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Notes on Building ODC as an Academic Discipline Conference

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Notes on Building ODC as an Academic Discipline Conference

Abstract

Looks at several aspects of the conference "Building ODC as an Academic Discipline."

Comments

Academy of Management, Organization Development and Change Division, "Building ODC as an Academic Discipline," 7-8 April 2006.

Organizational Consulting: Proseminar in Organization Development

DYNAM 629

Russell Force

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Final Paper: Building ODC as an Academic Discipline Conference

This paper will look at several aspects of the two-day conference which took place at International House on April 7th and April 8th. As the program for the conference stated, "For the past seven years, a group of dedicated academics and practitioners within the Organization Development and Change (ODC) Division of the Academy of Management (AOM) have been working on a project referred to as "Building ODC as an Academic Discipline." This conference was a major gathering designed to continue and build on the process.

It made perfect sense to begin the proceedings with a talk by Dr. Russell Ackoff, often referred to as the dean of systems thinking. In 1957 he co-authored a book with C. West Churchman and Leonard Arnoff named, "Introduction to Operations Research" a text that helped define the field of systems thinking. He delivered an amazing amount of information in almost every sentence, quoting dates, names, etc. At times the information appeared almost disconnected until he would ever so neatly wrap it up and make everything fit into the system he was discussing; because he definitely made connections with everything he presented to his audience. I believe he set the tone for the conference in as much as he created the biggest picture possible, "the world", and what ODC's place in this system could and should be.

In the first section of the paper, I attempt to include some of Dr. Ackoff's words and thoughts that I believe touched on much of the work done over the course of the two days. I've tried not only to comment on his presentation but also to take some of what he spoke about and relate these words to what was further developed in the conference.

Dr. Russell Ackoff

“Most learning is done before, out of or after school.” We kill creativity by teaching students there are a limited number of acceptable answers to any question. The first question students learn to ask in any course with any new teacher is “what is the answer the teacher is looking for.” This translates from school to the workplace. We continue to give the expected answers to those in authority. There is no creativity therefore no possibility to be creative, and to create more creativity.

During the conference the question of what we learn and how that affects us as scholars and practitioners was kept in constant view. What are the questions that need to be asked of ourselves, school administrators, scholars and practitioners that will lead to the creative knowledge needed in establishing an accepted curriculum for the field of ODC?

“No problem remains solved in a dynamic environment.” Solutions tend to create 2 or 3 problems for every one resolved. Therefore what works today will not work tomorrow. The only guarantee that something will remain solved is to use systems thinking. Looking back to previous experience and attempting to find a similar solution to the current problem, may resolve the present problem but it will not dissolve or eliminate the problem. If you consider a particular problem within a whole system design, you can

see that to change a part of the system may or may not be a positive change for the entire system.

The subject of what needs to be taught to current students in order for them to be prepared to function as ODC practitioners and/or scholars was often discussed during the conference. An answer, offered again and again is that students need to learn how to learn. Knowledge in today's society changes as soon as it is created. The only way for us to operate in the field of ODC in an intervention or in scholastic writing is to be aware of the changes and to modify, reframe and reformulate that which we have already learned. The way we do this most easily is through systems thinking. Everything is relational and keeping that in view is necessary when looking for new ideas or answers that fall "outside of the box". We need to be able to move as quickly as the environment of change moves around us.

You can grow without developing and you can develop without growing. Trash heaps keep growing, but just grow into larger trash heaps, developing into nothing but even larger trash heaps. Growth is concerned with earning while development is concerned with learning. Growth is the increase in amount while development is the increase in competence. Einstein continued to develop long after he stopped growing. The principal index of growth is the standard of living while the principal index of development is the quality of life. Development is not concerned with how much of something you have but with knowing what to do with whatever you have available. Dr. Ackoff stated that since development is a matter of learning, no one can do this for someone else. The only type of development is development of self.

Here Dr. Ackoff moved from the primarily personal view into a global view. What happens to the individual, happens to the organization, and happens to the world. There is a relationship here and nothing spontaneously occurs. In explaining his views on growth and development, he separates and clarifies what is so often confused in what we read and use in our own conversations. Often, in my own workplace, the only goal projected at meetings is growth. We need to grow certain areas of the patient population; we need to grow referrals and we need to grow admissions. Just changing the words changes the idea of what we need to be doing. If we develop a patient population who will use our resources, and develop the relationships necessary to establish a greater referral base and admissions base, we've done more than just grow it. We've created a relationship, which will lead to growth but also will lead to a continuously expanding relationship helping us develop increased services necessary in serving the growth we experience. Growth is so often just looking at numbers while development is much more relational in concept. One of the main points of the conference is "building ODC as an academic discipline" not just growing the number of students, faculty, programs and practitioners. Involved, also, is the creation of curriculum; the possibility of creating accrediting or credentialing bodies for the academic field; the academic, community and global place of ODC in a fast growing and changing world.

