

## Consulting Strategies for Developing an Organisation

Organisation development (OD) is a strategy to bring about planned change in an organisation by employing the findings of the behavioural sciences (Bennis, 1969; Beckard, 1969; Dc, 1971). OD strategies were spearheaded by the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in the USA, and sensitivity training has been used as the most important input in OD interventions.

Most OD approaches distinguish planned change from the normal change that occurs in organisations sometimes without even an awareness of it. When change is planned, the OD strategies have to be concerned with not only the technical characteristics of the system, but also the human aspects important for the growth of the organisation. Hence the organisation must analyse the human and technical characteristics of the system, and explicitly define its aims and the means to achieve them.

The target of change in OD is the total or a discrete segment of the organisation, rather than a chosen activity such as cost control, O & M, or management development. The development of an organisation is seen as a wholistic effort; change in the segments not always ensuring change in the whole. The segments may have their own specific features but the whole is not a sum total of parts. The difference between OD and other developmental efforts is the same as the difference between corporate planning and the planning of activities in different segments of the organisation. The two must dovetail but the perspectives of each must be different.

The OD strategies by NTL Associates are generally based on the premise that changes in attitude and uninhibited, authentic communication are necessary for generating trust among people in an organisation; and an

environment of trust is essential for teamwork and resolution of genuine organisational problems. There are many variations in the approaches of writers on OD and, in recent years, systematic attempts have been made to sharpen concepts in OD\*

I find that NTL approaches have contributed significantly towards the growth of many large corporations in the USA and elsewhere. However, concepts of OD by those other than NTL Associates in the USA have been somewhat different (Zaleznik, 1966). In England and Europe, too, the working of NTL, and other approaches are reported.

Widely different concepts are entertained by some recognised scholars from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London; Imperial College, London; and in Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. The most significant of these are Jaques (1952), Brown (1960), Rice (1970), Trist (1963), Miller (1959), Heijhold (1973), and Revans (1971). The differences between the approaches of NTL Associates and of these others are not merely in the strategies employed but also in their concept of OD. These different approaches, based on the researches in behavioural sciences, the studies relating to the nature of man, and the nature of authority and power in organisations, have furnished a progressive increase of literature in this area during the last 15 years. I am not sure that a synthesis between these different approaches is likely to occur or that it is even necessary. What is important is to promote further systematic research which may help in developing theory and the strategies of development.

Though the differences among OD consultants vary markedly, most NTL Associates have generally employed T-Groups as the most important means of developing interpersonal competence, teamwork, and a keener awareness of the nature of conflict and harmony in an organisation and the ways in which these develop. Invariably the chief executive has had a T-Group experience outside the organisation and initiates similar training experiences among his colleagues and down the executive hierarchy (Kuriloff, 1963; Davis, 1967; Beckard, 1966). The executives gain self-perception so that they can relate to others with understanding and, through personal experience, also understand how conflict and cooperation develop in a social system. The emphasis is more on the process, how social systems

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\* Of the several journals that deal with O.D., the most widely known are the *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* and *Organisational Dynamics*. For books on the subject, see specially references of Argyris, Beckard, Bennis, Blake, Brown, Clark, De, Dayal, Jaques, Judson, Lawrence, Losen, Monton, Newman, Schein, Sofer, and Welton.

develop, and why people react or behave as they do and less on prescriptions or models. Organisations such as TRW Systems have problem-solving or team-building offsite meetings for continuing improvement in the working of the enterprise (Davis, 1967).

Another common OD strategy is to collect relevant data by interviewing people in the enterprise and, after rearranging them meaningfully, feed them back to the management for discussion. The consultants help the management to determine action plans to improve upon the existing system (Beckard, 1966, 1969).

The experience provided through behavioural interventions enhances the interpersonal competence of individuals so that they are better able to recognise conditions that P R Kamani has mentioned are essential for transition from “leadership of authority to leadership of shared goals and norms...” (De, 1971).

