions and beliefs that build the desired culture.

The organizational culture is particularly important when implementing organization-wide change. Many organizations are struggling to keep up – they layer new initiatives onto the work processes before previous initiatives have taken hold. A culture can either enable or be a barrier to nonstop changes. If the culture is nimble (in the habit of being re-aligned), change will be more fluid and effective. Most large-scale changes need to be supported by complementary changes in the organization's culture. Change plans, then, should address current and desired cultural elements. Leaders can play a key role in facilitating change by aligning projects and development efforts to reinforce the desired culture.

A culture of Continuous Learning- Key to improving Organisational Culture

Many organizations say they want to build a learning culture. What does this mean? Generally, what they are saying is that they want people to grow and be receptive to

changes and willing to take on new tasks. A culture of continuous learning goes deeper than this, although these behaviours are certainly important. Employees value continuous self-development and choose to make learning a priority in the face of competing demands. Leaders, also, match their intention to seek coaching and development with the attention they give learning each day and week. A culture of continuous learning develops when there

is a collective understanding of the importance of personal and team growth backed up by actions a resolve to inject learning into everyday work practices.

Cultures of continuous learning tend to be more nimble, which means that they are easier to align and realign when new goals or new realities change how an organization must conduct its work. Resistance to changes – on an organizational level – is more common when team members are unaccustomed to learning and relearning new tasks, projects, and processes. Here are several important indicators of a culture of continuous learning:

People are curious and adventurous. They value mental exploration. Most people are naturally curious. To what degree does the work environment encourage people to be curious and adventurous at work?

- Team members are allowed and encouraged to experiment. It is safe to venture outside

of established practices and explore (within limits). Can employees try new ways and

approaches?

- The work environment is stimulating – it is sensual. The sights, sounds, smells, and

textures are interesting and engaging.

- Employees at all levels seek and embrace learning in a variety of forms. This is the most

telling clue. What level of participation is there in development opportunities? Are

executives active learners?

- There is a healthy view of failure and mistakes. Employees are held accountable, but

productive recovery is also rewarded and mistakes are looked at as learning

experiences.

- . The workplace is intrinsically rewarding. When employees are self-motivated, they

seek learning and development.

- The organization is proactive about succession. Talent is developed and promoted.

- The organization has a focus on innovation – in all functions and at all levels.

- The organization embraces Omni modal learning and communication in-person,

over the web, virtual, formal, informal, one-on-one, group, as part of regular meetings,

separate courses, on site, off site, etc…

Managers and leaders can help build these conditions by engaging team members in a diverse set of learning opportunities. Being a role model for lifelong learning is important, too. Leaders need to practice what they preach and ways to fit professional growth into their busy schedules.

The organization's culture is like a rudder under a large ship. To turn the ship, the rudder must move in the right direction. A nimble culture can help organizations explore and be successful while moving to meet new goals and seize new opportunities. Like an inoperable rudder, if the culture does not move, or moves in the wrong direction, it is hard for the organization to progress. Mahatma Gandhi once said, " You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Every leader and manager should model the desired culture – and his or her actions should reinforce excellence.

2. 2 Change Leader

To achieve their purposes, organizations must constantly learn, adapt, and grow, a process referred to as change. Research shows, however, that only a relatively few structured change efforts achieve great success-most just get by while the majority fail to reach predefined performance goals and objectives (Mansfield, 2010); (Salem, 2008);

(Schneier, Shaw, & Beatty, 1992). At issue is what underlies this phenomenon of underperformance. Studies of complex social systems suggest that the major reason for failure lies in the way decision makers think about and execute the change process (Smith, 1999). If one looks at the typical change process, it is apparent most decision makers view organizations from an objective perspective-as an assemblage of parts that can be arranged and re-arranged to produce predictable outcomes; however, the magnitude of the failure of planned changes led us to ask the following questions:

Research Question 1: What factors facilitate or inhibit the change process?

Research Question 2: How do these facilitators and inhibitors evolve within an organization?

Research Question 3: What are the implications of understanding this evolutionary process relative to achieving a more sustainable level of performance?

The answers to these questions led us to propose an alternative approach to understanding and changing organizational performance, one that supposes that organizational learning and change involves understanding the organization from the objective and the subjective perspectives simultaneously. We call this the Full Dimensional Systems Model (FDSM), a perspective which draws heavily on the concepts associated with Complex Adaptive System (CAS). The FDSM perspective assumes there are multiple, interrelated domains of influence that impact change and that these domains must each be appreciated and addressed simultaneously to achieve

sustainable performance improvements. The FDSM provides a valid and powerful rationale for determining how to implement meaningful change within

organizations as well as identifying probable outcomes and consequences from those changes.

