Organisation Development Intervention Programs at ZETDC

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Abstract – The research assessed Organisation Development Interventions and their effects at the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply and Transmission Commission in Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach was used and a case study design implemented to collect data from 58 employees. The research used face to face interviews, structured interviews and questionnaires as methods of collecting primary data to ascertain attitudes of respondents to the OD intervention strategies and how they are increasing organisational effectiveness. Of the 58 employees 6 were from senior management, 10 middle managers and 32 bottom shelf employees who were selected using a simple random sampling method. This method ensured that all employees had an equal probability of being part of the sample. It was concluded that the effects of organisational development interventions on organisational effectiveness depend on the organisation's strategies to manage them. The study recommends that ZETDC formulates clearly defined policies to deal with its workforce. Participation and involvement in decision making by employees play a key role in improving employee morale and commitment when implementing OD strategies in the organization.

Keywords – Collaboration, Commitment, Effectiveness, Organisation Development, Organisational Effectiveness, Team Building.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organisation Development may be defined as a long range effort to improve an organisation's ability to cope with change and its problem solving and renewal processes through effective management of organisation culture [Magaramombe & Shora, 2004]. While [Beckhard, 1969] asserts that Organisation Development is a planned, organisation wide and managed from the top to increase an organisations effectiveness and health through planned interventions in the organisations processes using behavioural science knowledge. A more recent definition that sums up the above two definitions shows that organisation development is a designed interference affecting the whole organisation and using scientific behavioural methods it aims at improving the health and output of an organisation, Budai (2011). The need to cope with change in most organisations has been necessitated by the rapid changes and increased competitiveness in business environments which has brought up the need for organisations to review their operating styles and functions.

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

ZETDC is a subsidiary of ZESA Holdings which was formed following the passing of the Electricity Act and falls under the Ministry of Energy and Power services (Zesa Holdings Private Limited 2012). The Utility handles large portfolio of electricity and civil works, projects of development and maintenance nature to meet electricity demand. Though the absence of competitors in the market has allowed the firm to gain control of the market, there is need for the organization to provide adequate, safe, reliable electricity and related services at competitive prices. The Government of Zimbabwe in the Zim Asset document 2013 reveals that energy is a key enabler to productivity and socio- economic development and as such OD interventions that help address bottlenecks faced by the organisation will be handy over and above recapitalisation of infrastructure and adequate financing. Among the aims of OD intervention strategies are the increase of productivity, increase of responsiveness to clients, developing new managerial skills and strategies and the increase of employees' and customers' morale. Of late there have been allegations of the poor quality of service by ZETDC, constant load shedding , high operation costs and corruption which has tarnished the corporate image and has put the company at risk of losing major clients as there is a threat of substitutes such as solar energy, generators and the ethanol power generation. According to some local media (Herald November 2012) '*ZETDC must be the most useless organization on the planet, with the most useless management team on the planet. I am sure that ZESA only exists to provide high paying jobs to a clown team of managers*'. With such utterances coming from the consumer the question is what interventions strategies are in place to improve the quality of service provided? The research is designed to identify the OD strategies at ZETDC, assess the effects of these strategies on the general organisational performance and to identify the challenges faced by ZETDC in implementing OD strategies.

Organisational Development Programs

According to [Bhatia & Ahmad 2010], Organisation Development activities should aim at three organisation dimensions which are: managerial effectiveness, managerial efficiency and motivational climate (employees' attitude, morale). This is said to help employees to understand what needs to be done, why and when so that they are able to take great responsibility for their own actions as organisation members. Organisation Development values are based on the assumption that people have the potential and desire to grow and to engage in meaningful collaborative relationships within organisations. The emphasis in organisation development is put on employee participation in diagnosing problems, considering solutions, selecting a solution, identifying change objectives, implementing and evaluating results.

There are a number of OD intervention techniques such as interpersonal interventions, group interventions,

intergroup interventions and comprehensive intervention among others. Interpersonal interventions are designed to improve individual skills, knowledge and effectiveness, such as, training programmes, performance reviews and career development. Employee involvement and empowerment and buy-in management are new techniques of unleashing human potential in organisations [Magaramombe & Shora, 2004]. These have been said to increase self insights and awareness of impact upon others and that observable changes in behaviour do occur on the job. Interpersonal interventions also include laboratory learning which has been said to improve organisation productivity including absenteeism, profits and quality [Anderson, 2010]. Group intervention helps teams and groups with organisations to become more effective through meetings, effective communication, problem solving and team building. Team building is a data based intervention where a work group examines such things as their goals, structure, procedures, cultures, norms and interpersonal relationships to improve their ability to work together effectively and efficiently [Bhatia & Ahmad 2010]. The coordination of individual effort into task accomplishments is most important when members of a team are interdependent. Team building or team development is used to increase communication, cooperation, cohesiveness of units so that they become more productive.