Some countries grow without developing while others develop without growing. You can support the development of another person but you will be able to accomplish nothing more than that support. One country is not able to solve the problems of another country, since development is only concerned with self, be it an individual or a country. A country must learn through its own trial and error and learn from its own mistakes.

Dr. Ackoff stated that our present administration is one incapable of admitting or recognizing its mistakes, therefore it is impossible that any learning is taking place. The same mistakes are being made again and again because no one is allowed to look critically at the errors already made and the consequences we have already experienced. Learning only takes place by making mistakes because if no mistake is made the individual, company or country obviously already knows how to do the task. You only confirm what you already know when you continue to do something correctly. This holds a certain value but it cannot be called learning. "One can only learn from making mistakes, identifying and correcting them."

There are two types of mistakes. The first is one of commission and the second is one of omission (the error of not doing what you should have done). Dr. Ackoff considers omission to be the greater of the two mistakes.

In organizations, errors of omission are errors that are unseen. You are much more likely to be punished for an error of commission rather than one of omission. In most organizations the principal of CYA is the basic principal. The lack of tolerance for making mistakes keeps our organizations conservative and thinking inside the box. Growth comes from making mistakes and taking the chance on something untried and unknown. Companies and organizations become paralyzed when no one is willing to risk and be held responsible. We should have tolerance for mistakes, but no tolerance for not learning from the mistakes.

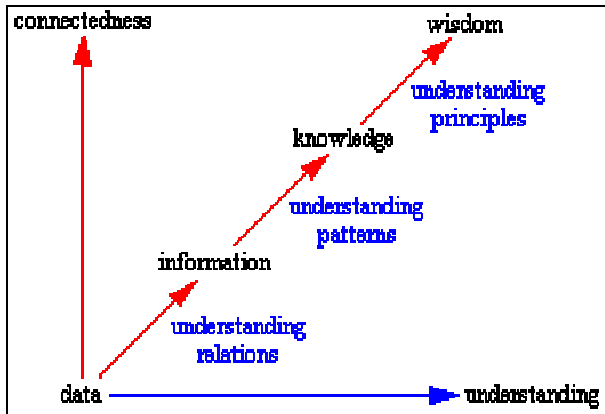
When Eastman Kodak bought Sterling Drugs, makers of Bayer Aspirin, it committed a big mistake, which ended in a 4 billion dollar loss when Sterling was sold.

When Kodak omitted buying Xerox for a low price of \$11 million dollars, it was also a very big mistake. However, the executives who committed a mistake, which was obvious to all the stakeholders, received a great deal more criticism than the executives who failed to buy Xerox for such a low price. The omission of this purchase was not evident on the bottom line. Nothing showed the stakeholders the amount of money lost by failing to buy Xerox, therefore, there was no obvious reason to criticize the decision since there was nothing noted in the bottom line as to the losses created by inaction. Dr. Ackoff stated that organizations invariably fail due to errors of omission. The pervasive atmosphere which leads to a lack of action leads to a conservative stasis where nothing is attempted that might be a mistake and therefore nothing can be achieved.

Dr Ackoff spent a great deal of time discussing the importance and the necessity of making mistakes and its contribution to the active learning process, in fact its necessity in creating the possibility of learning. He stressed the importance of “doing something”. To do nothing is the greater wrong because it offers no opportunity to either succeed or fail. What better audience to receive his views than the one gathered together for this conference, meeting not only to discuss ODC but to further the “act” of building ODC as a discipline. This is a task that will definitely call for action, which will bring change. To omit doing anything concerning the building of ODC as a discipline will lead to ODC’s disappearance as a separate discipline.

Dr. Ackoff stated that there are five types of content in the human mind. They are: data; information; knowledge; understanding; and wisdom. Data is symbols, existing in and of itself with no other significance. Information is data processed to become useful. Providing the answers to who, what, where, how many, in other words it is descriptive.

Knowledge is the collection of useful data and information and answers the question “how”. Understanding is the appreciation and answer to the questions beginning with the word “why”. Wisdom is used to judge between good and bad, right and wrong. It goes beyond understanding in that it offers new understanding not previously available. It is understanding with values.



