

THIRD EDITION

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

A Process of Learning
and Changing

W. Warner Burke • Debra A. Noumair

Organization Development

*A Process of
Learning and Changing*

Third Edition

**W. Warner Burke
Debra A. Noumair**

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*This book is dedicated to the students,
participants, and alumni of the
Social-Organizational Psychology Program:
Ph.D., M.A., Eisenhower Leadership Development
M.A. Program (ELDP), Army Fellows Program,
Executive M.A. Program in Change Leadership
(XMA), Principles and Practices of
Organization Development (PPOD),
and Executive Education Programs in Change
and Consultation in the Department of
Organization and Leadership at Teachers College,
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Preface

I wrote the first two editions of this book on organization development (OD) in 1987 and 1994, respectively. The significant change for this third edition is the addition of my coauthor, Debra Noumair. We have been colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University, for two decades and have worked together on numerous projects and several courses within our social-organizational psychology programs, which she now directs.

It was clear that the second edition, slightly more than 20 years old, was dated. It was also clear that some more recent perspectives and additions were in order, such as integrating covert processes into organization diagnosis, consulting to loosely coupled systems, and coaching and OD. Although massive change in the field has not occurred in the last two decades, plenty of change has evolved. Therefore, instead of the 11 chapters in the second edition, we now have 14, and with an exception or two (history remains the same), all other chapters have been revised, some significantly, such as Chapters 2, 12, and 14. A chapter-by-chapter summary follows, but a few words of clarification first: the intended audience for this book and some personal biases.

We have three audiences in mind: (1) the manager, executive, or administrator—that is, a potential user of organization development; (2) the practitioner in the field—that is, a user who may need some guidelines for his or her practice either as a consultant internal to an organization or as an external consultant working with a consulting firm or as an independent practitioner; and (3) the student—one who may in the future use the information provided in either of roles (1) or (2).

And now a brief word of clarification: Although we believe we have been reasonably objective in defining and describing OD, the theories underlying the field, and the way practitioners typically work, we do have a bias. While defining OD, we also present what we think OD *should* be; that is, a clear goal of change in the organization's culture. An organization's culture is the single greatest barrier to change for any system, whether profit-making or nonprofit, government,

educational, or religious institution. Not everyone will agree with this bias, but agreement or disagreement should not prevent a reasonable understanding of how we have described the concepts and practices of organization development.

What follows is a summary statement of the content for each of the 14 chapters organized in three parts plus a Conclusion.

Part I, “The Field of Organization Development”

Chapter 1, “What Is Organization Development?,” presents an actual case based on a consulting assignment, which succinctly illustrates the primary characteristics of OD practice, although taking into account what OD should be (our bias), it does not exemplify what OD really is.

Chapter 2, “Organization Development Then and Now,” is significantly revised and focuses on the impact of the external environment on OD. It first summarizes the previous second edition with the nine significant changes between 1969 and 1994 and then covers nine newer trends that are under way as of 2014 and likely will be influential for the foreseeable future.

Chapter 3, “Where Did Organization Development Come From?,” remains essentially the same as before and traces the roots or forerunners of the field as well as briefly describes ten theories related to organizational behavior that underlie OD practice.

Chapter 4, “Organization Development as a Process of Change,” covers the fundamental models of change that guide OD practitioners and, using another actual case to illustrate, also covers the phases of consultation that OD practitioners follow in their practice.

Part II, “Understanding Organizations: Diagnosis”

Chapter 5, “Defining the Client: A Different Perspective,” addresses the question of who the client is, which might seem obvious, but isn’t. This perspective considers the client in terms of relationships.

Chapter 6, “Understanding Organizations: The Process of Diagnosis,” describes some of the most common frameworks or organizational models that OD practitioners use after they have conducted their interviews and perhaps administered questionnaires, made their observations, and read some documents and then attempted to make systematic sense out of what often at first seems a mass of confusing data.

Chapter 7, “The Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change,” extends and builds on the previous chapter by describing our own way of thinking about organizations and changing them. The significant change that occurred at British Airways during the latter half of the 1980s is explained to illustrate how the Burke-Litwin model was used as a framework.

