

Course Name: Organizational Behaviour: Individual Dynamics in Organization

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Week – 08

Lecture – 02

Lecture 37: Employee involvement

Dear students, welcome back to the course on organizational behavior, individual dynamics in organization. We move to the second lecture of module eight, where we look into motivation application at workplace. So today, specifically, I look into employee involvement.

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Let's look into today's theme of the lecture, “increasing employee involvement can benefit the employer in more than one way.” Increasing employee involvement can benefit the employer in more than one way. We would have recognized in the organization that more the employee involvement, greater are the benefits, greater are the ramifications. Let's look into that in detail.

Let us look into what employee involvement is specifically. Employee involvement is a participative process. It is a combined process that uses employees input to increase their commitment to the organization's success. So many a time you feel that there are certain employees within the organization who have great potential to contribute to the particular organizational decision or sometimes to a organization as such in total. But many a time you also feel that the organization undermines them, undermines the idea, undermines the philosophy or the thought process of those set of employees. So this is something which works in counter purpose to employee involvement.

Employee involvement programs differ from organization to organization and also from country to country. So, there are situations where employees specifically needs to be part of every single or at least every important critical decision making that happens within the organization. So, it seeks employee engagement seeks to engage and empower employees to take an active role in the decision making and problem solving process within an organization. So, it calls for it warrants a sense of responsibility.

It calls for a sense of ownership within the organization where every single individual tends to take up a certain level of his or her involvement or his or her participation within the particular decision making that's happening many a time. So, it is also customary to define what is the difference between let's say participation and involvement. So here also I have used the term in a synonymous fashion but many a time I have always understood that people tend to make a mistake like understanding participation and involvement as similar. Participation when is added with commitment that makes it involvement. So, I is essentially equal to P plus C involvement is basically participation plus commitment.

So, if there could be a knowledge sharing session in your organization where you are being invited to attend. So, you are sitting in the in the particular session, you are participating in the particular session, but there is zero commitment from your side. So, you cannot say that you are being involved or you are a active person who is being involved or you are involved in the whole session. So, involvement is nothing but the participation plus an element of commitment coming into picture. With that understanding we move to key aspects of employee involvement.

When we look into employee involvement in particular, we tend to understand the first aspect or the most important aspect is participation in decision making. Many a time we see that organizations tend to ignore junior-level employees. It's customary that that happens. Many a time, unfortunately, we also see that senior employees getting ignored. These are situations these are practical situations we see in every single organization or you have a discussion with a individual or employee of any organization of that particular level you will try to see or hear these stories.

Now interestingly any organization who tend to ignore the thought process or the decision or the experiences of an experienced employee or somebody will eventually There is no doubt about it. So, there are organizations which actually accumulate the experience in one of the sessions I have already talked about institutional memory. Many a time you feel that there is a person coming into the organization he or she is working right from so ground level he is reaching a top becoming a top-level executive in his entire life let us say 30, 40 years of experience it is hardly now the case that a person sticks on to the company for that long but let's look into an ideal scenario which was till the recently the norm. So, what happens is over the period the person has gained let's look into the scenario he must have even come from different organizations. So those experiences all these organization all this organizational experience that he or she has gained over the years once he retires once he goes out of the job it goes out with him.

So, there are some organizations which are unable to tap the experience of the particular

individual and one of the earlier sessions have also talked about this institutional memory. If you are an intelligent of organization, if your organization is futuristic, if your organization wants to learn from the past, please understand past is the key to the present and the future. So if your organization is an organization which looks into the past, which learns from the past, it tries to understand all the things which the individual employee has learned over the years before he or she ventures out of the organization, tries to codify it and puts in a shareable platform which can add to the institutional memory of the organization. There is one individual who is coming into the organization he or she needs to fill the gap of the particular individual then just the item or the activity he or she needs to do is to access the knowledge portal and try to understand what he or she has recorded. over her or his experience within the organization what he or she has done within the organization. So that will be a quick start guide for him to be or to for her to be a better employee in the organization.

There are organizations, there are institutions which are effective in tapping into the institutional memory, which are which are readily trying to create a knowledge repository out of this institutional memories. But there are a few, there are a few organizations which tend to degrade, tend to undermine the experience of employees and experience of individuals within the organization. So, the participation in decision making is key. When you come to employee involvement, if you are a part of a group, there should be a certain level of psychological safety.

Psychological safety means the ability to give your response, give your idea in a public platform. Let's say you are conducting a meeting. There is a group meeting that's happening with your group. So, you should be able to keep your opinion on the table and the leader, the leadership should be able to absorb it or able to receive it or able to at least create an environment Where you are, where every single individual within the committee or within the group is able to put his or her opinion that is psychological safety and this is the first element, first critical aspect of employee involvement participation in decision making. There could be decisions which actually looks into that particular individual or matters or it affects or influences the particular individual there could be decisions which do not have any absolute connection with that particular individual whatever that decision be let the individual also be part of the decision making.

