SUBJECT – OC & D

UNIT -6 ( Factors influencing OD )

Part -1

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**Concept and role of power , politics and culture**

Power and politics are indisputable facts of organisational life. They are universal, important phenomena that need to be understood by employees, managers and OD practitioners.

The OD practitioners need both awareness (knowledge) and behavioural competence to deal effectively in the area of organisational power and politics.

OD has been criticized in the past for not taking account of organisational politics and power.

**Power**

‘Power is the intentional influence over the beliefs, emotions, and behaviors of people.

Potential power is the capacity to do so, but the kinetic power is the act of doing so...

one person exerts power over another to the degree that he is able to exact compliance as desired.

Power is ‘the ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire,’(Salancik and Pfeffer, 1971).

“Most definitions of power include an element indicating that power is the capability of one social actor to overcome resistance in achieving a desired objective or result,” (Pfeffer).

Two Faces of Power

McClelland research indicated that while most people give a negative connotation to power, it is through the use of power that things get done in the world.

The exercise of power is behind most human achievements, both good and bad.

Negative face of power is characterised by a primitive, unsocialised need to have dominance over submissive others.

The positive face of power is characterised by a socialised need to initiate, influence and lead.

This positive face of power is intended to enable others to reach their goals as well as let the persons exercising power to reach his or her goals.

The negative face of power seeks domination; the positive face of power seeks “more power to everybody”.

The positive face of power is much more prevalent than the negative face of power in organisations.

Positive changes in organisations take place through the positive face of power and politics.

Any OD program is by definition a power/political event in the organization’s life, and OD by virtue of its problem solving emphasis, is a program that increases the positive face of power and politics in organisations.

**Sources of Power**

The power can be seen to be emanating from different sources.

The sources of power determine the process of generation and acquisition of power. There are different approaches to understand

as to who gets power and how (French & Bell, 1995). Some of these are –

1. **Emerson’s “Power-dependence Theory”**

Power dependence theory states that power is inherent in any social relationship in which one person is dependent over the other.

The sociologist Richard Emerson (1962) states that “the dependence of actor A upon actor B is

(1) directly proportional to A’s motivational investment in the goals mediated by B, and

(2) inversely proportional to the availability of these goals to A outside of A-B relation.

In other words, if a person has something we want badly and we cannot get it at any place else, that person has power over us.

The components of this theory are a social relation between two parties, resources (commodities, goals, and rewards) that are controlled by one party, and desired by the other party.

2.**French & Ravens “The bases of Social Power”**

John R.P. French and Bertram Raven (1959) have suggested five sources, or bases of social power,

which are:

1. Reward Power: Power based on the ability of the power holder to reward another, i.e., to give something valued by the other.

2. Coercive Power: Power based on the ability of the power holder to punish other, i.e., to give something negatively valued by the other.

3. Legitimate Power: Power based on the fact that everyone believes that the power holder has a legitimate right to exert influence and that the power-receiver has a legitimate obligation to accept the influences.

4. Referent Power: Power based on the power-receiver having an identification with (attraction to, or feeling of oneness with) the power holder.

5. Expert Power: Power based on the power holder possessing expert knowledge or expertise that is needed by the other. Informational power is a form of expert power where the power holder possesses important facts or information needed by the other.

(To be continued in part -2 )