



What Is Organization Development?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Definitions of an Organization

Defining OD

Who Is an OD Professional?

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Roots and History of OD

When and Why Should an Organization Use OD?

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OVERVIEW This chapter presents the definitional issues, the business case for OD, two primary models with their strengths and weaknesses (action research, appreciative inquiry), and the importance of organizational context. It also contains the historical roots of the field, as well as its values and principles. Concepts of organizational culture and change management are also explored briefly.

Welcome to the world of *organization development* (OD)! Every reader of this book comes with multiple experiences in organizations—from your family to your schools; churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques; workplaces; charitable organizations; government agencies; sports teams; social clubs; labor unions; and so on. Some of these experiences have probably been positive, while some have probably been negative. That’s the nature of the world in which we live. In this book, you will learn some of the approaches that professionals in the field of OD use to turn negative experiences into positive ones, and how good OD practice that relies on solid OD theory can help organizations to be more productive, more satisfying, and more effective and efficient.

DEFINITIONS OF AN ORGANIZATION

The dictionary provides the following formal definition of an organization:

a) the act or process of organizing; the state or manner of being organized; a high degree of organization; b) something that has been organized or made into an ordered whole; c) something made up of elements with varied functions that contribute to the whole and to collective functions; an organism; d) a group of persons organized for a particular purpose; an association: a benevolent organization; e) a structure through which individuals cooperate *systematically* to conduct business; the administrative personnel of such a structure. (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000)

A more informal definition can include any situation in which two or more persons are involved in a common pursuit or objective. Given the broad-ranging and all-encompassing definitions of *organization*, it is

easy to understand the complexity of OD and the large number of situations in which it can be applied.

Now, as you begin to think about your experience in past and current organizations, quickly jot down some of the positive and negative experiences you have encountered. Use two columns, with the positive in one and the negative in the other. By doing this, you are already using the early stages of one of the tools of OD, called a *force field analysis*. You'll hear more about this tool in a later chapter. An OD professional, along with others in the same organization, might use a list like this to determine how people in that organization feel about what is and what is not going well. This, too, is a part of the OD process of doing an *organizational analysis* or a *needs assessment*. The OD professional might use such lists to work with the organization in finding ways to build on the positives and to overcome the negatives.

The field of OD is not regulated, except through ethics statements developed by professional organizations (more on this later, too). As a result, anyone interested can practice what he or she might label as OD, even though the field might take exception to the accuracy of such a statement. But there is no recourse. Thus, one of the real challenges of the field is that some people who call themselves OD consultants or professionals (these terms are often used interchangeably and do not indicate whether the person is employed by the organization or is a self-employed person or a person employed by a consulting firm) is that they operate with a narrowly defined “toolbox”—a set of so-called solutions that they apply to every situation. Thus, we experience the “flavor of the month,” a situation in which the latest fad is offered to organizations as *the* solution to all of their problems. Given the ambiguity of OD practice, having a strong theoretical background and functioning with proven models, therefore, become critical for successful and ethical OD practice.

DEFINING OD

As indicated earlier in this chapter, there is no standard definition of OD, and what may be considered as legitimate OD practice by some may equally be perceived by others, legitimately, as being outside the scope of OD. Here is your first challenge of *ambiguity*. How does the field continue to exist and thrive when we cannot agree on its definition?

What Can OD Address?

The field of OD is very large and complex; as such, OD professionals will find themselves in many different contexts using a wide range of methods and processes to bring about desired outcomes in organizations. This question will be answered more fully later in this chapter. For now, let me share a few situations in which I have been involved as an indication of the wide range in which one might practice OD.

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As our children were growing up, we used the tools of OD in our parenting. We held weekly family meetings with rotating facilitators (even the young children!) at which any grievances against each other or against parents could be voiced and (hopefully) managed, if not resolved. When it came to planning vacations, we used brainstorming to create a **Likert-type survey** to which everyone had equal input. The only differential role that we had as parents was in setting the budget. And whatever came out on top, that's what we did! With a family of six children (four are adopted Koreans), Lynn and I recognized how easy it would be for the individual child to be lost in the crowd. Thus, we created a system of providing each child with a "special day" once a month when each child could pick one parent and one activity that would be just for him or her. We used dialogue processes when there was conflict. We used storytelling to instill our values. Not only did OD serve us well as a family, but it also helped the children to develop some of the OD skills themselves.

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I have just finished a 3.5-year project sponsored by the U.S. State Department in which I worked with colleagues in Kyrgyzstan, a former soviet republic in Central Asia, to work on major initiatives to change the educational system by reinstating free kindergarten, establishing graduate degrees for school administrators, instituting requirements for persons to become school administrators, establishing a professional organization for teachers, requiring transparency in the finances of schools and universities, and many other outcomes. One of my colleagues wrote to me shortly after the peaceful overthrow of the corrupt president indicating that the

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work we had done set the stage for the democratic processes that resulted in a peaceful transition of governments.

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I received an urgent telephone call from Saudi Arabia requesting my immediate assistance. There had been a serious refinery accident in which one person was killed and several other workers were injured. The company wanted me to do an assessment to determine why the accident had occurred and what changes the organization needed to make to reduce the risk of future problems in safety. This task required an exhaustive review of risk policies, safety training, the role of the corporate risk office in refineries, a review of the processes, and so on. Two of the major findings were that contract employees, who outnumbered regular employees 2:1, received no safety training, and the corporate risk office was viewed as an auditor rather than as a support system. No subsequent accidents have occurred since this project.