Many organisations in India have undertaken OD programmes, broadly following the approaches described above. Kamani, TISCO, IIMT, and others have employed consultants for developing better teamwork and more effective use of groups in work situations (De, 1971). In most of the reported experiments, the consultants have used sensitivity training inputs to create more effective interpersonal relationships in these organisations. Kamani had experimented equally well with Likert’s (1960, 1965) linking-pin model of organisation, where each supervisor is regarded as a link between his subordinates and his superiors. In most of the reported experiences, the top management gave their support but did not participate in group training. Kamani is the lone exception where the top managerial cadre actively participated in the programme. An analysis of the reported OD programmes in these companies suggests the following underlying assumptions:

The achievement of organisational goals depends upon

- (a) competence in interpersonal relations;
- (b) team-building at all levels of organisation and understanding of the processes of intergroup conflicts and harmony; and
- (c) effective group-working at different levels, group methods of decision-making, and establishing link-pin positions between different groups.

Other consultants in OD feel that a greater awareness of self and of organisational process are necessary conditions; these are, however, not sufficient for organisational effectiveness. Organisational success extends beyond the limits of effective group-working and interpersonal relations (Brown and Jaques, 1965; Miller and Rice, 1967).

Consultants from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and other institutions in the UK have suggested that organisational tasks and functions should be explicit and should clearly define roles and role-relationships (Jaques, 1965). The relationships cannot be established by people unless the technical and social systems are congruent (Rice, 1958), and a conscious attempt is made to locate authority and power within the organisation wherever they shall serve the organisational purposes and not become a hindrance to the people within the system.

These OD strategies assume that the achievement of organisational goals depends upon three factors:

- (a) Congruence of the work organisation and the task it is set up to perform. Even the most gifted people would fail to perform at their best if the design of the work organisation is unsuited to the task.
- (b) Understanding of the appropriate relationships among people according to the requirements of the particular organisation. As the relationships in an organisation are influenced by a variety of characteristics, such as its control systems, the interdependence between divisions, and the appropriateness of the leadership, besides the individual's competence and his capacity to work in groups, it is necessary that these vital relationships are understood within the context of the work system and not independent of it.
- (c) The ability of the people to develop competence as individuals and as members of a group, and to discriminate between situations where one role is more effective than the other.

I shall discuss the rationale for examining the OD strategies that emphasise both work design and role-relationships. The models of these are available in the OD interventions in Calico Mills, State Bank of India, Indian Oil Corporation, and elsewhere.

I share the view of writers who suggest that, in the organisational context, the behavioural assumptions in the OD programme need to be comprehensive. Organisational activity requires the effective working of groups as well as of individuals. Not all tasks performed in groups, or all decisions taken by groups, are by definition better than those taken by individuals. In an earlier chapter, I have discussed that the acceptance or status that a manager enjoys among other people in the organisation depends on a variety of factors apart from his effectiveness as a group leader (1970). His individual competence as a technician, his knowledge in his field of operations, his ability to innovate and find solutions in situations of crisis

etc. are important in an assessment of his managerial accumen. The assumption that the manager's success depends primarily on his ability to function as a member of a group or as a link-pin is a limiting postulate. Organisations function effectively not only because of better group functioning, but also because of the presence of many exceptional individuals who project themselves successfully. In the absence of such individuals, the organisations may be less effective in spite of the availability of effective groups for decision-making or for any other purpose.

The OD work has also to make precise distinctions among the role demands at higher, middle, and junior levels of management. Floyd Mann, in his review of leadership studies, concluded that leadership skills recognisably differ at different levels of an organisation (Mann, 1965). He has suggested that, generally, at top levels administrative excellence is needed; at middle levels, finesse at human relations; and at junior level, technical skills.

To be effective, a leader has to understand the nature of demands at different levels of the organisation and, apart from dealing with them with a sensitive appreciation of the diversities, he must help others to cope with changing demands on their roles (Kahn *et al*, 1964; Sayles, 1964). Sensitivity training has at times failed to develop sensitivity in organisational roles and understanding of role-relationships at work.

I have earlier discussed that planning OD is concerned with the values considered essential for organisational effectiveness. These values are humanistic values, such as mutual trust, candid and authentic communication, self-actualisation, and exercise of choice and freedom at work. These values should be emphasised in the training of individuals as well as in developing the organisation. Most consultants state that these humanistic values are the crux of OD strategy and that the management must decide whether or not they are convinced of their effectiveness. Such a conviction notwithstanding, the level of trust and candour is a function of the situation and the requisites of the particular relationship.

