CHAPTER ONE

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT AS A PROFESSION AND A FIELD

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Organization development (OD) has been around since the late 1950s and early 1960s, but it still proves difficult to explain what it is, what it does, and why you might want it or need it. The reasons for this seem twofold. First, it is still an evolving field of practice and is therefore difficult to pin down. Second, it requires an understanding of a synthesis or integration of several sets of knowledge united by an underlying philosophical belief and value system(s). Consequently, the range of definitions offered over the years all sound somewhat similar, and they also seem to miss the mark in explaining to outsiders, "So, what exactly is OD?"

Consider these definitions:

> Organization development is an effort (1) *planned*, (2) *organization-wide*, and (3) managed *from the top*, to (4) *increase organization effectiveness* and *health*, through (5) planned *interventions* in the organization's "processes," using behavioral science knowledge [Beckhard, 1969, p. 9].

> Organization development refers to a long-range effort to improve an organization's problem-solving capabilities and its ability to cope with changes in its external environment with the help of external or internal behavioral-scientist practitioners, or change agents, as they are sometimes called [French, 1969, p. 24].

> Organization development is a planned process of change in an organization's culture through the utilization of behavioral science technology, research, and theory [Burke, 1982, p. 10].

> Organization development is a systemwide application of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures, and processes for improving an organization's effectiveness [Cummings and Worley, 1997, p. 2].

Now, at this point in most discussions of "what is OD?" the author offers his or her or their definition of OD, intended to make clearer what it is and what it does. No such effort is expended here. Instead, the intention of this discussion is to go behind the words to the underlying ideas and values that not only give definition to organization development but make it both a field and a profession distinct from other forms of management and organizational consulting or training. First, the underlying knowledge and philosophical systems that help define what is and is not the field of OD are described. Next, some of the implications for the professional practice of OD are explored. Finally, some of the current and emerging issues confronting OD are enumerated.

The Field of Organization Development

There are some who would not describe OD as a field, partly because it draws from many academic fields and disciplines and partly because it is a field of practice more than a field of academic inquiry. Nevertheless, OD practice is informed and defined by a more or less integrated set or sets of theories, ideas, practices, and values and therefore qualifies as a field of applied knowledge. Consequently, to understand what OD is and what it does, we must first understand the dimensions of knowledge, ideas, and values that in combination produce practices that are labeled as organization development.

There are three primary sets of knowledge and an underlying value system that lead to what is called organization development. The discussion that follows errs on the side of attempting to simplify and present essential characteristics. No attempt is being made to elucidate the full characteristics and nuances involved. In this sense, the discussion aspires to make clear some of the fundamentals for understanding organization development at the risk perhaps of appearing to be too simplistic or leaving some important dimension(s) out of the discussion. Finally, in this discussion the reader is reminded that the focus of the field follows its name: the development of organizations. Diagnostic and intervention activities may involve individuals, pairs, and teams, but these efforts are presumed to be part of a systemic effort to enhance the functioning of an organizational system.

Understanding Social Systems

The first set of knowledge, at its simplest level, is understanding the potential subject(s) of an intended development or change effort. Because OD seeks to foster the improved effectiveness of organizations and other social systems, a range of knowledge pertaining to the functioning of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities—separately and as integrated systems—is required. Thus organization development draws on a number of theories and ideas predominantly from the behavioral or social sciences (psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science) but also to a lesser extent from economics, religion, and even the hard sciences of physics and biology. However, as is explained in more detail later, OD does not draw equally from all types of theories and ideas about human behavior in organized social settings. Instead it tends to be based in those theories and ideas that are consistent with its underlying, and sometimes unarticulated, philosophical value system. So, for example, most organization development practices are predicated on the assumption that people are motivated by factors beyond purely economic incentives.

