The effect of Appreciative Inquiry as organizational development intervention on organizational planning and service quality improvement in St. Francis School (ICSE)

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Abstract

In general schools are used to annual planning models in spite of its weaknesses (process) and limitations (perspective). The focal organization based in a metro in India is no exception. In a significant departure from this general trend, this action research intends to craft a three-year holistic development plan for a school organization by employing an all-inclusive approach called Appreciative Inquiry. Further, the study examines the effect of Organizational Development Intervention (ODI) on the organization's service quality. The study combines both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. In addition to formulating the development plan, the study finds significant difference between Pre and Post ODI in terms of parents' satisfaction toward service quality in three out of the six dimensions.

Keywords: OD Intervention; action research; development plan; Appreciative Inquiry; Appreciative Inquiry Summit; service quality.

Introduction

Globalization and the evolution of Knowledge-based economies have caused dramatic changes to the character and function of school education all over the world. Critical factors contributing to these changes are the realization among the nations of the importance of school education in preparing the future knowledge

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workers, acute demand for skilled workers at the industry level, the understanding that economic growth, sustainable development and competitiveness depend on quality school education. Added to this is the strong belief among the masses that education is the only pathway to economic prosperity and higher status. Overall, schools have emerged as key players in the new economic order and more so in India.

Altered Indian Education Landscape

As for India, the country   is going through a period of hasty transition from, as the *most preferred off-shoring destination* in the world to *world's knowledge capital.* This transforming economy's desires and demands would keep dictating terms on the future shape of schools and its output. For India, the young demographic profile of an estimated 435 million in the age group of 1 – 14 years offers an inherent advantage in terms of human resources. According to NASSCOM's Perspective 2020 document estimated revenues are likely to touch an estimated $ 300 billion by 2020 in software exports alone, supported by focused initiatives in education, innovation and infrastructure.

The Context

The context of the study is a ten year old higher secondary school organization, namely St. Francis School (ICSE), Bangalore in India affiliated to CISCE headquartered in New Delhi. Since three years or so, the organization was concerned with an external threat in the form of increasing competition from different types of schools springing up in the nooks and corners of the burgeoning metropolis. It was facing an internal danger in the form of large scale turnover of teaching faculty. The school was at the cross roads as far as the future procedures were concerned. The school management was on the lookout for new possibilities and alternative courses of direction. Besides, at the end of ten years they wanted to evaluate the organization's service quality and find ways to leverage it. Since its inception, the organization was resorting to annual planning model which was beleaguered by many weaknesses (in the process) and limitations (in the perspective). The myopic nature of the plan completely ignored the all-round growth and long term sustainability of the organization. In this situation of predicament, the researcher convinced the school management to use a new process and formulate an alternate planning model which address their concerns and set the momentum for holistic and sustainable growth of the school. Thus the stage was set for an Appreciative Inquiry led OD Intervention, a whole-system change process involving all the stakeholders of the organization.

Analysis using SOAR framework

In order to know the elements of current reality of the focal organization the researcher used SOAR framework in a one-day group session that was participated by sixty five members representing different stakeholders. The day-long workshop doubled up as an orientation session on Appreciative Inquiry. At the end of the day the participants sketched out the organization's Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and measurable Results as described below.

The main strengths of the school are its location in an upper middle class residential colony and ample open space for expansion. It has excellent physical infrastructure and blessed by a dynamic principal, dedicated teachers and management by religious group of people. The overall climate in the organization is conducive for teaching, learning. The school saw great opportunities for rapid expansion by leveraging its brand value as a Catholic School in the wake of massive influx of educated people into the city. The transforming nature of the Indian Economy as a global knowledge hub and parents seeking quality school education were considered as further opportunities. The school's stakeholders are highly optimistic of developing the school as a model center of high quality academic learning. The teachers on their part like to imbibe in students the talents needed to succeed in the knowledge-powered economy like creativity, ingenuity and innovative skills. They dream of catapulting their beloved school in the near future as one of the best and most sought after school in ICSE category in the state/province. The school has set forth some concrete and measurable goals. The targets include: to become =1 school in ICSE category in the city of Bangalore by 2015, to produce one student every year in the annual merit list of CISCE, reservation for financially disadvantaged and a shining example of secularism and religious pluralism. Following the analysis, the researcher laid down four research objectives for the study: 1) to assess the existing Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and le Results (SOAR) present in St. Francis School (ICSE). 2) to craft a three year development plan for St. Francis School (ICSE) using Appreciative Inquiry approach (using SOAR) framework; 3) to determine the /Pre-OD Intervention level of service quality in terms of parents' satisfaction; and finally 4) to determine the effect of OD Intervention on the service quality in terms of parents' satisfaction in the organization.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of the focused review of previous literature was to lay a firm theoretical underpinning and introduce the conceptual and action research frameworks of the study.

