IMPLEMENTING STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING THROUGH MANAGEMENT LAB:STRATEGY, STRUCTURE, SYSTEM AND PROCESSES

Renjith Krishnan, K.
Faculty, Business studies Department, Shinas College of Technology, Oman and Research Scholar, Banasthali University.

Abstract
When Students participate in a classroom, they better understand the course concepts. Student Centered learning approach is an attempt in that direction so that it encourages students to become active learners rather than being passive as in the traditional teacher-centered learning approach. Implementing student centered learning in Business courses require more systematic effort supported by HR system. The critical problem facing the business schools today is the shortage of adequately trained management practitioners with leadership skill and with problem solving skills. To address this situation, the Business studies course curriculum at the author's institution is being improved via a program called Management Lab. The basic objectives of this project are to enhance the quality of business education via increased student engagement and by bridging the gap between the basic principles discussed in the classroom and the complexity of real world problems. The teaching method utilized promotes higher levels of student engagement and learning through case studies, Role play, Seminar, Group Discussions and Video analysis apart from spreadsheet for accounting subjects and simulation games and online exercises for real world experience.. The new course curriculum enhancement described in this paper is guided by academic research and industry best practices.

The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change".

*(*Carl Rogers, American psychologist and one of the founders of the humanistic approach to psychology.)

Management Lab: The Concept and Activities
Our business is changing, our competition is changing, and our Management world is changing:
In this context every day I am asking these questions to myself.

1) Am I changing accordingly in my mental models, mind-set and critical thinking?
2) How is my teaching, research and service activity advancing accordingly?
3) Is our Business program changing to meet the challenges of today's and tomorrow's markets?
4) Are our students capable of solving the business problems of today and tomorrow?
5) What should be done in class rooms for developing leaders of tomorrow capable of solving complex wicked problems?

These questions made me think of developing a curriculum to empower business students to lead teams comprising world's best talents with greatest ideas, not producing jargon-spewing, value destroying financiers and consultants, a curriculum that better fortify integrated business management skills to address current and future business problems and transform the Business students into competent professionals rather than just management disciplinary technicians.

Management Lab to Implement Student Centered Learning (SCL)
To implement the concept of student centered learning, a program called Management lab is designed. Management lab is a learning methodology adopted where the learning happens through Training, student involvement, sharing program and assessment centre, which is enriched by Discussions, presentations and live projects.

The motto of Management lab is
- Development by objective (DBO)
- Learning by involvement (LBI)
- Grading by Development (GBD)

Objectives of Management lab

- **Help to acquire Knowledge** (Latest and Current) for application
- **Skill Development** (Decision making, Presentation/Discussion, research, interpersonal, team work, leadership) and
- **Developing positive Attitude** and Assertive behavior

As part of achieving the objectives of management lab and student centered learning, the first task will be redefining the objectives of a course. Each faculty should ask themselves, "What students will be able to do after this course?" After that he should develop materials, case analysis, role play, presentation topics and assignments based on redefined objectives.

Figure: 1 Redefined objective of a course, an example.

International HRM-REDEFINED OBJECTIVES
The students will be able to..
Chapter-1
Make structure of International HRM and differentiate IHRM with DHRM (Seminar)
Analyze strategy of business and its impact on HRM (Using Porter's model)-Illustrative Case
Chapter-2
Analyze Culture Using Hofstede Model (Online exercise and Role play)
Chapter-3
Decide staffing approach suitable in different international Context (Case Analysis)
Identify recruitment sources in international Context. (On-the-spot seminar)
Decide selection criteria and methods suitable in different situations (On-the-spot Recruitment and selection decision exercises using value deliverable and selection performance model)
Chapter-4
Formulate training strategies and decide trainings suitable in different international Context. (On-the-spot seminar and cases)
Chapter-5
Design compensation strategies suitable in different international Context. (Video on Compensation practices in MNCs)
Chapter-6
Present HR practices in global companies and discuss issues in IHRM (Structured assignment Video analysis and Group Discussion)

After Finishing the Course
Craft HR strategies in Global Context (Structured assignment and Group Discussion)

Training given to students
Apart from traditional class room teaching a student will be given training in soft skill, skill developing activities and in decision making tools.
- Class room teaching- HR, Marketing and finance basics and functions.
- Soft skill training (Self-management, Personality management, Time Management, stress management and anger management, Communication skills, Presentation skills , self- marketing (cover letter, resume, Group Discussion and interview), Leadership skills and Team work skills)
- Training in skill developing activities like Case analysis, role play, presentation skills, group discussion and video analysis
- Training in decision making tools: Labor law, Marketing law and finance law, HR, marketing and finance technology, People soft, Dash Board @ desktop, Accounting softwares and analytics, marketing softwares and analytics, Payroll processing and Excel.