Understanding the Hows and Whys of Change

A central aspect of OD is fostering planned development and change in social systems. This means that the bodies of knowledge that help explain how individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and even societies change are all pertinent to organization development. How do we go about inducing, supporting, or facilitating change in a manager, in a team, in an organization, in a network of organizations? The range of ideas about change and development coming from, for example, education, training, economics, psychology, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology is all potentially relevant to OD practice. Again, however, not all ideas about change are embraced by the underlying OD value system. For example, we might be able to force or coerce people to make certain changes, but this would not be considered organization development (and would in fact be refuted by OD practitioners).

Understanding the Role of a Third-Party Change Agent

The final set or sets of knowledge helping define OD pertain to the role of the OD practitioner. When working with an organization to help bring about a desired change, the OD practitioner is not the person in charge. Instead the OD practitioner is a third-party change agent aiding the person or persons in charge as well as the system itself to bring about the desired changes. An OD practitioner, whether internal or external to the subject system, must understand the issues, politics, psychological processes, and other dynamics associated with being a third-party change

agent or practitioner working with people called clients in complex social systems. Here too, not all theories and ideas about the third-party role are endorsed or embraced by organization development. Once again, it is those ideas and practices that are consistent with or congruent with the underlying values and philosophy of OD that become part of the theories and practices associated with the proper role and responsibilities of an OD practitioner. For example, a third-party role wherein an expert tells people what they should do is an accepted if not essential part of a great deal of management and other types of consulting but is rejected in organization development as a general mode of practice.

These three sets of knowledge about (1) social systems, (2) how to change social systems, and (3) third-party change agent roles are the essential areas of expertise for an effective organization development practitioner. They are also insufficient to fully understand the theory and practice of OD as distinct, for example, from other forms of consulting and training intended to foster or induce development or change in organizations or other social systems. To make this distinction requires understanding the underlying philosophy of organization development and how it links and integrates selective aspects of each of the main bodies of knowledge making up OD practice.

Understanding the Underlying Values and Philosophy of Organization Development

Organization development is often referred to as a values-based or normative field of practice. This is true, although not always fully understood. Furthermore, it is difficult to precisely enumerate the exact values that are the essential ingredients making OD more or less uniquely OD. It is, however, possible to describe some of the defining characteristics of the underlying value system and some of the ways in which this value system is evolving over time. At some considerable risk of oversimplifying or leaving out something important, four key value orientations help form the underlying philosophy of organization development:

1. A humanistic philosophy
2. Democratic principles
3. Client-centered consulting
4. An evolving social-ecological systems orientation

A Humanistic Philosophy. Organization development not only accepts but also promotes a humanistic orientation to social systems. This includes beliefs that people are inherently good, not evil; that they have the capacity to change and develop; and that through the exercise of reason and judgment they, not outside forces or inner drives and emotions, are capable of empowered action in the best interests of the enterprise. This orientation also affirms the value and dignity of

each person. Furthermore, to be effective, social systems should not restrict, limit, or oppress people regardless of their role in the organization or their demographic background. In organization development the human side of enterprise is always a central consideration, along with other aspects such as economics, technology, and management practices and principles. Historically, this orientation in OD has been expressed by the assertion that an organization that empowers its people is also a more effective organization.