Intergroup interventions help different units in the same organisation to interact like departmental meetings. Such interventions are seen when the performance of one group is interdependent on the performance of the other group. The group's success would depend on others cooperation. When two groups are interdependent issues such as misunderstandings, low coordination and conflicts may arise. Groups in conflict with one another spend much time focusing on the conflict instead of accomplishing the goals. Organisation development programs are then needed to deal with these intergroup problems, use joint problem solving, correct misconceptions and reopen channels of communication. This helps the organisation in sharing of resources and resolving of conflicts as issues can be addressed in such meetings.

Comprehensive interventions can be used to create change throughout the entire organisation rather than focusing on individuals or departments. Such interventions include changes in structures in the organisation, socio technical systems and total quality management, culture change management or survey feedback to mention just a few that attempt to improve overall organisational effectiveness from a particular perspective. All organisation development interventions are aimed at changing some specific aspect of an organisation like its climate, members, structures and procedures.

With OD, organisations that can adapt to meet the challenges of changing environments are likely to be the most successful in the long run. This leads to the concept of a "learning organisation", which refers to organisations which make a practice of analysing their experiences in order to respond more effectively to their internal and external environments. Learning organisations emphasise the need to maximise the learning which comes from meaningful interaction with employees, customers, suppliers and even competitors. This is based on effective leadership. Senge 1996 (a well renowned writer in the discipline of learning organisations) states that in order to create a learning organisation what is required is effective leadership which is not based on traditional hierarchy but rather is a mix of different people from all levels of the system who lead in different ways Such organisations develop cultures in which all organisational members are responsible for learning from experience and for intervening to use their learning to make the organisation more effective. Organisation development is therefore a continuous process in the social, psychological, cultural and belief systems of an organisation. These interventions are based on certain principles and practices which are assumed to lead to greater organisational effectiveness.

Organisational Effectiveness

Organisation effectiveness may be defined as the organisational capacity to utilise available resources skilfully to achieve intended goals. Organisational effectiveness can be tested by the following issues which are adaptability, a sense of identity and the capacity to test reality. Adaptability is the ability to solve problems and to react with flexibility to changing environmental demands. It is the extent to which organisations may adapt that reflect on its effectiveness. An organisation also needs a sense of identity and vision where knowledge and insight on the part of the organisation's identity, goals and what it is to be done are clear. Organisation effectiveness is also measured by the capacity to test reality and the ability to search out and accurately interpret the real properties of the environment, particularly those that have relevance for the functioning of the organisation [Bhatia & Ahmad 2010]. Organizational effectiveness can be affected by many aspects that include production volumes, quality of work done, quality of service delivered, interpersonal relations between employees and the time taken to complete the tasks.

For organisation development strategies to be successful there is need to consider the interdependency that exists among the various sub-elements of the organisation. Any major changes, effort, regardless of emphasis, must deal with the total organisation system which includes structure, technology and people [Magaramombe & Shora 2004]. Each of these approaches appears in most organisation development strategies but receive different emphasis.

Organisational Development Interventions and Organisational Effectiveness

According to [Bhatia & Ahmad 2010], OD success depends on the fit between OD values and organisational values. There must be congruence on what the organisation values and what the Organisation Development intervention strategies seek to achieve. OD is more effective when the two share same value interests. However where there are opposing values OD should still be carried out (value free orientation) for example in the army [Magaramombe & Shora 2004]. There is also need for managers to orient the people on their beliefs, methods

to be used to reach the change and the purpose of the change program. Managers at all cost should avoid imposing changes on employees as this may cause resistance to intervention strategies. Managers should try and balance the need to have employees' rights and well being as well as improvements in productivity.

Successful Organisational Development interventions require full support of the people involved. Both managers and employees need to own the programmes or change implemented in particular the top managers. In this sense OD differs from other methods that hold managers responsible for the success or failure of a change effort or any other practise aimed at improving the organisation. In the practice of OD everyone should have an opportunity to contribute to and accept responsibility for the continuous improvement process. Managers however, are usually the chief power brokers and change agents in any organisation. Top managers control an organisation's resources and reward systems and are often powerful role models in behaviour change. Although OD efforts can be undertaken at any organisation level without direct top-management participation, OD is less likely to succeed if it does not have at least tacit approval from top management [Burke, 1987].

For OD interventions to be effective there is need for them to be articulated by appropriate managers that would have carried out proper diagnosis of organisational conditions. It is the manager's task to convince employees that the interventions have a clear link to the goals and mission of the organisation so that they are able to get commitment from the employees. Managers also need to show commitment at all stages of OD interventions which are diagnosis, implementation and evaluation.