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Rather than going into detail on other projects, let me provide a sampling of others in which I have been involved:

- I have worked with a state agency to help it institute total quality management, with a specific goal of reducing roadside construction site accidents.
- I have worked as a coach to the CEO of a large consulting firm to provide him with feedback on his decision making and processes, and to serve as a foil for his ideas.
- I have worked with many organizations in helping approach a move into another part of the world.
- I have worked with several organizations immediately after a merger or acquisition to help create a common culture and to bring personnel, processes, and policies together.
- I assist organizations in conducting qualitative feedback to employees on their performance.
- I work with organizations to help them manage conflict when it has become destructive to the organization.
- I have provided support at the ministry level and research in the use of organization development principles and processes

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to improve the national situation in Kenya and the Republic of Korea. This emphasis is continuing and expanding globally.

This is not an exhaustive listing of the OD work that I do, and it is not even close to exhaustive of the work that can be done under the guise of organization development. I hope, however, that it will give the reader some sense of the scope and power of OD work.

Sample Definitions

Egan (2002) explored the range of definitions for OD. While not a comprehensive review, he did identify 27 definitions between 1969 and 2003. Providing all 27 definitions here probably serves no useful purpose. Thus, this section will present a few definitions that express considerably different perspectives. Change, whether planned or unplanned, is often associated with people's understanding of OD. Planned change was incorporated into what was perhaps the first formal definition for OD, that of Richard Beckhard (1969), though many such definitions emerged in that year. Beckhard defined OD as "an effort [that is] (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" (p. 9).

Some within the field are now critical of this definition, asserting that the world in which we live is too complex to plan change. Change, both positive and negative, imposes itself on us from many sources, most of which are beyond our control. Others argue that management from the top is hierarchical, a concept that is acceptable in some cultures but not in others, including, to some extent, the United States. On the other hand, if desired change is not supported by top management, can that change ever really occur or be sustained?

Another criticism of this definition is the use of a medical model and the reference to "health." At the same time, just as medical models are rapidly shifting from remediation to prevention, so also do we see this shift in OD. The final phrase of this definition, referencing the "behavioral sciences," underscores the multidisciplinary nature of the

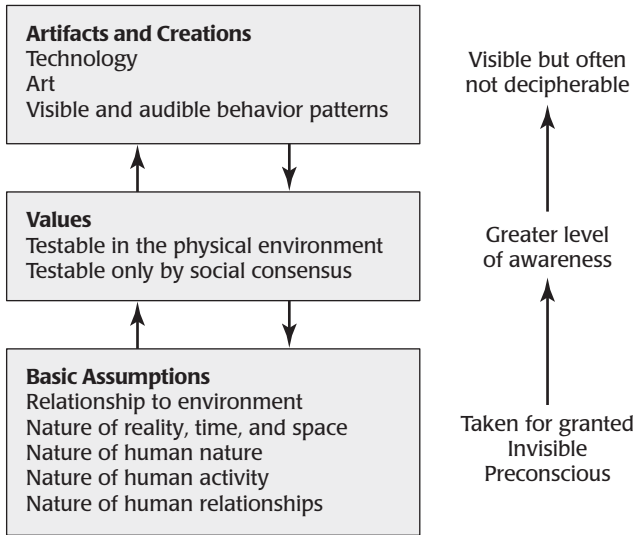


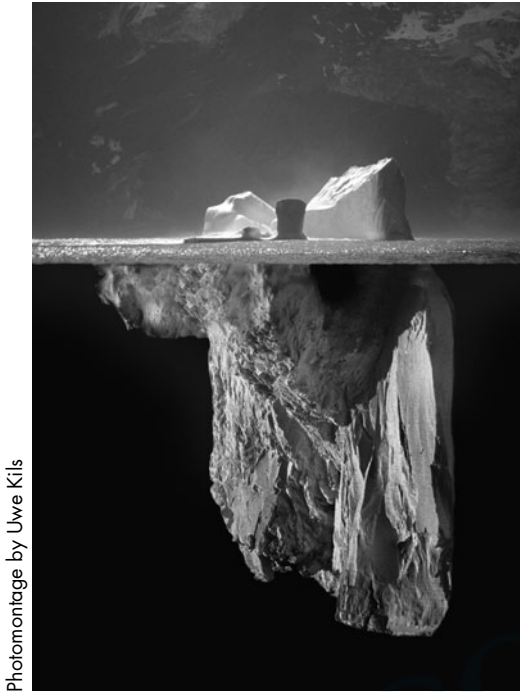
Figure 1.1 *Levels of Cultures and Their Interactions* (adapted from Schein, 1980, p. 4)

field. Many of the behavioral sciences are core to the practice of OD, including psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology, among others.

Warren Bennis’s (1969) definition positions OD as reactive to change, rather than proactive, as was the case in Beckhard’s definition. Bennis also introduced the concept that is still core to our understanding of OD today—namely, organizational culture: “Organization development is a response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change beliefs, attitudes, values, and structures of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself” (p. 2). Bennis used four words that are seen today as key components of organizational culture: *beliefs, attitudes, values, and structures*. This view was later expanded by Edgar Schein (1980), who developed the idea of a *cultural iceberg* (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

These diagrams illustrate that change in an organization can occur at many levels. As behaviors and their associated artifacts are readily visible to others, OD can effect change in these relatively easily. However, when organizational change needs to penetrate the underlying

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- Behaviors, Norms, Artifacts
- Stated Beliefs, Values
- Assumptions

Figure 1.2 *Schein's Cultural Iceberg*

beliefs, values, and, ultimately, the unconscious assumptions made in the organization, change is much more difficult. As illustrated in his metaphor of the iceberg, Schein indicated how difficult it is to “see” the assumptions that underlie our behaviors. Another metaphor used by Schein was the peeling of an onion. We can easily see the outside skin of the onion (behaviors), but, without peeling away the layers between the external skin and the core of the onion (the assumptions), we cannot really understand the onion (the people in the organization). This is the challenge that faces OD professionals—how do we peel away the layers of the onion or get to the bottom of the iceberg as we work in an organization? At the same time, because of its greater ease and efficient use of time, efforts to bring about change through OD should not attempt to go deeper than necessary to accomplish the objective (Harrison, 1970). If changes in behaviors or artifacts are sufficient (i.e., at the tip of the iceberg or the outer layer of the onion), then no further effort is necessary.

