

ISLAM AND HUMAN SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

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Management theories date back thousands of years, but a more organized and scientific approach to management has emerged only in the last one and a half century. Over the course of this period, hundreds of new management theories were given by various authors but basically three main schools of thought emerged. The earliest of these was the classical management school. The other two schools are referred to as the behavioral school and the quantitative school.

The management specialists in the mid 80's realized, that the conventional concept of management has failed in building better organizational behavior. The procedures and methods that used to work are no longer adequate. Low commitment, feeling of distrust and enslavement, unproductive internal competition, organizational politics and a sense of insecurity among organizational members have become part and parcel of almost every organization.

Later, it was discovered that it is possible for people within the organization to collaboratively manage the culture of that organization in such a way that on one hand, the goals and purposes of the organization are attained and on the other hand, human values of individuals within the organization are furthered. It was further argued that the organizational climate can be warmer and more friendly. All persons connected with organizations can establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and collaboration and work more productively.

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It was further recognized that an organizational culture can be established which will support more innovation and creativity, increase job satisfaction, develop more positive interpersonal relationships and foster greater participation in creating plans and defining organizational goals, through a special kind of behavioral training known as Organization Development (OD). The OD training emerged in 1956 as a result of joint efforts made by two research institutions namely National Training Laboratories, USA, and Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, UK. Leading behavioral scientists and management specialists of the time were involved. This training originated in response to the recognition that all the machines, systems and procedures can only work effectively if the people responsible for operation and implementation have positive values and attitudes towards work and their fellow employees. This small organization development training initiative later emerged as a separate professional discipline in the early 1980s.

Now, OD is recognized all over the world as “an intervention strategy that uses group processes to focus on the whole culture of an organization in order to bring about planned positive changes. It seeks to change beliefs, attitudes, values, structures, and practices, so that the organization can better adapt to technology and live with the fast pace of change”. The main objective of OD is to change all parts of an organization in order to make it more humanly responsive, more effective, more viable and more capable of self-renewal

The Field of Human Systems Development¹

In 1984, after the success of OD techniques and realizing the increasing demand for OD practitioners, National Science Foundation, USA., funded a three-year research project. The project sought to bring experience and informed opinion to bear on the values and ethics that underlie and guide the practice of OD professionals. As a result of this research, the commission published its reports in late 1990 which revealed the following facts about the field and its practitioners.

- The practice is generally recognized as Organization Development (OD). However, in recent years, there has been increasing recognition that “the field” includes more than organizations, i.e., the entire range of human systems including individuals, small groups, organizational subsystems, organizations, communities, nations and global human system as a whole. The commission recommended that looking at the broad applications of the field, the name OD will simply restrict the scope of this field to organizations only. Therefore, to incorporate a broader view of the field, it should be known as Human Systems Development (HSD).
- Answering the question that if OD should be recognized as a separate discipline, the commission reported that “the commitment of professionals to the values central to their profession is what leads society to grant them - individually and collectively - the authority and resources to pursue those values in the services of others”, as a separate field of professional practice.
- The commission reported that the OD practitioners are “viewed as morally committed to pursuing the dominant value that defines the goal of their professional practice.... They are expected to do so even when self-interest may have to be sacrificed in that pursuit”.
- On defining the field, the commission elaborated that, “*Human Systems Development is a professional network or community of professionals whose practice is based on the applied behavioral sciences, a human systems perspective, and both human and organizational values.*”
- The purpose of HSD is “*to promote a widely shared learning and discovery process dedicated to the vision of people living meaningful, productive, good lives in ways that simultaneously serve them, their organizations, their societies, and the world*”.

Beliefs and Values for Human Systems Development²

In addition, the commission reported the following underlying belief and values of HSD professionals.³

The fundamental belief of HSD professionals is that:

Human beings are:

- equally worthy regardless of race, creed, age, nationality, gender, ability, socio-economic status, or any other attribute that distorts people's perception of their essential equality
- rightfully entitled to equal opportunities in their lives
- interdependent economically, politically, socially, culturally and spiritually
- rightfully responsible for taking charge of their own lives, functioning autonomously and interdependently, and for controlling and facilitating their own growth.