At work, trust between persons depends as much upon the clarity of the role, the definition of the boundary of operations of each role, and the capacity of the role incumbent to discharge the responsibility, as on the emotive aspects of the interactions among persons in the situation. It is difficult to examine the trust factor in normative terms, independent of the situation. In modern complex organisations, relationships are so inextricably tied up with the work that the two are inseparable. As a social scientist interested in

organisational theory, I find it necessary to study trust and candour in relation to the specific demands of the work situation, i.e. in terms of the roles and role-relationships rather than in absolute terms, by assigning omnibus value to such attitudes.

What is said about trust is also true of commitment to work. The commitment to work and the commitment to one's close friends, or family, cannot be identical. Friendship and family have many emotive aspects which work is rarely able to provide. The commitment of a scientist to his work is in reality different from the commitment of a production engineer to his work and perhaps the commitment of both to their families and close friends also differs. I believe that differences of these kinds must be recognised by organisations as well as by individuals. The concepts must essentially relate to the situation. The social science interventions need to develop an appreciation of these differences rather than attempt to create value systems which are irrelevant to the situation or the environment that OD interventions may be attempting to develop. Basically, people in organisations would have to understand the significance of these differences and also begin to recognise them in different situations.

In the OD strategy, another aspect that requires clarity for the consultant is that which relates to organisational behaviour. Relationships in an organisation are not an end in themselves. They are indeed important in achieving the primary task of an organisation. However, we can scarcely afford to overlook the fact that certain kinds of relationships are also induced by the particular nature of the technology, the styles of leadership, the control systems exercised within the organisation etc. The second series of studies on control systems in organisations, accomplished under the leadership of Joan Woodward at the Imperial College, London (Woodward, 1970), have indeed provided extremely useful knowledge about relations between the control systems and the patterns of work behaviour. In her earlier studies, she had pointed out the differences in structures and administrative practices based on the technology and size of a firm (1965).

Studies by Whyte (1959), Trist and Bamforth (1951), Rice (1958), Blauner (1964), and others have revealed that relationships in an organisation are not independent of the characteristics of the work and the technology. Miller and Rice (1967) have further argued that the leadership cannot be optimum if the structure of the organisation is inadequate for the total task. Rice even asserts that the structure should be conducive to the performance of the task to enable the manager to achieve the desired results. Inadequacy of structure is likely to induce forces that tend to vitiate

relationships among fellow workers. For example, a district administrator's development tasks require cordial personal relationships, empathy with the village folk, flat organisation, and face-to-face contact; the revenue tasks, however, require a hierarchy and are better suited to a tall organisation (Dayal *et al.*, 1975).

There seems to be reasonable agreement among many consultants in O.D. that both structure and role-relationships are important (Newman, 1973; Clark, 1972; Judson, 1966). The strategy employed, or the sequencing of the intervention design, may perhaps vary from one consultant to another.

Another area in OD that has received somewhat limited attention until recently is that which concerns the sustaining or stabilisation of change. Experience has shown that unless examination and review of the functioning of a system is built into its organisational design and corrective adjustments are made for slip-backs, the people revert to their established patterns of behaviour. The processes that lead to internalisation of change and to stability in the working of the new system are of crucial importance (Dayal, 1975). Some organisations have created departments specifically concerned with the examination of the organisational system and, in other cases, the training and development activities try to ensure that the systems remain dynamic. However, a lot of ground remains to be covered before one clearly understands how a system can remain dynamic over a considerable period of time and can continue to respond effectively to new demands from within and outside the enterprise.

## CONCLUSION

Organisational development (OD) is a strategy to bring about planned change in an organisation by employing the findings of behavioural sciences. The target of change in OD is invariably the total organisation or its discrete segment. Three broad approaches to OD are identified:

- T-Group at the top and other levels down the hierarchy to facilitate better teamwork. It is assumed that empathy with people and sensitivity to relationships would enable the individual to acquire a more realistic appraisal of the work situation and bring about the needed changes.
- Obtaining data on the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation through personal interviews with key people and, after feeding this data to the people concerned helping them to develop an action plan; and.

- Appropriate design for the nature of work to be done and appropriate role behaviour and role-relationships as are necessary for the system to work effectively.

Subscribing to the third approach, I have discussed the rationale for the third strategy and elaborated on the steps that are needed for the purpose.

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