Chapter 8, “Understanding Organizations: Covert Processes,” is a new chapter that addresses those organizational issues that exist beneath the surface—the “undiscussables,” matters of collusion, and what might be referred to as the collective unconscious. Central to the chapter is an actual case that brings these issues to the surface and provides a framework for integrating covert processes with OD models, tools, and practice.

Part III, “Changing Organizations”

Chapter 9, “Planning and Managing Change,” explains what OD practitioners do after the diagnostic phase and includes many of the primary steps involved in managing change as well as theory about organizational culture change. With change in general being more rapid than ever and with organizations being more differentiated than ever, we end the chapter with two caveats—we may not have as much time to plan our change effort as we would like, and we can no longer assume that most organizations today follow the organizational model of General Motors in the days of Alfred P. Sloan (1946), *the* model of its day for corporate America.

Chapter 10, “Understanding and Changing Loosely Coupled Systems,” another new chapter, compares and contrasts loosely coupled systems with tightly coupled systems and explores the

complexities of attempting to change a loosely coupled system, a network or political party, for example. Social network analysis is a popular and useful tool for understanding loosely coupled systems. Other political tools and interventions, such as large group techniques that can be useful for changing a loosely versus tightly coupled system, are explored.

Chapter 11, “Does Organization Development Work?,” presents some summary evidence that OD does work, brings the evidence up to date, highlights the issues in evaluating OD efforts, and provides the key reasons in support of conducting an evaluation.

Chapter 12, “The Organization Development Consultant,” is significantly revised and covers OD consultant roles and functions, abilities required of an OD practitioner, OD values, ways to become an OD consultant, self as instrument, and reflective practice. This chapter also addresses the shift toward integrating OD skills into line functions and managerial and leadership roles in organizations.

Chapter 13, “Coaching and Organization Development,” another new chapter, covers the field of coaching and its relation to OD. Although coaching as a process of teaching and learning has been around for centuries, as a distinct field within organizations and primarily for executives, managers, and supervisors, it is comparatively new. There are different roles and functions of coaching and OD practitioners need not only be aware of these processes, but also incorporate coaching into organization development and change.

Conclusion

Chapter 14, “Organization Development and the Future,” is significantly revised and provides an overview of current and future trends in OD and then summarizes four primary trends currently under way and likely to influence the field of OD in the foreseeable future. These four are dialogic OD, leadership development, positive psychology, and agility both organizational and individual. The chapter ends with an overall summary.

Writing a book—even one that is a revision, a third edition of an earlier one—requires long hours of digging into the more recent and relevant literature, concentrating on what needs updating, what new topics need to be added, and what is not necessary to incorporate into this latest edition. But the long hours have been rewarding because new learning for us has been realized. This learning has come from both new theory concepts and research, as well as from new and different practice. The joy comes from seeing how theory and research can influence practice and how practice can inform what new research and theory needs to be conducted. Completing this third edition therefore strengthens our self-identity of being scholar-practitioners.

And, finally, with respect to helping us to bring this book to the printed page, we wish to express our deep gratitude to Ms. Ambar Ureña for her skill at typing and use of the computer, her administrative abilities, and most important, her positive, can-do attitude.

New York, NY

W. Warner Burke
Debra A. Noumair

1

What Is Organization Development?

The term *organization development*, or OD, the label most commonly used for the field, has been in use since at least 1960. In the '60s and early '70s, jokes about what the abbreviation OD meant were common. Today, few people in the world of large organizations associate OD with overdose, olive drab, or officer of the day, however. Organization development as a field may not yet be sufficiently known to be defined in the dictionary or explained in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, but it has survived some turbulent times and will be around for the foreseeable future. Although not defined in these well-known standards for definitions, organization development is defined in the *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*, Volume Two (Kessler, 2013) albeit requiring more than five double-columned pages. Moreover if we do check Webster's dictionary and look for the definition of *development*, we will find that part of the definition is as follows:

- Evolve possibilities
- Make active
- Promote growth
- Make available or usable resources the organization has
- Move from an original position to one that provides more opportunity for effective use

In other words, we could hardly do better attempting to find a more appropriate lead-in to what OD means.