The fundamental values for this profession are:

- life and quest for happiness;
- freedom, responsibility and self-control;
- justice;
- human potential and empowerment;
- respect, dignity, integrity, worth, and fundamental rights of individuals and other human systems;
- authenticity, congruence, honesty and openness;
- understanding and acceptance;
- flexibility, change and pro-action;
- learning, development, growth and transformation;
- whole-win attitudes, cooperation-collaboration, trust, community and diversity; and
- widespread, meaningful participation in system affairs, democracy and appropriate decision making.

The beliefs and values prescribed in this section are contributed and owned by hundreds of HSD practitioners (with the exception of the author, no other Muslim is registered yet), throughout the world. Any Muslim can admit the fact that these beliefs and values are derived from Islamic principles. The only difference as I see is that these beliefs are rooted in their social and cultural systems as opposed to religious system in Islam. And that is the why that the successful implementation of HSD programs in non-Muslim societies is more difficult as opposed to Muslim societies, where these beliefs form an integral part of their Religion.

Let us first take the belief statement, which looks like a synopsis of the Last Public Address of the Holy Prophet delivered at the time of Haj-tul-Widah. Looking at the values given for this "highly specialized field of practice", the whole Quran is full of outlining these characteristics and traits for Muslims. On the other hand Sunnah supports all of these characteristics where the Holy Prophet practiced all these values and left an unforgettable mark not only on Muslims but also on Non-Muslims. I am providing references from the Holy Quran, in the end-notes section.⁴

Characteristics of IISD

Before we get into arguments, let us also review the underlying characteristics, foundations and unique features of OD or what we call it now, HSD. These perspectives show different facets of the OD process that, practiced together, give this field its unique stamp. These unique characteristics serve as the foundation upon which this process of organization development is built, and it has contributed a lot in shaping the practice of organization development.

Human Values: HSD programs typically are based on strong human values, which are positive beliefs about the potential and desire for growth among individuals. To be more effective and self-renewing, any human system needs people who are honest, open, just, responsible, and they need stress collaboration, open communication, interpersonal trust, shared power, self development and constructive confrontation. They all provide a base for HSD efforts and help ensure that the new organization or any human system to which they belong, will be more effective and productive.

Flexible and Pragmatic: HSD is flexible and contingency-oriented. Unlike many other approaches that emphasize only one "Right" solution to any problem, HSD is flexible and

pragmatic. Instead of imposing a single best way on a group, usually there is open discussion of several alternatives than a single best way.

Problem Solving: HSD emphasizes the process of problem solving. It trains participants to identify and solve their problems rather than only discussing theoretically, with no ultimate outcome. The focus is on improving problem-solving skills by discussing data-based system problems. In other words, individuals “learn how to learn” from their experiences, so they can solve new problems in the future.

Feedback: HSD relies heavily on feedback. Feedback is a tool which is widely used for Self Development and is absolutely necessary for survival and growth. It is information that helps people to decide whether their behavior has had positive effect on others. The main logic behind feedback is unless a person knows about the effect (positive or negative) of his behavior on others, it is neither practical nor logical to expect the intended behavior from him/her. Feedback encourages people to understand how they are seen by others and take self-correcting action.

Experiential Based: Experiential based learning means that people learn more by experiencing than simply listening or reading. People like to discuss and analyze their own immediate experience and learn from it. This approach tends to produce more changed behavior than the traditional listening or discussions, in which people talk about abstract ideas. Theory is necessary and desirable, but the ultimate test is how it applies in a real situation.

