OD INTERVENTIONS

CHAPTER: 8

Md. Musharrof Hossain
Head, HRM, icddr,b
&
President, BSHRM
“OD interventions are sets of structured activities in which selected organizational units (target groups or individuals) engage in a task or sequence of tasks with the goals of organizational improvement and individual development”

Interventions constitute the ACTION component of the OD cycle
The OD practitioner (consultant) adds value in many ways. 4 sets of attributes are brought to the organizational context:

- a set of values;
- a set of assumptions about people, organisations and interpersonal relationships;
- a set of goals for the practitioner, the organisation and its members; and
- a set of structured activities that are the means of achieving the values, assumptions and goals. These activities are what are referred to as interventions.
OD Intervention Strategies

Intervention strategies are based on

- Results of the diagnostic process and
- The specified goals of the client system.

Eg. the client system wants to modernize the production process by moving from an assembly line with simple task structure and complexity to complex tasks performed by self-managed teams.
The diagnosis process examines the extent to which the 

- Work environment is amenable to such a system
- Employees willingness to change
- Time and effort required to make the change and
- Possible benefits or disadvantages.
Using a systems model to guide the programme, the OD practitioner would need to suggest a series of interventions in order to facilitate the change:

- Training and education
- Modified reward systems
- Group and team building programmes
- Reworking of the organizational structure etc.
Factors to consider: Planning and Implementing an OD intervention

- There has to be an intervention strategy
- Activities to promote learning and change must be structured effectively
- Choose and sequence intervention activities carefully
- Different interventions have different dynamics.
Factors to consider: Planning and Implementing an OD intervention

• Activities to promote learning and change must be structured effectively. Techniques to achieve this include:

  ➢ Make sure all the relevant people are included

  ➢ Allow the client group to identify problems and opportunities themselves

  ➢ Let them be the ones to solve their own problems and capitalize on their own opportunities
Factors to consider: 

- Ensure that goals are absolutely clear to all, as are the strategies for goal-attainment.

- Make sure that activities are structured in such a way that there is a high probability of success.

- Goals must be manageable and attainable.

- Success is highly motivating to the client group.
Factors to consider: -------

- Include both experience-based learning and conceptual learning. This is not meant to be an academic exercise.

- Make sure that the climate is appropriate for openness. If the client group is defensive or anxious, the exercise is futile.

- Ensure that the client system not only learns how to solve one particular problem, but it learns how to learn, ie. acquires skills and knowledge which can be utilized with future problems and changes.
Factors to consider: -------

• Teach them about both **task** (what) and **process** (how).

• Engage the whole person in the intervention, not just the intellect. Change stirs up powerful emotions. Get them to talk about thoughts, feelings, ideas, concerns, beliefs etc.
Choose and sequence intervention activities carefully; Some rules of thumb:

- Maximize diagnostic data. Not knowing the full facts of the situation can lead to inappropriate interventions.

- Maximize effectiveness. Early interventions should enhance the effectiveness of subsequent interventions. Those that build motivation, readiness, knowledge and skills required for future change should come first. Leapfrogging can lead to regression.

- Maximize efficiency. Sequence interventions to conserve time, energy and money.
Factors to consider: -------

- Maximize speed. Delays in achieving organizational improvement could lead to loss of momentum and motivation

- Maximize relevance. Interventions that relate to immediate problems should be tackled first

- Minimize psychological and organizational strain. Sequence interventions that are least likely to cause anxiety, insecurity, distrust, disillusionment and poor performance
Factors to consider: -------

- Different interventions have different dynamics

  ➢ Each intervention should be selected in relation to causal factors and the nature of underlying problems.
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

- Discrepancy Intervention
- Theory Intervention
- Relationship Intervention
- Organisation structure Intervention
- Cultural Intervention
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Discrepancy Intervention

Calls attention to a contradiction in action or attitudes

That then leads to exploration
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Behavioral science knowledge and theory are used to explain present behavior and assumptions underlying behavior.
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Relationship Intervention

Focuses on interpersonal relationships, esp. where there are strong negative feelings; brings issues to the surface for exploration and resolution
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Discrepancy Intervention
• calls attention to a contradiction in action or attitudes
• that then leads to exploration

Theory Intervention
• behavioural science knowledge and theory are used to explain present behaviour and assumptions underlying behaviour

Relationship Intervention
• focuses on interpersonal relationships, esp. where there are strong negative feelings; brings issues to the surface for exploration and resolution
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Organisation Structure Intervention