Explaining what OD is and what people do who practice OD continues to be difficult nevertheless because the field is still being shaped to some degree and because the practice of OD is more of a process than a step-by-step procedure. That is, OD is a consideration in general of how work is done, what the people who carry out the

work believe and feel about their efficiency and effectiveness, rather than a specific, concrete, step-by-step linear procedure for accomplishing something.

An example should help to explain. The following case represents a fairly strict, purist stance for determining what OD is and what it is not.

A Case: Organization Development or Crisis Management?

The client organization was a division of a large U.S. manufacturing corporation. The division consisted of two plants, both of which manufactured heavy electrical equipment. The division was in trouble at the time I (Burke) was hired as an OD consultant. There were quality and control problems and customers were complaining. The complaints concerned not only poor quality, but also late delivery of products—inevitably weeks, if not months, later than promised. Several weeks prior to my arrival at the divisional offices, a senior vice president (VP) from the corporation's headquarters had visited with the division's top management team, a group of six men. The corporate VP was very much aware of the problems, and he was anything but pleased about the state of affairs. At the end of his visit, he made a pronouncement, stating in essence that, unless this division was "turned around" within six months, he would close it down. This ultimatum would mean loss of jobs for more than 1,000 people, including, of course, the division's top management team. Although the two plants in this division were unionized, the corporate VP had the power and the support from his superiors to close the division if he deemed it necessary.

For several months before this crisis, the division general manager had taken a variety of steps to try to correct the problems. He had held problem-solving meetings with his top management team; he had fired the head of manufacturing and brought in a more experienced man; he spent time on the shop floor talking with first-line supervisors and workers; he authorized experiments to be conducted

by the production engineers to discover better methods; and he even conducted a mass rally of all employees at which he exhorted them to do better. After the rally, signs were placed throughout the division announcing the goal: to become number one among all the corporation's divisions. None of these steps seemed to make any difference.

The general manager also sought help from the corporate staff of employee relations and training specialists. One of these specialists made several visits to the division and eventually decided that an outside consultant with expertise in organization development could probably help. I was contacted by this corporate staff person, and an exploratory visit was arranged.

My initial visit, only a few weeks after the corporate vice president had made his visit and his pronouncement, consisted largely of (1) talking at length with the general manager, (2) observing briefly most of the production operations, (3) meeting informally with the top management team so that questions could be raised and issues explored, and, finally, (4) discussing the action steps I proposed. I suggested we start at the top. I would interview each member of the top management team at some length and report back to them as a group what I had diagnosed from these interviews; then we would jointly determine the appropriate next steps. They agreed to my proposal.

A couple of weeks later, I began by interviewing the six members of the top management team (see Figure 1.1) for about an hour each. They gave many reasons for the division's problems, some of the presumed causes contradicting others. What became apparent was that, although the division's goals were generally understandable, they were not specific enough for people to be clear about priorities. Moreover, there were interpersonal problems, such as conflict between the head of marketing and the head of employee relations. (The marketing manager believed that the employee relations manager was never forceful enough, and the employee relations manager perceived the marketing manager as a blowhard.) We decided to have a two-and-a-half-day meeting of the top management team at a hotel some 90 miles away to work on clarifying priorities and ironing out some of the interpersonal problems.