Moving forward, McLagan (1989), about whom you will hear more later in this chapter, also provided a definition:

Organization development focuses on assuring healthy inter- and intra-unit relationships and helping groups initiate and manage change. Organization development's primary emphasis is on relationships and processes between and among individuals and groups. Its primary intervention is influence on the relationship of individuals and groups to effect an impact on the organization as a system. (p. 7)

Moving to a more current definition, Cummings and Worley (2005) proposed the following definition: "Organization development is a system wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization effectiveness" (p. 1).

For the purposes of this book, I am proposing the following broad definition for *organization development*, based on a previous definition of *global human resource development* (McLean & McLean, 2001). The evolution of this definition is presented in Chapter 11.

Organization development is any process or activity, based on the behavioral sciences, that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop in an organizational setting enhanced knowledge, expertise, productivity, satisfaction, income, interpersonal relationships, and other desired outcomes, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, region, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity.

Egan (2002), using a card-sorting process based on the 27 OD definitions, identified 10 clusters of dependent variables (or desired outcomes) contained in the definitions:

- Advance organizational renewal
- Engage organization culture change
- Enhance profitability and competitiveness
- Ensure health and well-being of organizations and employees
- Facilitate learning and development
- Improve problem solving

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- Increase effectiveness
- Initiate and/or manage change
- Strengthen system and process improvement
- Support adaptation to change (p. 67)

Such a broad set of desired outcomes adds to the complexity of the field of OD, impacting the expectations of OD by organizations and practitioners, which makes for a very challenging environment in which to do OD work.

A Separate Field or a Subset of Another Field?

Here is another piece of ambiguity: The answer to this question, as to much of OD work, itself, is “It depends!” The two professional organizations that exclusively represent OD professionals—OD Network and The OD Institute—have argued that OD is a field separate unto itself. Recently, however, the *Journal of Organization Development*, the journal of The OD Institute, has used OD along with the field of *human resource development (HRD)*. In addition, many other professional organizations see OD as a subset of that field:

- Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD)
- Academy of Human Resource Development (India) (AHRD)
- Korean Academy of Human Resource Development (KAHRD)
- Academy of Management (AOM) (especially, the ODC—Organization Development and Change—Division)
- American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)
- Euresform
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (with several affiliated groups, such as the Arabian Society for HRM, the Japanese Society for HRM, etc.)
- Society for Industrial and Organizational Development (SIOP)
- University Forum of Human Resource Development (UFHRD)

It is interesting to note the number of global organizations that recognize OD as part of a larger field. Perhaps the most well-known of these inclusive models was developed by McLagan (1989) for ASTD.

Her research identified 11 functional areas within the larger field of human resources; this model is referred to as the *human resources wheel*, because it is often illustrated in a pie chart format. These functions were then grouped into two clusters: human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM). Four of the 11 functions overlapped the two clusters, as shown in Table 1.1.

Note that OD is listed as one of three functions exclusively assigned to HRD. While McLagan has orally expressed some doubts about her model, this model is clearly embedded in the literature of HRD that is utilized around the world.

Exploring definitions of HRD globally led to the following definition:

Human Resource Development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop . . . work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or ultimately, the whole of humanity. (McLean & McLean, 2001, p. 322)

It is easy to see from this definition, if accepted, how OD fits within the broader context of HRD globally.

TABLE 1.1 Assignment of 11 Human Resource Functions to HRD and HRM

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD)	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Training and development ■ Organization development ■ Career development ■ Organization/job design ■ Human resource planning ■ Performance management systems ■ Selection and staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ HR research and information systems ■ Union/labor relations ■ Employee assistance ■ Compensation/benefits ■ Organization/job design ■ Human resource planning ■ Performance management systems ■ Selection and staffing

Note: Boldfaced items belong exclusively to that column. Nonboldfaced items are shared.

Source: Adapted from McLagan (1989).

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Characteristics of OD

The American Society for Training and Development's OD Professional Practice Area attempted to provide a synthesis of the various definitions by providing the key points that it saw in the range of definitions available:

We believe the practice of organization development:

- must be in alignment with organization and business objectives;
- is rooted in the behavioral sciences;
- is long range and ongoing;
- stresses a process orientation to achieve results;
- is based on collaboration;
- is a systems orientation.

The following conclusions can be drawn about the core characteristics of OD:

- OD is an interdisciplinary and primarily behavioral science approach that draws from such fields as organization behavior, management, business, psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, education, counseling, and public administration.
- A primary, though not exclusive, goal of OD is to improve organizational effectiveness.
- The target of the change effort is the whole organization, departments, work groups, or individuals within the organization and, as mentioned earlier, may extend to include a community, nation, or region.
- OD recognizes the importance of top management's commitment, support, and involvement. It also affirms a bottom-up approach when the culture of the organization supports such efforts to improve an organization.
- It is a planned and long-range strategy for managing change, while also recognizing that the dynamic environment in which we live requires the ability to respond quickly to changing circumstances.
- The major focus of OD is on the total system and its interdependent parts.
- OD uses a collaborative approach that involves those affected by the change in the change process.

- It is an education-based program designed to develop values, attitudes, norms, and management practices that result in a healthy organization climate that rewards healthy behavior. OD is driven by humanistic values.
- It is a data-based approach to understanding and diagnosing organizations.
- It is guided by a *change agent*, *change team*, or *line management* whose primary role is that of facilitator, teacher, and coach rather than subject matter expert.
- It recognizes the need for planned follow-up to maintain changes.
- It involves planned interventions and improvements in an organization's processes and structures and requires skills in working with individuals, groups, and whole organizations. It is primarily driven by *action research (AR)* (which will be discussed soon).

Is OD the Same as Change Management?