There is need to connect Organisation Development intervention effort to other systems and processes of the organisation like evaluation and reward systems. This helps in winning the hearts of the people involved as the outcome of the change will benefit both the employee and the organisation. For the organisation to remain competitive there is need for it to be more customer driven, more innovative and more effective in the way they are doing business.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers made use of the qualitative approach and a case study, designed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at the specific instance and location. The study used questionnaires and structured interviews to collect primary data from respondents. 58 employees with 6 senior managers, 10 middle managers and 32 bottom shelf employees were selected using a simple random sampling method. This method ensured that all employees had an equal probability to be part of the sample. A thematic approach was used to analyse the findings.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings revealed that the core values at ZETDC include team work, integrity, customer focus and social responsibility. ZETDC with a vision to be the preferred provider of electricity regionally and related services globally it means that every individual should thrive at attaining such a vision or preset goals and objectives. ZETDC was found to implement various interventions ranging from interpersonal interventions, group interventions, and intergroup interventions. This was justified by the implementation of the various OD activities like teambuilding, training, career management, customer focus, employee participation and involvement, in-vision and total quality management. All 6 managers agreed that at ZETDC intergroup interventions were more applied with team projects, meetings across the organisation by different units, employee participation and involvement at different levels.

The top management acknowledged the complexity of certain tasks at ZETDC which they said could only be accomplished through intergroup intervention. One manager supported this when he said *'a number of OD interventions are specifically designed to improve team performance for instance quality circles or team building especially among artisans'* It was thus clear that many tasks at ZETDC, are so complex that they may not be performed by individuals, especially in the maintenance department so people need to work together to accomplish them. The line gangs were said to operate as a unit and plans on how there are to tackle their responsibilities and plan improvements in their operating procedures. Therefore '*this team functioning has been successful at ZETDC and has contributed to the effectiveness of the organization'*, reiterated the one senior manager. This view is supported by [Bhatia & Ahmad 2010], that team development is used to increase communication, cooperation, cohesiveness of units so that they become more productive. The same authors also believe that employee involvement, empowerment and buy-in management are new techniques of unleashing human potential in organisations. It is the shared management strategies that help organisation sail in the same boat.

The organization was said to focus on Management Training for its employees as it seemed to understand that it cannot succeed in long term strategies well, without well trained leaders. 26 out of 32 non managerial employees were of the view that laboratory learning was more dominant and was a prerogative of top management. However the other 6 employees concurred with top management that they were consulted and involved in most training and development programs at ZETDC. '*Earlier, this was targeted to the top management alone but now there are inculcating the leadership skills in their middle management as well'* said one middle manager. '*The training and coaching has a very positive impact on both the employees and the company'* said the HR manager. '*As a result employees had requested continued implementation of more programs as they believed that it assisted them in enhancing organisational effectiveness'* reiterated the HR manager. [Casio, 2011] argues that, training has a purpose of effecting positive and permanent change in knowledge, skills and attitude for improved performance of employees in an organization. In other

words, training greatly determines the performance of employees in the working environment**.** This is further supported by [Armstrong, 2010] who acknowledges that training and development programs are critical to the improvement of employee performance as well as overall organizational performance. Training and development has benefits for organizations which include improved work performance, increased productivity, a decrease in wastages, less accidents, decrease in labor turnover and decrease in absenteeism [Buckley & Caple 2004].

The research found out that in terms of development the respondent favoured a systematic career path approach together with training to overcome or alleviate current problems. Respondents felt that if an individual could vision something of a clear future, present performance and motivation would improve. We need a '*listening as opposed to a telling approach from management'* said one employee. The employees at ZETDC have been subjected to this activity whereby their careers are developed. [Smither *et al,* 1996] argue that allied to OD's ideas about change through education is OD's emphasis on the development of the organisation's members. It is grounded in the belief that human beings have an intrinsic need for psychological growth. Organisation structures or practices which limit opportunities for personal growth are therefore ultimately harmful to the organisation. ZETDC also implemented the various OD activities like career management, training, customer focus, employee participation and involvement, in-vision and total quality management. According to [Shora & Magaramombe, 2004] if careers are managed well, employees become motivated and productivity increases and they are better able to meet organisational goals. This helps to provide promising employees with a sequence of training and experience that will equip them for any assignments in future and to ensure that the organisation's needs for management succession are satisfied from within.

