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ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF HRD

From diagnostic to dialogic perspectives

Toby Egan

Since the rapid growth period of the 1980s and 1990s, in which HRD was firmly assembled as a defined area of practice and scholarship, organization development (OD) has been integrated into the definition of HRD. Compared with OD, HRD is a relatively youthful field of practice and scholarship; yet OD and HRD share many of the same roots and dispositions. OD was born out of the formation of the human relations related exploration and scholarship that began in the 1930s. This early work led to important observations and assumptions that are now well integrated into everyday modern life – that organizational processes and structures shape employee motivation, behavior and work-related mindsets. The work of Lewin and Trist and Bamforth in the 1940s and 1950s demonstrated the value of feedback in clarifying and addressing organizational social processes. “More recently, work on OD has expanded to focus on aligning organizations with their rapidly changing and complex environments through organizational learning, knowledge management and transformation of organizational norms and values” (Shull *et al.* 2013: 1).

Framing OD

One of the challenges to exploring, researching, and implementing HRD is in demarcating its boundaries. HRD is often described in terms of levels or frames of interaction. Certainly one of the most commonly used HRD-related frameworks has been McLagan’s (1989) “HR Wheel”. In it, OD is featured as one of three elements of HRD. According to McLagan, HR may be segmented into 11 key elements, including three areas described as HRD: OD, Training and Development (T&D), and Career Development.

Regardless of its positioning, those defining OD share overlapping vantage points. French and Bell (1999: 25–6), defined OD as:

a long-term effort, led and supported by top management, to improve an organization’s visioning, empowerment, learning and problem-solving processes, through an ongoing, collaborative management of organization culture – with special emphasis on the culture of intact work teams and other team configurations – using the consultant-facilitator

role and the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research.

French and Bell's definition reflects both the early and enduring aspects of OD. Since then, organizations have evolved as a result of the influence of organizational complexity, an understanding of the influence of systems on the scope of OD, and the influence of multicultural and global perspectives. The OD professional role and central processes used to facilitate OD are key elements that extend OD from a behavioral science approach to a profession and action-oriented practice. The aims of OD are key aspects in terms of desired results. In an earlier review of multiple definitions of OD, ten key outcomes were identified, including:

- Advancing organizational renewal
- Engaging organization culture change
- Enhancing profitability and competitiveness
- Ensuring health and well-being of organizations and employees
- Facilitating learning and development
- Improving problem solving
- Increasing effectiveness
- Initiating and/or managing change
- Strengthening system and process improvement
- Supporting adaptation to change (Egan 2002: 67).

More recent overviews of OD definitions support these ten OD outcomes (Cummings and Worley 2014, Rothwell and Sullivan 2005, Rothwell *et al.* 2009).

A brief history of OD

To a great degree, OD can be viewed as involving application of and influences from some of the major social science thought leaders of the twentieth century. Psychologists from Freud, Adler and Jung to Skinner and Rogers heavily influenced the ways in which OD is framed. In particular, these psychologists informed understanding of human motivation, attitudes, behavior change, performance, and ways in which individual, group and organizational outcomes could be predicted, directed, explained and supported. Economists Keynes, Malthus, Shepherd, Coase, Bain, Mason and, later, Becker and anthropologists and management scholars, such as Hall and Hall, Hofstede, Mead, Schein and, more recently, Drucker, Argyris and Schön provided key insights regarding organizations and the larger cultural contexts in which they are situated. In addition, Deming, Juran and Ishikawa provided important contributions to organization quality and productivity making the quality movement a central period in the history of OD-related interventions. Of course there are many more contributors who, either directly or indirectly, impacted OD-related research, theory and practice.

As OD has grown and expanded internationally, records of related happenings, changes and insights have also dispersed. However, many OD authors emphasize and reemphasize similar key events leading to the current state of OD as a field and professional practice. Kurt Lewin was an early influencer regarding the formation, theoretical development, and practice approaches to change – including work in communities and organizations. Strongly influenced earliest by Elton Mayo, the human relations movements, that spanned much of the past century, influenced thinking about the potential for change in organizational contexts. Tavistock and National Training Lab work on groups and group dynamics (Hall and Williams 1970) informed social scientific

understanding regarding power and authority, and shared decision making informed the potential for group facilitation and organizational change. Data driven approaches to understanding organizations was influenced by Rensis Likert's formation of relatively easy to use scales of measurement that allowed for assessment of individual perceptions in a variety of contexts including, most importantly for OD, organization members.

