

# History, theories, and models of organization development paper research paper ex...

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



## **Introduction**

Every organization has to undertake the critical process of employee selection and development at some point. Organization development is responsible for ensuring that organizations are run based on the laid down policies. For example, decisions made in the organization must be aligned to a specific part of the organization. Organizations are like living organisms; they operate in combination of different processes. Organizational development entails a cycle where efforts are made to measure, manage, adapt to and create desirable results within a target organization. Organizational development is a wide field of study that covers the economic, social, political and interpersonal aspects of humanity in organizations. Organizational development has a long history; it has evolved over the years into an important area for most managers. Many theories have been developed to help explain the history of organizational development. The theories are also designed to explain different ways that one can understand how organizational development functions and how it can be achieved. The theories help explain to organizational managers how organizational development can be implemented and how it can be developed using minimal organizational resources.

## **History of Organizational development**

Organizational development has been in existence for over half a century; organizational development started in the late 1950s. Initially, organizational development took a different outlook from what it is today. Organizational development entails an integrated framework that can be used to solve

different problems facing human beings and organizations in general.

Organizational development started as a result of several forces and conditions that were facing organizations and human beings at the time. The main reason why organizational development came into existence was because of the intensity of civil rights activities in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Civil Rights Act, which was passed in 1964, is one of the most evident causes of organizational development. This legislation was passed to help discourage workplace discrimination. This created the need for organizations to streamline their human capital to fulfill the legal implications.

Organizations also wanted to ensure that the diverse workforce assembled was of high quality to meet the expectations of stakeholders. Organizational Development was further made a necessity by the political movements and voting rights. Some scholars believe that organizational development started earlier than 1950 when the individuals like Kurt Lewin, who was a scholar at the Sloan School of Management, spearheaded reforms. Kurt and his colleagues started by developing theories that have become the basis of organizational development. These theories have been improved over the years to develop refined form of organizational development.

## **Models and theories of organizational development**

Organizational development came about as a result of the prevailing conditions of the 1950s and 1960s. Scholars in the field of management designed the theories that would be used to explain how organizational functions and its objectives in general. The theories and models have been used over the years and improved to accommodate the changing

organizational environment and the social, economic and political scene.

This paper focuses on some of the major theories and models that have been used to influence organizational development.

## **Kurt Lewin's Changes Theory of Organizational Development**

The theory of change was developed by Lewin and his colleagues at the Sloan School of Management. The theory was a unified change theory, which was based on four major elements. The elements of the Lewin's theory include; group dynamics, field theory, three step change model and the action research. The theorists argue that these elements are responsible for the creation of change in organizations. Furthermore, the theorists view social surroundings as an element of dynamism that influences the interactive nature of human consciousness. The Lewin theory is used by organizational development practitioners to adjust different aspects of the organizational environment. The changes that occur in an organization automatically induce several kinds of psychological experiences. Contrary to what the theorists say, it is the employees' psychological condition that causes changes in the organizational environment.

Group dynamics was introduced in this theory to create a relationship between organizational settings with the complex inter- and intra-personal influences in group behavior. Group dynamics helps determine different classifications of human character, long term survival and development. The objective of introducing group dynamics was to help establish the rules underlying group behavior. It also helps study how groups are structured, formed, how they interact and their behavioral processes. Furthermore,

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group dynamics is used in analyzing group functioning.

The Lewin theory of organizational change also purported that group dynamics could be used in solving social problems and other related prejudices. Lewin explained group life and investigated the forces and conditions that cause change or resistance to change. This was done under the field theory approach where he studied individuals in organizations, their behavior and characteristics. Under the field theory, as Lewin argues, change can occur only when there is a total situation. Taking part of the situation does not reflect the reality and may be a misrepresentation of the truth. Lewin's field theory asserts that the behavior of human beings is a function of the environment and the individual. This implies that the behavior of a given individual has a direct relationship with the person's character traits and the organizational environment in which they work.

The fourth part of the Lewin change theory is the three step model. This part is also called Unfreeze Change Refreeze theory. It has a close relationship with the field theory. The three step model asserts that organizational change involves movement from a static state through progressional shifts to a different static condition.

Step 1 is the unfreeze stage, which involves the creation of optimal conditions for change to take place. When people resist change, the people are demonstrating a sense of belonging or identity to their environment.

Under this step, all alternatives to the prevailing conditions cause discomfort at first. The major challenge is always to convince people to move from this state to another state. The second step is the transition, which is characterized with confusion. People know that the old culture is under a

challenge, but they are not aware of how the new culture operates. When roles change, organizational goals are lowered as people acquaint themselves to the new culture. The final stage is the refreeze stage where the people are expected to accept the new culture and environment. New levels of stability and comfort are attained because people are familiar with the environment. This stage moves the organization from low productivity at the transitional stage to the organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

### **The Burke-Litwin model**

This model of organizational development was proposed by George Litwin and Warner Burke. The model later became the basis of transformational and transactional leadership in modern day. This model is used by organizational development practitioners to determine the first and second order change. The model states that interventions are made to change the structure, systems and management practices of organizations. The changes are the first order changes. Second order changes are intended to change the strategy and mission of the organization. The model allows organizations to split the necessary changes between non-tangible and task related needs. The challenge facing this model is that it is challenging to apply it when dealing with individual behavioral progress within an organization.

### **Porras and Robertson model**

This model of organizational development solely focuses on individual behavior. The model purports that by studying individual behavior, the general disposition of the work place can be influenced. For instance, by emphasizing on rewards, expectations and requirements of individuals,

organizational development can achieve the desirable work behaviors. This model is important in organizational development because it can be used where the other models cannot be used. The other models cannot be used to study organizational development from the individual perspective. Therefore, this is a convenient theory that can be used in small organizations.

## **Systems theory**

This theory is focused on a contemporary ideology. Its developers argue that open systems change with changes in the environment. The theory was developed in 1950 by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Based on this theory, it is assumed that organizations operate in an input and output environment. It also assumes that they operate in an open environment where they can communicate to one another. Furthermore, there is free flow of information between organizations. Therefore, organizations can be receptive to changes required from the feedback from their surroundings. Organizations can also respond to changes because of the prevailing market conditions. For example, if a competitor organization changes its systems to enhance efficiency, the other organization will also try to change in order to boost its productivity too. Under the current fast global marketplace, the systems theory of organizational development is commonly used. However, the demerit of this theory is that it has the inability to gather the necessary information from relevant areas to facilitate the model's implementation.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, organizational development has existed since the 1950s.

Organizational development theories were developed by scholars who were

studying the necessary changes to be made in organizations to improve efficiency and productivity. Organizational development developed due to several economic, political, social and interpersonal forces. Some of the political sources included the civil rights acts where politicians enforced laws for organizations to have all races represented in their workforce. Economic forces included the need by organizations to streamline their labor force so as to survive the changing economic conditions while fulfilling the law. The social and interpersonal forces that led to the birth of organizational development include the post-civil rights period where organizations had to have diversity in the kind of people they employ. The theories of organizational development have helped in explaining different processes of organizational development. Some of the major theories include the Lewin theory of change, the Burke-Lintwin model, the systems theory and the Porras and Robertson model.

## **References**

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