In addition to the above strategies, ZETDC also implemented Total Quality Management. TQM applies human resources and analytical tools to focus on meeting or exceeding customer's current future needs. It integrates these resources and tools into management efforts, by providing planned, systematic approaches to improving organization performance. TQM in ZETDC was said to be confined to line gangs. The finding contradicts [Shora & Magaramombe, 2004] who argue that TQM should involve everyone in programs aimed at improving the total organization so that it is more customer oriented, quality conscious, flexible and responsiveness. The purpose is to increase effectiveness of an organization through planned improvements which influence the quality and productivity of the organization. However all the top managers were of the view that the organisation was making efforts to make ZETDC people-centred and transparent organisation. *'As management we try to involve employees through development programmes like quality circles, training workshops, meetings, consultations and third part interventions where possible'*, said one of the managers.

Despite the fact that the organisation enjoys the benefits of monopoly when it comes to its market share the key strategic issue that ZETDC has adopted is customer focus with customer satisfaction and delight. The researcher found out that the corporate business plan encompassed the focus on customer to embrace the ever increasing complains about poor services being experienced by the end users of electricity. The organisation has adopted action research in order to improve customer satisfaction. ZETDC is collecting information about how the consumers feel about the firm and then look at the problems, give solutions or new action, implement the new action and then recollect new data from the customers. This is supported by [Reason & Bradbury, 2001] who view action research continuous enquiry where all stakeholders concerned are engaged and participate in bringing up the final product. However most (28) employees felt that this was more of a cosmetic approach as the actual feedback rarely finds its way back into the organisation decision making process. Most non-managerial employees (30) felt that the organisation development programs were not effective as they were imposed by the organisation. This was supported by 7 out of 10 middle managers who agreed that the morale was low among workers as most of the changes were imposed by authority. In-spite of the business plan adopting action research approach, findings indicated that ZETDC had problems in implementing the approach. The indications were that ZETDC organisation still enjoyed being monopoly and did not take employees' and customers' complain seriously.

The implementation of the various OD activities like teambuilding, training, career management, customer focus, employee participation and involvement, in-vision and total quality management at ZETDC has been regarded as the core of the organisation's efforts to make the company a more people focused and transparent organisation which believe in organisational effectiveness that come from people. It however had some loopholes raised by most employees which may need attention.

Challenges faced in implementing OD strategies

The challenges that were noted from the obtained data included resource constraints as the greatest obstacle for the ongoing implementation of Organisation Development Interventions giving much emphasis to financial resource constrains. Employees felt neglected as most of the time there were no funds to undertake training and development opportunities that come their way. This is supported by [Elena, 2000], who noted that, the availability of resources, mainly financial resources, determined whether training and development of human resources was effective or not. Capital injection is critical to the success of all training and development programs [Bhatia, 2010]. The researcher noted that this issue of financial constrain stirred anger in most shop floor workers who had a feeling that funds for management training are always available but only insufficient for the low level employees. The other challenge was of poor communication and poor interpersonal relationship between management and employees. Most employees felt that there were short

changed by managers who never communicated any developments in the organisation. An example given was of some line managers who were not willing to give time off to some subordinates to enable them to participate in OD activities. For instance some employees in Manicaland district have not been trained of the new SAP system as they were required to attend to faults in Chimanimani, Middle Sabi and Chipinge. [Cheng & Ho,2001] show that adequate training produces marked improvements in employee communication and proficiencies of performances as well as extended retention. These employees were used to receiving instructions from the managers, and this created a culture which is not favourable to business changes in the organisation.

V. CONCLUSION

Overall findings revealed that OD interventions at ZETDC were more confined to behavioural process intervention strategies. This support the allegation made by some clients (Herald 2012), in the media which shows that managers at ZETDC had to deal with their attitude and behaviour. However it is pleasing to note that top management and employees at ZETDC have scanned the appropriate intervention needs to improve services and products delivered to clients to date.

ZETDC has no clearly defined strategies and polices to manage the implementation of the OD strategies. The researcher is confident that the challenges that are faced in implementing the interventions can be ironed out through budget focus so as to enable all employees to participate. Organisation Development Interventions have a positive impact on organisational effectiveness. ZETDC still enjoys its monopoly position in the country and this stifles growth as the company do not take customers' complaints seriously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends ZETDC to formulate clearly defined policies to deal with its workforce. At the moment the organisation seems to be more focused on issues to develop production tools for Artisans while giving a blind eye to human development. This will help counter problems that arise in training and development. Participation and involvement in decision making by employees play a key role in improving their morale and commitment to the organization. Regular meetings should be encouraged to encourage participation and involvement of employees in matters that affect the organization. The study recommends improved communication in all facets of the organisation so as to achieve 100% support, commitment and involvement on all issues that concern the worker. They have to have a knowhow on whatever is prevailing in the organisation so that it doesn't come as shock when organisational matters are being discussed. ZETDC has a good IT system which should be used for better communication within the organisation for instance the use of emails. It is recommended that ZETDC takes action research seriously and engage all stakeholders involved to help improve its effectiveness in providing the basic service of electricity.

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