OD and ODI

Organization Development could be understood as "an effort planned organization wide, managed from the top, to increase organization's effectiveness and health, through planned interventions in the organization's processes using behavioral science knowledge" (Brown & Harvey, 2006). For French, Bell and Zawacki, (2005) "OD is a powerful set of concepts and techniques for improving organizational effectiveness and individual well being." While, the OD literature is replete with a large number of definitions, the common point in all these definitions and explanations is that the goal of OD is to *increase organizational effectivene*ss and *improve human wellness.* OD Interventions have been defined as a set of sequence of deliberately planned actions or events intended to disrupt the status quo and lead the organization to a better state (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

Organization as an Open System. An organization is continually in interaction with its environment and within itself between the various departments who are interdependent for completing the tasks. Therefore, Brown & Harvey (2006) view organizations as Open Systems and hold that the "efficiency of the system depends on the level of interaction." As a created system it basically consists of three groups of factors. First, called resource inputs are the resources such as information, people, money and equipment. Second, transformation processes are the activities that are performed to produce goods and services. And third, outcome process is the finished goods/services produced by the organization for consumers. A school organization fits in the bill as an open system as it draws its inputs from the environment, transforms the inputs by enriching with knowledge and returns it back to environment from where it was drawn.

Learning Organization Model. Peter Senge, (1990) the titan of learning organization theory defines it as "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. Senge, further describes the key dimensions of learning organization as five "competent technologies". They are: Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Building Shared Vision and Team Working. School organizations with their primary focus on transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the pupils can be deemed as a learning organization. As Sillins and Mulford (2002) have stated that "schools should be a place where all participants – teachers, principals, parents and students – engaging in a process of continuous and ongoing learning and teaching." Viewed from this perspective, school's efforts for a new planning process and an alternate planning model are right measures in the direction of becoming a learning organization continually in search of new and expansive knowledge.

Organization as Living-Human-System Model. The perspective of organization as living human system recognizes that people in relationship with each other

create organizations; and that without people working together organizations would not exist (Lewis et al., 2008). Organization as *living:* suggests that it has got life, potential for growth, and it is essential to know what gives life to the organization so that organizational changes can be achieved through nurturing and nourishing them. *Human*: reminds that organizations are made up of people and exist because of them and they display a range of emotions from constructive to destructive. *System:* under this model is to be understood as humanistic system with their beliefs, cultures and traditions. This new perspective of looking at organizations as human system *living in relation* to one another marks a contrast from the machine age mindset where organizations were considered as inter-dependent and interconnected sub systems in a large system (Cojocaru, 2005).

Planned Change Models in OD

A planned change model illustrates the different stages through which planned change in organizations are effected.

SOAR Model. SOAR (**S**trengths, **O**pportunities, **A**spirations and **M**easurable **R**esults) is an innovative strategic planning tool. It relies on a process based on strengths, involving the whole system to direct an organization to its most preferred future with measurable results (Lewis et al., 2008). The model assumes that an organization's life energy is located in the members of the organization. Therefore, SOAR intends to accelerate the organization's planning efforts by focusing on those elements that will give life energy to the organization's future. For this study, the researcher has used the framework in concurrence with Appreciative Inquiry.

The McKinsey 7-S Model. The basic premise of this model is that there are seven interdependent internal aspects of an organization that need to be aligned if it needs to be successful. The seven elements are: shared values, strategy, structure, systems, style, staff and skills. Any change in one element will affect all the others. Strategy, structure and systems are classified as "hard" elements meaning by they are easy to identify and the management can exercise direct influence over them whereas "soft" elements, shared values, skills, style and staff are less tangible and more influenced by culture (Bryan, 2008; Gill, 2006; and Vaneeva, 2005). Noted researchers Price and Chahal, (2006) have criticized this model for its lack of clarity of external environment indicated in the model.