In an effort to simplify an explanation of what OD is, some have suggested that OD and change management are the same. I disagree. There are times in the life of an organization where dramatic change is needed—change that does not and cannot rely on the use of OD. The marketplace sometimes requires that an organization take swift and unplanned actions in order to survive. It may require outsourcing domestically or to another country, downsizing, reductions in salaries, and increasing health care costs. Although all of these changes may be absolutely necessary for the survival of the organization, they do not necessarily follow the OD processes, principles, or values. An excellent distinction between OD change and change that does not follow OD principles is discussed in Beer and Nohria (2000). In essence, they argued that there is *E change* (economic value) and *O change* (organization's human capability), one of which is planned and follows OD principles (O), while the other (E) is market driven and does not follow OD principles; both can be included in what many people call change management. So, it is a mistake to equate OD with change management. The business benefits when *both* types of change are affirmed

within an organization. While long-term, systemwide planning that results in change (the OD model) can be very beneficial for an organization and its bottom line, failure to act quickly and to make immediate decisions, even when those processes violate OD principles, may well result in the demise of the organization.

WHO IS AN OD PROFESSIONAL?

There are many ways to answer this question. We will answer it first by looking at where OD professionals are primarily employed, and then we will explore the qualifications for doing OD work. Finally, we will look at how OD consultants differ from management consultants or consultants in other fields of endeavor.

Internal versus External

OD professionals or consultants can be employed by the organization or can be hired on a contract basis. Regardless of whether they are internal or external to the organization, the term *consultant* is still commonly used. There is no right answer for whether an *internal consultant* is better than an *external consultant*, or vice versa (more ambiguity!). Table 1.2 outlines the advantages of each.

Because both internal and external OD consultants have advantages, it makes considerable sense for a partnership between an internal and an external consultant, so that the best of both can be available to the organization. For this same reason, it also makes sense to establish a partnership based on differences in demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age) in order to capture fully the perspectives of varying views. What one might see, the other might not see or might see differently based on different socializing experiences. Thus, using a partnership approach can strengthen the ultimate outcomes from OD work.

OD work does not necessarily need to be performed by a professional serving in such a designated position. Increasingly, OD is performed by persons in other positions who have OD expertise. Thus, a line manager or a staff person in some other functional area who has been trained in OD can (and probably should) apply OD principles in his or her ongoing work. The more widely understood OD principles are in

TABLE 1.2 Advantages of Using Each Type of Consultant—Internal and External

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Already has familiarity with the organization and how it works ■ Knows the organizational culture better than any external can ever know it ■ Has relationships established that can get cooperation more quickly ■ Has a trust level already established ■ Lower cost by project because of organization’s long-term commitment to employment ■ Organization takes less risk of confidential information being leaked ■ Less emphasis on getting the job done quickly as salary is already paid versus hourly pay for external ■ Greater accountability ■ Job security and less emphasis on marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does not have preknowledge of the organizational culture, so does not enter the process with any preconceived notions ■ Often given more respect by insiders because he or she is not known except by reputation ■ More freedom to “say it like it is” because he or she has less at risk politically ■ Organization makes less long-term commitment for pay and no commitment for benefits, leading to lower overall costs. ■ Organizational members may be more willing to trust in confidentiality in sharing information with the consultant ■ Easier to be ethical; can refuse to do something that is deemed unethical ■ Can reject the project if there is a perceived lack of readiness for change in the organization ■ Usually has a broader set of experiences ■ Greater job variety ■ Can be separated from the organization quickly and easily if performance problems occur

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an organization, the more likely it is that the organization will benefit from their use.

Qualifications for Doing OD Work

A subsequent chapter will focus extensively on the competencies needed by professionals doing OD work. This section will provide a very brief overview of the qualifications needed.

Given that OD work is based on the behavioral sciences, an OD professional would be expected to have an intensive and broad background in the behavioral sciences. Clearly, no one individual can be an expert in all of the behavioral sciences, so one would expect an OD professional to be involved in continuous study and lifelong learning in the profession. Furthermore, one would expect an OD professional to have advanced education specifically in OD, or in a field with a strong emphasis on the behavioral sciences in an organizational context (e.g., human resource development, industrial and organizational psychology, organizational behavior, etc.). At the same time, it should also be evident that no one can have complete knowledge of OD or of all of the behavioral sciences. So, do not be intimidated by what appears to be overwhelming content. At the same time, it should also be obvious that the field of OD is complex. A single course in OD, or in one or more of the behavioral sciences, is probably not sufficient to allow an individual to begin to practice OD.

Because there are no restrictions as to who can practice OD, trained professionals in the field have expressed concern that unqualified individuals can and do enter the field who may negatively affect the reputation of the OD field. This point leads to dialogue about whether there should be licensure, with the assumption that only qualified individuals will be licensed, thus protecting the practice of OD. Licensure is a legal requirement, usually enforced by a government entity. But licensure results in many problems. First, since we do not have a common definition of OD, how do we determine what competencies are necessary for licensure? Who will determine what is to be measured and how? Are the core competencies for OD even measurable? And what should be done with the thousands of OD professionals who are already in the field?

Another approach to becoming an OD professional, short of licensure, is to acquire appropriate credentials. The OD Institute is currently the only professional organization that provides specific certification in OD, though many universities may provide their own certification for students. The OD Institute has two levels of credentials: RODP (Registered Organization Development Professional) and RODC (Registered OD Consultant). Both certifications require ongoing membership in The OD Institute and an affirmation of the Code of Ethics of The Institute. In addition, to be an RODC (the higher level of certification) requires two letters of recommendation attesting to one's professional expertise and the passing of a multiple-choice examination. No identified research indicates that the work done by an RODP or an RODC is any better than that done by those without such credentials.