Examines and evaluates structural reasons for organizational ineffectiveness
OD interventions and their underlying causal mechanisms:

Cultural Intervention

Examines traditions, precedents and practices which form the fabric of the org’s culture, in a direct, focused approach.
Possible results of OD interventions:

- Feedback
- Awareness of changing socio-cultural norms or dysfunctional current norms
- Increased interaction and communication
- Confrontation (surfacing and examining differences)
- Education (knowledge and concepts, beliefs and attitudes, skills)
- Participation (in problem solving, goal setting, idea generation)
- Increased accountability (through clarifying responsibility and monitoring performance)
- Increased energy and optimism ("the future is desirable, worthwhile and attainable")
There are many, many different types of OD interventions. These are classified, or grouped according to:

i) The objectives of the interventions

ii) The targets of the interventions
14 major “families” of OD interventions

1. Diagnostic Activities -
2. Team Building Activities
3. Intergroup Activities
4. Survey Feedback Activities
5. Education and Training Activities
6. Techno-structural or Structural Activities
7. Process Consultation Activities
8. Grid Organisation Development Activities
9. Third -Party Peacemaking Activities
10. Coaching and Counseling Activities
11. Life and Career Planning Activities
12. Planning and Goal Setting Activities
13. Strategic Management Activities
14. Organizational Transformation Activities
1. Diagnostic Activities

Fact-finding activities designed to ascertain the state of the system or the status of a problem.
2. Team Building Activities

Designed to enhance the effective operation of system teams. These can focus on task-related issues such as the way things are done, necessary skills and resources, relationship quality between team members and between team and leader, and effectiveness. In addition, structural issues must be addressed (the nature of the team). “Outdoor Adventure” teambuilding programmes are currently very popular.
3. Intergroup Activities

Designed to improve the effectiveness of interdependent groups, i.e., those that must cooperate to produce a common output. These focus on joint activities and the output of the groups as a single system rather than 2 subsystems.
Activities that focus on the use of questionnaires to generate information which is then used to identify problems and opportunities.
5. Education and Training Activities

Designed to improve skills, abilities and knowledge. Several activities and approaches are possible, depending on the nature of the need.
6. Techno-structural or Structural Activities

Designed to improve organizational structures and job designs. Activities could include either:

- Experimenting with new organizational structures and evaluating their effectiveness i.t.o. specific goals
- Devising new ways to bring technical resources to bear on problems
Activities that help the client “perceive, understand and act upon process events which occur in the client’s environment”. The client gained insight into the human processes in organisations and learns skills in diagnosing and managing them. Emphasis on communication, leader and member roles in groups, problem solving and decision making, group norms, leadership and authority and intergroup cooperation and competition.
A six-phase model designed by Blake and Mouton involving the whole organisation. The model starts with upgrading individual manager's skills and leadership abilities, moves to improvement activities, then to intergroup relations activities. Later phases include corporate planning for improvement, developing implementation tactics and finally evaluation of the change in organisation culture. A long term process lasting up to 5 years.
Intervention by a skilled third party aimed at helping 2 organizational members manage their interpersonal conflict. Based on confrontation and an understanding of conflict and conflict resolution processes.
The consultant works with org. members to a) define learning goals; b) learn how others see their behavior, and c) learn new behaviors to better achieve their goals. Key features are non-evaluative feedback and joint exploration of alternative behaviors.
11. Life and Career Planning Activities

Activities focused on life and career objectives and how to go about attaining them. Includes goal setting, assessment and training.
12. Planning and Goal Setting Activities

Theory and experience in planning and goal setting, problem solving models, planning paradigms and “ideal vs. real” discrepancy models.
13. Strategic Management Activities

Helping key policy-makers reflect on the org’s basic mission and goals, environmental demands, threats and opportunities, engaging in long-range planning of both a reactive and a proactive nature. Attention is focused outside of the org. and to the future.
Activities focusing on large-scale system changes that will fundamentally transform the nature of the organization. Virtually every aspect of the org. is changed: structure, management philosophy, reward systems, work design, mission, values and culture.
Common OD Intervention

- Interpersonal Interventions
  - Coaching and Counseling
  - Sensitivity Training
  - Process Consultation
Group Interventions

- Group Diagnostic Meetings
- Team-Building
- Role Analysis/Role Clarification
- Responsibility Charting
Intergroup Interventions

1) Conflict Resolution Meetings
2) Finding a common enemy
3) Joint Activities
4) Rotating Membership
Thank You