Preferred Futuring Model. This is a whole system change methodology developed by Dr. Lawrence Lippitt (1998). It enables an organization to plan for and construct the future they want and inspire the passion and energy to follow through and get there. It is based on the philosophy that all stakeholders can and must participate meaningfully in the present and future states of the organization. The process outlines a path consisting of eight simple steps leading to the development of an action plan and realization of the collective preferred future.

The SWOT Model. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It is a tool for auditing an organization and its environment. It is the first stage in the long process of planning and it helps organizations to focus on key issues. Strengths and Weakness are classified as internal factors while Opportunities and Threats as external factors. In order to over the shortcomings, OD practitioners use SWOT in conjunction with other analytical tools.

Future Search Model. Weisbord and Janoff have developed a model of large group intervention called Future Search for creating strategic changes in an organization. The process is based on key principles: 1) the whole system participates in the planning process; 2) a global context forms the base; 3) the focus is on finding common grounds of working and moving toward the future; and lastly emphasis is on self-management and personal responsibility. The process of planning has five steps. As a whole, the process is akin to Appreciative Inquiry in its nature and from but it fails to create the kind of energy and excitement in the participants as in the case of AI conversations based on strengths.

Appreciative Inquiry Theory – a Positive Approach to Change

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to organizational change marks a fundamental shift from the age-old *find the problems and fix the problems* approach to *find the strengths and build on the strengths of the organization.* Therefore, Fitzgerald, Murrell and Newman (2002) have hailed AI as "ground breaking." According to Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) AI is distinct in three significant ways from other traditional methods of change in OD because, *it is fully affirmative, it is inquiry-based and it is improvisational.* David Cooperrider from whom AI originated defines it as "a form of action research that attempts to create new theories/ideas/images that aid in the developmental change of a system (Cooperrider & Srivastava, 1987).
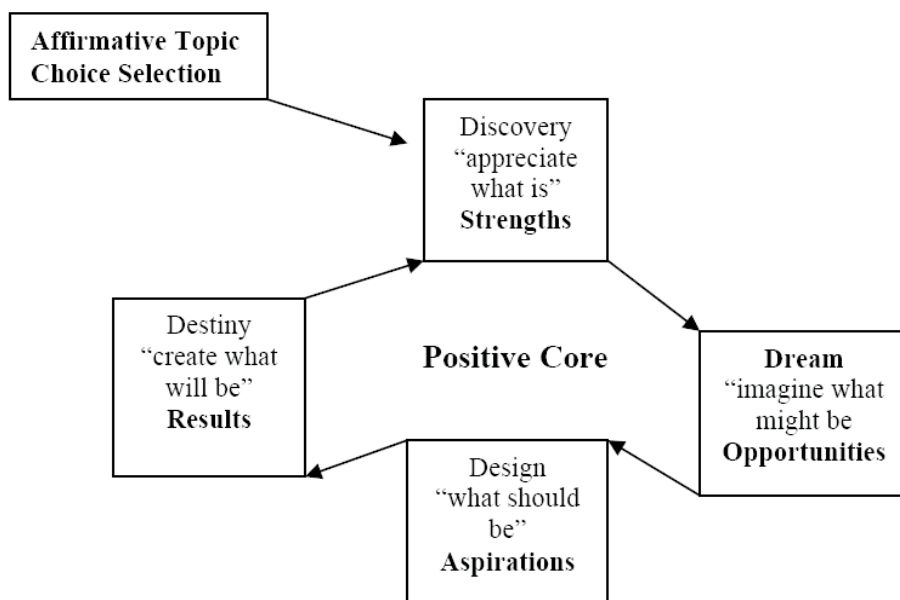
The five basic principles of AI. Cooperrider, (2003) has set out five basic principles which need to be applied in the course of applying AI in organizational change interventions.

- *The constructionist Principle:* This is the fundamental underpinning of AI. The basic idea behind the theory is that our thoughts about the world are developed through interpretation and construction, rather than simple recording of a phenomenon.
- *The Principle of Simultaneity:* points to the way that inquiry and change are simultaneous, in other words, they are not separate stages in development. An inquiry is an intervention.
- *The Poetic Principle:* emphasizes the way people author their world continually, choosing the parts of the stories they are most interested in at the time.