Finally, one can look at one's individual personality characteristics and one's level of knowledge and skill. An extensive list of competencies needed for OD professionals has been developed and will be explored in a later chapter. For now, it is important, again, to emphasize the importance of self-knowledge. When you work in an organization at the core of assumptions, beliefs, and values, it is easy to impose one's own assumptions, beliefs, and values on the organization, and to make judgments based on your own assumptions. It becomes critical, therefore, to understand fully what your own values, beliefs, and assumptions are to minimize the damage that may be done to the organization as a result of ignorance.

Another core expectation for an effective OD professional is basic knowledge of business and its language. Given that most OD work is done in a business environment, OD professionals need to understand that context. There are many skills and considerable knowledge that the OD professional must have that will be discussed in Chapter 16.

OD Consultants versus Traditional Consultants

A common and appropriate question is how OD consultants are different from traditional consultants, such as management consultants, information technology consultants, safety consultants, and almost every other field that employs consultants—and that means almost every field! While perhaps a biased perspective, Table 1.3 provides a

TABLE 1.3 Comparison of Traditional and OD Consultants

TRADITIONAL CONSULTANTS	OD CONSULTANTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are considered to be the subject matter expert ■ Take more of a telling and directive mode with clients ■ Create dependency between the client and them ■ Own and manage process and outcomes ■ Transfer little or no skill to client organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Function as facilitators rather than subject matter experts ■ Work/collaborate with clients and client members ■ Create interdependency moving to independence for the client ■ Allow clients to own and manage process and outcomes ■ Transfer skill to client organization

comparison of traditional consultants and OD consultants—at least in the ideal world. Schein (1998 and earlier) referred to the OD consulting processes described in Table 1.3 as *process consultation*.

MODELS FOR DOING OD

This section contains an explanation of what a model is and how it is used in practice, followed by a basic presentation of the primary models in use for doing OD. This text is organized around the action research model. Although the action research model has been the dominant model in use in OD (and continues to be), it has been criticized, and alternate approaches have been suggested. All of the current alternative approaches, however, are still basically variations of the action research model.

The Use of Models in OD

A *model* is a representation of the real thing and is intended to provide general guidance and suggestions about how one might proceed. For example, a model airplane may look like the real thing in miniature, but it will be lacking some critical components, as it will not carry passengers or cargo and will not fly across the ocean. Yet it can be a very useful tool in aviation design and construction. A model plane used in

a wind tunnel might well show engineers what design components are best equipped to deal with a variety of wind patterns. But no one loses sight of the fact that the model airplane is not the real plane.

The same is true of models utilized in the field of OD. Even though the model is not OD, an OD model has the capability to illustrate and lay the groundwork for the work to be done. Though it may be helpful in building our understanding of a certain phenomenon, a model cannot replicate a phenomenon, laying a foundation instead. Practitioners and even theoreticians sometimes lose sight of the difference between a model and reality. So, as you encounter models throughout this book, keep in mind that they are presented to help you understand a phenomenon, but not to describe it fully.

The Action Research Model

From early on in OD, the action research model (ARM) has been the organizing approach for doing OD. It remains deeply embedded within the practice of OD, and a form of it will be the organizer for the remainder of this book. Kurt Lewin, one of the widely recognized founders of the field of OD, is also credited with forwarding the ARM concept in the mid-1940s with his famous statement, “No research without action; no action without research.”

A precursor to the ARM was Shewhart’s PDCA cycle, developed in the 1920s as a model to explain the necessity for ongoing organizational improvement and a process through which such continuous improvement was to occur (see Figure 1.3).

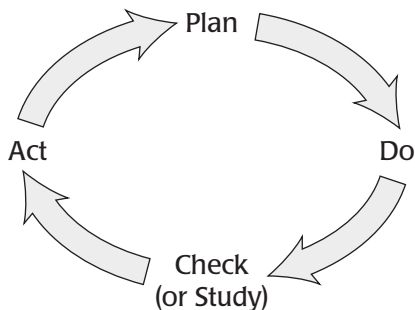


Figure 1.3 *Shewhart’s PDCA Cycle*

At the Plan stage, decisions are made about what might be done to improve the organization and its processes, using a variety of decision-making tools. At the Do stage, those plans are carried out in a pilot or trial implementation. At the Check stage (W. Edwards Deming, well-known for his leadership in *total quality management*, later suggested that Study might be a better word here), measurements are taken to determine whether the pilot implementation did, in fact, result in the changes desired. At the Act stage, the process, if successful, is implemented. Whether successful or unsuccessful, the next stage is to begin the cycle all over again with a Plan stage. If successful, the new plans should explore what more can be done to improve the processes. If unsuccessful, new data may be gathered to determine what went wrong, and new plans are piloted to see whether they will improve the processes. The emphasis is on continuous improvement.

In many respects, the action research model reflects a similar commitment to continuous improvement. An earlier model (McLean & Sullivan, 1989) suggested a cyclical but sequential model, much like the PDCA model shown in Figure 1.3. This type of model, however, has been criticized on a number of counts. For example, even though the model appears to be cyclical, the unidirectional arrows still suggest a linear model. Furthermore, there is no indication of overlap between the phases, or any suggestion that there might be a back and forth movement among the phases. As a result, a modification of this model (see Figure 1.4) is used throughout this book, called the *organization development process (ODP) model*.

The ODP model consists of eight components or phases with interactivity among the phases, each of which will become one (or more) chapters of this book. Each of these phases applies whether or not the OD professional is an internal or external consultant. Keeping in mind that OD can be applied at different levels of depth, some of these phases will be very brief and superficial, while more in-depth OD efforts will require more time, resources, and effort. Briefly, the purpose of each component is as follows:

Entry – The first phase is when the OD professional (“consultant”), having done the requisite marketing, and a person representing the client organization (or part of an organization) (“client”) meet to decide whether they will work together, assess the readiness of the organization to change, and agree on the conditions under which they will work together.