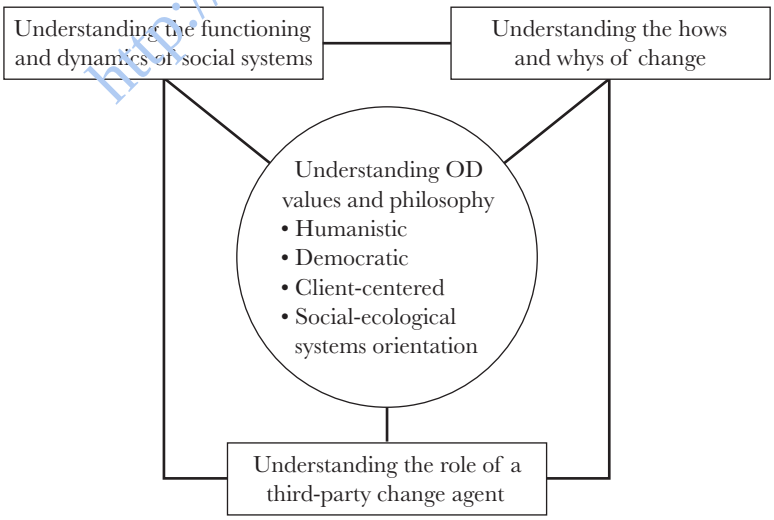
Democratic Principles. Partly because of its humanistic philosophy and the roots in World War II of many of its founders, organization development also advocates democratic principles—meaning, involvement in decision making and direction setting should be broadly rather than narrowly delineated. Another way of saying this is that OD tends to reject the notion that there are elites who possess superior knowledge and who alone should make decisions on behalf of others. Instead, OD believes and advocates that important and relevant knowledge is more broadly distributed and that more rather than fewer people are capable of and should be involved in making inputs or in the actual process of decision making. In this regard, organization development is in the tradition of the British philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) and Anglo-American liberalism in general, rather than that of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who justified autocracy and an absolute monarchy as required to protect people from their baser instincts. In practice therefore organization development advocates more democratic processes not simply as a way to get buy-in (although buy-in is famously associated with involvement) but because there is a belief that the resulting decisions are also superior, implementable, and more relevant to important audiences and stakeholders.

Client-Centered Consulting. Consistent with humanistic and democratic values, organization development believes that change efforts should be client-centered, not practitioner-centered. This expands on humanistic and democratic values and assumptions and asserts that human systems are capable of self-initiated change and development when provided with appropriate processes and supportive conditions. The role of the OD practitioner is therefore to partner with the client system in self-directed change efforts operating from a third-party change agent role. In carrying out this role, the practitioner uses knowledge and skills about how social systems function and change in order to support, educate, facilitate, and guide the client system in its work. The role of the practitioner in client-centered consulting is neither to impose or enforce an unwanted change agenda on the client system nor to furnish "expert" answers to the client's issues. It is, however, acceptable and appropriate for an OD practitioner to constructively confront blind spots in a client system and to engage in education or awareness-raising interventions should a client system be operating from incorrect or incomplete information. Therefore a primary intervention by an OD practitioner is often to suggest and

facilitate participative processes for diagnostic data gathering, informed decision making, and building client-system commitment for change.

An Evolving Social-Ecological Systems Orientation. A social-ecological systems orientation is, perhaps, a more recent or emerging aspect of the underlying organization development values and beliefs. In its simplest form, it means that ends should not be defined in terms of an individual, group, or organization alone. Rather, a perspective of the much larger and broader social, economic, and environmental system(s) must be held, and ends should be considered in terms of their impact on the broader, even global, system—not, for example, on a specific organization. Thus, if maximizing the profits of a specific organization might threaten the environment or negatively affect a community or country on the other side of the planet, it should be avoided in favor of outcomes that take into account the broader global or ecological system of which everyone is a part. On the basis of this orientation, it could therefore be a legitimate role for an OD practitioner to help an organization understand the full range of impacts of its choices, beyond perhaps what was considered in the past. This orientation might also lead an OD practitioner to seek to help a client system rethink or reposition projects or endeavors that are intended to contribute to a specific organization's success but could ultimately be harmful from a broader social, economic, or ecological perspective. A summary depiction of the three core knowledge areas and the underlying values and philosophy of OD are in Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1. CORE KNOWLEDGE SETS AND UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT.



Organization Development Results from an Integration of Ideas and Ideals

What is called organization development results from putting into practice these three sets of knowledge and skills, integrated by the underlying normative value system(s) and intended to enhance an organizational system. This integration defines what OD is and also what is not OD. Thus change activities aimed at, for example, individual performance alone, or based on prescriptive methods, may be important forms of coaching, training, and consulting but are not considered to be organization development. To help illustrate these important points, a few simple examples will be given as stand-ins for a more thorough and complex discussion.