Flaws in Traditional Approaches to Thinking About Change

The fact that organizational change frequently fails underscores the flaws inhering in traditional approaches to change. These approaches to change are flawed in four ways. First, the need for change is framed in almost exclusively objective terms, thus overlooking important subjective issues. Secondly, the change problem is viewed as a puzzle to be solved (Mansfield, 2010), and the challenge is collecting and analyzing enough data until all the pieces form the right solution. Thirdly, using this approach means that decisions are often based on flawed and/or incomplete information. Fourth, decision makers tend to develop detailed change strategies (often based on the data collected around the need for change), assuming that, if they follow the plan, the puzzle will be solved and the organization will come through the process better structured to meet the needs of their clients. This typical mental model leads to a misalignment of how decision makers perceive and respond to the " hard reality of reality itself" (Wolfberg, 2006).

Myths and Other Dangerous Half-Truths About Change

Adherence to traditional approaches to thinking has produced a number of myths, or dangerous half-truths, about how to make change happen (Kelly, Hoopes, & Conner, 2005); (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006).

Myth 1-Change starts at the top

Organizational change starts with a goal and a plan created by senior management. This approach is usually met by what is referred to as resistance and typically does not work in the fast changing systems of today because the change strategy reflects the same paradigm that created the problem in the first place. The truth seems to be that change depends on the participation of many system members (agents) in an essentially self-organizing process. It may also depend on change agents who consciously influence self-organization toward new and more adaptable patterns of relationship.

Myth 2-Efficiency comes from control

Change is possible only when every detail is mapped out in precise terms. This prejudice ignores the fact that every process improvement adds new and/or changes existing subsystems, which adds even more complexity to subsystems/systems that already have problems. The result is that many efforts to solve problems actually lead to more serious ones.

Myth 3-Prediction is possible

It is assumed by many managers that an action in one place will have a replicable effect in another. This, it turns out, is usually false, in part because a complex system consists of many agents, with different ideas, biases, prejudices, and expectations, and each of these concepts interact with many subsystems to determine outcome. Even small variations in the patterns of interaction can produce enormous variation in outcomes. In other words, complex systems are usually very sensitive to inconsistencies in mind-sets and processes.

Myth 4-Change is manageable

Assuming the course of change is predictable, many managers make a related assumption-that you can manage the change process by developing and then implementing complex plans. The fallacy of this myth was very clearly illustrated by the recent Gulf of Mexico oil tragedy that cost 11 lives and did untold damage to the Gulf's ecosystem. The assumption was made that through design and control alone, the company could achieve the aim of hazard elimination-This turned out not to be the case.

The validity of these myths is not supported by the facts. Decisions made in the manner described above often produce unanticipated and unintended consequences. A typical occurrence is illustrated in one of the organizations we studied (Owen & Mundy, 2005) where a shared services human resources model was created to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of human resource delivery. Although the delivery model seemed very efficient, it produced the unexpected and unintended consequences of bringing about a loss

of direct contact with customers and direct accountability at the local level. The result was that the quality of service delivery actually declined significantly as did the level of customer satisfaction and, instead of saving money, costs soared as a quiet revolt of internal customers ensued.

An important effect of these flaws is the creation of what might be thought of as ripples of dissonance in an organization. These ripples, which represent the diverse patterns of self-interest (significant differences) that exist relative to the change, behave like attractors and exhibit all the properties

associated with attractors, that is, the emergence of self-organized, adaptable networks, and so on. The " psychological mathematics" of how this region of dissonance is resolved, then, is at the root of much of the wasted energy observed when an organization tries to implement a large-scale (organization-wide) change or intervention. Any change that involves new patterns of relationships among members, new ways of behaving, and new processes requires a different mental model than the one that is typically used to understand and execute change.

A NEW WAY OF THINKING IS NEEDED

The contention is that decision makers must shift from a puzzle-solving perspective (a typical fact-based approach) toward a mystery-solving perspective (a value-based approach). The puzzle-solving perspective rests on the assumption there is one right answer; as soon as it is discovered, events can be expected to flow in a predictable manner (Mansfield, 2010). The mystery-solving perspective rests on the assumption there is no one right answer or even a right way to get to an answer; rather, there is an array of possible outcomes, none of which is predictable. Because there are many possible outcomes and consequences associated with any organizational change decision, decision makers need to be able to anticipate and understand the implications of their decisions, and how to respond should the improbable outcome become a reality (Wolfberg, 2006). The only way to do this is for decision makers to create a fully transparent environment in which the many differences of potential relevance to a change are put in the open for analysis.

Although there are many organizational change methods available, few are based on such a mystery perspective. The result is that change efforts are generally disconnected from a significant pool of knowledge. The bottom line is that the way a change agent views the causes of change determines how she or he sees the world and, therefore, determines how she or he intervenes on behalf of the organization. If change agents see the organization as a machine, then they use interventions consistent with this view; if they see it as a complex, multidimensional system, then they use methods appropriate to that paradigm to change (Kim & Mauborgne, 1999).