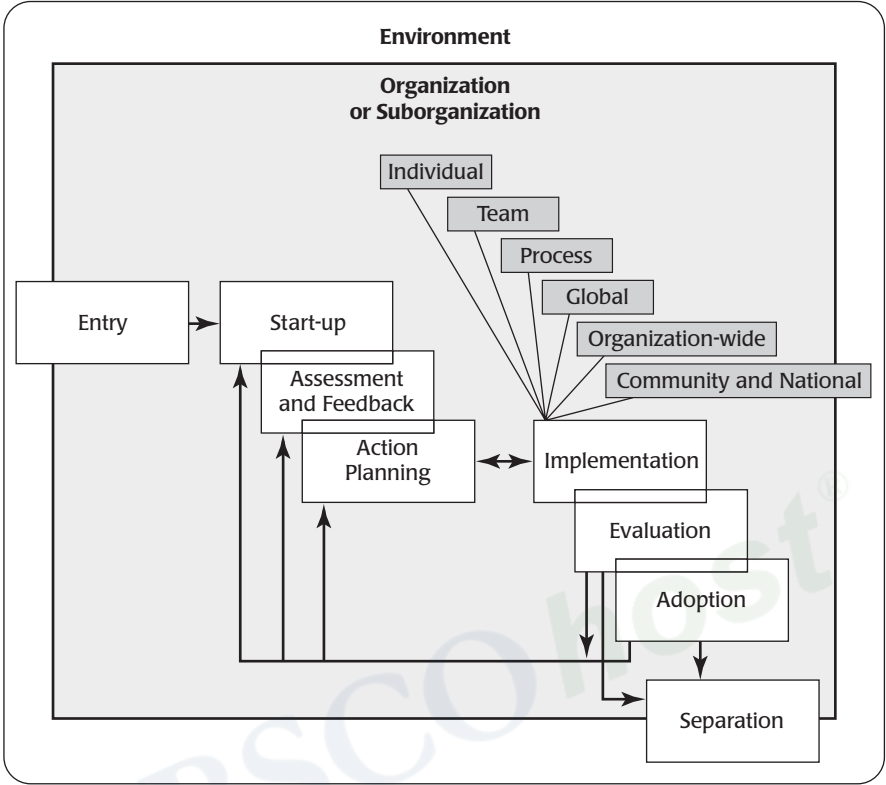


Figure 1.4 *Organization Development Process Model*

Start-up – The next phase occurs after an agreement has been reached to work together, and a basic infrastructure (such as a client team with whom the consultant will work) is put in place.

Assessment and Feedback – This phase is sometimes called *analysis* or *diagnosis*; in this phase, the consultant and client, together, determine the organizational culture, including its strengths and weaknesses, and give this information to the organizational members. The assessment can also focus on a specific area of interest to the organization that might, because of its lack of depth, require much less commitment of time and resources.

Action Plan – Based on what was determined in the previous step, plans are mutually developed as to how the organization wishes to

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move forward, in terms of both goals and objectives and how these will be accomplished.

Implementation – In this phase, the plans that were made in the previous step are implemented; in OD jargon, this is called an *intervention*.

Evaluation – This phase answers the question, “How well did our intervention accomplish the objectives that were planned?”

Adoption – If the evaluation indicates that the objectives of the intervention were accomplished, then the change that was implemented becomes institutionalized; that is, it becomes a part of the way in which business is done in the organization. If the evaluation indicates that desired objectives were not met, then this phase is skipped. In both cases, the process begins all over again.

Separation – At some point, the consultant will withdraw from the intervention process, having transferred his or her skills to the client organization (again, whether the OD professional is internal or external). This may occur because additional change is no longer a priority to the client organization, or that it is not ready for the next stage of change. It may be because OD skills are needed that the current OD consultant does not possess. It may be that the consultant has been co-opted by the organizational culture and is no longer able to maintain objectivity. For whatever reason, separation should occur intentionally and not by just letting it happen.

As can be seen by the model illustrated in Figure 1.4, the ideal, then, is that the process continues, with or without the consultant’s involvement, with the objective of continuously improving the organization, no matter how well it is doing. Keep in mind the discussion earlier about the use of a model. Sometimes, phases need to be combined or even skipped because of the demands of the marketplace. This process should be done cautiously. Although the ARM/ODP process has served the field well, criticisms of its use do exist. Some claim that it takes too long to go through all of these phases and that the world is too dynamic to take the time to do a thorough job at each of these phases. A counterresponse to this criticism is to ask how much longer it takes when a step is skipped and the OD process fails because that

step was skipped. As a result, the time and resources focused on improvement are wasted, requiring the OD practitioner to begin the process anew.

A second criticism of the model is that OD, using this traditional approach, has as its goal to find problems to be solved, thus leading to what has become known as the *appreciative inquiry (AI)* model. In contrast to ARM or ODP, AI looks solely for the positive in an organization. The counter to this argument, however, is that good OD, through the use of the ODP, is to find strengths in the organizational culture as well as problems. By focusing only on the positive, as AI does, neither the client nor the consultant has a systemwide view of the organizational culture. AI will be presented briefly in this section.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry has come to be associated with Cooperrider (e.g., Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). It basically uses the same steps as the ODP with one major modification to one of the phases. Instead of exploring the full range of strengths and weaknesses of an organization's culture, the assessment stage uses a narrative approach to surface only positive aspects of the organization's culture. As identified by Egan and Lancaster (2005), however, consultants who use the AI approach have difficulty in convincing clients of its validity. *Anecdotal research* does, however, suggest that such an approach can be beneficial for an organization, especially if it has been traumatized in the recent past. For example, AI might be more effective than ODP when an organization has a long history of near bankruptcy, when an organization acquires another organization in a hostile takeover, or when severe downsizing has occurred.

Abbreviated Models of ARM/ODP

Many modifications to the ARM/ODP models have been proposed, though they consistently follow the components of the ARM/ODP, perhaps changing the wording or combining steps to produce fewer apparent steps. However, the essence of the model appears to be unchanged and continues to function as the normative approach to OD. Keeping in mind that no model is perfect and that every model is an imperfect

representation of reality, given the history and usefulness of the ARM/ODP, we will use that model throughout the rest of this book.