OD and Social Systems

First, let us consider that there are numerous theories and ideas about human nature. In psychology, for example, psychoanalytic theories such as those advanced by Freud and his followers postulate that individual behavior is influenced, if not controlled, by basic inner drives and that individual behavior can be controlled by unconscious and nonrational processes. In contrast, behavioral theories such as those associated with B. F. Skinner consider the positive and negative reinforcements coming from an individual's environment to be the determinants of behavior. Partly in response to the more limited or limiting view of human nature advanced by these two schools of psychology, a third school, called humanistic psychology, emerged in the 1950s and suggested that individuals were inherently capable of higher-order functioning, that they could determine for themselves how to develop and behave, and that individuals were capable of transcending narrow self-interest in service to themselves or others.

In general, it was the ideas of the pioneering humanistic psychologists, notably Abraham Maslow (hierarchy of needs), Douglas McGregor (Theory X and Theory Y), Carl Rodgers (unconditional positive regard), and Chris Argyris (congruence of individual and organizational needs), that helped define the field of organization development by implicitly contributing to its strong, underlying humanistic value system. Consequently, in practice humanistic theories of human behavior have a central or prominent role in how OD practitioners think about and diagnose human systems, even though they augment those theories with an eclectic array of other theories and belief systems, including, at times, those of Freud and Skinner. Similarly, given the range of theories about groups and organizational behavior, OD tends to reject, for example, those

theories and ideas that postulate the need to provide economic incentives (alone) or closely monitor and control people. The need for more autocratic management based on Theory X assumptions is rejected as unwarranted and ultimately counterproductive.

OD and Change in Social Systems

Just as there is an array of theories about individual, group, and organizational behavior, there are also theories about how individuals, groups, and organizations change and develop. Staying at the individual level of behavior and again contrasting psychoanalytic, behaviorist, and humanist schools, one confronts varying ideas and emphases about how change and development occur. For example, from a behavioral orientation one would seek to condition new behavior through manipulation of the environment of rewards and punishments resulting from an individual's behavioral choices. From a more humanistic perspective, one might assume instead that people are capable of rational, self-directed learning and growth, especially in a supportive environment that treats them with dignity and respect. Thus change theories and practices that might suggest or support the notion that people must be forced, coerced, manipulated, or ordered to change tend to be rejected in favor of theories and practices that assume people can, on their own, rationally assess the need to change and are capable of changing, especially when given the appropriate data or feedback information.

Although OD draws on a variety of theories and ideas about individual, group, and organizational change and has a range of methodologies and practices, all or almost all OD practices are predicated on more positive and humanistic ideas about change in human systems. For example, action research, which is one of the fundamentals of organization development, is based on the assumption that people can and will change when involved in a process of rational inquiry into their present situation to determine new courses of action. This orientation is so strong in organization development that some would include an action research orientation as part of its core values. Others include it as one of OD's preferred theories of change along with others supported by rational, humanistic, democratic, and client-centered assumptions and values. These theories of change and supporting values and assumptions about change lead to OD practices that tend to emphasize giving the involved or affected people supportive processes wherein they can rationally assess their situation and develop new actions, behaviors, and directions. Theories and practices predicated on somehow forcing people to change, or developing answers for them because they are somehow incapable of doing so themselves, are not part of the accepted change philosophy and practices in organization development.

OD and Third-Party Roles

In organization development, the third-party role of the practitioner is defined, in many respects, by its underlying values and supporting theories about the nature of change in social systems. If we assume that most people are capable of self-directed growth and development, especially when given appropriate feedback or information in a supportive environment, then the role of the third-party OD practitioner becomes clear.