More recently, a number of scholars and practitioners have strived to define and assess quality of work life. This issue has become especially important in societies allowing for employee mobility across organizations – when, during periods of economic growth, employees are free to choose organizations based on organizational climate, policies and opportunities. Clarification of values and ethics in OD, such as those developed by the National Training Lab, OD Network, and others, have informed organizations about the importance of values-driven organizations and OD practices.

Broad application of systems theory has influenced OD as well. Learning organization concepts, advanced in practice literature by Peter Senge (1990), and Watkins and Marsick (1993, and 1996), led to further broadening of how OD was framed, heightening sensitivity not only to internal-to-organization systems perspectives, but to the potential impact of larger systems on the organization or area of focus for OD. Employee knowledge, learning and development have emerged as essential for organizational contexts. Application of systems thinking can also be attributed to supply chain management and the increasingly overt influence of complex exchanges in the global marketplace. Most importantly for HRD, systems thinking formed the rationale for HRD being seen as the more complete framework to describe organizational learning and development – thus, for those favoring HRD, subordinating OD within the HRD framework. It must also be noted that some OD scholars and practitioners have subjugated HRD beneath the OD framework, while still others situate OD and HRD beneath human resources (HR) or human resources management (HRM). Ironically, HRD scholars and practitioners point to McLagan's (1989) model, "The HR Wheel" as validation for their approach; however, it overtly subjugates HRD and OD under HR.

Increased use and application of coaching, particularly executive coaching, has impacted the ways in which OD and HRD practitioners think about their work and their skill development (Ellinger *et al.* 2014). For many OD practitioners, executive coaching has become an important part of their OD practice. In a recent survey of 388 OD practitioners, 87 per cent identified coaching as "an integral part of OD today" (Shull *et al.* 2013: 19). Such coaching serves to support the executive during a large-scale OD effort and/or can support individual executives in the refinement of their individual knowledge and skills.

Workforce diversity and globalization has also led to some rejecting OD as a historically, male, European/European-American frame, with calls for new perspectives (Cox 1993, Greene 2007, Griffith *et al.* 2007, Holvino 2010). Non-OD practitioners and scholars, as well as some members and leaders involved in OD-focused professional associations, have critiqued and deconstructed the history of OD, and related current practices. However, while HRD and OD have involved increasing numbers of women and professionals from a variety of non-European backgrounds, few novel notions regarding the reframing of OD research, theory and practice have emerged. At the same time, the embracing of diversity and inclusion as an essential aspect of OD has been affirming to the array of professionals currently involved in and new to OD. And, it can certainly be argued that many early contributors to OD applied their humanistic viewpoints in a manner intended to be broadly inclusive of practitioners and organization members. The grassroots, participatory and humanistic traditions of OD contribute to the longstanding potential for OD to be viewed and deployed as a critical action research approach. OD-related professional

organizations strive to communicate an openness and inclusivity towards new perspectives and approaches (Adler 2008, Shull *et al.* 2013).

Over time, the organization as machine metaphor was infused with more naturalistic considerations; this transition was concurrent with evolutions in collective thinking about scientific inquiry and behavioral sciences. Social constructivism contributed to new thinking about organizations and diminished the fully positivistic ambitions of early behavioral scientists to a more constrained, post-positivistic perspective. Key elements contributing to the formation of classical approaches to OD are associated with this values shift – including emphases on systems thinking, employee feedback, T&D, action research, diversity and inclusion, and facilitation of organizational change. And, consistent with evolutions in philosophies of research in social science, many OD scholars and practitioners have been influenced by postmodern and critical theory oriented perspectives (Bierema 2010, Bushe and Marshak 2008). While these philosophical paradigm shifts created disorientation among some scholars and researchers, constructivism and participatory research contributed to an interactive mode of inquiry and action. Learning and performance began to be organized in far more humane ways than approaches found in large, post-war organizations. Participatory OD approaches, which truly engage stakeholders at all levels (including “frontline” and underrepresented individuals in whatever context OD is being implemented), often reflect critical and postmodern perspectives.