ROOTS AND HISTORY OF OD

From the beginning of time, it is probable that humanity has tried consistently, though imperfectly and with notable exceptions, to improve the lot of life. There are many examples from religious literature of the use of consultants in making decisions. One common to many religious traditions is the consultation of Moses with his father-in-law, Jethro, to improve the organization of the large numbers of Israelites escaping from Egypt. Mohammed, also, had his consultants, and one could argue that the 12 disciples served as consultants to Jesus. So, as we look at the roots that led to the formation of OD, we have a limitless number of options from which to draw. Even when exploring the history of OD, one has difficulty, as with any history, in identifying exactly how the field emerged and developed. In a recent Web chat about the history and origins of the OD field with practitioners and theoreticians who had been around and involved when OD emerged, everyone had a different memory, including those who were in the same room at the same time! So it is difficult to argue that there is a single source of the field of OD. What is interesting to note is that almost everyone remembers OD as emerging—that no one set out to create a new field, but the important concepts and tools that were to make up the field of OD emerged as people were simply trying to do their jobs better.

Most of the early names associated with the field of OD were, not surprisingly, psychologists; as a result, our field has been heavily influenced by the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, and B. F. Skinner. Those influences are still present in management and the field of OD, in such theories as small group dynamics, reinforcement theories, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), open-ended interviewing, and so on. Margaret Mead, Gert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaur, Edward and Mildred Hall, Edgar Schein, and others reflected efforts at describing cultures from an anthropological perspective. John Keynes, Thomas Malthus, and others have introduced economic theories. In the area of *quality management* and continuous improvement, names such as Joseph Juran, W. Edwards Deming, and Kaoru Ishikawa are considered primary contributors. In the area of systems

theory, certainly biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy must be included along with more recent contributors such as Peter Senge and Margaret Wheatley. We could easily fill pages and pages with names of people who have made contributions to the field of OD. What follows, in this section, are a few names selected out of my biases to reflect only some of the more significant factors that have contributed to the field of OD. Some of the ideas that follow are based on Alban and Scherer (2005).

Kurt Lewin (mid-1940s) – It is impossible in this brief paragraph to convey the significance of Lewin’s contributions. Lewin worked with organizations to improve their productivity and through various consultancies created the concepts of force field analysis, *sensitivity training* (which led to team building), feedback, *change theory*, action research, and *self-managed work teams* (more about these as we move forward in this book).

Richard Beckhard (mid-1960s) – Most reports indicate that Beckhard was the first person to coin the phrase *organization development*.

W. Edwards Deming (1950s in Japan; 1980s in the United States) – Few would claim that Deming used the processes or language of OD. Nevertheless, at least in the United States, Deming, through his initial work in Japan, popularized the concept of continuous process improvement, with the emphasis on processes rather than results, arguing that the best processes lead to the best results—a good OD concept!

Wilfred Bion (late 1940s) – Bion was a key leader in London’s Tavistock Institute (in the UK), where discoveries were being made about group processes at about the same time as *T-groups (training groups)* were emerging in the United States. The two concepts eventually came together as there were interactions across the ocean.

Eric Trist (1950s) – Also working in the UK, Trist is credited with the development of the *sociotechnical system (STS)* in his work in the coal mines of England. STS focuses on the interface among people, machines, and their environment.

Other important names will surface as specific OD concepts and tools are presented throughout the remaining chapters of this book.

WHEN AND WHY SHOULD AN ORGANIZATION USE OD?

The field of OD is extremely broad—one of the problems in communicating clearly what the field entails. OD is not a technique or a group of tools, though some OD professionals practice as if it were. Rather, OD can be applied any time an organization wants to make planned improvements using the OD values. OD might be used in any of the following situations:

- To develop or enhance the organization's *mission statement* (statement of purpose) or *vision statement* for what it wants to be
- To help align *functional structures* in an organization so they are working together for a common purpose
- To create a *strategic plan* for how the organization is going to make decisions about its future and achieving that future
- To manage conflict that exists among individuals, groups, functions, sites, and so on, when such conflicts disrupt the ability of the organization to function in a healthy way
- To put in place processes that will help improve the ongoing operations of the organization on a continuous basis
- To create a collaborative environment that helps the organization be more effective and efficient
- To create reward systems that are compatible with the goals of the organization
- To assist in the development of policies and procedures that will improve the ongoing operation of the organization
- To assess the working environment, to identify strengths on which to build and areas in which change and improvement are needed
- To provide help and support for employees, especially those in senior positions, who need an opportunity to be coached in how to do their jobs better
- To assist in creating systems for providing feedback on individual performance and, on occasion, conducting studies to give individuals feedback and coaching to help them in their individual development

This is not an exhaustive list—it is suggestive only. But it will give you some idea of the range of activities for which OD professionals might be called on to assist an organization.

OD as a field has thrived because of the value-added concepts and tools that it has brought to organizations and its *stakeholders* (those concerned with how the organization operates), including customers, stockholders, employees, management, the community, and even the nation. If an OD professional can be helpful in bringing about desired change with a process that uses the values described in the next section, everyone benefits. *Organization Development* (1991) suggested the following benefits to the use of OD (as opposed to other types of consulting or using individuals within the organization who do not have OD skills):

An atmosphere can be established which will support more innovation and creativity, increase job satisfaction, develop more positive interpersonal relationships and foster greater participation in creating plans and defining organizational goals. Systems can help to establish this kind of atmosphere. (p. 2)

All of this will create a more effective and efficient organization that will, consequently, provide higher-quality goods and services at a reasonable price, increase profitability, improve stock values, improve the work environment, and support management in its leadership role.