Specifically, the role of the OD practitioner is to collaborate or partner with the subject system by facilitating, coaching, or otherwise supporting self-directed change. This is done by suggesting and facilitating processes that encourage and support inquiry, discovery, and motivation to change, while establishing and reinforcing new behaviors, actions, or directions. An assortment of skills, interventions, and practices are required to successfully carry out this role, but the first and most essential ingredient is to operate from a client centered, collaborative, and facilitative mind-set. If instead one were to assume that people were not capable of changing on their own, or were totally governed by narrow self-interest, or were lacking somehow in intelligence or capability, then quite different third-party roles could be justified as necessary and appropriate. After all, why would you want to involve people in working on a change initiative if you think they are somehow incapable of developing a good or appropriate answer to whatever the situation is under consideration? Might you not instead be more helpful by offering them the right answer to implement based on your neutrality or your superior knowledge or information? Because organization development tends to reject this set of assumptions and resulting reasoning, it also tends to reject the expert third-party role in favor of a more collaborative or facilitative one—recognizing, of course, that within an overall collaborative or facilitative role OD practitioners can and should suggest to ("tell") clients what are considered to be successful practices and processes on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in facilitating change.

In sum, then, organization development is an applied field whose practitioners draw on knowledge about how social systems function and change while working from a third-party collaborative and consultative role based on and integrated by humanistic, democratic, client-centered, and more recently, social-ecological values and principles. Organization development practices are applied in organizational and community settings where the responsible managers, executives, and leaders wish to enhance the functioning and effectiveness of their organizational unit or enterprise. Organization development is usually more successful when applied in a setting where the responsible parties are in at least minimum agreement with, or ideally wish to advance, its underlying normative values and principles. Thus settings where leaders and managers are more in agreement with Theory Y

versus Theory X assumptions, or believe most people are willing and able to develop new organizational practices and behaviors if given a supportive, data-based, facilitated process of inquiry, may be more conducive for organization development than others.

The Professional Practice of Organization Development

In the early days, developing and advocating application of sound humanistic and social science theories and principles to help improve organizations was at least partly an *avocation* or calling of the early pioneer practitioners of what became known as organization development. Many, but not all, were university-based or university-trained, and most or all believed that the World War II triumph of democratic values combined with advances in the social sciences could improve the functioning of the highly bureaucratic organizations typical of that era. They also believed they could improve and enhance the human condition in organizations (and in general) by incorporating into organizational functioning the latest humanistic and democratic theories, principles, and values. Over time, the ideas and practices of the often part-time and usually externally based OD advocates became accepted in varying degrees and incorporated into a range of full-time, internally and externally based OD practitioner roles. There has also developed a number of OD-related professional associations or divisions of associations; a substantial and still-evolving practitioner and academic literature; and certificate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. From an avocation of the pioneers, organization development in the twenty-first century is now an established—although not licensed—*vocation* or profession.

Professional Roles

The discussion of the three knowledge bases and underlying philosophy of organization development suggests the range of knowledge and skills required for the professional practice of OD. This is compounded by the multiple roles an OD practitioner may need to play in engaging with a client system. Various descriptions of OD practitioner roles have been advanced over the years emphasizing the need to be proficient in many skills and practices. Several of the most critical roles are highlighted here. For example, an OD practitioner needs to be:

- A skilled *professional practitioner* able to initiate, negotiate, and maintain a collaborative consulting relationship with managers, executives, and leaders over the

life of an engagement. This also includes knowledge of and ability to manage or facilitate the phases and processes associated with an organizational change effort.

- A skilled *diagnostician* capable of reading and understanding the behavioral dynamics of individuals, teams, organizations, and even larger social systems.
- A skilled *social scientist researcher* capable of designing and conducting various data-gathering and data-analysis methodologies, including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and so on.
- A skilled *interventionist* knowledgeable of a range of participative methods and processes that enable and encourage people to collectively engage or explore important issues and opportunities.
- A skilled *educator or trainer* able to communicate new ideas and skills to system members to better prepare them to address their issues, opportunities, and concerns.
- A skilled *facilitator* of small and large group participative processes capable of dealing with such difficult dynamics as those associated with issues of power, authority, leadership, conflict, diversity, resistance, and the like, as well as able to keep participants engaged and on track.
- A skilled *coach* able to advise, support, and when appropriate constructively confront client system mangers, executives, and members to encourage and help develop the skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary for their success and that of the overall change effort.