OD interventions

OD interventions can take on a variety of forms and foci. Similar to medicine or psychology, the instigation of OD interventions is often due to emergent “symptoms,” which may take the form of needs for learning or performance improvement, pain or ongoing disputes, or in reaction to environmental or organizational change or felt need for change. McLean (2005: 26) developed the following list of situations in which OD could be deployed. In utilizing OD organizations may desire:

- 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.

Although not exhaustive, McLean's list provides insight into the broad spectrum of interventions that OD practitioners may undertake with the use of OD-related tools and frameworks.

OD as a values-based applied behavioral science

OD has long been characterized as a humanistic, values-based applied social science intervention. This includes careful reflection by OD practitioners on their behavior and actions in a manner consistent with the values of the field and their own, careful interpretation of the appropriate course of action. In an effort to establish the values of the field, the OD Network formed values-based principles of practice, including: (1) Respect and Inclusion – equitably values the perspective and opinions of everyone; (2) Collaboration – builds collaborative relationships between the practitioner and the client while encouraging collaboration throughout the client system; (3) Authenticity – strives for authenticity and congruence and encourages these qualities in their clients; (4) Self-awareness – commits to developing self-awareness and interpersonal skills. OD practitioners engage in personal and professional development through lifelong learning; and (5) Empowerment – focuses efforts on helping everyone in the client organization or community increase their autonomy and empowerment to levels that make the workplace and/or community satisfying and productive (OD Network 2013).

This values set is intended to guide the development, discussion and focus of OD practitioners and OD-related interventions. Similarly, Margulies and Raia (1972) articulated several humanistic values for OD practitioners including the respect for each human being as an individual person with a set of complex needs, all of which are important to work and in life. These OD humanistic values also emphasize an expansion of opportunities for exciting and challenging individual work while maximizing the potential of each employee. Additionally, the effectiveness of the organization in terms of the workplace environment and accomplishment of shared organizational goals is also identified as a central value for OD practitioners.

Together, these types of humanistic values present a framework for the reflective OD consultant that is intended to communicate, in broad terms, the aims of OD, while at the same time, provide meaningful challenges for OD practitioners and those participating in OD. The challenges that any statement of values present to OD practitioners are the need to continuously revisit the ideals of the field and to carefully tend to interpretations of their professional actions. Because many organizations often frame values primarily in legal terms, practitioners must embrace the notion that a values-based field does more than establish the legality of their actions. Meeting professional standards and striving to respect individuals entail a more expansive commitment than handling legalities alone.

Confusion and dilemmas are generated within any attempt to organize a profession around its values. Bradford (2005: xxvi) provided the following elaboration:

OD is confused about its values. On the one hand, OD claims that it is firmly based in the applied behavioural 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 behavioural 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.

A closer look at any professional field of practice would reveal the presence of dilemmas and confusion regarding how to align values statements in practice. Regular dialogue and exchange among peers is a key aspect in the evolution and enactment of professional values statements. Perhaps one of the potentially greatest negative impacts of the lack of professionalization of OD and HRD is the absence of systematic renewal regarding the values of the field. The best of counselling and clinical psychology professionals, and their associations, participate in supervision, team reviews of professional cases, mandatory continuing education, and ongoing renewal and development of ethical standards – all within the structured and managed guidelines of their profession. Without professionalization, OD and HRD practitioners are commonly on their own in terms of reflection and peer-support regarding their ethical obligations and practices. However, thoughtful OD practitioners can access available support resources and work collaboratively to determine the best ways to enact and maintain the values and professional aspirations of the field. Such intentions are made more complex in multicultural or multinational contexts.

From an organization environment standpoint, OD practitioners may be faced with the need to challenge the status quo regarding the treatment of employees, unfair treatment and workplace justice issues (Bierema 2010, Cobb *et al.* 1995, Cox 1993, Greenberg and Colquitt 2013, Greene 2007). Additionally, intersections between multinational stakeholders and individuals within the organization from a variety of national, racial, and culture backgrounds demand OD practitioners extend themselves regarding their cultural awareness and capacity for intercultural exchange. This is equally true regarding gender, as organizations largely struggle to support women's participation and advancement in the workplace.