A VALUES-BASED FIELD

In the characteristics section of this chapter, I mentioned that OD is a value-driven, humanistic field. An entire chapter of this book has been devoted to the ethical processes by which OD consultants are expected to act. In this chapter, as a concluding section, two statements are provided to illustrate the values base of the field. The first is the mission statement of the Academy of Management's Organization Development and Change Division (2005):

The Organization Development and Change division represents scholar/practitioners committed to individual and organization success and to the fulfillment of humanity's spirit and potential. It encourages efforts that create, develop, and disseminate

knowledge or extend the practice of constructive change management and organization development.

The division affirms the importance of a triple bottom line in organization effectiveness (human-social, financial, and environmental); justice, dignity, and trust; and shared accomplishment resulting in positive, meaningful contributions to the global society. The division acknowledges and accepts the responsibility for contributing in a significant way to the creation and enhancement of an ethical and humane global community. (www.aom.pace.edu/odc/draftofvm.html; reprinted by permission)

Second, a portion of the statement of principles of practice being promulgated by the OD Network (2003) reads as follows:

OD Principles of Practice

Organization Development is a planned and systemic change effort using organization theory and behavioral science, knowledge and skills to help the organization or a unit within an organization become more vital and sustainable.

The practice of OD is grounded in a distinctive set of core values and principles that guide practitioner behavior and actions (called *interventions*).

Values Based. Key values include:

- Respect and inclusion—to equally value the perspectives and opinions of everyone.
- Collaboration—to build win-win relationships in the organization.
- Authenticity—to help people behave congruent with their espoused values.
- Self-awareness—committed to developing self-awareness and inter-personal skills within the organization.
- Empowerment—to focus on helping everyone in the client organization increase their individual level of autonomy and sense of personal power and courage in order to enhance productivity and elevate employee morale.
- Democracy and social justice—the belief that people will support those things for which they have had a hand in shaping; that human spirit is elevated by pursuing democratic principles.

Supported by Theory

OD's strength is that it draws from multiple disciplines that inform an understanding of human systems, including the applied behavioral and physical sciences.

Systems Focused

It is grounded in open systems theory and approaches to understand communities and organizations. Change in one area of a system always results in changes in other areas and change in one area cannot be sustained without supporting changes in other areas of the system.

Action Research

A distinguishing OD feature, contrary to empirical research, that posits things change by simply looking at them. Therefore, the results from planned action must be continuously examined and change strategies revised as interventions unfold.

Process Focused

The emphasis is on the way things happen, more than the content of things, per se. Management consultants are more concerned with the what versus the why.

Informed by Data

Involves the active inquiry and assessment of the internal and external environment in order to discover valid data and create a compelling rationale for change and commitment to the achievement of a desired future organization state.

Client Centered

OD Practitioners maintain focus on the needs of the client, continually promoting client ownership of all phases of the work and supporting the client's ability to sustain change after the consultant engagement ends. (Organization Development Network, 71 Valley Street, Suite 301, South Orange, NJ 07079-2825; [973] 763-7337—voice, [973] 763-7488; www.odnetwork.org; reprinted by permission)

An interesting dilemma concerns the way in which values of OD practitioners and authors think about how they do OD. Bradford (2005) captured this dilemma succinctly:

OD is confused about its values. On the one hand, OD claims that it is firmly based in the applied behavioral sciences. But on the other hand, it stresses its humanistic roots. What happens when the latter is not supported by the former? Unfortunately for many OD consultants, it is the humanistic values, not the applied behavioral sciences, that dominate. . . . What OD has lost is its commitment to rigorous, objective analysis of what truly is effective and instead has replaced that with a view of what it thinks the world should be. (p. xxvi; italics in original)

It is my hope and intent that I have been successful in this book of providing a balanced approach, one that is not either/or but, in the spirit of accepting ambiguity, both/and. We do not always have clear answers from research about what the appropriate behavioral science response should be in a consultancy. And, while we cannot and should not leave our values behind, we must proceed in a thoughtful and aware way. I am a humanist, and I am a behavioral scientist. That is an ambiguity I have had to accept in my life. I hope you are able to find a balance in your own life as you read this book.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

From the many definitions of organization development that exist, a few were presented to give the reader a sense of how the broad field of OD has evolved. Detail was provided in support of the action research model, the core approach to OD, modified in this text as the organization development process model, with an explanation of each of its eight phases or dimensions: Entry, Start-up, Assessment and Feedback, Action Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Adoption, and Separation. Brief mention was also made of the appreciative inquiry approach to doing OD. The organizational context is an essential factor influencing how OD is done in that organization. Generally, reference to this is to organizational culture. The components of culture were explored, with a recognition of the difficulty of determining the assumptions that reside within organizational members. Some of the major historical roots of OD were explored. Clearly, as with almost every topic in this book, such coverage is not comprehensive as whole books exist on the topic. The positive impact of doing OD work on an organization's per-

formance was then explored. Finally, the values espoused by the OD Network and others were presented in support of the concept of OD being a value-based process with a bias toward humanistic values in creating an open system designed to meet the needs of its stakeholders.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR SELF-REFLECTION

1. Is the list you made of positive experiences in your selected organization while reading this chapter longer than the negative experiences, or vice versa? What is there about that organization that leads to this outcome?
2. Which definition of OD do you prefer? Why?
3. Do you think it makes a difference if OD is viewed as a stand-alone field or as a subset of another field? Why?
4. Describe an example of change in an organization that does not follow OD principles. What is it about that example that is not consistent with OD principles?
5. Pick an organization of which you are a member. Would you rather work with an internal or an external OD consultant? Why?
6. From your perspective, is it important to have recognized credentials for OD consultants? Why?
7. Why do you think there are so few credentialing organizations? Why is the existing credentialing process not more rigorous?
8. Why do you think that appreciative inquiry consultants might have a difficult time in selling the concept to clients? What arguments might be used to make the concept acceptable?
9. How do you think the OD Principles of Practice would influence how an OD consultant does his or her job? Discuss whether you believe that following the OD Principles of Practice statement will add business value to an organization.

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