

“Integrating OD, HR and Change Management: Strategies for Sustained Success”—Insights on AODN and Foresights on Application of OD to Educational Systems

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Abstract: Organizations are facing unprecedented challenges in the 21st century and OD plays a significant role in creating effective responses to these changes. Not only has it been applied in the USA but gains popularity in dynamic Asian region under the megatrend of globalization and information technology. This paper gains insight from Asia Organization Development (OD) Network Summit and discusses future potential application of OD to educational systems.

Key words: AODN, Organization Development, Change Management, Educational Systems

1 Introduction of AODN

The Asia OD Network (AODN) was formed in 2006 by a group of OD scholars and practitioners based in Asia and the US, is a not-for-profit organization, officially registered in the US and in India in May and June respectively. Its mission is to create and provide an environment that continuously fuels the passion and search for excellence in Organization Development, as well as provide a venue for all OD professionals to network with each other and to share knowledge and best practices with special emphasis on the unique needs of the dynamic Asian region (<http://www.aodn.org>).

The 2016 AODN Summit was held in Shanghai, China. In terms of the conference theme which is “*Integrating OD, HR and Change Management: Strategies for Sustained Success*”, it is quite thought-provoking for it conveys a message that to achieve sustained success and win-win situation organizations need to integrate OD not only with HR and CM but

also other aspects since we now live in a interrelated and interdependent environment. The following is the author’s impressions and insights on this summit.

2 Insights on the Plenary Presentations

Rolland Sullivan started the ball rolling with Google Kurtzweil’s words: “We will not experience 100 years of progress as we know progress in the 21 century--it will be more like 10,000 yeras of progress.”, which indicated there would be more changes, such as global development (poverty 90% gone), technology (singularity), health&longevity. He then pointed out that in face of the fast changing environment, you have key role, you are the process facilitator of the whole organization. In response to current development of global OD framework, OD professionals in the panel shared their own thoughts, to name only a few.

Rolland Sullivan began his speech with some common problems and misconceptions about OD, such as CM is irrelevant, OD is archaic, etc. , and pointed out that OD is not about tool, not about technique but how you live your life. He then elaborated the “WST”, i.e. Whole System Transformation: “whole” means taking the system to excellence and develop to its best, “system” means we live in a interrelated and interdependent environment where no individual or organization can live alone. To be more specific, according to Rolland Sullivan, WST is transferable through an internal change agent that sustains continual positive causing of change as dependence on the outside experts deplete; it breaks down borders; it creates business intelligence; it builds authentic relationships.

2.1 Insights

2.1.1 A Wake Up Call—We Adapt or Die

Today, in a world of constant change, we see slow death more often. It is not easy to maintain faith, courage, and energy in today's world. This also holds true for the educational field. The integration of education and technology has increasingly become a trend of educational reform in China and will surely play an essential role in future education development. Under such circumstance, it is imperative that educators should not try to keep the status quo or stick to traditional teaching all the time. Instead, they should adapt to the changing environment in order not to fall into the pattern of "slow death". Avoiding making the change means contributing to the process of slow death.

2.1.2 Build Trusty Relationship with Students & Engages and Empowers the Whole

Rolland Sullivan's interpretation of WST attached great importance to being "Whole". As a college teacher, this makes the author think about how to achieve whole classroom engagement. Inspired by WST & Whole Brain Literacy (Tayko & Talmo, 2010), the author learned some guidelines for designing teaching. Firstly, the teaching design should be student-oriented and put students' needs in the first place: What are "in the control" of the learners? What do learners wish to "explore"? What do learners learn "to do"? What do learners "feel, think, and value?" (Tayko & Talmo, 2010, p.105). One way of doing this is by establishing authentic and trusty relationship with students. Secondly, giving students more freedom and autonomy and maximize the level of their class involvement. Meanwhile, creating psychological safety to reduce their learning anxiety. Thirdly, organizing more group work to advocate collaborative learning.

In another keynote entitled "Self as Instrument of Change: You are the Intervention", Dr. John J. Scherer used five questions to illustrate how one could develop himself/herself as an effective OD consultant:

·What **CONFRONTS** me? What 'tigers' do I need to face?"

·What am I **BRINGING**? What is my history with this situation? What am I saying to myself that makes it hard for me to face this 'tiger'?"

·What **RUNS** me? Where am I 'on autopilot' and don't realize it? How is that affecting what I do all day long-and in my life in general?"

·What **CALLS** me? What bone-deep gifts, talents or

capabilities do I possess that call out to be expressed more fully in my life and work? What kind of difference would I like to think my life could make in the world?"

·What will **UNLEASH** me? What will it take for me to finally get out of my own way and BE fully who I am in the world? (Scherer, 2009).

2.2 Insights

2.2.1 Am I Ready for Change?

The author (referring to me) felt a little bit nervous and doubtful when Dr. John J. Scherer asked everyone in the room to change the original seat to have a different partner. The author's first reaction was to sit where he was because he had no idea what would happen. However, nothing "terrible" happened afterwards. Instead, new ideas were generated, new relationship was established and new insight was obtained. The change of seats enabled the author to interact with different people and listen to diverse voices, which was a win-win and amazing experience. It was not just a change of seat but a change of mindset.