The Components of Management Lab
- Simulated office with internet connection: This simulated office is equipped with business software's like People soft, tally or accounting softwares and marketing control softwares, Spread sheet templates for accounting and finance, Dashboard @ Desktop for business analytics, Payroll processing soft wares and applications used in all business functions like Marketing and finance. A simulated board room, observation room with one way mirror, video camera for running focus group interviews and conducting observation based experiments and video lab to edit, store and analyze experimental data.
- Business form database: Employee database format, HR forms used in Recruitment, selection, job evaluation, salary survey, application bank, training need analysis, training evaluation forms, performance appraisal forms etc. Marketing forms and finance and accounting function related forms.
- Test database: Psychometric tests, Thomas – Killman conflict mode questionnaire and other tests and questionnaires used in all business functions.
- Database of cases and case lets, role play situations, exercises, games, videos and audios related to all functions of Business (HR, Marketing and finance)

- Data base of Business practices in domestic and Global companies, Annual reports and interview with CXOs, leaders (Videos, audios and print/online).

Once the lab is set up the class room exercises, case analysis, seminar, group discussion, assignment, simulation games, Role play and even class room teaching will be done in this simulated office for providing real world experience and for developing skills of students. The training given and student learning element will be tested and applied through the assessment center where proper feedback will be given based on rubrics. In assessment centre students will be given

- Role plays for developing communication, Team work and interpersonal relation skills,
- Case Analysis for decision making, leadership and business problem solving skills,
- Seminar for presentation and communication skills in a business context,
- Exercises for practice and conceptual understanding,
- Simulation games in marketing, finance (Simulated stock market games) and HR for practice and real world experience and
- Psychometric tests will be administered for personality development.

The Need for HR System and Its Strategic Alignment for Implementing Student Centered Learning

Within the broad context of external environment, every organization will have a strategy and its foundation itself is Enthusiastic leaders and diverse work force who are guardians of their culture and value system and these leaders and diverse work force will bring in the necessary operational excellence, process excellence and managerial excellence which in turn will help to achieve the strategic objective of value creation, customer satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. (Krishnan R, 2011).

Figure: 1: The need for HR system and its strategic alignment
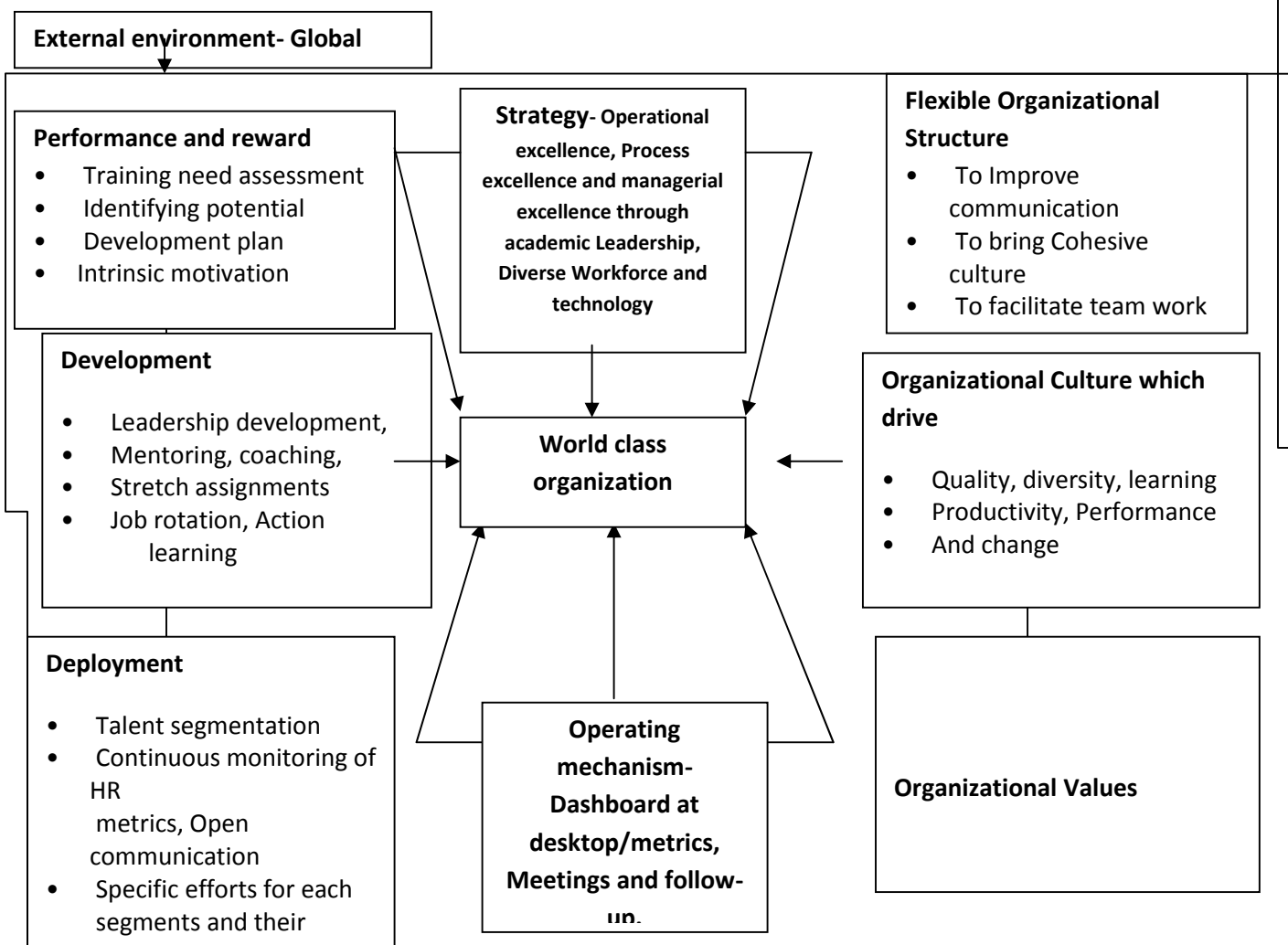
Source: Krishnan, R (2011), "An integrated approach to international HRM", in the book 'Building Business Capability through Human Resources' published by excel books, New Delhi, ISBN No.93-80-697-83-X.