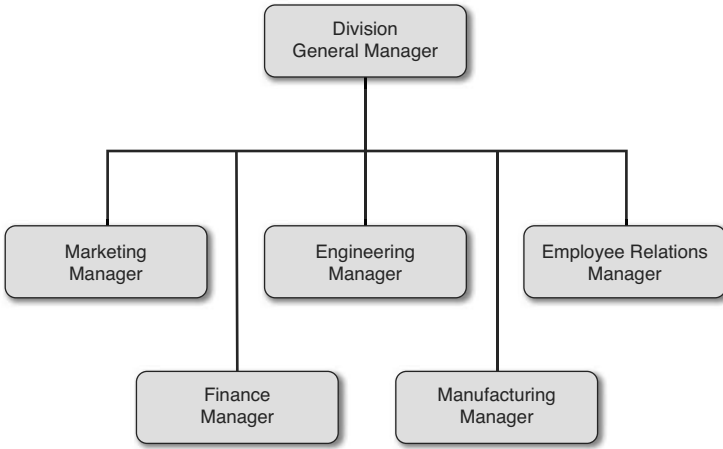


Figure 1.1 Organization Chart: Top Management Team of Manufacturing Division

The off-site meeting was considered successful because much of what we set out to accomplish was achieved—a clearer understanding of the problems and concerns and an agenda for action. The crucial problem did indeed surface. A layer or two of the organizational onion had been peeled away, and we were finally getting at not only some causes but specifics that we could address with confidence that we were moving in the right direction. The key problem that surfaced was the lack of cooperation between the two major divisional functions—engineering and manufacturing.

As the organization chart in Figure 1.1 shows, the division was organized according to function. The primary advantages of a functional organization are clarity about organizational responsibilities because of the division of labor and the opportunities for continuing development of functional expertise within a single unit. The disadvantages also stem from the distinct divisions of responsibility. Because marketing does marketing and manufacturing manufactures, the two rarely meet. In this case, the problem was between engineering and manufacturing. The design engineers claimed that the manufacturing people did not follow their specifications closely enough, while the manufacturing people claimed that the design engineers did not consider that the machinery for manufacturing was old and

worn. Because of the condition of the machinery, the manufacturing people were not able to follow the design engineers' specifications to the desired tolerances. Each group blamed the other for the drop in overall product quality and for the delays in delivery of the product to the firm's customers.

This kind of conflict is common in organizations that are organized functionally. The advantages of such organizations are clear, of course, but a premium is placed on the need for cooperation and communication across functional lines. Moreover, the pressures of daily production schedules make it difficult for managers to pull away and clearly diagnose the situation when conflicts occur between functions. Managers spend a great deal of time fighting fires—that is, treating symptoms rather than causes. An outside consultant who is not caught up in this day-to-day routine can be more objective. Thus, my primary role as consultant to this division was diagnostician.

The next step was to deal with this problem of intergroup conflict. Another off-site meeting was held about a month later with the top six people from engineering and their equivalent number from manufacturing. These men were predominantly engineers, either design engineers assigned to the engineering function or production engineers working in the manufacturing operation. These two functions were supposed to interact closely. The design engineers sent blueprint-like plans to manufacturing for production of the specified electrical equipment. The manufacturing people reiterated their complaint that the design tolerances were too stringent for their worn-out machinery to handle. Meeting the design specifications would require purchasing new machinery, but the cost was prohibitive. "And besides," they added, "those design guys never set foot on the shop floor anyway, so how would they know whether we complied with their specs or not?"

These comments and the attitudes they reflect are illustrative and common. Communication is rarely what it should be between groups in such organizations. It is also common, perhaps natural, for functional groups to distance themselves from one another to protect their own turf.

Using a standard OD intergroup problem-solving format, I worked with the two groups to understand and clarify their differences, to reorganize the two groups temporarily into three

four-person, cross-functional groups to solve problems, and to plan specific action steps they could take to correct their intergroup problems. The object in such a format is to provide a procedure for bringing conflict to the surface to enable those affected to understand it and manage a solution more productively. An initial exchange of perceptions allows the parties to see how each group sees itself and the other group. Next comes identification of the problems that exist between the two groups. Finally, mixed groups of members from both functions work together to plan action steps that will alleviate the conflict and solve many of the problems. See “Conflict in Organizations” (Burke, 2014a) for a detailed description of this process and see Figure 1.2 for a summary of its application in this case.

The outcome of this intergroup meeting clearly suggested yet another step. A major problem needing immediate attention was that the manufacturing group was not working well as a team. The design engineers produced evidence that they often got different answers to the same design production problem from different manufacturing people. Thus, the next consulting step was to help conduct a team-building session for the top group of the manufacturing function. Approximately two months after the intergroup session, I met off-site for two days with the production engineers and general foremen of manufacturing. In this session, we set specific manufacturing targets, established production priorities, clarified roles and responsibilities, and even settled a few interpersonal conflicts.

