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The most bizarre thing about Organisational development is that there is not a single definition capable of explaining it properly; in simple terms Organisational development can be regarded as planned change concept, organisation wide effort to increase an organisation's effectiveness and viability. Organization development is interdisciplinary in nature and draws on sociology, personality, psychology, and theories of motivation. It is considered both applied behavioural science focused on understanding and managing organizational change as well as a field of scientific study and enquiry (en. wikipedia. org/wiki/organization\_development). Kurt Lewin (1898-1947) is credited with the origin and development as it is his work on Group dynamics and Action-Research which corroborates the basic OD process. Going through the history it would be worth saying that 1960's were the Influential period of T-group which saw the inculcation of Lewin's Force Field analysis and organisational theory (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Argyris, 1962; Harisson, 1963, 66). Planned change approach coined by Kurt Lewin is corroborated by the humanistic and democratic values and had its focus upon resolving group issues and improvement through the involvement of managers, employees and a change consultant (Bernard Burnes, 2004). Till 1980's planned Change was the dominant approach to manage organisational change, however by 1980's it faced harsh criticism regarding the ability to stand for the organisations operating in dynamic and unpredictable environments.

This essay will discuss the origin and objectives of Organisational development. Going further insights will be developed regarding the evolution of organisational development and its present scenario. Critical

evaluation and comparison will be done in order to determine the difference between the present one and the original developed and to understand whether Organisational development still hold its purpose and coherence.

## **ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It will be worth saying that it is an uphill task to put Organisational development under a single definition. In an organisation team building with top corporate management, Job enrichment in manufacturing are all examples of Organisational development (Cummings and Worley). Some definitions of Organisational development are described as under –

Organisational development is a “ Planned process of change in an organisation’s culture through the utilization of behavioural science technology, research and theory”. (Warner Burke)

Organisational development is “ An effort (1) planned, (2) organisation-wide, and (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organisational effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organisation’s “ processes” using behavioural science knowledge”. (Richard Beckhard)

Organisation development refers to a “ Long-range effort to improve an organisation’s problem-solving capabilities and its ability to cope with changes in its external environment with the help of external or internal behavioural-scientist consultants, or change agents, as they are sometimes called”. (Wendell French)

Organisational development is “ Long term, planned changes in the culture, technology and management of a total organisation or at least significant part of the total organisation”. (Jamieson, Bach Kallick and Kur, 1984)

From the above explained definitions it is quite obvious that all of them differ on several important dimensions such as some focus on culture, some on the importance of top management support while other on the importance of technology, there is no doubt that do exhibit some common features -

Organisational development is concerned with managing planned change targeting organisation-wide issues, problems and challenges.

Organisational development is basically a data-driven process, collected through process of action research by ways such as observations, assessments and surveys.

Intent of organisational development to improve organisational effectiveness and it serves the purpose of both the creation as well as the subsequent reinforcement of change.

Organisational development is concerned with the change in strategy, structure and/or process of an entire system.

Organisational development is based upon the application and transfer of behavioural knowledge and practice such as leadership, group dynamics, and organization design.

(Cummings and Worley, 2005)

An attempt have been made by Cummings and Worley to incorporate most of the views expressed in various definitions through the very definition explained below -

“ Organisation development is a system wide application and transfer of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures and processes that lead to organisation effectiveness”.

Organisational development had its origin in the 1960's when the need of Organisational health preponderant. Organisational development tends to works by acknowledging the dysfunctions and correcting them in order to retain equilibrium. Initial approaches to Organisational development was developed on the theories of Kurt Lewin who described it as a planned change and is based on Field theory, Group dynamics, Action Research and Three step model. Apart from significant work carried out by Kurt Lewin there are other prominent researchers in this field such as Bullock and Batten(1985) who proposed a four phase model of planned change - Exploration phase, Planning phase, Action phase and Integration phase. It will be worth mentioning that in spite of the extensive work carried the focus was on change at Individual and Group level ignoring the organisations in their entirety.

**The main objectives of Organisation development are to address and smoothen the process of change that will in turn help the organisation to achieve greater effectiveness.**

## **Evolution of Organisational Development**

Organisational development have emerged from five basic backgrounds or stems as described below - (Cummings and Worley)

Growth of National Training Laboratories (NTL) and development of training groups known as T-groups.

This very stem of Organisational development pioneered the T-Group - a small, unstructured group in which the participants are expected to gain from their own interactions and developing dynamics such as interpersonal relations, leadership, and group dynamics. With the passage of time T-Groups have declined on their importance as OD intervention and is often associated with the reputation of Organisational development as "touchy-feely" process. The practical aspects of T-Group organisations are better known as team building and worth saying that it is one of the institutionalized forms of Organisational development today.

Inculcation of action research as a way of applying research to managing change. An important feature of action research was survey feedback.

It was well-understood that in order to manage change research needs to be in close ties with action. Action research was seen as two-pronged process and it focuses on the fact that change requires action that can be achieved by carefully analysing the situation properly, looking out for all the possible alternatives and going for the most apt. to situation at hand (Bennet, 1983).