- *The Anticipatory Principle:* points to the way people think about their future, will shape the way they move toward the future.
- *The Positive Principle:* stresses on asking positive questions that engages people more deeply and for a longer time.

The 4-D Cycle of AI & SOAR

AI's five underlying principles mentioned above come to life through the cycle of Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny phases, popularly known as the "4-D" cycle (Cooperrider, 1999).

Affirmative Topic Choice Selection

Discovery "appreciate what is" **Strengths**

Destiny "create what will be" **Results**

Positive Core

Dream "imagine what might be **Opportunities**

Design "what should be" **Aspirations**

Figure 2.1: The 4-D Cycle of AI integrated with SOAR framework

(Source: adapted from Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003)

The SOAR framework is very similar to the 4-D cycle. It has got the same cyclical process with all the four phases building on each other and the entire process being seen as a continuous and ongoing one. This phase-to-phase integration is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

- *Discovery (Discovery of Strengths).* The purpose of the discovery phase is to search for, highlight, and illuminate factors that give life to the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The participants are asked the questions what are doing really well and what are our greatest assets. The distinguishing factor of this phase is that the crafted questions are all positive (Cooperrider et. al., 2003).
- *Dream (envisioning of Opportunities).* In this phase, the stakeholders explore the environment to envision an ideal image of the future. The envisioned images create compelling picture in the minds of the stakeholders what the organization would like and impel them to inspired action (ibid).
- *Design (formulating Aspiration statements).* These are affirmative statements for the future of the organization that stretch the organizational stakeholders towards the envisioned image. It tries to answer the question: "what would our organization look like if it were to maximize and preserve the potential we have discovered?" (Hammond & Royal, 1998).
- *Destiny (establishing indicators for measurable Results).* The final phase is the time for integration of all inputs from the three previous phases into an inspired action plan. The plan contains specific objectives, key strategies, success indicators, time frame and a financial budget. This impels in the members a sense of urgency, commitment and focused action.

Gap Model of Service Quality

Service quality has been conceptualized as a gap between customers' expectations and perceptions by Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1985). The Gap Model utilizes the disconfirmation paradigm, proposing that the gap between "expected" and "perceived" service quality determines the customers' overall service satisfaction. Closing or narrowing this gap is the goal of the services firms. Based on the gap theory Parasuraman et al., (1988) have developed SERQUAL scale primarily to measure service quality in firms. According to Hill, (1995) SERVQUAL is being extensively used in education sector as well. The researcher has used modified SERVQUAL (with addition of Fees to the original 5 dimensions) to fit in with the needs of the study

The Disconfirmation of Expectation Model

The disconfirmation of expectations paradigm developed by Paul Patterson (1993) related satisfaction with customers' pre-purchase expectations and perceptions. Any difference between expectations and perceived performance is known as disconfirmation. According to the model, expectations exceeding perceived

performance, the result are *dissatisfaction*. If perceived performance equals to expectations the outcome is *mere satisfaction*. On the contrary, the perceived performance exceeding expectations, the end is *customer delight*.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature reviewed the conceptual framework for this study was designed as shown in Figure 2.2
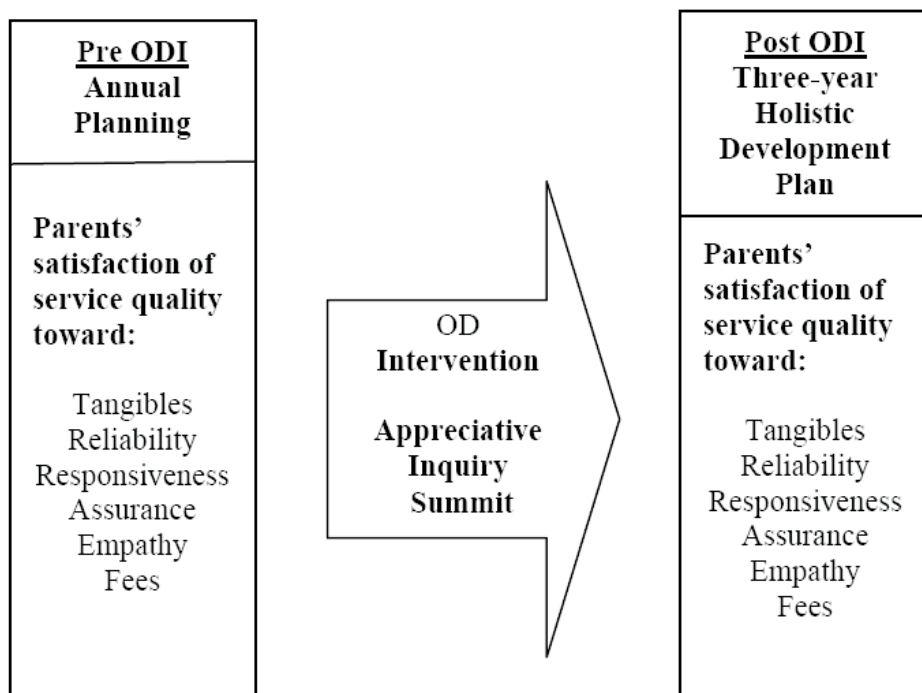