(Source: Bellinger, G., Castro, D. and Mills, A. (1997). Data, Information, Knowledge, and Wisdom. Available at <http://www.outsights.com/systems/dikw/dikw.htm>)

Using a Peter Drucker quote on integrity, “It’s more important to do the right thing than to do things right.” Dr. Ackoff paraphrased it to say “It is better to do the right thing wrong, than the wrong thing right.” The righter we do a wrong thing the “wronger” we become. When we make a mistake, and the wrong thing is done to correct it, we become wronger. When we make a mistake doing the right thing and correct it, we become righter, proving his above quote. One example he gave was of the prison system in the United States. We have a higher percentage of people incarcerated and at the same time have the highest crime rate. Prison teaches a person how to become a better criminal so that when he exits the system, he has achieved a higher level of skill at being a criminal and is more likely to use this skill and commit an even more serious crime.

Prison is not a correctional facility, it is a place people are instructed in becoming better criminals.

Dr. Ackoff stated that most organizations state their primary purpose is to create greater wealth for the shareholders when in truth, the principal objective is to maximize pleasure for the decision makers of the organization.

The World Health Organization ranks the United States as 37th of all countries in its quality of health care for its citizens. There is no universal health coverage and tens of millions go uninsured. Studies have shown that a great deal of the professional care provided by these institutions and practitioners is due to the fundamental inadequacy of these same institutions and practitioners. Wrong diagnoses, unnecessary surgeries, incorrect prescriptions, etc. ensure a population in need of health care. This perpetuates a system which creates these problems and ensures its survival to deal with the created problems. This has little to do with health care and much to do with the lack of a health care system in place.

Here again, Dr. Ackoff spent a great deal of time in relating data to information, information to knowledge, knowledge to understanding and understanding to wisdom, and all of this linked to the idea of values. Very “wrong” systems have been created and perpetuated. He included the U.S. health care system, certain organizations, and the penal system. What each holds in common is doing something wrong and then doing something wrong again to fix the problem, which only perpetuates or exacerbates the problem. So, human beings are able to create systems which work, not always for the betterment of the system or those involved in the system. The use of wisdom, defined as “understanding with values” is necessary in whatever system we wish to create. In

creating a system which will firmly establish ODC as a distinct academic field, I believe the conference offers the example of people sharing data, information, knowledge and understanding. I also believe that the wisdom to take all of this and use it as a base for further action is invaluable. I believe Dr. Ackoff was exhorting the attendees to use wisdom in their participation over the next two days.

“Being taught is the major obstruction to learning.” Dr. Ackoff stated that people could mistakenly think that the main objective of universities is to educate students. He states the principal objective of universities is to give job security, increase the standard of living and the quality of life for the administrators and faculty. In other words, the ones who have the power to make the decisions are the ones who decide what the institution is for. He stated also that universities know a lot about teaching but very little about learning. He stated it was obvious that to anyone who taught that the teacher learns much more than the students do, and that in order for the students to learn they need to teach. Students should be teaching the teachers as teaching is a much better way to learn.

During the conference a great deal of time and energy was spent on what ODC students need to learn to be successful as scholars and practitioners. Questions were asked of the faculty and directors as to what they felt should be included in the curriculum and how the curriculum should best be presented to the students with the goal of creating the greatest amount of learning. Should there be more adjunct teaching by professionals in the field or should classes be predominantly taught by scholars? What is the best method for students to learn the practice of ODC in an academic setting in order for them to become better practitioners? How can we help students to teach each other

in our classrooms? These and many other questions of learning took place in almost all of the discussions.

Dr. Ackoff offered another benefit of being a systems thinker in relation to concepts. Illustrating that fixing a part does not necessarily improve the whole and that ruining a part does not necessarily hurt the whole was explained by an early experience in his career having studied architecture.

An architect will first develop the concept of the whole that is being created and will then create the parts that will fit into the whole, not the other way around. We need to conceptualize what we wish to achieve and we cannot do that by analyzing the concept bit by bit and after a time form a whole from all the pieces. Yet, this is often how an organization operates. Instead of taking a whole system approach, technicians will examine one part of the system, put in the fix and then expect the system will suddenly improve. This more than likely will not happen. Every action that achieves the improvement of that one part of the whole may have another reaction or multiple reactions on the rest of the system that need to be taken into consideration as to the affect of the fix. Often, repairing one segment will misalign many other parts and create an even less functional system.

When we tend to be analysts and avoid viewing the whole picture; the entire concept; we do not achieve the desired results. We achieve inefficient, malfunctioning failures. It takes the same amount of work or less to keep the whole concept foremost in our vision and to work within that vision always considering the whole.