By this time, I had been working with the division on and off for close to nine months. After my team-building session with the manufacturing group, I was convinced that I had begun to see some of the real causes of the divisional problems; until then, I had been dealing primarily with symptoms, not causes. I noticed, for example, that the first-line supervisors had no tangible way of rewarding their hourly workers; they could use verbal strokes—“Nice job, Alice,” or “Keep up the good work, Joe”—but that was about it. They could use negative reinforcement, however, if they so chose—for example, threatening a one- or two-week layoff without pay if performance did not meet standards. This type of action was within the bounds of the union contract.

Procedure to Resolve Conflict**Participants**

Manufacturing Department
(six people)

Engineering Design Department
(six people)

Step 1: Identify Perceptions

Each department's six representatives work as a group and separately from other departments to generate three lists: how we see ourselves, how we see them, and how we think they see us.

Step 2: Exchange of Perceptions

Meeting as total community of twelve, each departmental group of six presents its lists of perceptions to the other departmental group.

Step 3: Problem Identification

Employing information presented in Step 2, the two groups, again working separately, identify the primary problems that exist between the two departments.

Step 4: Problem Exchange

Each group presents its problem list to the other group.

Step 5: Problem Consolidation

The total group, or representatives from each department, consolidate the two lists into one.

Step 6: Priority Setting

Together the twelve people rank the problems listed from most to least important.

Step 7: Group Problem Solving

The total community is reorganized into three cross-departmental, temporary problem-solving groups. Each of the three groups, consisting of four people, two from manufacturing and two from engineering design, takes one of the top three most important problems and generates solutions.

Step 8: Summary Presentations

Each of the three groups presents its solutions to the other two groups.

Step 9: Follow-Up Planning

Final activity in total community of twelve is to plan implementation steps for problem solutions.

Figure 1.2 Example of Intergroup Problem-Solving Process

The hourly employees were paid according to what is called a measured day-work system. Their pay was based on what an industrial engineer had specified as an average rate of productivity for a given job during an eight-hour day. Incentive to produce more for extra pay was not part of the system.

I suggested to the division general manager that a change in the reward system might be in order. At that suggestion, the blood seemed to drain from his face. He explained that the present president of the corporation was the person who, years before, had invented the measured day-work system. He did not believe in incentive systems. The division general manager made it clear that he was not about to suggest to the corporate president, the big boss, that the measured day-work system should perhaps be scrapped. I discussed this matter with my original corporate contact, the staff specialist. He confirmed the origin of the reward system and stated that changing the reward system was not an option. I became extremely frustrated at this point. I thought that I had finally discovered a basic cause of divisional, if not corporate, production problems, but it became apparent that this root of the problem was not going to be dug up. The next step I nonetheless recommended in the overall problem-solving process—to change some elements of the reward system for hourly employees, if not the entire system—was not a step the division general manager was willing to take. The corporate staff person was also unwilling to push for change in this aspect of the system. My consulting work with the division ended shortly thereafter.

The point of this consultation case is as follows: What I used as a consultant was the standard methodology of organization development, but the project was *not*, in the final analysis, organization development. Having described the case, I will now use it as a vehicle for clarifying what OD is and what it is not.

Definitions

In the consultation, I used OD methodology and approached the situation from an OD perspective. The methodological model for OD is *action research*; data on the nature of certain problems are systematically collected and then action is taken as a function of what the analyzed data indicate. The specific techniques used within this methodological model (few of which are unique to OD) were as follows:

1. *Diagnosis*. Interview both individuals and groups, observe the situation, then analyze and organize the data collected.

2. *Feedback.* Report back to those from whom the data were obtained on the organization's collective sense of the organizational problems.
3. *Discussion.* Analyze what the data mean and then plan the steps to be taken as a consequence.
4. *Action.* Take those steps.

In OD language, taking a step is making an *intervention* into the routine way in which the organization operates. In the consultation case, there were three primary interventions: team building with the division general manager and the five functional heads who reported directly to him, intergroup conflict resolution between the engineering and manufacturing groups, and team building with the top team of the manufacturing group.

