

Experiential Learning Enters the Eighties, Volume 7, 1980

AN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO TEACHING ORGANIZATION BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the use of Organization Behavior. The course deals with the intervening characteristics in an organization which are the characteristics of the processes, procedures, and working climate which are dependent upon causal variables that are predictive of the end results achieved by the organization. Theoretically, changes in the causal variables influence and change intervening variables and both have an effect on the end results.

The course uses a variety of interventions that can be applied to different situations and different problem areas and become components of the total system when used in conjunction with a careful diagnosis of the intra-inter personal, intra-inter group, and intra organization process interventions which have proved helpful in making both individual members of the organization and the organization itself more effective. The course is designed so that each student has an opportunity to move our classroom organization towards the accomplishment of the systems ideal outputs.

INTRODUCTION

"Organization Development has been defined as a planned, managed, systematic process to change the culture, system, and behavior of an organization in order to improve the organizations effectiveness in solving its problems and achieving its objectives. (1) The Organization Behavior class is viewed as an organization which must complete specific tasks so that the goals of our classroom organization are accomplished. The theory presented during the semester deals with the topic areas of the course and the major concepts which are the emphasis of discussion during the semester (Figure 1). The organizational development interventions used in the course are designed around the needs of our classroom organization and the accomplishment of the course goals. The course concerns itself with learning method used as well as subject area and placed emphasis in the creation of a learning climate in which students look at their ways of thinking, their skills, and the development of models which call for the application of the theories and concepts presented throughout the semester.

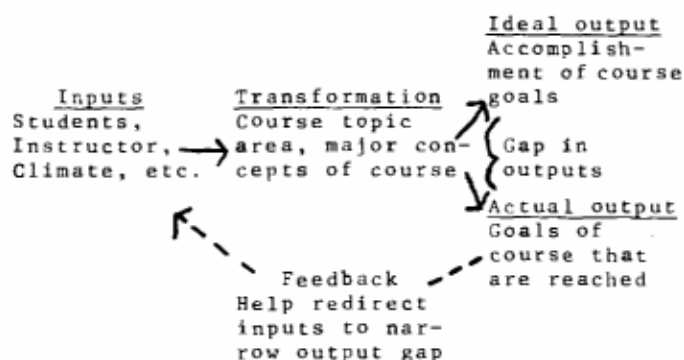
FIGURE 1
LEARNING LEVELS & CONCEPTS

Topic Areas	Org. Climate	Intra Inter Personal	Intra Inter Group	Group Dynamics	Intra Org.	Perceptions
Major Concepts						
Leadership		E	E	E	E	E
Motivation	E	E	E		E	E
Communication		E	E		E	E
Conflict			E	E		E
Job Enrichment	E	E	E			
Change Process	E				E	E

E = indicates where major emphasis is placed on the application of course theory.

The course uses "Open Systems Theory" to study the improvement of human systems in organization. According to the open systems approach, emphasis is placed on understanding, managing, and directing people within a particular environment. The inputs to the system are transformed within the organization to create the outputs of that particular organization (Figure 2). The outputs from the organization viewed as both ideal and actual. Ideal outputs are contained in the goals of the organization (in this situation the course goals), and until the system has a good handle on its goals, it is very difficult to know what inputs and transformations are needed.

FIGURE 2
OPEN SYSTEM APPROACH

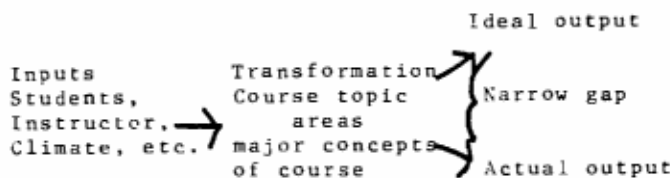


Organizational member (students and instructor) need to be aware of the class goals so they can together develop a framework for understanding the behavior of the total system. During the semester designed

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interventions are used to deal with discrepancies that exist between actual and ideal organizational outputs. These discrepancies are discovered through the use of the feedback phase of the system. Feedback makes more sense when it shows and deals with differences between actual output and ideal output. The course puts major emphasis on the transformation phase of the model so that the outputs can become more realistic and attainable (Figure 3). In our classroom organization the open systems theory uses functional analysts to look at the functions of the organization (planning, attitude, rewards, procedures, learning, testing, evaluating, etc.) to see the part these components play in moving the system toward meeting its goals. It is important to look at alternative functions that can help the organization reach its goals and prevent dysfunctional activities from setting into the climate which would make the accomplishment of the goals more difficult for the organization.