For the Implementation of Student centered learning through Management lab, the leaders with a specific strategic plan must attract, develop and retain diverse workforce who are guardians of their culture and value and are capable of facilitating growth in the fast moving global-Tech environment, maintain an organizational structure which facilitates communication which brings cohesive culture characterized by performance, productivity, change, diversity, quality and learning and integrating all these functions by meetings, follow-ups and metrics and measurements including dash board @ desktop. (Krishnan R, 2011).

For implementing SCL through Management lab, one should develop a work force strategy emphasizing work place philosophy and differentiating employees to link the process and HR practices (Beatty and Schneider, 2005). The workforce strategy may help advocate for strategic clarity rather than link their HR plans to flawed strategic assumptions. We should develop a performance – oriented, value driven, culture bound flexible organization. HR systems help to implement these winning practices. (Joyce, Nohria and Roberson, 2005). The HR systems should help to empower human capital for creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation through the quest for knowledge and experience- a quest that will nurture the mind to the world.

Performance Management System for Implementing Student Centered Learning Through Management Lab
Performance Management helps to provide open communication channels between the faculty and his/her immediate supervisor through goal setting, performance evaluation and feedback. Performance management helps to ensure contract renewal and employment continuation decisions are transparent and based on a mutual understanding of evaluation criteria. Additionally, performance management informs decisions regarding training and development needs and opportunities. The performance management system ensure the capability building of Faculty members for implementing management lab. The performance management philosophy should aim at encouraging a performance driven culture and open communication. It also should aim at providing a fair and objective review of a teacher's performance during the year as an integral part of employee development.

Performance management activity should include a minimum the following components; a formal annual meeting to set goals and objectives for the upcoming year (Session-O) and to review performance over the previous year (Session-R). The immediate supervisor is required to keep a written record of these meetings and the employee shall have the opportunity to add his/her comments and should receive a signed copy. Aside from the formal meetings noted above, employees and their immediate supervisors are encouraged to meet more frequently on a less formal basis to discuss activity to date.

Development Strategy to Implement Management Lab
Development strategy of faculty includes 3 parts. Develop-Deploy-Connect (Delloitte, 2008)

Develop
In this context 'develop' means the 'trial-by-fire' experiences that stretch the capabilities (action learning) by directly tackling real issues and the lessons they learn from peers, mentors and others. There should be a formal process that connects individuals and teams so that the inexperienced can learn from the experienced. These peer assist programs are natural way to approach complex assignments.