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Action research stresses that change can only be effective if it is taken at the group level by involving concerned ones and it must be a participative and collaborative process. (French and Bell, 1984; Lewin, 1947b). One of the key components of action research studies was the systematic collection of survey data that was fed back.

The third one is associated with a normative view i. e. “ One best way” to manage organisations.

The third stem that popped out was the normative view which closely held the view that Human relations approach represents a “ One best way” to manage organisations. Furthermore, this normative belief was illustrated by through Likert’s Participative Management style i. e. Participative Group systems and Blake and Mouton’s Grid OD program with organisational effectiveness. (R. Likert, 1967; R. Blake and J. Mouton, 1964)

The fourth stem can very well be described as the approach focusing on quality of work life and productivity.

This very stem or we can say the background to OD can be described under two phases that initially took off by the projects developed and their emergence in 1950s, 60s and lasted until mid 1970’s. This phase of QWL programs were concerned with providing employees high levels of discretion, task variety and feedback about results. One of the main characteristic of QWL was Self-managing groups as a form of work design. It lost its importance during 1970s due to other important and emerging issues such as inflation and energy costs. Second phase of QWL extended its scope and inculcated other features such as work flows, reward systems, management

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styles that effect employee productivity and satisfaction and is known by the term “ Employee Involvement”. (Cummings and Worley, 05)

The fifth and last stem of organisational development involves strategic change and organisation transformation.

The latest of Strategic change background have an overarching influence on Organisational Development’s evolution. In current scenario the environments known as technological, socio-political environments are more complex and uncertain than ever before which in turns calls for planned change process and strategic perspective from Organisational development (D. Naddler, 1988). Strategic change intervention helps to improve both the organisational effectiveness and its relationship to its environment.

Moreover, Strategic changes to organisational development have made its presence felt in mergers and acquisitions, alliance formation. (M. Marks and P. Mirvis, 1998).

All the above explained five stems have great influence on the current practice of organisational development as well as by the trends that are responsible of shaping change in the organisations. The commonality between all the backgrounds is that all wholeheartedly support the transfer of knowledge and skill to the client system and making them capable of managing better change. This field of organisational development is on a growth spree as it can be witnessed through the new researchers, theorists, practitioners who are building their work on the work of early pioneers and making it perfect for the contemporary situations.



## Findings

Organisational change as a planned discipline is concerned with the application of behavioural knowledge and practice in order to help organisation to achieve greater effectiveness but growing with the evolution phase, Current phase of organisational development goes far beyond its humanistic origins and it will be worth saying that as now a day's practitioners of Organisational development took a more prescriptive approach as compared to early pioneers of Organisation development who took analytical approach. Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) draw organisational development in terms of activities at three interfaces – Organisation to environment, Group to group, and Individual to organisation. Till 1980's planned change approach as coined by Kurt Lewin with its set of tools, techniques and practitioners was the dominant approach in managing organisational change unless it faced criticism from certain quarters regarding its inability to cope up with emerging and coercive situations such as dynamic and unpredictable environments. Even in today's scenario there is a continuing argument over the proper definition, its state of art and the skills required for practising it. Despite certain limitations cited who have opposed it by saying that Planned change is more flexible and holistic approach than it is being considered and is en route on a transition phase from being a miscellany of certain devices to becoming a mature, usable set of principles and procedures for organisational change (Cummings and Worley, 2001; French and Bell, 1995; Robert L. Kahn, 2002). The problems cited with Planned change to change are that it was developed for the organisations operating in Top-down, autocratic environment (Wooten and White, 1999: 8). It also have been criticized on the other note that it is more <https://assignbuster.com/organisational-development-and-organisatins-effectiveness-and-viabi/>

emphasized on Incremental and isolated change rather than its ability to cope up with more radical and transformational change (Dawson, 1994 ; Schein, 1985). Planned change is more suitable for the group and individual context but lacks strength for system-wide change. One of the problems of organisational development is the inclusion of conversational and commercial terms as independent variables such as T-Group training as a number of activities lies with the preference of trainer itself (Back, 1972). Other problem that can be cited is that Organisational development relies too much on the expertise and experience of trainees and change agent. Though often the process of planned change in terms of three successive phases - Unfreezing, Moving and Freezing is often quoted without proper understanding of it as well as the Lewinian quasi-stationary equilibrium is often seen but without undergoing any proper system conceptualization calls for more serious attention so that a more holistic approach can be developed in managing Organisational change.

In a nutshell, it can be said that it is not fruitful to look solely at group and individual level, the need is to look for the organisations in their entirety as seen from the concepts developed by Kurt Lewin. Organisational development practitioners have understood the importance of understanding organisational culture and organisational learning. The concepts coined by Kurt Lewin and others pioneers in this field are still relevant and needs a more in-depth understanding. The need of the hour is the conjugation of the emergent approaches such as punctuated-equilibrium, continuous transformation models with the existing approaches so that more benefits can be realized in terms of organization effectiveness by achieving planned

organisational change. In the end it is worth mentioning that organisational development is not that Strategic and this is the prime reason why Organisational development have lost its purpose and coherence. Though there has not been a single approach for Organisational Development but the combination of all the approaches make it a very coherent approach and it needs to be developed with the ever changing scenario so that nothing affects its suitability.

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