Figure 2.2 The Conceptual Framework (Source: Researcher)

Pre ODI stage represented the existing level of service quality in the organization. ODI is the phase in which the researcher entered the organization with an organization-wide change process known as Appreciative Inquiry Summit in order to improve the situation. Finally, the third and concluding phase shows the effect of the OD Intervention on service quality.

The Action Research Design

This study employed Action Research Design in three phases. The Assessment (pre-ODI), OD Intervention led by Appreciative Inquiry and Evaluation (post-ODI).

Phase 1: Pre-OD Intervention:

This represented the current practices/situation/challenges faced by the organization. During this phase the researcher engaged in various activities which will make the OD Intervention highly effective and successful. The activities covered were: AI workshop for the Board of Trustees, a similar workshop to the Principal, SOAR analysis of the organization, secondary data collection, and focus group meeting with teaching faculty.

Survey: The Pre-ODI assessment of service quality was done using a survey questionnaire modeled on the popular SERVQUAL on a sample population of 277.

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert Scale with the following values: 1 â Strongly Disagree, 2 â Disagree, 3 â Neutral, 4 â Agree, 5 â Strongly Agree. The arbitrary level for interpretation of mean scores was determined at 0.75 interval level.

Before sending out the questionnaire for the main survey the instrument was subjected to reliability test and found to be reliable.

Phase 2: OD Intervention.

This phase is the heart of the AR model. Under this phase the researcher conducted a one-day workshop called Appreciative Topic Choice Selection Workshop to choose the "focus of Inquiry" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). A total of thirty people representing the three major stakeholder groups got involved in this all "important and fateful task" of moving the organization in the direction of inquiry (Cooperrider, 2003). Using the AI generic questionnaire recommended by Cooperrider as a tool and following the pre-determined process flow chart the stakeholders crystallized their deliberations in the form of five themes which would form the basis for further inquiry at the forthcoming AI Summit. The five themes selected are: St. Francis School (ICSE)
- To reinvent as thinking pupils and evolving school;
- To promote faculty retention rich strategies/practices;
- To enhance its image and credibility;
- To improve school service quality;
- To build an appreciative school organization.

The Appreciative Inquiry Summit

The AI Summit using SOAR framework spanning four days is the core OD Intervention program. A summit is a way of implementing the AI process in a short concentrated time span. The chief objective of the summit was to craft a holistic three-year development plan for the school organization. Subsequently, the researcher studied the effect of the AI Summit as an OD Intervention on school service quality.

A total number of one hundred and fifteen people representing different stakeholder groups registered for the Summit. They were grouped into pre-drawn ten groups of ten each in order to ensure proper mix of participants from each stakeholder group. Each person in the group was given a specific task to perform and each group consisted of a pre-trained AI Interviewer who used the AI Interview Guide to interview and glean information. Thus the participants embarked on an exciting SOAR journey (one letter per day) with the five themes stated above forming the boundary walls in their discussions and deliberations.

Day-1, Discovery of organizational Strengths/assets and best practices. In each organization there are some elements that give life and energy. At the same time, it is quite possible that the members in the organization are not aware of it and that they may need time and encouragement to explore this fully (Whitney & Bloom 2003). Given the opportunity, the participants of the summit discovered a number of strengths, active and dormant that gave life to St. Francis. A summary of it is given in Table 1.