The second important aspect is problem-solving. When you are looking into key aspects of employee involvement, let every individual be part of the problem solving. So, if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem. Then you are the problem. You might be the problem. So there could be a situation where you could bring some unique solution from your cultural experiences. your previous experiences which others might not have so try to make use of every single individual within the organization if you are in a leadership position within the organization please try to understand that

every single individual happens to be an asset of an organization. If you are unable to understand this prime logic and you are able to undermine or outweigh the particular individual over with your own let's say preconceived notions then you are at you are working at your own peril. You are working in a counter purpose way what the organization should happen or should work otherwise.

The third important aspect is continuous improvement. Japanese call it kaizen continuous improvement but this is essentially one of the key aspect of employee involvement when you are continuously improving let's say this is the basic philosophy of training and development within an organization there might be individuals who might lack something That would be the initiation or the trigger for giving a training. Let us say there are a set of group, there are a set of people who are being formed into a team. They would want to develop a particular program. So, they might lack essential coding skills.

So you tend to run a training program of the particular coding or the particular language and that will enable them, equip them to be experts in that particular area. Let us see. It does not end there. The moment they have they have captured they have got the gist of the core idea of the particular language in which it is being coded they tend to or the organization needs to upgrade or needs to notch up the game. So, there is a process or there is a next step every time involved when it comes to employee involvement. So if a person thinks that I am being valued by my company. Every now and then the company is trying to give me continuous improvement. I am some way a asset of an organization and the organization is trying to develop me at least incrementally. I will be tend to be more loyal to the organization. So this is what continuous improvement can do in terms of employee involvement.

The fourth important aspect is communication and feedback whereby you will see that the Employee involvement takes a back seat if you do not tell that particular employee how you are doing. Let us look into a particular scenario where you are being given a strategic decision to be made with respect to an expansion of your firm and you are holding a very key position. So, you had certain interaction with the essential stakeholders may be from land requisition to let us say to establishing the infrastructure, establishing a political and economic environment around so that it develops in itself to a township etcetera. So, lot of discussions have happened and you are being the key person assigned to that. After two months you feel that you are being suddenly thrown out and there is another person being placed in that particular place You are still with the organization, but you are you fail to understand what went wrong there.

So it's always better It's always prudent from the part of the organization that you give proper feedback What is going in and this should be real time? What is going bad or what

is going good if it is going good take time to appreciate if it is going bad do not criticize but tend to disclose what the problem is so that the individual can develop. So this essentially acts as a sign of employee involvement.

Now other aspects of employee involvement could be empowerment. The moment I see my organization is involving me in critical decision making or critical policy making I feel empowered. I might be just a junior level employee of that particular organization.

But let's say my thought process, my idea is being translated to a very important strategic decision of the company with some refinement of course. But I feel that the whole process makes me empowered. That my freedom to give an opinion in the first place. I have the organization gives me that level of psychological safety.

That's the first thing. Second, the moment I place it, place the idea it is not dismissed as futile rather it is taken up seriously it is being worked on it is being refined I feel that I am empowered similarly the organization giving me training and development the organization I tend to feel I tend to understand the organization is seeing potential in me The organization is trying to realize the entire set of potentialities in me. That's why the organization is investing that much in terms of training and development. It is giving me recognition and reward for the work I've done. It might be the case that many a time you feel that some organizations don't reward their employee and it's not uncommon. Let's look into situations where you are being rewarded. You are being rewarded more than the reward. It is the recognition that comes within the organization that matters because you tend to feel a bit elated because your idea has some material to it. Your idea has some effect to it, some goodness to it. That's why it was employed.

Similarly, teamwork. Teamwork essentially gives you an idea that you are part of a larger decision making body. What happens within the team could be speculative, could be doubtful but the moment you are put in a team that means you are being given part or you are being given a level of involvement within the decision-making process and finally the culture of trust. Many a time you feel that in organization today there is a trust deficit. This word trust deficit has come into the organization lexicon very fast. We will see that we observe that the culture of trust leads people to be normal and in one of the modules specifically I have designed for knowledge hiding which is also my research area.

I will talk about the distrust that is being created and how distrust is being transformed distrust loop etc. So, when you are talking about the culture of trust please try to understand that many organizations lack this. The moment there is culture of trust you tend to work gel in as a group, you tend to work as a group, you tend to contribute more than what you have contributed otherwise, so this is what employment involvement can benefit for the organization. These are some of the key aspects of employee involvement.

Let us look into some of the examples of employee involvement.

One is participative management and another is a representative participation. Participative management is nothing but you are being given an individual seat in the organization decision making body. You are a part of decision-making body whereas representative participation is something like a work council, like a trade council, you are a board representative, you are being representing the interest of the workers in the board. or you might be part of the work council whereby you are representing the interest of the larger workforce in the council. So, there might be two types of participative management, one is participative management, two types of employee involvement, one is participative management, another is representative participation.

Most of the European companies follow the representative participation aspect, but trust me Each of them has its own benefits and demerits. Each of these styles have its own advantages as well as disadvantages.

Now let us quickly link some of the employee involvement programs and the motivation theories. This is where the application of motivation as a singular module comes into play. If you recall what we learned in expectancy theory, there is a level of expectation that is coming with every particular job.