FIGURE 3
EMPHASIS ON NARROWING OUTPUT GAP



Through proper use of feedback, the transformations phase can be used to help narrow the gap between the ideal and actual output.

Course Goals

The course goals, which are the ideal outputs of the organization, serve as a starting point of contracting with the students in the course. You work to narrow the gap between your ideal and actual output by stating at the beginning of the course what is expected of both the students and the instructor in the organization. The course works towards the accomplishment of the following goals:

The student will demonstrate an understanding and application of Open Systems Theory.

The student will demonstrate skills in interpersonal communication.

The student will demonstrate an awareness of the dynamics of small group behavior.

The student should be able to apply the experiential learning model in problem solving situations.

The student will demonstrate awareness and application of important literature in the field.

The student should develop a high degree of personal responsibility for learning in the course. The student will show awareness of his/her own attitudes, stereotypes, assumptions, value system, and goals.

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of the above statement of his/her own perception of how managers should and do behave.

The student will demonstrate an understanding of change principle as an organizational process and a managerial responsibility.

The student should develop an appreciation for the potential organizational development as a total program for integrating individuals, groups, and organizations.

Course Design

The beginning session is used to create an open learning environment in which both the students and the instructor share the responsibility for the establishment of an organization climate in which the following conditions exist:

all members of the organization exercise their need for independence.

all members of the organization have a readiness to assume responsibility for effective communication which require listening and feedback.

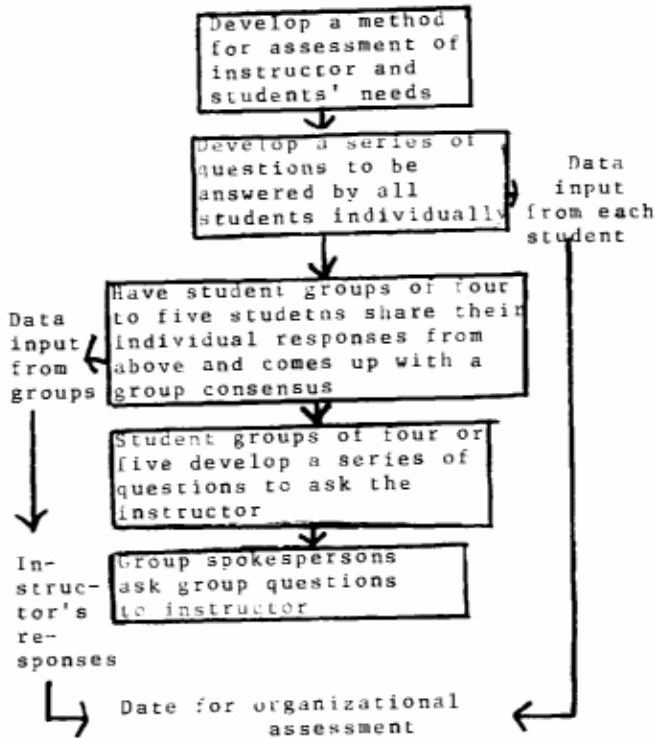
all members of the organization understand and identify with the goals of the organization.

all members of the organization learn to expect to share in decision making.

During this class session the experiential learning model is used and explained to the students so that they are able to understand the teaching method used in the course. The organizational assessment which takes a look at the needs and attitudes of the students toward the course along with the expectations and attitudes of the instructor is conducted (Figure 4) in an environment in which two way communication and openness in expressing views, ideals, and feelings is encouraged. The assessment is a way of dialoguing the classroom organization by collecting data, establishing necessary relationships and rapport, identifying problems, and modeling behavior which sets a climate that encourages the expression of one's own convictions. Many students come to the class with a good deal of anxiety and apprehension which can be reduced in a climate that allows risk taking by individual members of the system. The course design allows students an opportunity to become aware of not only the task to be performed but also the process used to complete tasks. Students are taught to recognize and appreciate individual differences and how those differences can be used to develop a stronger organization which is more effectively run and has increased its ideal outputs.