OD practitioner roles and competencies

OD practitioners are commonly referred to as “change agents.” While OD practitioners may have specific technical or industry knowledge emphasized in their practice roles, they most commonly have expertise in social science or human systems and must have strong analytic, facilitation, and interpersonal communication skills. A key focus is the OD practitioner's capacity to support organizational involvement towards collective problem solving. The change agent combines social science knowledge with multiple intervention techniques and action research. The OD Network provided a list of 141 competencies commonly needed by OD practitioners (Sullivan *et al.* 2001). Although not a comprehensive list, details regarding the extensive capabilities needed by an OD practitioner are provided.

One common comparison within OD practice is the internal versus external OD consultant. Differences between internal OD practitioners (employed by the organization as a standing member of the firm) and external OD practitioners (contracted as consultants to the organization) have been outlined in many ways. The focus of attention by an internal OD consultant is often more relationship network oriented, as the maintenance of ongoing relationships with organization members is important, beyond any single OD project. External OD consultants are frequently most concerned with their success as perceived by their main organizational contacts/clients, as opposed to specific organization members. Because of the relatively short-term nature of the relationship, the success of each individual OD project is often of highest importance to the external OD consultant. Because internal consultants are often motivated by longevity and rewards within the organization, they may be far more aware and sensitive to the impact of social networks and internal political issues impacted by a proposed OD intervention.

While internal OD practitioners benefit from inside knowledge and subject matter expertise, seasoned external OD practitioners bring an array of experiences from across organizations and industries. Many organization leaders and members may prefer external consultants, as they are often perceived to bring a fresh view and novel ideas/perspectives, over an internal consultant who is viewed as an immersed stakeholder/contributor to the current set of issues or problems. However, internal consultants have the advantage of historical and specific knowledge of the organization, its systems and policies. The external consultant's lack of specific knowledge, given the complexity of many organizational systems, can be a liability. An advantage internal consultants may have over external consultants, in terms of OD project deployment, is the utilization of internal resources. While external consultants are largely constrained to organizational resources provided within their contracts, internal consultants can utilize organizational assets available to them or internal OD stakeholders throughout the course of an OD intervention. External OD consultants commonly have options to depart from an OD intervention at any time. But, internal OD practitioners must wade through the challenges of a stagnant or failing OD effort, while maintaining their internal role. Some internal OD practitioners develop internal-to-organization service contracts as a way to avoid entrenchment; however, there are commonly greater complications for consultants seeking to depart from their internally led interventions.

Internal versus external is one of many ways to describe OD-related roles; however, one may have OD-related obligations or opportunities as part of a larger managerial or executive role. Although OD practitioners are often characterized as advanced degree holders with specialized training, there have been many instances where frontline employees have been taught OD-related skills. In fact, the classic total quality management approach often involved training of employees and managers on OD-related skills and tools. Beckard (1969) provided several examples whereby employees were trained to use OD intervention techniques and who successfully led impactful change processes. This type of synergy between OD/HRD practitioners and organizations seems to be ideal, as is the combined use of internal and external OD practitioners. And, this type of knowledge transfer differentiates the facilitative approach commonly described in OD literature – whereby OD consultants spread OD knowledge, rather than maintaining autonomy as “the expert.” This compares with other types of consultants who are interested in keeping information from clients in order to maintain their “expert” status or who may be focused more on their proprietary or “off-the-shelf” approaches than the clients’ specific needs.

OD as Action Research

Any credible approach to applying social science related knowledge should involve use of data collection and analysis towards some eventual intervention or approach to change (Egan and Lancaster 2005). Action research (AR) is the best developed approach for such applications. In fact, one would be hard pressed to identify a model or application of OD that could not be framed within AR. At the same time, action research is also used by schools, teachers and employees in a way that may not frame a particular issue or problem at the larger systems level that is commonly used in OD. A key example of alignment of OD and AR from the “action research side” of the applied social science literature is Shani and Pasmore's (1985: 439) definition of AR:

an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioral science knowledge is integrated with existing organizational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations,

in developing self-help competencies in organizational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry.

