
Organisational Development (OD): A Systems Wide Change Strategy

Dr. Caxton Shonhiwa*

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Commerce and Law, Zimbabwe Open University, P. O. Box MP 1119 Mount Pleasant, Harare, Harare, Zimbabwe

Corresponding Author

Dr. Caxton Shonhiwa

Abstract: Although the field of OD is broad, it can be differentiated from other systems of organizational change by its emphasis on process rather than problems. Indeed, traditional group change systems have focused on identifying problems in an organization and then trying to alter the behavior that creates the problem. OD initiatives focus on identifying the behavioral interactions and patterns that cause and sustain problems. Then, rather than simply changing isolated behaviours, the OD process aims at creating a behaviourally healthy organization that will naturally anticipate and prevent problems.

Keywords: Organisation, change, development, systems wide, strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Organisation development is concerned with changing attitudes, perceptions, behaviours and expectations [1]. More precisely, organisation development is a planned effort that is organisation wide and managed from the top, and is intended to increase organisation effectiveness and health through planned interventions in the practice of OD are based on several very important assumptions. The first is that employees have a desire to grow and develop. Another is that employees have a strong need to be accepted by others within the organisation. Still another critical assumption of OD is that the total organisation and the way it is designed will influence the way individuals and groups within the organisation behave. Thus, some form of collaboration between managers and their employees is necessary to (1) take advantage of the skills and abilities of the employees and (2) eliminate aspects of the organisation that retard employee growth, development, and group acceptance. Because of the intense personal nature of many OD activities, many large organisations rely on one or more OD consultants (either full-time employees assigned to this function or outside experts hired specifically for OD purposes) to implement and manage their OD program [1].

OD Techniques

Several kinds of interventions or activities are generally considered to be part of organisation development. Some OD programs may use only one or a few of these; other programs use several of them at once.

Diagnostic Activities

Just as a physician examines patients to diagnose their current condition, an OD diagnosis analyses the current condition of an organisation. To carry out this diagnosis, managers use questionnaires, opinion or attitude surveys, interviews, archival data,

and meetings to assess various characteristics of the organisation. The results from this diagnosis may generate profiles of the organisation's activities, which can then be used to identify problem areas in need of correction [2].

Team Building

Team-building activities are intended to enhance the effectiveness and satisfaction of individuals who work in groups or teams and to promote overall group effectiveness. Given the widespread use of teams and to promote overall group effectiveness. Given the widespread use of teams and to promote ties have taken on increased importance [3]. An OD consultant might interview team members to determine how they feel about the group; then an off-site meeting could be held to discuss the issues that surfaced and to iron out any problem areas the working relationships between workers and supervisors from confrontational to cooperative. An interesting new approach to team building involves having executive teams participate in group cooking classes to teach them the importance of interdependence and coordination.

Survey Feedback

In survey feedback, each employee responds to a questionnaire intended to measure perceptions and attitudes (for example, satisfaction and supervisory style). Everyone involved, including the supervisor, receives the results of the survey. The aim of this approach is usually to change the behaviour of supervisors by showing them how their subordinates viewed them. After the feedback has been provided, workshops may be conducted to evaluate results and suggests constructive changes [4].

Education

Educational activities focus on classroom training. Although such activities can be used for

technical or skill-related purposes, an OD educational activity typically focuses on “sensitivity skills” – that is, it teaches people to be more considerate and understanding of the people they work with. Participants often go through a series of experiential or role-playing exercises to understand better how others in the organisation feel [2].

Intergroup Activities

The focus of intergroup activities is on improving the relationships between two or more groups. We noted in Chapter 11 that, a group interdependence increases, so do coordination difficulties [5]. Intergroup OD activities are designed to promote cooperation or resolve conflicts that arose as a result of interdependence. Experiential or role-playing activities are often used to achieve these goals.

Third-Party Peace making

Another approach to OD is through third-party peace-making, which is used most often when substantial conflict exists within the organisation. Third-party peace-making can be appropriate at the individual, group or organisation level. The third party, usually an OD consultant, uses a variety of mediation or negotiation techniques to resolve any problems or conflicts between individuals or groups [5].

Techno structural Activities

Techno structural activities are concerned with the design of the organisation, the technology of the organisation, and the interrelationship of design and technology with people on the job. A structural change such as an increase in decentralisation, a job design change such as an increase in the use of automation, and a technological change involving a modification in work flow all qualify as techno structural OD activities if their objective is to improve group and interpersonal relationships within the organisation.

Process Consultation

In process consultation, an OD consultant observes groups in the organisation to develop an understanding of their communication patterns, decision-making and leadership processes, and methods of cooperation and conflict resolution. The consultant then provides feedback to the involved parties about the processes he or she has observed. The goal of this form of intervention is to improve the observed processes. A leader who is presented with feedback outlining deficiencies in his or her leadership style, for example, might be expected to change to overcome them.

Life and career planning

Life and career planning helps employees formulate their personal goals and evaluate strategies for integrating their goals with the goals of the organisation. Such activities might include specification of training needs and plotting a career

map. General Electric has a reputation for doing an outstanding job in this area.

Coaching and Counselling

Coaching and counselling provide non-evaluative feedback to individuals. The purpose is to help people both develop a better sense of how others see them and learn behaviours that will assist others in achieving their work-related goals. The focus is not on how the individual is performing today; instead, it is on how the person can perform better in the future [4].

Planning and Goal Setting

More pragmatically oriented than many other interventions are activities designed to help managers improve their planning and goal setting. Emphasis still falls on the individual, however, because the intent is to help individuals and groups integrate themselves into the overall planning process. The OD consultant might use the same approach as in process consultation, but the focus is more technically oriented on the mechanics of planning and goal setting [3].

The Effectiveness of OD

Given the diversity of activities encompassed by OD, it is not surprising that managers’ report mixed results from various OD interventions. Organisations that actively practice some form of OD include American Airlines, Texas Instruments, Procter and Gamble, Polaroid and Goodrich [1]. Goodrich, for example, has trained sixty persons in OD processes and techniques. These trained experts have subsequently become internal OD consultants to assist other managers in applying the techniques. Many other managers in contrast, report that they have tried OD but discarded it. OD will probably remain an important part of management theory and practice. Of course, there are no guarantees when dealing with social systems such as organisations, and the effectiveness of many OD techniques is difficult to evaluate. Because all organisations are open systems interacting with their environments, to the intervention, but it may also be attributable to changes in economic conditions, luck, or other factors [2].

CONCLUSION

The process of organizational development identifies areas of company operations where change is needed. Each need is analysed, and the potential effects are projected into a change management plan. The plan outlines the specific ways in which the change will improve company operations, who will be affected by the change and how it can be rolled out efficiently to employees. Without organizational development as part of change management, a company would have a difficult time developing effective change management programs.

REFERENCES

1. Clayton, G. A. (2012). *New ways to motivate employees*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
2. Paul, M. N. (2009). *Organisational behaviour and human performance*. New York: Wiley.
3. Fred & Kreitner. (2005). *Organisational behaviour: Modification and beyond*. Glenview: Scott Foreman.
4. Forrester. (2010). Empowerment: Rejuvenating a potent idea. *Academy of Management Executive*,14 (3):67-77.
5. Lawler, E. L. (2011). *Pay and organisational development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.