**Chapter 1**

**General Introduction to Organization Development**

**Learning Objectives**

* Define and describe the practice and study of organization development (OD).
* Describe the history and relevance of OD.
* Distinguish OD and planned change from other forms of organization change.

**Chapter Outline and Lecture Notes**

Note: This chapter consists of straight forward descriptions and discussion of key issues in the history of OD. Depending on the professor’s perspectives, this material can be covered in depth (i.e., if you really want to understand OD today, you have to understand where it came from) or just discussed briefly (i.e., if you really want to understand OD, you have to practice it). It is also appropriate to share your view of the field today, for example, whether you think it is growing or declining, its certification of practitioners, and how you regard its relevance in the world today.

1-1 *Organization Development Defined*

Organization development is both a professional field of social action and an area of scientific inquiry. Several definitions are presented in Table 1.1. The definition used throughout the text is as follows:

Organization development is a system-wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization effectiveness.

OD emphasizes systemwide, behavioral science, and organization effectiveness. OD applies to changes in the strategy, structure, and/or processes of an entire system. It is based on the application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge and practice. OD aims to improve organization effectiveness by managing planned change which involves both the creation and the subsequent reinforcement of that change. Although OD has grown and matured by adding content issues, it is still known mostly for its attention to the process of change.

Note: An important opportunity for discussion is to compare the definitions of OD provided by different authors. What differences and similarities do students see in the definitions presented in Table 1.1?

1-2 *The Growth and Relevance of Organization Development*

Three major trends are shaping change in organizations: (1) globalization, (2) information technology, and (3) managerial innovation. OD plays a role in helping organizations change themselves. It enables members to gain skills and knowledge such that tasks can be performed more effectively.

1-3 *A Short History of Organization Development*

OD has five major sources of background, which we call stems. Each stem also represents an important part of OD’s past and informs its practice today. These are presented in Figure 1.1.

1-3a Laboratory Training Background

Laboratory training began in 1946 with the work of Kurt Lewin. It focused on the T-group, a small, unstructured group in which participants learn from their own interactions and evolving group processes about issues including personal growth, interpersonal relations, leadership, and group dynamics.

1-3b Action Research and Survey-Feedback Background

The second movement that led to OD included the processes of action research and survey feedback. This movement used systematic collection of survey data which was then fed back to the client organization. Feedback sessions were conducted in task groups.

1-3c Normative Background

The normative belief stage was marked by two key programs.

1. Likert’s Participative Management Program

This program characterized organizations as having one of four types of management systems: (1) exploitive authoritative, (2) benevolent authoritative, (3) consultative, or (4) participative.

1. Blake and Mouton’s Grid®

The grid stated that an individual’s managerial style can be described according to his or her concern for production and concern for people. Each dimension is measured on a 9 point scale and results in 81 possible leadership styles ranging from 1,1 to 9,9.

1-3d Productivity and Quality-of-Work-Life Background

Quality-of-work-life (QWL) was first defined in terms of people’s reaction to work, especially job satisfaction and mental health. A second definition defined QWL as an approach to job enrichment.

1-3e Strategic Change Background

Strategic chance involves improving the alignment among an organization’s design, strategy, and environment.

Note: Ask students to apply normative assessments to their own experiences using Likert’s and Blake and Mouton’s frameworks. Discuss the value and limitations of this approach.

1-4 *Evolution in Organization Development*

Today the field is increasingly influenced by globalization and information technology trends.

1-5 *Overview of the Book*

This book presents the process and practice of organization development in a logical flow. It is organized into 7 parts that present the field of organization development and its applications to organizations. Part 1 provides an overview of OD that describes the process of planned change and those who perform the work. Part 2 describes the process of organization development. Parts 3 through 6 present the major interventions used in OD today. Part 7 is concerned with special topics in OD such as OD in international settings, OD in different kinds of organizations, including educational, government, family-owned, and health-care agencies and it also examines the future of organization development.

*Summary*

This chapter introduced OD as a planned change discipline concerned with applying behavioral science knowledge and practice to help organizations achieve greater effectiveness. Organizations are faced with rapidly accelerating change, and OD can help them cope with the consequences of change. The history of OD reveals its five roots: laboratory training, action research and survey feedback, normative approaches, productivity and quality of work life, and strategic change. The continued growth in the number and diversity of OD approaches, practitioners, and involved organizations attests to the health of the discipline and offers a favorable prospect for the future.