Modern organizations are complex. Simply moving from the organizational chart to examining how work gets done in most organizations easily demonstrates this. Work is a complex process involving multiple interactions between the members of an organization and their teams, teams and other teams, teams and other organizations, and so on. Changes in one part of an organization will invariably have an effect on other parts of the organization- some obvious and others less so. As organizations grow and change through time, their complexity grows and changes as well. (Anderson, 1999) proposed integrating four attributes of CASs into our thinking of modern organizations: agents, feedback loops, self-organization, and coevolution. All human systems comprised numerous semi-independent agents, each of which is capable of autonomous action; such action follows that agent's schema of the organization. A schema is a mental model of how the world works and how to interpret events in that world. These schema act like self-fulfilling prophecies and thus can have powerful and sometimes disruptive effects on a change.

A second concept is that agents are connected to one another by feedback loops. One agent's behavior can affect the behavior of numerous other agents in self-reinforcing cycles of influence. These feedback loops underscore the importance of coevolution. Third, agents coevolve with one another. A given agent's adaptations impact the efforts of agents to adapt, and these co-adaptations lead to patterns or waves of self-organization that flow throughout the organization. Finally, CASs evolve over time through the entry, exit, and transformation of existing agents, and new agents can be formed by recombining elements

of previously successful agents. Furthermore, the linkages between agents also evolve or coevolve over time, shifting the pattern of interconnections and their strength.

CHANGE IN CASs: A METAPHOR

How can organizations hope to adapt to the ever increasing level of complexity and in the process remain vibrant, responsive, and healthy? The answer to this question lies in the principles of CASs. (Dooley, 2002) offers the following three principles about the nature of the CAS:

(a) order is emergent as opposed to hierarchical,

(b) the system's history is irreversible, and

(c) the system's future is often unpredictable.

The basic building blocks of the CAS are agents. Agents are semiautonomous units that seek to maximize some measure of goodness of fit by evolving over time in response to the environment. Rather than focusing on macro

strategic-level changes, complexity theory suggests that the most powerful processes of change occur at the micro level (e. g., the individual and groups) where relationships, interactions, experiments, and simple rules shape emerging patterns.

As everything in an organization is interconnected, large-scale change occurs through the integration of changes that affect the smallest parts. Organization change occurs through the evolution of individuals and small groups. Like biological changes, these changes are sometimes not incremental but dramatic. From a complexity perspective, everyone can be a change agent if they are aware of options to help the organization adapt to its environment. A metaphor will serve to clarify these points.

A jazz ensemble is a CAS. Each musician is autonomous. They interact as they play. They bring their own intents, biases, levels of interest, experience, and aesthetics to the performance. A minimum number of rules are put in place regarding set, place, time, and so on. Usually, the players know one another very well, and they are all very competent in the

theory and practice of jazz music. The music is a balance of control and improvisation (in the moment changes or adaptations in the melodic and/or harmonic line). They listen to each other and adapt themselves to fashion their music. Their enthusiasm influences the other members of the band and the receptivity of the audience. The audience influences the

band. In the end, the quality and creativity of the performance is the result of the interaction of all these elements. These emerging patterns influence

not only the current selection but also the next piece as well as successive pieces.

This metaphor illustrates how creativity and efficiency emerge naturally in human organizations. Some basic rules, positive contacts, and relationships among members allow solutions to emerge from the bottom up. In this CAS, the musicians and the audience all act as autonomous system agents; the setting, roles, rules, and duration of the concert constitute the container/context; the contribution of each instrument and the continuous change of melodies and harmonies are significant differences, whereas the influencing processes between musicians and their audience are transformative exchanges; the continuous successions of music are the self-organizing patterns. Each of these concepts is highly interdependent

REFRAMING THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Reframing is about changing perception by understanding something in another way. (Bandler & Grinder, 1982) explained reframing in the following manner:

What reframing does is to say, Look, this external thing occurs and it elicits this response in you, so you assume that you know what the meaning is. But if you thought about it this other way, then you would have a different response. Being able to think about things in a variety of ways builds a spectrum of understanding. None of these ways are ' really' true, though. They are simply statements about a person's understanding.

BASIC TYPES OF REFRAMING

There are two basic kinds of reframes: context reframing and content reframing. Both can alter our internal representations of events or situations, which permits us to experience the events in other, hopefully, more resourceful ways.

Context reframing

Bandler and Grinder noted that " every experience in the world and every behavior is appropriate, given some context, some frame" (1982, p. 9) Context reframing offers an understanding of how we make meaning through the environment – physical, intellectual, cultural, historical, and emotional – in which a situation occurs. It can also provide a pattern of thinking that helps us see the value in every situation regardless of any perceived downside.

Context reframing is taking an experience that seems to be negative, not useful, and distressing and showing how the same behaviour or experience can be useful in another context. Children's stories are full of reframes designed to show children how what might seem a liability can be useful in another context. For example, the other reindeer made fun of Rudolph's bright, red nose; but that funny nose made Rudolph the hero on a dark night.

Context reframing can be used as a " perceptual filter," taught and practiced until it becomes an integral and habitual way of organizational thinking. It is a very useful tool in business as it is the way of thinking that gives one the ability to make lemonade from those unexpected