Day-2, Envisioning Opportunities. The participants were asked the question: how do we envision St. Francis School by 2015? (select an image). This imagery exercise has its roots in the AI's "Anticipatory Principle" which means as we anticipate, so we create. As Ludema, (2001) puts it "powerful image of the future in the mind has its effect on the present behavior". Following discussions in small and large groups and going through Ideal Image Mapping session the participants arrived at a consensus and chose Bishop Cotton Boys' School (BCBS), Bengaluru as ideal image for St. Francis School to model upon and at the end of the day listed out multiple opportunities present in the environment as given in Table 2.

Day-3, Crafting of Provocative Propositions (or Aspiration Statements). According to Whitney, (2003) "provocative propositions are intended to stretch the organization as it moves to realize the co-created future" On the third day of the Summit, the participants working through the day in micro and macro groups and pouring over several drafts finally produced five aspiration statements that will positively energize them to arrive at the co-committed ideal school organization decided by them in yesterday's session. The five aspiration statements addressed specifically one theme each.

Day-4, Development Plan (achieving measurable Results). The Development Plan was the main output of the Summit. This was formulated by the stakeholders making possible action statements and giving their unflinching commitment and co-operation for the success of the plan. The highlights of the plan are presented below:

- *The Structure:* The plan revolves around the five themes. It sets out to each of the stakeholder group clear sub-objectives derived from the main objective, strategies for attainment, success indicators, financial budget, a time frame and tasks people for achieving the objectives.
- *The Purpose*: is to equip and bolster the school to counter the internal and external challenges and accomplish a holistic growth in the next three years.

Objective 1: St. Francis to reinvent as "thinking pupils and evolving school"

This aims to equip the pupils to the demands of the globalization and the knowledge economy by inculcating in them creative, critical and analytical thinking skills. The school on its part strives to adapt and grow in the right direction in order to meet the shifting changes in the environment. Highlights: Training program for teachers to develop various thinking skills; critical reasoning skills during math classes for students; creatively connect class lessons with real life situations; improving self learning skills, and providing a high quality learning environment by the management.

Key Success Indicators (KSI): improved scores in math and science, teachers exhibiting greater self-confidence and students doing homework creatively.

Objective 2: St. Francis to implement faculty retention rich practices/strategies

These are aimed at decreasing the teacher turnover and improve their staying in the school. Highlights: salaries & perks, recognition & rewards, making aware of the vision, mission and values and admitting more children from middle-class segment.

KSI: low turnover, more job satisfaction and a positive school climate.

Objective 3: To enhance school image and credibility

This is a critical objective as it implies unless the school has credibility and image in the society competent teacher would not join and middle class parents would not seek admission. Therefore, image building is very crucial in the hyper competitive environment. Highlights: emphasis on core values and beliefs; teacher exchange program, financial assistance for research works, extensive use of ICT, ISO certification and fair management practices. KSI: more demand for admission and more students appearing for competitive exams.

Objective 4: St. Francis to improve service quality

This objective intends to give the school a competitive advantage over its rivals by improving parents' satisfaction toward various services offered by the school. Highlights: class teacher – parent link via website, remedial classes, differentiated learning techniques, due attention to opinion of parents, increased investment in ICT and career counseling seminars. KSI: appreciation from PTA, improved communications in the organization and praise in the media.

Objective 5: St. Francis to build an appreciative school organization

The idea behind the objective is to embed AI methods into the administrative practices in the school among the stakeholders and finally evolve the school as a model. Highlights: indulging in affirmative and appreciative conversations in workplace, training in AI for select teachers, school meetings conducted in AI style and pupil goal setting using SOAR framework. KSI: a climate of trust and team spirit, a sense of worth and empowerment among stakeholders, fundamental shift in thinking pattern and power paradigm.

Phase 3: Post-OD Intervention

At this stage researcher evaluated the success/failure of the OD Intervention program in the organization. The two key dimensions for an effective evaluation are measurement and research design (Cummings & Worley, 2009). This phase included the following activities: second round of data collection on service quality using the same survey instrument, hypothesis testing, comparison of mean scores of Pre and Post ODI, triangulation of results, research findings, conclusions, recommendations and final report to the management.

Tools for data analysis

All the quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 14.0 for Windows. Parents' satisfaction toward service quality dimensions Pre and Post ODI and hypothesis testing was done using paired samples t-test which is the most appropriate for fulfilling the objectives of the study. In addition, the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies were got validated and approved by following the Member Checking Method recommended by Creswell, (2008).