Although deeper discussions about differences between AR and OD often lead to more differentiation, it would seem that most OD practitioners would embrace Shani and Pasmore's definition as relevant for OD – if not a reasonable OD definition. For AR experts Coghlan and Brannick (2009) AR is (1) research *in* action, rather than research *about* action; (2) a collaborative democratic partnership; (3) concurrent with problem solving; and (4) a sequence of events and an approach to problem solving. These features are also well aligned with OD-specific literature and definitions. The overlap between AR and OD is important for the understanding of the central processes of OD.

Because of the complexity involved in OD, models are helpful representations of potential actions in OD practice. In reviewing the history of change processes, most identify Shewhart's (1939) cycle as an original expression of the AR process. Shewhart's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle is a model depicting a repeatable process involving planned action, assessment, and realigned action (see Figure 6.1).

From the perspective of changing habits or patterns of behavior, Lewin (1947) suggested AR involved unfreezing the current practices and related habits in response to needed change; changing the current situation through data collection, analysis and plans for new action; and, finally, refreezing new behaviors and approaches after appropriate exploration and testing of the actions planned in the previous step. Together Shewhart's and Lewin's approaches contain the most common features described by AR authors and implementers.

Similarly, OD practitioners who map their consultative process are likely to present an AR-related model. McLean (2005) formed an AR model framed in the context of OD (see Figure 6.2).

Different from a model co-developed earlier in his academic and practitioner career, McLean's current 8-step model – entry, start-up, assessment and feedback, action plan, intervention, evaluation, adoption, and separation – is not only more complex than Shewhart's in terms of the number of steps, but it interrupts the ordinal step process, common to such models, in favor of a more realistic depiction of steps that may be repeated or reengaged. While reconsidering the stepwise approach commonly depicted in AR, McLean embraces the importance of each step in