Change Agents: HSD programs generally use one or more change agents, whose role is to stimulate, facilitate, and coordinate change. The change agent usually acts as a catalyst and is a role-model. Change agents may be either external or internal., they are usually practitioner from outside that particular human system. Advantages of using outsiders are that they are more objective, have diverse experiences and are able to diagnose and operate independently. It also emphasizes that the success of any HSD program depends on the Change Agent, demonstrating all the desired behaviors himself.

System Orientation: HSD programs are system oriented. In other words, they recognize the fact that to bring positive changes in any human systems the process will have to be started from individuals. To bring changes at the global system level, for example, the process will begin from the individual, then group, then inter-group, organization, communities, social systems, national and then ultimately the global system.

Some Facts About Islam

Islam is a universal religion and provides a complete code of life. It is not a religion only guaranteeing the improvement and uplift of an individual’s private and personal life, in-fact, it is a complete way of life catering to all the fields of human existence. Even the main objective of Islam is “the reformation and reconstruction of society (human system) on the eternal and all-embracing principles set forth in the Quran. Some facts about Islam are listed in the following paragraphs.

Islam- A Universal Religion: Islam is the religion of mankind and its message is universal and eternal. Islam provides guidance in all walks of life - individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. James A. Michener writes, “Many Westerners, accustomed by their history books to believe that Muslims were barbarous infields, find it difficult to comprehend how profoundly our intellectual life has been influenced by Muslim scholars in the field of science, medicine, mathematics, geography and philosophy. Crusaders who invaded the Holy Land to fight Muslims returned to Europe with new ideas of love, poetry, chivalry, welfare and government. Our concept of university was modified by Muslim scholars, who perfected the writing of history.....”⁵

Islam-Emphasizing Human Values: Islam has placed a lot of emphasis on character

building of an individual. It realized the importance of moral values for a social system to work effectively and thus incorporated those values as basic traits of the human being. That is why it raised His Prophets to impart knowledge of the principles of individual and social behavior to maintain justice and tranquility in society and culture. Kindness, manners, courtesy, trusting relationships, truth, fulfilling the promise, justice, honesty and providing equal treatment are basic and prime values given by Islam. Sirojini Naidu admits justice in Islam, while saying, "Sense of justice is one of the most wonderful ideas of Islam, because as I read in the Quran, I find those dynamic principles of Life, not mystic but practical ethics for the daily conduct of life suited to the whole world".⁶ On the other hand, Major Arthur Glyn Leonard says, "Two features in the Creed of Islam have always specially attracted me. One is the God conception, the other is its unquestionable sincerity - a tremendous asset in human affairs,"⁷

Few sayings of the Holy Prophet are listed below which emphasize these values:

- "Guard yourself against six things, and I am your security for Paradise: When you speak, speak the truth; fulfill when you promise; discharge your trust; be chaste in thought and action; and withhold your hand from striking and from taking that which is unlawful and bad".
- "The most perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral excellence.
- "No man hath believed perfectly until he wisheth for his brother that which he wisheth for himself".
- "All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most beloved of God who doeth good to God and His creatures".
- "No father giveth his child anything better than good manners".

Islam-Emphasizing Responsibility and Self Control: Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual personality of man and holds everyone personally responsible and accountable for his deeds. It guarantees fundamental rights to the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. It also puts a lot of emphasis on self control. The Holy Prophet on one occasion said that, "The most excellent Jihad is that for the conquest of the self".

Islam-Satisfying Stability and Change: Mr Justice Cardoza of the United States of America has emphatically declared, and rightly so, that, "The greater need of our time is a philosophy that will mediate between conflicting claims of stability and progress and supply principle of growth". Islam bestows upon mankind an ideology that satisfies the demands both of stability and change. It encourages continuous self-development as a major tool for bringing positive changes and development in society. According to the Quran, "Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in their hearts". At another occasion, it suggests, "Man shall have nothing but what he strives for". The Holy Quran did not accomplish the transformation of the individual alone. Equally, it brought about a transformation of the family, of society, of humanity as a whole. The Quran has affected a transformation of humanity itself, a transformation material as well as moral, an awakening intellectually as well as spiritually. There is no other religion which has brought about a change so deep and everlasting in the lives of men.