Comparison of Pre- and- Post ODI effect on parents' satisfaction toward service quality dimensions. In the dimension of tangibles, the average mean value witnessed a slight change from 4.13 to 4.10. This meant a drop of 0.03 (-0.77%) in the respondents' satisfaction as regards physical facilities and infrastructure. With respect to reliability dimension, the average mean value between Pre and Post ODI registered a significant improvement of increase by 0.14 (+3.6%). In the dimension of responsiveness, the biggest improvement of 0.26 (+7.7%) in the

mean value was recorded. The assurance dimension recorded another huge increase of 0.18 (+4.9%) in the mean value. The empathy dimension showed an insignificant increase of 0.04 (+0.97%) in the mean value. And finally, the fees dimension mean value fell marginally by 0.03 (-1.13%).

Research Hypothesis

H_{o1}: There is no significant difference between Pre-ODI and Post-ODI on the level of service quality in the dimensions: (a) tangibles, (b) reliability, (c) responsiveness, (d) assurance, (e) empathy and (f) fees.

H_{a1}: There is significant difference between Pre-ODI and Post-ODI on the level of service quality in the dimensions: (a) tangibles, (b) reliability, (c) responsiveness, (d) assurance, (e) empathy and (f) fees.

- Tangibles: With a significance level of more than 0.05 the null hypothesis is accepted. This point to the OD Intervention has not made any significant difference in service quality in tangible dimension.
- Reliability: The significance level of parents' satisfaction toward reliability dimension is less than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference in the level of parents' satisfaction toward reliability dimension following the OD intervention.
- Responsiveness: The significance is less than 0.05 so the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference in the level of service quality in terms of respondents' satisfaction in responsiveness dimension following the OD Intervention.
- Assurance: In this aspect, the significance is less than 0.05 so the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference between Pre and Post ODI on the level of service quality in the dimension of assurance.
- Empathy: For this aspect, the significance level exceeds 0.05 so the null hypothesis is accepted. It entails there is no significant difference between Pre and Post ODI on the level of service quality in the dimension of empathy

Fees: The significance level for this aspect is more than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between Pre and Post ODI on the level of service quality in the dimension of fees.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The AI Summit was a watershed in the decade old history of the school. It created a positive atmosphere for Change within the organization and inspired hope in the stakeholders with regard to the future.

The process of crafting the development plan opened up a new collaborative and all-inclusive approach in school planning. The process has generated an appreciative and affirmative momentum among the stakeholders.

The AI platform permitted the one hundred plus stakeholders to forge enduring symbiotic relationship with each other. It also presented an unparallel opportunity for the school management to interact freely with parents, teachers and the staff and understand each stakeholder's actual needs, desires and expectations. Common grounds for working and commitment to a commonly co-created goal replaced whining and complaining.

Development Plan and its implications

In so far as the school is concerned, the holistic development plan heralds a new decade of all round improvement and growth. This plan effectively eliminated the weaknesses and limitations in the annual plan. The plan was formulated based on the discovery of organizational best practices, strengths and assets, envisioned image, aspiration statements declared by the stakeholders in a collaborative process. The plan's core strength is, it is co-created, co-committed and co-owned by all the stakeholders. Overall, the development plan is a clear road map leading the long term growth and sustainability.

Recommendations

Successful organizations often share an important characteristic – they make every effort to ensure the satisfaction of their customer (Boone & Kurtz, 2002). Following the ODI the service quality in three out of six dimensions has not shown improvement, in fact, it two dimension in actually slightly diminished. For this reason, the management has to take the DP seriously and implement the measures in all its earnestness. They should constantly strive to evaluate and leverage the level of service quality.

The school management which has over a two dozen educational institutes could think of drawing up a Master Development Plan following the AI process and ensure optimum utilization of financial and human resources at their disposal.

Future studies done employing AI as methodology should take the trouble to measure and capture in quantitative terms the real benefits that accrued to the organization as a result of AI led OD Intervention. This would lend credibility to the studies and possibly convince the skeptics of the efficacy of the technique. This study combining qualitative and quantitative methods is a small step in this direction.

In view of heightened competition among schools more schools are likely to follow differentiation strategy in order to succeed and outperform others. The

most promising area where the schools would try to out do one another will be service quality delivery. Given this situation, future researchers could think of developing an exclusive scale for measuring service quality in schools.

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