Each role requires in itself a depth of knowledge and skills, but successful OD practice demands integration and appropriate application of all of these roles. The ability to effectively perform some or a subset of these roles using OD practices can be valuable, but it should not be mistaken for full professional practice of organization development.

Professional Values and Ethics

Finally, although organization development has neither a governing body nor an officially recognized and enforced code of conduct, it does have a set of generally recognized values and ethics that are based on its underlying philosophy and principles. (See for example, Gellermann, Frankel, and Landenson, 1990.) In this sense, organization development practitioners form a values-based community of practice. In a way, what helps define someone as an organization development practitioner, as opposed to another type of change practitioner, is belief in and adherence to a significant portion of the underlying humanistic, democratic, client-centered, and social-ecological values and principles.

Tensions Within Organization Development

Primarily because of its strong values-based orientation, there are a number of tensions and ongoing discussions within the field of organization development. This includes whether or not OD focuses too much on "soft" people issues; whether it should address diversity and multicultural dynamics, including considerations of the degree of applicability in all countries and cultures; and issues related to dealing with lack of readiness for change.

OD Is Too Touchy-Feely

Almost from its inception, OD was labeled by some as too touchy-feely. This reflects its strong humanistic and developmental orientations, as well as the psychological and social-psychological knowledge and methodology bases. Balancing humanistic values with more technological or business-oriented goals, such as economic efficiency, can be difficult. Holding humanistic values and assumptions while addressing challenges from "pessimistic" economic assumptions about human nature and motivation can also be difficult without coming across as too strident or doctrinaire. If the balance struck appears too rooted in human development or humanistic values, perhaps as opposed to economic values and objectives, then organization development or the OD practitioner can be labeled too touch-feely. On the other hand, if the core values of organization development are ignored or subjugated to a great degree, the practitioner is likely to be accused of not practicing OD. This is made especially difficult by the absence of clear criteria about what is too much or too little. These tensions are also revealed in the ongoing discussion within the field about the importance of "our values" as well as among those who on the one hand wish to adopt a more pragmatic values orientation and those who by contrast wish to remain strongly centered in the traditional orientation (Worley and Feyerherm, 2003). These discussions and periodic challenges to the field raised in journals, at conferences, and by clients are inherent in a strongly values-oriented field, especially if the values are not taken for granted by everyone or by all managers and organizations. The challenges also become an opportunity for the OD profession and individual practitioner to periodically reassess, rebalance, and rededicate themselves to a set of core values and principles that define the field of practice.

Addressing Multiculturalism and Diversity

Organization development promotes a range of values (for example, respect, inclusion, democratic principles, and empowerment) as core aspects required for effective functioning of groups, organizations, and communities. Since perhaps the

early 1980s, if not earlier, this has led to a number of challenges and tensions within the profession, notably whether organization development is applicable in all countries and cultures and whether addressing issues of diversity or social justice should be a central aspect of the professional practice of OD.

First, in terms of multiculturalism, there has been continuing commentary over the years questioning whether a field of practice based so strongly on Western, liberal-democratic, and humanistic values can be equally applicable in all countries and cultures (see, for example, Jaeger, 1986). Others assert that with multicultural sensitivity and some adaptation OD is applicable in all cultures and contexts. This is a discussion fueled in recent years by globalization and the increasing number of OD practitioners working in multinational or transnational organizations. Although sensitivity, balance, and flexibility are called for, OD is also predicated on a core set of values; the choice therefore, in some settings, may be whether to use OD premises and methods at all, rather than trying to adapt or downplay some dimensions or practices.

