

Organisation Development (OD) as a field teaches us to look beyond the obvious. It means to go beyond simple causality, look at multiple realities, use systems thinking approach, understanding the cultural nuances of the context and then approximate a diagnosis and co-create the solutions along with the client system. And NOT get seduced to become the know-all solution provider (which anyway most organisations are looking for).

Let me try and expand it to explain it better....

Organisation Development (OD) as a field teaches us to look beyond the obvious: meaning what you see is not what you get. There are hidden realities in organisations that need to be understood. There are unspeakable which need to be unearthed to figure out the complexities of a situation.

Go beyond simple causality, look at multiple realities:In organisations there is no “one reality”. Every individual holds a view of reality based on their subjective experience of the organisation and also based on how they are feeling (their fears and anxieties / their hopes and aspirations) – all this shapes the reality for every individual. And organisations are a system made-up of numerous individuals and multiple sub-systems, resulting in existence of multiple realities that every individual and every sub-system holds, as well as the multiple realities that get created based on interactions amongst these individuals and sub-systems (their inter-personal dynamics, the power dynamics that exist et. al). All these multiple realities need to be unearthed and explored to make sense of the current reality of the organisation, which would lead to a holistic diagnosis.

Use of systems thinking approach: One of the most critical skills to have in understanding and developing organisations is to have a systems thinking approach – to be able to look at the Macro while keeping a detailed eye on the Micro at the same time. What is the Big Picture? How do systemic forces play a role in shaping the current reality. The whole is bigger than the sum of its parts – hence no sub-system can live in isolation. Closed systems are just a

figment of imagination, every sub-system is inter-connected with other systems and has impact on each other.

Understanding the cultural nuances of the context: One of the golden rules of OD is that there are no best practices that can be copied from one system to another. Every system is unique in itself, even if they are from the same domain, same industry, having similar challenges – each organisation has its own unique challenges based on its unique context, challenges, leadership styles and in a single word, its unique culture, which cannot be easily understood, let alone be reproduced. Hence as an OD Practitioner, one needs to be sensitive to the context and culture we are operating it and make sense of the organisation and its dynamics through that prism.

Approximate a diagnosis: After exploring the multiple realities through a holistic lens and considering the unique cultural dynamics of the organisation, still even if you are the best of the best OD Consultants, you can never be sure of the Diagnosis you make. At best you can approximate a hypothesis, which needs to be tested, calibrated and then owned by the client system. That is the first step towards initiating a change.

Co-create the solution with the client system: Purely from a change management perspective, the change process needs to be co-owned and co-created by the client system – because of two main reasons. 1) Client systems has the tacit knowledge and intelligence to know what will work for them (as a consultant you will never know the context and technical challenges of the client system enough to suggest a solution) and 2) To have a buy-in from the entire client system, they need to feel ownership of the change that they would be going through, else there would be resistance at multiple levels. And the solutions provided won't be either appropriate and / or sustainable.

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Hence as an OD Professional, knowing and understanding the concepts and theories of OD are not enough – a lot of work needs to be done at the self-level too (just like to become a Psychotherapist, one needs to go through intense therapy for oneself first). As an OD Consultant, one needs to build immense self-awareness (about one's own beliefs, values, motive and needs) and to see to it that all the personal stuff of the OD Consultant does not come in between, while working in the service of the client system.



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