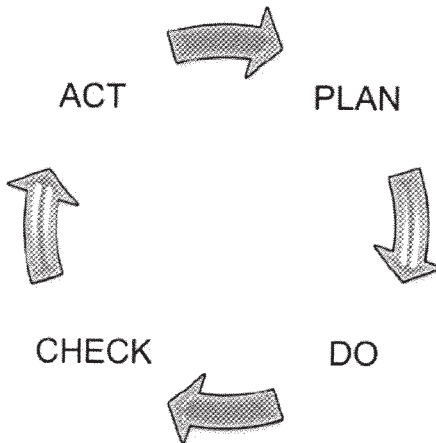


Figure 6.1 The Shewhart cycle

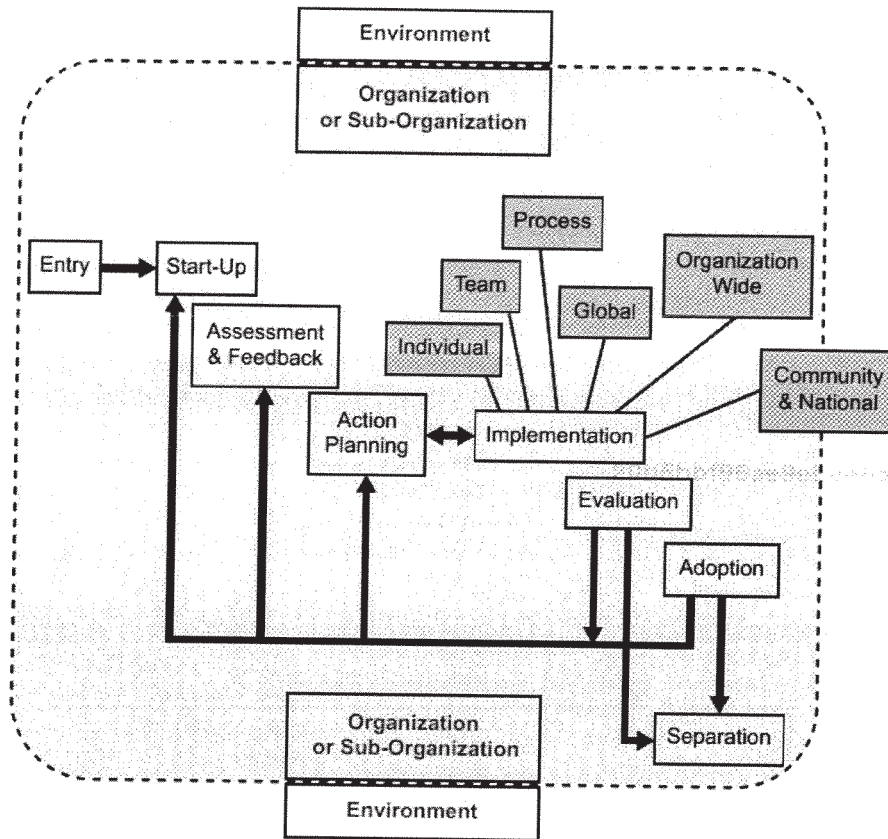


Figure 6.2 McLean's (2005) model of Action Research in OD

the process. At the same time, experienced OD practitioners recognize they may need to reengage assessment, reexamine the contractual relationship, or return to the action planning phase in order to fully implement an intervention. This more flexible AR model depicts a realistic, OD-specific context.

While the AR models in OD may seem straightforward, even simple, they are often misused or underutilized. OD practitioners (and/or those desiring to implement OD approaches) are vulnerable to criticism if they skip or underutilize assessment and feedback and evaluation in OD. It is common for organization members and clients of OD to report OD interventions that did not effectively utilize assessment and feedback and/or evaluation. If OD was a licensed practice, this would amount to OD malpractice. However, conditions such as client demands, timelines, internal pressures, and impatience by leaders not familiar with the time needed to deploy a proper assessment, may undercut OD practitioner plans to engage in a thorough examination of the OD area of focus.

Probably most challenging for any OD approach is the OD practitioner's management of a collaborative AR approach, which involves multiple stakeholders and complex issues. And, OD practitioners may face additional challenges when organization members are, for the first time through the collaborative AR process, experiencing authentic involvement in assessment and decision making. Individual opportunity presented in high power distance structures, can evoke excitement and anticipation by AR participants. However, process outcomes may not always meet anticipated expectations from all organization members.

Appreciative inquiry in OD

Nearly in tandem with the emergence of Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was principally developed by David Cooperrider, a professor at Case Western Reserve University. Central to AI is the rejection of the traditional problem-solving approach in change management and OD. AI and related approaches have expanded over the past 20 years and are an important, novel contribution to OD literature and practice. According to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987: 159), AI “refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action, which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organization or society as a whole.” Bushe (1999) identified AI as one of the most significant new OD interventions. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999: 10) describe the merits of AI:

Appreciative inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system “life” when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capability to heighten positive potential . . . In AI, intervention gives way to imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis there is discovery, dream and design.

The AI process emphasizes the importance of the first question asked at the start of the AI intervention – the discovery step in Cooperrider and Whitney’s (1999) AI 4-D cycle. Discovery emphasizes the appreciation of “what gives life” followed by dream, or “what might be.” Similar to AR, the next step is to explore the ideal of what could be or might be done to enact action, or design. Design is followed by an approach to sustainability, or destiny, which involves “how to empower, learn and improvise” (see Figure 6.3).

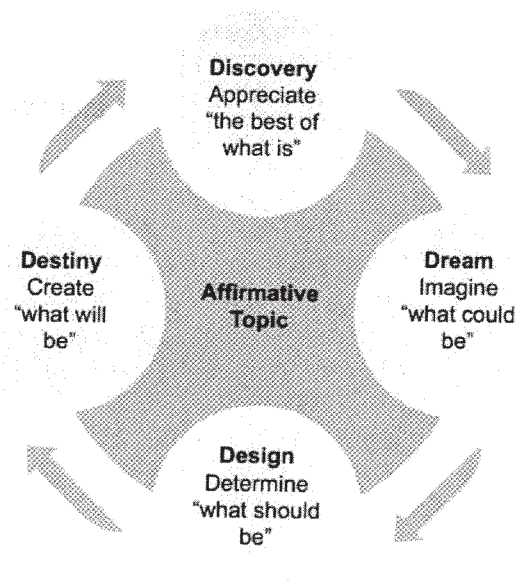


Figure 6.3 Appreciative inquiry 4-D cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999)