Since the 1980s, intervention to help organizations deal with and effectively incorporate an increasingly diverse workforce, located in many cases around the world has become commonplace. Interventions range from multicultural awareness training to transforming organizations with the intent of ridding them of hidden but institutionalized barriers to the full inclusion of all people. This set of practices, in the United States, is often called dealing with diversity, and its practitioners diversity practitioners. Many but not all might also consider themselves to be organization development practitioners. The tension within the field and among practitioners is whether or not diversity is a separate or semiseparate field of practice or an inherent aspect of organization development. If the latter, then it would be expected of all professional practitioners to be knowledgeable, adept, and required to deal with diversity and social justice dynamics and issues. If it is not an inherent aspect of the field, then although OD practitioners should of course be sensitive and aware the requirement to address such issues in some fashion would be optional as a matter of professional practice and responsibility.

At this point, whether organization development practitioners should address the multicultural dynamics of groups, organizations, and communities seems no longer open to serious question or debate. Given the core values of OD and the increasingly diverse and multicultural organizational settings for its practice, it is clear that all professional practitioners need to fully understand and as appropriate address multicultural and diversity issues and dynamics as they present themselves, just as they would need to address any other set of issues and dynamics central to the theory and values orientation of OD. Exactly what this means in practice, as well as divergent views about how to best address these issues, will remain ongoing areas of discussion and reflection among practitioners.

Change and Readiness for Change

Organization development is about change in human systems, but not just any change under any circumstances. Instead, OD theory and practice assumes and even promotes several key criteria related to change efforts:

- Change(s) should be directed toward enhancing or developing individual, group, and organizational capabilities, as well as the conditions under which people work and contribute. It is assumed that this is a primary determinate of higher performance in organizations.
- Change(s) should be carried out in a way consistent with social science knowledge about human systems and how they change, as well as a generally optimistic set of values and assumptions about human capability and potential.
- Change(s) should be initiated and led, to the greatest extent possible, by the people involved; it should also be based on their assessment and concurrence with the need to change.
- Change efforts should not only lead to the desired change but also leave a client system with increased capabilities and skills to address future situations and needs.

A dilemma and discussion in organization development is what to do when one or more of these criteria are absent. Consider, for example, corporate downsizing, which has been going on since the late 1970s. In its early days, many OD practitioners felt it was inappropriate or even unethical to be involved in downsizing change efforts that did not seem to match any (or very many) of the implicit criteria needed for an OD change effort. In later years, as downsizing was redefined as "rightsizing" to enhance corporate competitive capabilities, more—but not all—OD practitioners felt using OD technology in rightsizing redesign efforts was workable and acceptable.

Another aspect of this ongoing tension relates to the concept of readiness for change. In organization development it is not simply a matter of there being a call or demand for change; there must also be readiness for change in the system. Because of the values, assumptions, and criteria guiding OD change efforts, unless there is a felt need or readiness for change in the system OD interventions may not work. Simply put, it would not be possible to enter into a client-centered, collaborative change effort intended to enhance the capabilities of the organization on the basis of social science theories and practices and guided by humanistic and democratic values if the client system were not ready and willing to do so at some level. Instead, initial interventions such as education or diagnostic action research would be needed to develop readiness for change, particularly readiness

for OD change methods. In many contemporary organizations, however, OD practitioners (especially internal practitioners) are asked to conduct change interventions whether the target system is ready or not, and with little or no time to create readiness. This sometimes places the OD practitioner in the position of trying to carry out interventions under conditions where the premises for success are not fully met or else risk appearing to be unresponsive or unable to help.

Exactly how to handle such dilemmas is an important discussion within the professional practice of organization development, because of its philosophy and values about change. As new situations present themselves, the field and individual practitioners must adapt and adjust to be responsive within the broad framework of the principles and practices of the profession.

Conclusion

Organization development is at once a simple and complex field of professional practice. Initially learning the many knowledge bases, roles, and skills required for professional practice and then integrating and internalizing how they all fit together according to an extensive, but sometimes only implied, value system or philosophy can be both challenging and confusing to would-be practitioners and clients alike. Once the sets of values, knowledge, and skills are understood and mastered, the practice of OD becomes much simpler and more straightforward. It is indeed the requirement to know an extensive range of knowledge and methodologies integrated by a philosophical system that makes organization development a worthy field of professional practice.

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