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FIGURE 4
ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT MODEL



When the dialoguing of the organization is completed and the course goals have been explained each individual student is requested to complete the following 1) Define management, 2) state the traits of a good manager, and 3) state the traits of a poor manager. After each student responses to the above statement they are instructed to form into groups (four or five members) and come up with a group definition of the three statements. Figure 5 is a sample of some typical responses given by students in the past. This exercise along with the use of the Dependent/Intimacy Rating form (2) and the Interpersonal Check List (ICL) (3) published by University Associates is used to introduce the topic of intra and inter personal relationships.

FIGURE 5
MANAGEMENT DATA

Management Defined

a coordination of people working toward a goal.

the ability to motivate and coordinate efficiently to a desired end.

those activities undertaken in order to coordinate the work of others to reach a common goal.

Management is the ability to maintain and make sure that all working parts of business are coordinated with the

objectives and goals of the organization.

management is an individual or group of individuals that plan, organize, and coordinate the activities of others for specific purpose or goal that otherwise would not be achieved without their leadership.

traits of a good manager:

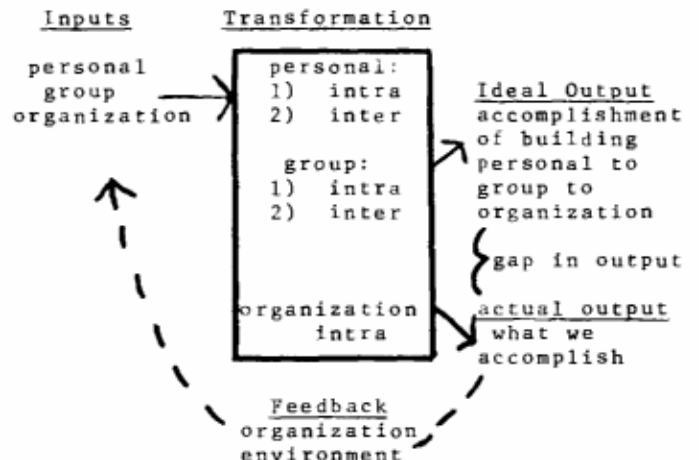
problem solving ability.
empathy.
being knowledgeable,
good leadership.
fairness,
firm in decision making.
responsible.
level headed,
honest,
good organizer.
dependable.
profit minded,
good foresight.
good attitude toward job responsibilities,
keep in touch with top level management,
good communication.

traits of a poor manager

lack of concern for employees.
poor communication skills.
hasty decision maker.
unwilling to work with others.
tardiness.
unorganized.
not motivated.
uses favoritism.
impatient.
has a short temper.
poor leadership skills.
totally task oriented.
does not command respect.
not willing to listen to ideas from subordinates.
lack of discipline.
lacks foresight.

Various instruments are used throughout the semester as tools that give the students an opportunity to develop a profile of some of the possible ways they may function in the handling of various organizational situations. The course builds on the topic areas and the major concepts as presented in figure one. The topic areas are inputs that build from the intra personal to the intra organization and are affected by the environment both inside and outside of the organization (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6
TOPIC AREA



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During the first three weeks, considerable time was spent in "talking out" the game. Mutual problems were discussed between the teams and by the sixth week students felt fairly comfortable in working with a fiscal quarter. Also while they were held back in certain decision areas in the early stages, as a means of minimizing anxieties over too many decisions, in the sixth period they were given a free hand to use and implement all data and decision areas.

Parallel to working in the Marketing Management course with MIA was the testing done in Principles of Marketing with the simulation game "Marketing a New Product" (MNP).

During the last four weeks of the fall semester, 1977 eight students who were enrolled in two Principles of Marketing classes experimented with MNP. The objectives of the experiment were a trial run of the game to evaluate teaching technique and how well students learn the game, their reaction to the game and through a special exam to see if they had grasped a better understanding of concepts of marketing strategy.