Although AI has some distinctive differences from AR, Egan and Lancaster (2005) identified some key similarities between the two approaches. Each model was founded by individuals interested in theory-building and is applicable to a variety of human systems, from individuals to organizations and even larger frameworks. Both AI and AR engage real social systems and are values-based. Both tend to be iterative, cyclical processes emphasizing reflection and action. Additionally, these approaches are change-oriented processes focused on making improvements beyond the current organizational state by involving organizational stakeholders in an interactive, real change process.

Using a qualitative research process, Egan and Lancaster asked OD practitioners who use AI to identify the strengths and weaknesses of AI and AR overall. One key conclusion by OD practitioners was that a challenge of AI, which maintains a relentlessly positive perspective regarding the organization and the AI process itself, has some potential weaknesses that may block its successful use in OD. Four key limitations identified by experienced OD practitioners using AI included: (1) difficult interpersonal situations may be overlooked, (2) feelings of anger or frustration not voiced, (3) dissatisfied organization members retreat and withdraw, and (4) managers may avoid challenges by focusing exclusively on “the positive” (Egan and Lancaster 2005: 43). Although AI was endorsed by each interviewee in Egan and Lancaster’s study, these AI oriented OD practitioners all voiced concerns or shared experiences where situational and data analysis within the AI 4-D process may have overlooked opportunities for critical thinking or analysis in favor of positive framing.

In response to the strengths and weaknesses of AI and AR identified, and in acknowledgment of the potentially transformative contributions of AI, Egan (2004) formed an Appreciative Action Research approach (see Figure 6.4).

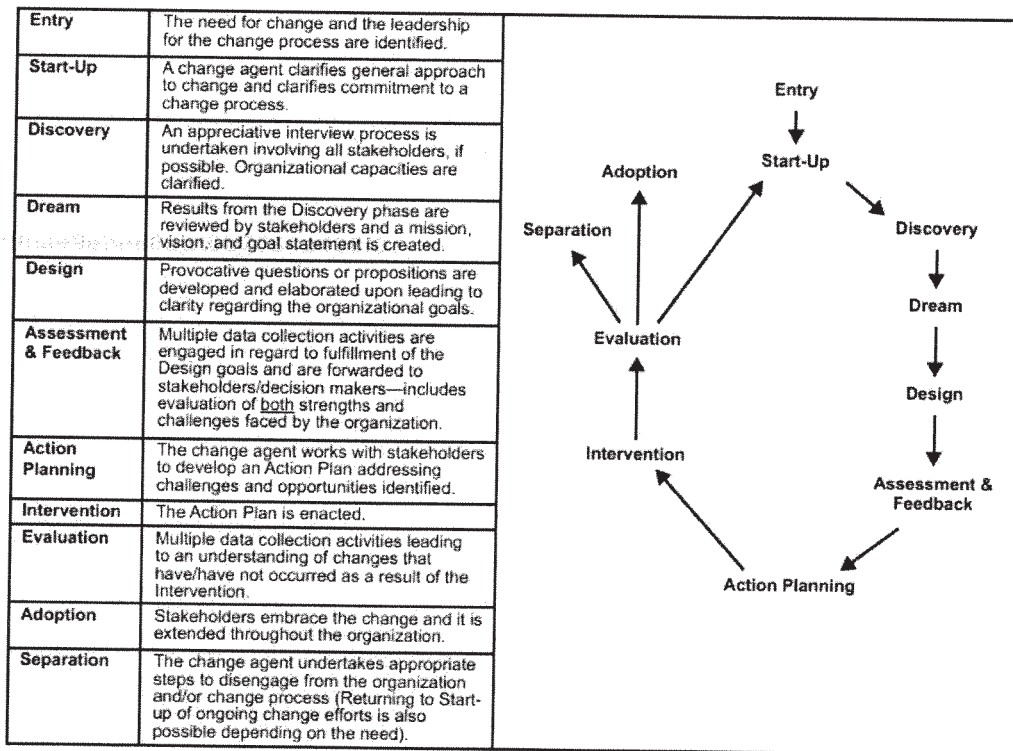


Figure 6.4 Appreciative Action Research model (Egan 2004)