Islam-Leadership and Democracy: Islam is a practical religion and there is no hierarchy in Islam. Everybody is supposed to approach the Quran or Mohammad (the leader) directly and live his life according to its directives. Islam has emphasized that the leader should be a "role model" for the society and must demonstrate all the traits and qualities as expected by the members of the society. Giving the leadership traits, the Quran suggests, "they deserve the right to govern who, among other assets, have physical strength coupled with knowledge". Here "other assets" does not mean physical assets but means Islamic values which are considered as true assets for Muslims. Sirojini Naidu writes that "It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque when the call from the Minaret is sounded, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and

the king kneel side by side and proclaim, "God alone is great".⁸

Islam-Emphasizing Human Equality: It suggests the equality of human beings regardless of any factor. H.A.R. Gibb, an English writer says: "But Islam has yet further service to render the cause of humanity No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and of endeavor so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small Muslim community in Japan, show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition between the great societies of the East and the West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition".⁹

Islam- Emphasizing Importance of Knowledge: Islam takes mankind out of the world of darkness and initiates him into that of knowledge and light. It has emphasized the power of knowledge. The Holy Prophet once said, "To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female". On another occasion, the Holy Prophet said that, "Seek knowledge even though it be in China". Islam makes the proper development of the personality of an individual as one of the prime objectives of its educational policy.

Conclusion

Islam addresses the entire humanity, transcending all barriers and limitations of race, region or time. It seeks to guide man in all walks of life, spiritual, temporal, individual and collective. It contains directions for the conduct of the head of state as well as a commoner, of the rich as well as the poor. Islam recognized the importance of individual development to stimulate social development, 1500 years ago. This is something which modern management has recognized now, saying that "in the 80's major growth areas for organizations were related to technology transfer, in the 90's expected growth will be related to people". Marquis of Dufferin and Ava very rightly said that "It is always to Mussulman science, to Mussulman art, and to Mussulman literature that Europe has been in great measure indebted for its extrication from the darkness of the Middle Ages".¹⁰

I do not claim to be a "Scholar", but being an HSD Practitioner in a Muslim Society, more I think about and practice HSD, more I get convinced that this is something which our religion has laid down for us. Few questions then arise: "Why did it take humanity so long to recognize it?" "Why have we abandoned our true values and code of life?" and, "Why do we always let Non-Muslims take our leads?" These are the questions to be answered by every Muslim. I think that we will have to prove what the Holy Quran cited, "Thus we have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind,....."

End Notes

1. and 2. These sections are heavily based on Values and Ethics in Organization and Human Systems Development, (1990)
3. After reviewing the list of the professionals and leading organizations Which were involved in the design and formulation of this belief and values statement, I found that there was not a single Muslim involved in this process.
4. For more details, please refer to these verses of the Holy Quran: Women 58; The Children of Israel 34 and 53; Light 7 and 94; Counsel 43; The Family of Imran 103, 134 and 159; Hud 75 and 88; Fusilat 35; The Criterion 63; Iron 25; Cattle 153; The Pilgrimage 30; Repentance 71 and 77; The Table Spread 2; The Private Apartments 9, 11 and 12; Luqman 17; The Cow 44, 83 and 143; The Ranks 2; Sad 29; The Bee 125; Spoils of War 1; and, TaHa 44.
5. "Islam-The Misunderstood Religion, James A. Michener, Readers Digest, (May, 1955)
6. The Ideals of Islam - Lectures vide speeches and writings, p.167
7. Islam-Her Moral and Spiritual Values
8. Same as No. 6
9. Whiter Islam, H.A.R. Gibb, p.379
10. Speeches delivered in India, p.24

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