The case does not qualify as an effort in OD because it meets only two of the three criteria for OD as they have been defined (Burke & Hornstein, 1972, p. xviii). For change in an organization to be OD, it must (1) respond to an actual and perceived need for change on the part of the client, (2) involve the client in the planning and implementation of the change, and (3) lead to change in the organization's culture.

As a consultant, I was able to meet the first two criteria, but not the third. For cultural change to have taken place in this case, the reward system would have to have been modified. The bias presented in this book is that *organization development is a process of fundamental change in an organization's culture*. By fundamental change, as opposed to fixing a problem or improving a procedure, we mean that some significant aspect of an organization's culture will never be the same. In the case described, it was the reward system. In another case, it might be a change in the organization's management style, requiring new forms of exercising authority, which in turn would lead to different conformity patterns because new norms would be established, especially in decision making.

Now that we have jumped from a specific case to more general concepts, perhaps we should slow down and define some terms. Any organization, like any society, has its own unique culture. A given culture consists of many elements, but the primary element is the unique pattern of norms, standards, or rules of conduct to which members

conform. Other significant elements of an organization's culture are its authority structure and way of exercising power, values, rewards and way of dispensing them, and communication patterns.

Our definition of culture emphasizes norms and values because doing so gives us an operational understanding of culture: conforming patterns of behavior. Norms can be changed. The changed behavior is a different conformity. This position, albeit perhaps limited, is nevertheless consistent with Kurt Lewin's thinking concerning change in a social system (Lewin, 1958; see Chapter 3, "Where Did Organization Development Come From?," of this book).

Edgar Schein (1985) defines culture at a *deeper* (emphasis added) level, as

basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of *internal integration*. They come to be taken for granted because they solve those problems repeatedly and reliably. This deeper level of assumptions is to be distinguished from the "artifacts" and "values" that are manifestations or surface levels of the culture but not the essence of the culture (pp. 6–7).

According to Schein's definition, I—as the consultant in the manufacturing case—was dealing with surface levels. And this is true—almost. The OD practitioner's job is to elicit from the client implicit norms, those conforming patterns that are ubiquitous but are just below the surface, not salient. These behaviors are *manifestations* of basic assumptions and beliefs as Schein notes, and may not be the essence but constitute more operational means for dealing with organizational change. These issues concerning covert data are addressed in Chapter 8, "Understanding Organizations: Covert Processes."

At the outset of an organization consultation, it is practically impossible for an OD practitioner to deal with data other than fairly superficial behavior. To discover the essence of organizational culture, the practitioner must establish not only good rapport with members of the client organization, but also a sound basis for trust. If organization members are reluctant or even unwilling to talk openly,

the OD practitioner may never discover the true culture. To find out why its members behave the way they do, the OD practitioner must therefore truly engage the client organization's members. This is done by asking discerning and helpful questions and by showing genuine interest in the members as people and in what they do, what they are responsible for, what their problems are, and what helps or hinders them from making the kind of contribution they want to make as well as what will be beneficial to the organization. Engaging people in this way is an *intervention* into the organization, not simply observation.

Schein (1991) terms this form of organizational consultation and research *clinical research*. He maintains that one cannot understand the culture of an organization via the traditional scientific model; that is, making observations and gathering data without disturbing the situation. It is practically impossible to collect data without disturbing the situation. The classic Hawthorne studies, as Schein appropriately points out, demonstrated rather clearly that changes observed were due more to the researcher's presence than to any of the other modifications in the workers' environment; for example, change in lighting.

Schein's point, therefore, is this: To discover the essence of culture, the practitioner must *interact* with the client—ask questions, test hypotheses, and provide helpful suggestions. He states that “once the helping relationship exists, the possibilities for learning what really goes on in organizations are enormous if we learn to take advantage of them and if we learn to be good and reliable observers of what is going on” (p. 5).

In summary, the OD practitioner begins with asking about and observing norms and values in the client organization. Inherent in this process is building rapport and trust with the client organization as well as testing the values and norms presented and observed. Gradually, then, the OD practitioner becomes clearer about the essence of the culture and can sort out what needs to be maintained, if not strengthened, and what needs to change.