If you see that your organization is performing in a way that you were expecting, if your organization is trying to reward you for what you have actually done, if your organization is giving you an opportunity to be trained in something which you are lacking or which you were trying to build your career on, you are trying to improve upon then it is sitting in well with expectancy theory.

If you recollect the self-determination theory SDT talks about the efficacy part the whole relatedness autonomy is critical here if you look into every single employment initiative every single employee involvement initiative you will see that there is an autonomy that is given and the autonomy as discussed in the previous class is not only with respect to the execution of the job it is right from the beginning of the planning of the job the conceptualization of the job the planning of the job all the action plans to be listed out. execution of the job and finally even evaluating the particular results of the job. It has a whole stream of process associated with this. This is where the self-determination theory gets aligned with the concept.

The third one is goal setting theory. If you recollect the goal setting theory is where you set specific objectives, set specific goals. Your employee involvement is always in line with the goal you are setting then you tend to feel that the theory also supports your argument. There is always an organizational goals there is no doubt about it

organizational objectives are there. I have talked about strategic intent in one of the previous classes where your individual goal is in alignment with the organizational objective that is called a strategic intent. If that is happening then the whole process of employment employee involvement is streamlined within the organization.

Equity theory is where if you recollect you tend to see the input and the output. You feel that you are giving so much of input but the organization is not responding or reciprocating in terms of the output. You feel that others are not giving that much of input but they are getting a lot of attention, lot of benefits, lot of other achievements as part of that. So this equity theory would always sit well when you feel that the organization recognizes your simplest of the simple efforts. appreciates is appreciating the key ideas which you are giving organization in fact in fact tries to reciprocate and tries to reward what you are giving us as initial points for decision making.

So equity theory also sits well. If you look into the Maslow's theory hierarchy of needs if you recollect. When you are looking into employee involvement, it does not have much of say in terms of the physiological needs or the safety needs. But when you climb up the hierarchy in terms of recognition, in terms of self-esteem and in terms of self-actualization, the moment you feel that you are being involved, In every single decision-making of the organization you tend to feel that your hierarchy of needs especially the higher set of needs are being catered to or are addressed are being addressed. This is how Maslow's hierarchy of needs lies in tandem with your employee involvement. And finally, job characteristic model which we discussed in the previous class, the autonomy, the task variety all leads to a basic psychological state of mindfulness or responsibility, meaningfulness and responsibility that gives you a certain idea that yes you are being involved in the decision making process. So all the theories which we have discussed in detail In the previous module we see that is being in tandem or has been aligned perfectly with what we understand as employee involvement today. Let us have a quick case discussion before we wind up today's class.

Columbia Aluminium was situated on the Columbia River in Washington State. Year-round work and high wages made it the preferred employer in the area. However, due to high operating costs and ineffective managerial practices, it went through numerous owners and was shut down until Ken Peterson reopened it. Peterson had an open-door approach to leadership and envisioned an engaged workforce. But despite his efforts, the plan seemed to be heading in the same direction as with previous owners. After deciding that external help would be needed, Peterson submitted a request for proposal and hired the consulting firm Scontrino Powell. After conversation with Peterson and plant management as well as interviews with employees, it became clear to Scontrino-Powell that the best approach would be to develop and implement a formal and structured employee involvement process designed around the framework of lean and

continuous process improvement, CPI. So please note continuous process improvement. Below are the key process of the approach Columbia Aluminium adopted. First, they established a large steering committee of 18 employees covering all levels and areas in the plant. Scontrino-Powell designed and delivered a multiple day training workshop to the steering committee on employee involvement and continuous process development. After this base of knowledge was developed, it was important that the steering committee also get first-hand exposure to the concepts and strategies they just learned. To accomplish this, the committee went on site visits to plants across the United States and experienced first-hand different approaches for CPI and employee involvement. After the site visits the steering committee decided that they wanted a highly structured approach to employee involvement. They worked with the consultants to design a system applying ideas from the training and site visits.

So, employee involvement system as per the case totally talks about three important aspects. One is training, the training essentially given to the employees. The second part is facilitation. Facilitating the resources that is ideal or that is required that is much needed for the activity. And finally, the problem-solving teams have to be developed. Within the organization, there are always troubleshooters. Make a team of all those troubleshooters and it will be very handy in terms of in times of need, in times of necessity.

So, these are some of the results that have been deciphered with respect to the case discussed. Productivity shot up by 6 percent. Return on investment during the first year was over 1000%. Product quality improved and employee stake ownership plan. There was a significant improvement in safety. Labor management corporation improved dramatically. So, if you look into all these situations, this is not one single agenda that has come up or one single result that has come up. If you try to look into the entire case, you see that employee involvement tries to address a 360 degree solution. It gives you the required result in terms of the sales, in terms of your revenue.

It gives you the desired result in terms of the performance. It gives you the desired result in terms of the workability or the working environment or the culture. It gives you the desired result in terms of the level of training that can be obtained. So, there is a lot of there are a lot of factors that employee involvement can give. So when we look into motivation always the motivated employee is the person or is the employee who is involved in the decision-making process. Every single employee who is involved in the decision making process is a motivated employee.

On that note we will end the class today. Thank you for listening to me patiently. See you in the next class. Till then take care.