He ended his words by stating that what is needed now, not just by organizations but by the countries that populate the globe is the ability for the governments to think in a

more global system's approach. He views much of the governmental decision making as narrowly focused and self-serving with no ability to see the "big" picture. As long as countries remain determined to believe that only through expressions and actions of self-interest they will grow and develop, there is very little hope that the condition of the world we leave for the next generation will realize any improvement. Our greatest goal as OD practitioners should be to engage with those who have influence in public policy. We need to help them to see, with clearer vision, the deficiencies of what they are presently doing and the possibilities that abound if they can think and act in a relational systems way. We can help them do that.

Dr. Ackoff sees the big picture and asked the attendees to join in that vision.

Reflections and Predictions from the Founding ODC Academic Programs

Following the remarks of Dr. Ackoff, the group was divided into smaller groups to discuss the first question in this segment, which was: What are the problems and challenges facing ODC programs today?

David Jamieson, Adjunct Professor of Management, Master of Science in Organization Development Program at Pepperdine University, brought up the differences between certification and achieving degrees in ODC. He talked of the necessity of gaining field experience, going outside the classroom to gain expertise. He said programs needed to become better at human system and exchange of information. He also talked of the need to develop diversity within the community of ODC practitioners and asked the question of those in attendance, “What are your programs doing to attract a more diverse population?”

Robert Marshak, President of Marshak Associates, Scholar in Residence at American University, and Member of the NTL Institute spoke of a joint program at Washington University where ODC was never housed in a business program. He talked of the decline in research in OD as well as the decline in professors, an aging group with no one onboard to replace them. Mr. Marshak also spoke of the shifting of values of the various generations and the need to create “niche” OD programs which will bring in the most money to the schools.

Jim McFillen, Associate Dean of the Masters of Organization Program from Bowling Green University spoke of the process of redesign in the OD Program. He sees a lack of qualified faculty to teach and also questions who are we looking for to teach our programs. He spoke of faculty who have had no field experience within the concept of

“change”. He voiced his concern about a rising tide of non-doctoral faculty within our programs which brings on the concern of diminished scholarship. “There is less scientific writing and more technique driven writing within the field.” There is a “mainstreaming” of organizational change research being usurped by other disciplines, making OD just a piece of other programs. He questioned if there was a failure to build relationship with other academic streams as there is a strong need for interdisciplinary work. He also questioned if perhaps it’s best not to try to build a silo for OD. Perhaps we need to be floaters with other programs. ODC is getting caught up in methodology instead of being problem oriented.

Peter Sorensen, Jr., Director of the Ph.D. Program in Organization Development at Benedictine University presented his groups ideas on the issues facing OD today. He stressed the importance of the following ideas: the image of OD; curriculum within a program; placement of the program within the university structure; knowledge creation; strategic and global OD; no agreement on what OD is; lack of uniformity in programs; and is OD a profession; OD practitioners and teachers are not trained in OD; the predominant focus of OD studies on business (bottom line); need for a different term as Organizational Development is confusing; the change in the OD student population inasmuch as students are majoring in OD to further enhance their positions in their chosen fields and not furthering OD as a study or a separate practice.

There is no agreement on what OD is among ODJ, ODN, AOM; there is a lack of uniformity in defining the subject matter and definitions; practitioners are not always schooled in OD; many people call themselves OD when they have had no training in the field; the interdisciplinary / cross-functional nature of OD brings many people under the

one tent (the story about touching the elephant); predominant focus on business is reflected in OD programs; is the term “development” misleading or confusing to ourselves and to our clients; failure to build partnerships with other disciplines – students benefit from a multidisciplinary approach.; changing nature of students interested in OD; OD “morphs” as leaders redefine what they want OD to do; diversity of the roots of OD; the strengths of OD may be its very weaknesses.

The second question presented to the attendees was: “How well are ODC programs addressing these challenges?”

Jim McFillen, of Bowling Green presented the following ideas. There is a program drift and it’s been around for awhile with faculty changes, program vision drifts, programs changed from developing leaders into developing consultants. OD is losing its “brand identity”. There is a loss of program foundation, drifting away from empirical scientific method and action research..

Organizations are solution minded while ODC is process minded. We need to define our programs for if there is no definition, there is no identity. Also, if we do not define our programs, who will? Rediscovery needs to occur in our programs. We shouldn’t however change them just because of enrollment issues. There are market realities such as MBA programs offering OD type courses in their curricula. We need to be creative which includes looking into possibilities of WEB use for classes. We need to circle back to move forward. We need to be the executives dealing with change in our own organizations. With all of this we need to move once again to embrace empiricism and science.