Appreciative Action Research (AAR) “emphasizes that OD begins with the appreciative development of an understanding of collective capacity, mission, vision, goals, and steps that could be taken to accomplish those goals” (Egan 2004: 46). In AAR, Egan emphasized disciplined focus by OD practitioners to the positive questioning orientation outlined by the founders of AI, followed by assessment and feedback that provides a balanced perspective regarding the positive visions and promising action steps developed during the discovery, dream and design steps in the AAR process. As Cady and Caster (2000: 90) noted, the blending of “the humanistic side of OD with the empirically driven data collection is needed to add rigor to our field . . . [and] allows for seemingly polar opposite theories, such as the problem approach and the appreciative approach, to exist in a synchronous relationship.” This may be one of the most important next steps advancing the future of OD and HRD professional practice.

The future of OD

The dynamic and seemingly unpredictable world economy, our growing international interdependence, and growth in technology leading to the transformation of human interaction are some, among many, forces contributing to uncertainty regarding the nature of OD in the future. Shull *et al.*'s aforementioned (2013) study explored perspectives regarding OD by contrasting survey data gathered over a 20-year period (data collection occurred in 1993 and 2013). The 388 responding OD professionals indicated that while they perceived continued weakening of traditional OD values, they were very optimistic about the future of OD. At the same time, these researchers and others have found blurring boundaries between OD and other areas of HR – along with less emphasis on group dynamics and process consultation. Overall, OD practitioners appear more focused on key organizational results and business outcomes and they tend to utilize quantitative research and topic areas focused on improving organizational results. Shull *et al.* (2013) found younger, newer OD practitioners tend to emphasize traditional OD frameworks and values less, while (as a group) they indicated greater optimism about OD than their more senior counterparts. Therefore, it would seem that a large number of practitioners are likely to continue actively working in and promoting OD practices.

The original framing of OD was *diagnostic* and strongly situated within a positivistic perspective that dominated social sciences during the first seventy years of the last century (and which still does today in economics and industrial/organization psychology). This classical approach assumes an objective organizational reality and the collection of valid data. According to Bushe and Marshak (2010: 350) “This commitment to empirical, scientific inquiry may well be why OD is one of the few fields of consulting practice to also be recognized as a scholarly discipline.” Diagnostic approaches to OD include sociotechnical systems analysis, task-oriented team development, survey feedback, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

Bushe and Marshak note that newer, *dialogic* OD perspectives have begun to be positioned in new ways. Although the epistemological assumptions related to dialogic OD have been delineated for some time, dialogic OD practice is still exploring and developing. In addition to including AI as a dialogic approach to OD interventions, Bush and Marshak identified *search conferences* and *future search* both of which engage large groups in collective identification and elaboration of their desired future. These dialogic perspectives aim towards the identification and presentation of multiple perspectives, versus providing an objective diagnosis. Another large group approach, called *technology of participation*, helps groups to develop common ground, to plan together, and to enact planned action together. These participants engage in discussion that elaborates on the current organizational system and emphasizes participants' beliefs, stories, and assumptions. The intended outcome of this process is an agreed upon vision. Additionally, *open space* and *world café* approaches

also involve large groups. Open space involves bottom-up identification of shared interests and motivations that lead to formations of agreements about future shared enterprises (new idea development, projects and more) on a variety of scales, from dyadic to team and large-scale collaborations. Although much more structured, world café is also a bottom-up process that helps participants to discover latent mental models through a facilitated process and solid coaching skills (Shull *et al.* 2013).

As noted by the majority of participants in the Shull *et al.* study, there are reasons to believe that OD has been responsive to dynamic organizational environments much different from those experienced by the founders of the field. Including the placement of OD within the context of HRD, OD practitioners and scholars remain engaged and responsive with an eye on the next dynamic changes that may well have an impact on HRD overall.

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