

Roosevelt University

Culture and Collaboration in Change Management and Organization Development

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This paper outlines my philosophy of Organization Development as informed by my master's degree work at Roosevelt University, as well as my professional experience as a theatre designer and my volunteer experience in various community organizations. It also lists three professional exhibits, including the underpinning theories and methodologies.

Philosophy of Organization Development

My philosophy of organization development is rooted in my passion for collaboration. This comes out of many years of professional experience as a theatrical costume designer – group collaboration is a pivotal part of this work, and my interest in examining the process more closely led me to the field of organization development. I have also found that the practices of theatrical design are useful in organization development – in particular, the ability to move smoothly from imaginative conceptualization into logistical planning, and the capacity for building a common vision among multiple stakeholders.

My primary focus within the organization development field is facilitation – guiding groups through complex conversations, particularly in change management. It is key to this process to have a thorough understanding of organization culture. This helps the facilitator understand the barriers to change that exist within the culture and history of the organization, as well as the aspects that are enablers of change. Those positive mechanisms that already exist should form the foundation of any planned interventions.

In any change management process, it is key to build an environment of trust and collaboration, and one cannot exist without the other. Underpinning both is transparency. Leadership of the organization must be transparent about the priorities informing any change planning, the facilitator must be transparent with the client and the participants about their role

and responsibilities, and any change process must include transparency about both the benefits and the costs of change. This is how one achieves full buy-in from organization members on any change process.

Review of Literature

The field of organization development uses a human-centered, democratic lens through which to help organizations plan grow through challenging circumstances. My strengths in this work come from understanding how organization members construct meaning, how organization culture impacts group process, and an interdisciplinary approach to collaboration and feedback.

Below, I have outlined some of the models that inform my perspective.

Theory One – Dialogic organization development

Dialogic organization development (or “dialogic OD”) views organizations as fluid, ever-changing networks of meaning-making (OD Network, 2025). In contrast to a diagnostic approach, “...dialogic OD tries to avoid diagnosis (at least directed by the practitioner), but instead tries to help organization members raise their own consciousness” and come to their own awareness of what co-created systems within their organization can support change (Anderson, 2020, p120). This approach is process-focused, with an emphasis on changing mindsets within an organization rather than technical systems or behaviors. As Donald Anderson puts it, “If organizations are conversational systems... then changing the organization means finding ways to change the conversation” (Anderson, 2020, p121).

Theory Two – Weisbord’s Six-Box Model of Organizational Cultural Assessment

Marvin Weisbord describes his Six-Box Model as providing “six labels, under which can be sorted much of the activity, formal and informal, that takes place in organizations. The labels allow consultants to apply whatever theories they know when doing a diagnosis and to discover

new connections between apparently unrelated events” (Weisbord, 1976). Those labels are: Mission/Purpose, Structure, People & Relationships, Rewards, Helpful Mechanisms, and Leadership; then those boxes all function within an Environment. One way to look at it as building an organization’s “cognitive map” – the six categories of formal and informal activities allow consultants to identify the key areas (or connections between areas) causing issues or tension in the organization. Cultural assessment also leads to identifying barriers to and enablers of change. It’s important to work with those positive mechanisms that already exist within an organization; Hallsworth points out that “[r]ather than starting with an intervention and then trying to scale it, we could start by looking at operations or processes already happening at scale and explore how they can be influenced” (Hallsworth, 2023).

Theory Three - Theatre methodologies: collaboration and feedback

As a theatre-maker, collaboration has been one of the most important aspects of my professional life. Collaboration in theatrical design is more than just a binary process between two parties; it requires a team of people, each one an expert in their own field with a team of people supporting them, and that team brings their diverse talents and perspectives to a shared vision. As Robert Cohen puts it, “Collaboration includes, but is considerably more than, co-laboring and cooperating” (Cohen, 2024, p23). Bringing this expectation and model to facilitation in an organization development setting can shift expectations; while in the past, solo achievements might have been most admired, “...our new heroes are men and women who know how to gather allies, build teams, and work together toward shared goals.” (Tharp, 2009, p7) This kind of collaboration requires sharing feedback on each other’s work in a way that is supportive, not competitive. I use a process adapted from choreographer Liz Lerman’s “Critical Response Process.” On her website Lerman describes Critical Response Process as “a method

for giving and getting feedback on creative work in progress, designed to leave the maker eager and motivated to get back to work” (Lerman, 2026). Moderating an iterative and supportive feedback process is vital to building a collaborative environment.

Exhibits

Exhibit One: *Cultural Assessment and Intervention Plan for the Chicago College of Performing Arts (created for ORGD 400 Organization Culture & Behavior and ORGD 460 Interventions and Applications)*

This project is a summary of an organizational culture assessment process, including a paper collecting interviews with organization members conducted in February 2024, and a presentation on recommended interventions. The culture assessment was based on Weisbord’s Six-Box Model.

Exhibit Two: *Diversity & Inclusion Plan for Thousand Waves Martial Arts and Self-Defense Center NFP (for ORGD 485 Leveraging Diversity) – October 2024*

This project presents a hypothetical series of steps for increasing diversity and inclusion at a local non-profit sports and self-defense organization. This was informed heavily by Minal Bopaiah’s book, *Equity: How to Design Organizations Where Everyone Thrives*, and modeled on similar plans for the FDA and the City of Edmonton.

Exhibit Three: *Applying Organization Development: The Venue Theatre Case Study (for ORGD 435 Applying Organization Development) – July 2023*

This paper uses a case study to propose an organization development process, emphasizing engagement from a full range of stakeholders. The process outlined follows a dialogic organization development process, and uses frameworks such as Liminal Pathways Change Framework and Role Negotiation and Analysis.

Reflection or Summary

What new information or skills did you gain from this assignment?

In the process of assembling this paper, I realized that most of my work in my master's courses was focused on how to implement existing theories and models. This is really the first time I've been asked to state a personal approach to OD. I looked through many of my previous papers, thought about different discussion boards from the last 3 years, and was able to identify some through-lines that were specific to me. In the end, I feel that this summary synthesizes many different aspects of my professional life and the interdisciplinary nature of my work.

How might you use this in the future?

Being able to succinctly describe my unique approach to organization development will definitely help in developing my career in this field. I can imagine using portions of this paper on my website or LinkedIn.

Is there any additional information or thoughts you would like to share about the assignment?

I don't know if this experience is similar for the TDV students, but because this assignment involved synthesizing so much information from the last 3 years for me, the combination of that step and doing a lit review felt very daunting. Perhaps there's a way to add an additional scaffolding step earlier in the class (I know there's very limited time) where a first draft of personal philosophy is drafted. That way the lit review piece is the only fully new section.

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