Evaluations, based to a large degree on faculty and student observation and feedback, were positive. It was decided to add the game to the syllabus of two sections of the Principles of Marketing course for two to three additional semesters to determine what modifications were needed in the course outline and whether the game should be recommended for all sections of the Principles of Marketing course.

OBSERVATION PERIOD

In the spring, 1978 semester four of the students who had participated in the first test of MNP enrolled in the Marketing Management course. These were the only students in the course with previous simulation game experience. It was observed during the second week of game time that these students, each assigned to a different team, had taken some readership role. These students appeared to pass on to their colleagues that getting up-tight about making decisions was par for the course and that they should concentrate on the decision making and just let the situation ease up. It soon became apparent that most of the students didn't seem to be overly concerned about specific outcomes of each individual period and were concentrating on advanced planning. During the semester, MIA seemed to flow a little smoother and all teams moved very quickly through the second year of game time. Three years of game time were completed before the end of the semester.

In the fall, 1978 semester there were again four students enrolled in Marketing Management who had studied the Principles of Marketing course and worked with MNP. The decision was made that instead of starting with the fourth week to begin MIA in the sixth week and, if necessary, to speed up the game at the tail end by moving to the fiscal half year rather than maintaining fiscal quarters.

Again it appeared that the phenomenon which we had observed in the previous semester was coming through. The four students seemed to take a leadership role; all students seemed to get involved in the game more quickly. There appeared to be fewer anxieties and perhaps more attention to the long-range planning of the game rather than worrying about period to period "winning." For the spring, 1979 semester three students who had taken

the Principles course with the simulation game MNP enrolled in Marketing Management and the decision was made to introduce MNP very early into the course. This meant a very tight schedule since the students would work on two games, one which called for many more decisions. The class at this time was large with 26 students relative to the usual enrollment of 16-18 students. This also meant that the three students who came into the class with previous experience in MNP had very little opportunity to influence their colleagues in any way. With fewer decision demands and for long range marketing planning students quickly became involved in the game. By the second period they were doing forward planning and the six periods of MNP were completed in four weeks.

The following week, which then brought the semester into the beginning of the eighth week, the second game, "Marketing in Action" was introduced. It was at this point that we observed that the anxiety syndrome seemed to be greatly reduced. It took only two weeks and two periods for students to seem to get the "feel" of the game and to move into forward planning with more ease. By the end of eighteen months of game time students were making decisions in class in half the time which had been previously allowed. This gave more time to be spent on discussion of the game as well as other elements of the course, namely, cases and outside reading.

At the time of the writing of this observation paper we are almost at the half-way point of the fall, 1979 semester, are completing MNP and about ready to start on MIA. The observations seen for this semester so far seems to confirm that of previous semesters. Moving into the advance game seems to be easier, there is less anxiety and students are better prepared for planning. They are already doing outside research and preparing themselves for the type of activity that is necessary while at the same time completing the assignments and reports on NNP. In this semester, incidentally, there was only one student with previous gaming experience for the game.

OBSERVATIONS

There are several important areas that we have observed. Some which reinforce original concepts and others which are new.

1. Students in lower division courses can handle relatively sophisticated computer simulation games and achieve a high level of learning.
2. The reduction of "game anxiety" can increase student involvement and participation and, hopefully, a higher level of learning.
3. Experience in a computer simulation game can be a significant factor in reducing anxiety in subsequent games.
4. Using two computer simulation games of different levels in a single course minimizes anxiety in the higher level game and appears to increase student involvement and learning.
5. Students repeating a game in a different course appeared to approach the game with a much higher level of sophistication and learning may also be at a much higher level.

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SUMMARY

The use of multiple games in sequence in a single course is rewarding to students in making the learning process more enjoyable. For the faculty member there is more work but it appears to pay off in terms of local course objectives.

The extent to which learning may be increased should be tested in a more controlled situation. We have, however, the impressions of the validity of computer simulation games to enhance a course as well as methods to make computer simulation games more effective.

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