For an organization to develop (see definitions of *development* in the opening paragraph of this chapter), then, change must occur, but this does not mean that *any* change will do. Using the term *development* to mean change does not, for example, mean growth. Russell Ackoff's distinction is quite useful and relevant to our understanding of what the *D* in OD means:

Growth can take place with or without development (and vice versa). For example, a cemetery can grow without developing; so can a rubbish heap. A nation, corporation, or an individual can develop without growing.... [Development] is an increase in capacity and potential, not an increase in attainment.... It has less to do with how much one has than with how much one can do with whatever one has (Ackoff, 1981: 34–35).

OD, therefore, is a process of bringing to the surface those implicit behavioral patterns that are helping and hindering development. Bringing these patterns of conformity to organization members' conscious awareness puts them in a position to reinforce the behaviors that help development and change those that hinder. OD practitioners help clients to help themselves.

More specifically, OD practitioners are concerned with change that integrates individual needs with organizational goals more fully; change that improves an organization's effectiveness through better utilization of resources, especially human resources; and change that involves organization members more in the decisions that directly affect them and their working conditions.

At least by implication and occasionally directly, we shall define OD several times throughout this book. The following general definition provides a starting point: Organization development is a planned process of change in an organization's culture through the utilization of behavioral science technologies, research, and theory.

What if an organization's culture does not need any change? Then OD is neither relevant nor appropriate. Organization development is not all things to all organizations. It is useful only when some fundamental change is needed. Then how does one recognize when fundamental change is needed? Perhaps the clearest sign is when the same kinds of problems keep occurring. No sooner does one problem get solved than another just like it surfaces. Another sign is when a variety of techniques is used to increase productivity, for example, and none seems to work. Yet another is when morale among employees is low and the cause can be attributed to no single factor. These are but a few signs. The point is that OD ultimately is a process of getting at organizational root causes, not just treating symptoms.

To be clear: Much of what is called OD is the use of OD techniques—off-site team building, training, facilitation of ad hoc meetings; providing private and individual feedback to managers and executives; and so on—but not in our purist definition. According to our definition, organization development provides fundamental change in the way things are done, modifying the essence of organizational culture. Many, perhaps most, practitioners, therefore, are conducting sessions and processes that rely on OD technology—and that's fine. But using OD techniques is not necessarily providing organization development.

A Total System Approach

The target for change is the organization—the total system, not necessarily individual members (Burke & Schmidt, 1971). Individual change is typically a consequence of system change. When a norm, a dimension of the organization's culture, is changed, individual behavior is modified by the new conforming pattern. Organization development is a total system approach to change.

Most practitioners agree that OD is an approach to a total system and that an organization is a sociotechnical system (Trist, 1960). Every organization has a technology, whether it is producing something tangible or rendering a service; a subsystem of the total organization, technology represents an integral part of the culture. Every organization is also composed of people who interact to accomplish tasks; the human dimension constitutes the social subsystem. The emphasis of this book is on the social subsystem, but both subsystems and their interaction must be considered in any effort toward organizational change.

The case at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the socio-technical qualities or dimensions of an organization. The problem between the engineering and manufacturing groups was both technical (out-of-date machinery) and social (lack of cooperation). The case also illustrates another important point. A cardinal rule of OD is to begin any consultation with what the client considers to be the problem or deems critical, not necessarily what the consultant considers important. Later, the consultant can recommend or advocate specific changes, but the consultant begins as a facilitator.

Whether the consultant's role should encompass advocacy as well as facilitation is in dispute within the field of OD. Practitioners and academicians are divided according to their views of OD as contingent or as normative. The contingent camp argues that OD practitioners should only facilitate change; according to their view, the client determines the direction of change, and the OD practitioner helps the client get there. The normative camp, significantly smaller, argues that, although the approach to OD should be facilitative at the beginning, before long the practitioner should begin to recommend, if not argue for, specific directions for change. We place ourselves in the normative camp, the minority. Although we are taking a position, we shall make every attempt to be comprehensive and as objective as possible in our coverage of OD.