Stretch assignment
A stretch assignment is simply a project or task that falls outside the typical duties and requires stepping outside the comfort zone and learning new skills. Taking on such an assignment not only helps grow and develop, but it also sends the message to the higher ups that you're ready to take on more responsibility in the form of a promotion.
In addition, a stretch assignment can help advance within the College, rather than having to look for a new job and switch employers. And if a faculty happy in terms of the culture and the work being done, then there is a much better chance of succeeding in an expanded role there than going to a totally new organization.

Some examples of common stretch assignments possible in our department:
- Implementing a new project for improving the effectiveness of Department, Curriculum etc.
- Managing a Conference/Student events
- Executing a new or important project for improving student competencies
- Participating in College's strategic planning process

- Turning around the department or an operation for example, new method of examinations
- Organizing and leading an important College event or meeting
- Implementing SCL, Redefining objectives and developing skill developing activities

By challenging oneself professionally, one could develop leadership abilities and other important skills necessary for career advancement.

Action learning
Action Learning Projects (ALP) focus on two broad areas where we see faculty skills and leadership put to the test in organizations: **Process consulting and leading change.** The process consulting focuses on problem solving. Faculty may be asked to examine the entire department and choose to reengineer its practices and processes. The task of faculty is assessing its mission and goals, improving processes, allocating resources and creating results. Example, Reengineering academic process, building brand image, reengineering examination methods, developing new curriculum etc.
The second ALP focuses on leading change. This ALP gives the opportunity to transform some aspect of the department – to create a change for the better. This may be refining a process or altering the entire culture. This will be done with the top management, bringing the wisdom and leadership skills you've.

Academic Coaching
Coaches guide into becoming the most effective, self-regulated learner possible. Coaching is a perfect metaphor for the relationship that develops, because the Academic Coach identifies the strengths and weaknesses and individualizes appropriate activities, much as an athletic coach or a personal trainer assesses an athlete and develops a training regimen. As soon as the appointment is made, the HOD assigns a coach. The coach helps to
- become a self-regulated learner;
- understand and use effective learning strategies appropriate
- identify and overcome obstacles that may be impeding academic success;
- focus on goals and identify steps to reaching those goals;

Mentoring
This mentoring program is intended to be a useful way of helping new faculty members adjust to their new environment. The induction committee will arrange for Assistance from a well-respected mentor and it can be an invaluable supplement in the early years of a faculty. The program's success will depend on the new faculty members, their mentors and HOD all taking an active role in the acclimation process.

The mentor should provide informal advice to the new faculty member on aspects of teaching, research and committee work. Often the greatest assistance a mentor can provide is simply the identification of which staff one should approach for which task. The mentor should treat all interactions and discussions in confidence. There is no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member on the part of the mentor, only supportive guidance and constructive feedback.

The new faculty member should keep his/her mentor informed of any problems or concerns as they arise. The most important tasks of a good mentor are to help the new faculty member achieve excellence and to acclimate to Academic process and Management lab.

Deploy
Deploying Means working with key individuals to (a) identify their deep-rooted skills, interests, and knowledge (b) find their best fit in the organization (c) craft the job design and conditions that help them to perform. Deployment is about matching the correct candidate to a critical job or project. It helps to win their commitment. When people feel that organization takes a keen interest in their interests, skills and connections, they are far less tempted to look for challenges outside.
- Segment talents based on their potential and Performance
- Collect CV and make database of faculty members and identify the interest
- Have face to face contact if necessary for identifying interests of faculty members
- Identify deep-rooted skills interest and knowledge
- find their best fit in the department
- craft the job design and conditions that help them to perform (May be in a committee)

Connect
In this context 'connect' means providing critical employees with the tools and guidance they need to (a) builds networks that enhance individual and organizational performance and (b) improve the quality of their interactions with others. It found

that engineers and researchers were five times more likely to turn to another person for information rather than to search an impersonal source such as a file or data base.

a) Identify People having ability to solve problems in each critical areas in the work for example, Advising, Examination and assessment, Material development, Research, Workshop/Training, Language/Communication, Technical problems, Design needs Computers/Software etc.
b) Inform the other faculty members about the expertise of people having ability to solve problems in each area.
c) Create network/Connections between employees for solving problems.

Conclusion

How do we prepare, develop and mission our students as moral and human business professionals equipped to bring about a real positive difference in the challenging business world they are about to enter? Answers to these questions requires, business professors and business curricula do not create masks that prevent our students from seeing the persons whose lives are affected by the business world. In this connection, Business schools should not only impart wisdom but also empower our students with moral courage to make decisions strategize for the benefits of both organization and society.

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