This experience impels the author to reflect on attitude towards change. When confronted with the unknown or unexpected, some people's first reaction would be uncertainty avoidance or to make use of their past experiences to adopt a solution they are familiar with. People prefer the change to be orderly and predicable so that they have some idea how things will turn out. If the change is unpredictable, they would be suspicious of new ideas and become repressive in the face of change. A case in point is an experience the author had last year. The director of College English Department of the university where the author worked was exploring reform in teaching college English. The director intended to employ level-based English teaching approach, that was those who passed CET4 (College English Test Band 4) go to A-level class while those who did not pass go to B-level class. He stated his views on the necessity and advantages of the reform, such as being conducive to teaching in accordance with students' aptitude. However, no matter what he said, the author just could not reach agreement with him because the author believed its disadvantages outweigh the advantages in the long run. For example, those who study in B-level class would feel that they were intellectually inferior to their peers, which in turn would decrease their learning initiative. On the other hand, there were many uncontrollable factors in this reform. If it failed, the author would feel

guilty for himself and his students. That was why the author would rather continue along the path as it was. Nevertheless, transformational change suggests that to achieve the ultimate goal, one needs to learn and discover his or her way from A to B without knowing what will happen during the process. Only when one is capable of discovering opportunities and development from the mess, the frustration, and the uncertainty can transformational change happen.

Actually, the ‘tiger’ is a potential teacher. When facing it, one is creating possibility for different outcome. However, if one attempts to run away, chances of survival is zero. Leading others begins with leading self. If one could not change himself or herself, how could he or she become a change consultant to change others? Next time when confronting with a “tiger”, instead of being intimidated and running away, face it bravely. Maybe one should also change the way of greeting by saying “Take risks” rather than saying “Take care”. Change the so called “unchangeable”.

2.2.2 Am I 110% Present Now?

The following task Dr. John J. Scherer assigned was simple but thought-provoking. A shares a significant person or event in his life with B while B, at the very beginning, pays only 25% attention to what A says but gradually more and more attention is paid until B is 110% present. The result with 110% attention is quite different from the one with only 25% attention. When B are 110% present, he has the power to influence the speaker and make the conversation go on smoothly. There are two questions that worth considering: Q1. *Do I listen carefully to others, without feeling uncomfortable with the ambiguity that might arise from hearing different view?* When hearing different views, the usual response would be sticking to own thought. However, being too opinionated would result in absence of creative thinking. Q2. *Do I engage and empathize with others and understand their thoughts, feelings, and concerns while they are talking to me?* It depends. That was why when the partner talked about his father-daughter relationship, the author was absent-minded. But when the author was asked to be 110% present, something extraordinary happened. The author tried to listen with heart, empathize with him, and even give him some suggestions.

Therefore, it is suggested that effective communication require both parties to listen and speak with both head and heart, understand others’ thoughts and feelings and not feel uncomfortable with the

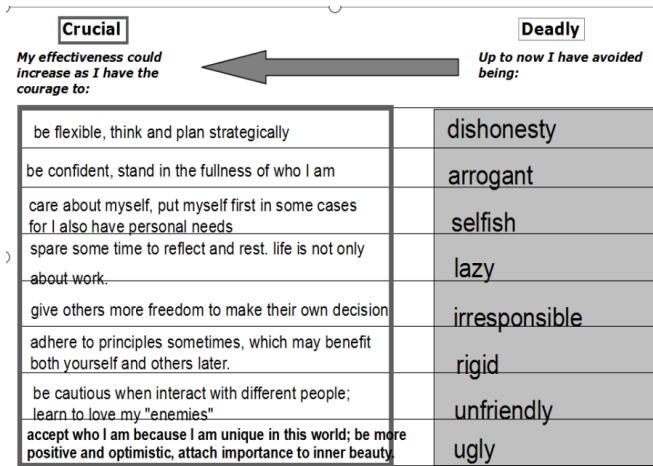
ambiguity that might arise from hearing different view.

2.2.3 Am I Willing to Embrace Resistance?

There is a Chinese saying that goes like this, “A bitter medicine cures the disease”, which means that honest advice or opposing voice may be unpleasant to hear, but it is beneficial to one’s development in the long run. When faced with some opposing voice, some people would feel uncomfortable and irritated. Accordingly, the resolution they often adopt is attempting to change that “resistant” person from actively opposed to 100% supportive, only to find that this kind of attempt is in vain. Why? Because they always view resistance as something bad or worthless. Instead of viewing resistance as contempt or jealousy, we should consider it as contribution and learn from it. Invite ‘resistors’ into the process and ask them to suggest how best to respond to resistance and ‘sticky’ problems. However, one thing we should keep in mind is that investing energy only with those ready to move. Don’t waste energy ‘converting the un-convertable’. After all, the ‘resistors’ resistance may be out of the whole’s organization’s interest.