In the consultative case introduced previously, I (Burke) dealt almost exclusively for more than nine months with what the client considered to be the central problems and issues. As I became more confident about what I considered to be not just symptoms but causes, I began to argue for broader and more directed change. Until then we had been putting out fires, not stopping arson. Although the organization was correcting problems, it was not learning a different *way* of solving problems—that is, learning how to change, the essence of OD. This essence has been elaborated on by Argyris and Schön (1978), who call it *organizational learning*, and by Senge (1990). According to Senge, for organizational learning to occur, members and especially managers and executives must develop systems thinking. To understand complex managerial problems, one has to visualize the organization as a whole, how one aspect of the system affects another within an overall pattern. These ideas are highly compatible and consistent with what we mean by OD.

When a consultant takes a position, regardless of how well founded, he or she risks encountering resistance. This obviously happened in the case I described earlier. I didn't consult much longer than the first nine months. As it turned out, I did help; the division did turn around in time to keep the corporate vice president from acting on his threat to close the plant unless quality and delivery time were improved. As a consultant, I take satisfaction in this outcome. From an OD perspective, however, I consider that my work was a

failure. That assessment stems from two perspectives, one concerning research and the other concerning values.

Research evidence regarding organizational change is now very clear. Change rarely if ever can be effected by treating symptoms, and organizational change will not occur if effort is directed at trying to change individual members. The direction of change should be toward the personality of the organization, not the personality of the individual. My knowledge of the research evidence, my realization in the consultation case that a modification in the organization's reward system was not likely, and my acceptance that OD, by definition, means change led me to conclude that, in the final analysis, I had not accomplished organization development.

The values that underlie organization development include humanistic and collaborative approaches to changing organizational life. Although not all OD practitioners would agree, decentralizing power is part of OD for most organizations. In the consultation case, it seemed that providing first-line supervisors with more alternatives for rewarding their workers positively not only was more humanistic but would allow them more discretionary and appropriate power and authority for accomplishing their supervisory responsibilities. Changing the reward system was the appropriate avenue as far as I was concerned, but this change was not to be and, for my part, neither was OD.

By way of summary, let us continue to define what OD is by considering some of the field's primary characteristics. The following five characteristics serve as a listing so far; thus we have just begun:

1. Our primary theoretical father is Kurt Lewin. We begin summarizing his work in Chapter 3, "Where Did Organization Development Come From?," and continue in Chapter 4, "Organization Development as a Process of Change." His "field theory" is derived from physics and states that human behavior can be understood as reactions to forces in our environment that influence us one way or the other. But it is not just environmental forces. Each of us as individuals have a personality the sum total of who we are as human beings. Lewin puts these two elements, personality and environment, together in a simple formula— $B = f(P/E)$: Behavior is a function of the interaction between personality and how one perceives his or her

environment. Thus, we cannot understand human behavior unless we take into account *both* personality and context. The organization serves as context and the organizational member has a personality. As OD practitioners, we must attempt to understand individual behavior through the eyes of that individual, how she or he interprets the context and how the person's personality helps to explain her or his behavior accordingly. There is much more to Lewin but his formula explaining behavior is fundamental. As authors of this book, we are in part Lewinians.

2. Besides field theory, there is system theory to which we subscribe. Organizations are open systems with input, throughput, and output with a feedback loop. This means that we consider the roots of organizational issues and problems to be primarily systemic in nature, thus the problems we seek to solve do not reside with individuals who are idiots but with systems that are idiotic.
3. Our work in OD must be data-based; otherwise, we come across as opinionated with no real basis for our opinions. Our data may be either qualitative or quantitative, preferably both, and grounded in what we learn from clients.
4. Our clients have the solutions to their problems. They may not know it at the outset; therefore, our job is to help our clients find the solution—not hand a solution to them.
5. And perhaps most important of all, we are values-based regarding OD practice, but there are many values to which we subscribe, and it is therefore important for us to know what our priorities are. Is treating people respectfully more important than resolving conflict? And when does the bottom line and/or meeting our budget demands take precedence?

Conclusion

What we have just stated is likely to raise many more questions than answers. But we have only begun. Let us move on now to more clarity and, we hope, answers. In the next chapter, we explore a broader context for OD as a way of clarifying further the work of OD practitioners and the domain of their work for the future.

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