2.2.4 The Most Challenging Part: Peeling the Onion

The ‘polarities’ task that Dr. John J. Scherer assigned in the workshop was quite challenging because in the author’s life, he tried to avoid the ‘SHADOW’ words, such as selfish, arrogant, dishonesty, indifferent, etc. or avoided becoming the ‘SHADOW’ person. Inspired by the “Peeling the Onion” game, we can actually discover the upside of these ‘SHADOW’ things and learn from them. Take the SHADOW word ‘arrogant’ for example. The stretches of arrogance is standing in the fullness of who you are and being confident. This is an important quality for those who are kind of self-contemptuous sometimes. Therefore, effectiveness could increase if



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one has the courage to be moderately arrogant.

The following is shadow-stretch the author wrote for himself based on John J. Scherer's 'STRETCHES WORKSHEET'.

2.2.5 The Most Powerful Part of the Process: Affinity Diagram & Presenting Action Recommendations to Decision-Makers

Affinity Diagram allows large numbers of ideas stemming from brainstorming to be sorted into groups, based on their natural relationships. What impressed me most is its high efficiency. It is really time-saving and a very simple method for organizing a complex body of information. In the workshop, we used it as a diagnostic tool to detect what issues or challenges for breakthrough that are associated with being in this PhD program. Then we sorted out the top three issues: Balance, Money and Time. After that we were divided into three "Breakthrough Action-Planning Teams" and had group discussion about the three focus areas, using Dr. John J. Scherer's STRIPES model. Then each group presented their preliminary result, which, to the author's great surprise, was satisfying and useful, though we still need more practice and further enhancement. During the process, the author also acquire knowledge about decision-makers' options, face-saving strategy, effective communication and room set-up for presentation meeting. I am eager to apply all these theory and knowledge into practice so that I will have the power to change myself, people and organization.

3 Organization development in educational systems.

Although OD is more widely applied in business-industrial settings, it is also applicable for other types of organizations, such as schools and colleges which are educational and social organizations. This section aims at exploring OD in educational systems from the following three aspects: current reality and challenges in school system, organization and current issues of education in China, and strategies for OD practitioners.

The current reality in public education is one of shrinking budgets, limited resources and a growing demand for higher standards with stricter accountability that can demonstrate annual gains in student performance (Schmuck, Bell & Bell, 2012). The debate around 'No Child Left Behind' and the updated version, 'Race to the Top' have not solved the problems in educational organizations (Schmuck, Bell & Bell,

2012). It is now widely accepted that transforming schools is at the heart of system-wide transformation (Kaser & Halbert, 2009).

Cummings and Worley (2014) identify five forces that are challenging traditional models of schooling: "the changing nature of communication and learning, evolution of the workplace and required skills, increased diversity, increased competition, tough economic times" (p.695).

Some of the above issues are also what China's education system is encountering. China has the largest education system in the world. However, China's education system also suffers from a number of critical issues or challenges. One of the issues is a gap between the knowledge students acquire at higher education institutions and what is actually needed in their jobs. College training needs to catch up with the rapid development of services in recent years to provide enough professionals in areas like sales and marketing, reported to have the greatest shortage (OECD Economic Surveys: China 2015, p. 71).

These challenges, whether faced by the USA or by China, demand thoughtful and strategic application of OD principles. Schmuck, Bell & Bell (2012) put forward three strategies or goals in educational organizations that the school or teacher leader as well as the OD practitioners should keep in mind in order to change norms, roles, structures, and procedures so that a school or college can become self-renewing, i.e. organizational adaptability, individual motive satisfaction, and effective work groups.

4 Conclusion

The 2016 AODN Summit conveys an important message that to achieve sustained success and win-win situation organizations need to integrate OD not only with HR and CM but also other areas, such as education, since we now live in a interrelated and interdependent environment. As an OD learner and researcher, the author conducted a research aimed to foster student academic motivation and student engagement in the EFL classroom through organization development interventions (ODIs). In this way, OD was integrated with education.

The theory and practice of organization development has been developing for about 60 years abroad, but it has not been introduced into China for a long time. With the rapid development of social economy in the past 40 years after China's reform and opening up,

OD has finally ushered in China. Nowadays, more and more domestic enterprises turn the perspective from the outside to the inside, and turn to the organizational form, organizational effectiveness and competitiveness. Therefore, OD has naturally been favored and trusted by entrepreneurs and human resource executives. The word “organization development” has become a high-frequency word in the field of enterprise management and HR. OD talents are being sought and favored by major enterprises. OD posts have become increasingly popular high salary positions in major enterprises. To promote OD, firstly, instead of directly applying the western OD theories or techniques, Chinese organizations should be cautious, and take their own context and culture into account. Secondly, it is recommended to introduce OD to Chinese organizations integrated with Chinese characteristics and realities (Wang, 1994). Thirdly, organization change is inevitably accompanied by challenges posed by interwoven risks and resistance both at home and abroad. Therefore, it is paramount to develop competent change leaders who can manage change opportunities and challenges (Wang, 2010).

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