Peter Sorensen gave grades to aspects of OD. For the image of OD as a discipline, he gave a C-, stating that as a field it just isn't doing too well. Program curricula was offered a B+ however, as he felt this was going quite well in no small measure because of Glenn Varney who has worked long and hard in the development of masters and doctoral programs in university settings. Peter stated that the structure of OD should be given an Incomplete. He felt that the knowledge was very limited and definitely not shared. Strategic/Global OD was given a C+ and he felt it was getting better. Knowledge received an A in terms of drawing on other disciplines. He gave OD a C in terms of creating its own knowledge base. The question becomes what to do about the above. As far as Image, Peter stated a reduction was needed in continuously deprecating and giving ourselves negative self-assessment. We have a great urgency to provide/communicate OD's capabilities and high rates of success. Concerning curriculum, Peter stated the need to continue to work with and share competencies. The structure of OD should begin discussions on alternative designs and there should be sharing of information on the effective management of university administrations. Success needs to be shared.

Jim McFillen's group responded to Question 2: How well are ODC programs addressing the challenges?

Marymount dissolved the OD program and moved OD into other academic disciplines within the institution, including the MBA program. A redesign of OD programs is needed to include core business knowledge. He offered examples of how at Bowling Green, they have connected OD to OD opportunities on campus – thus making the program visible and useful while offering field practice for students and the greatest

possible exposure to the university administration. He suggested that there could be a balance of e-learning and face to face for doctoral program participants in recognition of student's fast paced lives. There is a need to adjust tactics and methods to meet the changes in the various markets. We should provide mentors to students made up of alumni of our own programs. We need to increase the global learning by increasing the number of international learning programs. International learning should be the practice of all OD programs. It was suggested strongly that we bring action research back into the OD curriculum, building the OD program to encourage application, the actual doing of OD. We need to find ways to have the students actively engaged in the learning experience. OD programs should seek relevant research wherever it might be found, in whatever field or discipline. The strength of OD lies not in the programs, but in OD and its relevance and fit in multi-disciplinary approaches.

Marvin Weisbord

One of Marvin Weisbord's first OD interventions was at the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia. He had the experience of going back to school many years later and talking with the few members of staff who remained from when he had first consulted with the school. The most interesting question he asked was if they felt any real change had been accomplished by his consultation. They replied no, but that they would gladly go through the process all over again. They said this because they felt it had been an important process of learning for the people involved, and that the ideas formed then continued with the people throughout their careers at the hospital.

Mr. Weisbord spoke of the changes time has brought to organizations. He stated in the 1960's, organizations redefined themselves every seven years from centralized to

decentralized, to centralized and so on. The 1970's brought a five-year cycle to for organizations dealing with a faster paced world and the 1980's moved organizations to reframe every two years. Now, redefinition appears to be nonstop, occurring by the hour. Methodology has had to change to keep pace with the ever-speeding changes. He described the methodology he used with organizations, which was to unfreeze the organization and then to refreeze once it had opened up and trust had occurred. The old days of walking into a company to centralize and seven years later walking in to help it decentralize are over.

He has worked for years with the UN on disaster reduction around the globe. He stopped OD consulting many years ago and began working in sustainability of the OD work already accomplished. Though this may seem a little like an oxymoron, it really isn't. If one works to sustain change that has occurred, this in no way precludes further change from occurring, it instead gives it a new solid base of knowledge to evolve from in future change. This change too may be sustained and built upon. He stated that the work is existentially important, and that what is important is whatever we do more. In describing the work he does with future search, he points out that the future never really comes. We have only the present to work in, not yesterday or even one moment from now, only now.

How do we create conditions that people will break through to their best selves?
“If you want something you've never had before, you have to be willing to do something you've never done before.”

Mind Mapping

Question: “What are the trends in the world that could be affecting ODC academic programs?”

At this point in the program, Ralph Copleman rose to explain why he had been taping paper all over one wall at the end of the large meeting space. He was going to facilitate in helping us create a mind map around the above question. The rules were fairly simple. Ralph put the question in the center of the paper. He asked us to consider the question and respond, one at a time. To accomplish this he assigned numbers to those with responses. We were asked not to filter our ideas but to express them. He also stipulated that no judgments should be brought by the participants in response to what others in the group had offered. As each idea was offered, a line would be drawn out from the center and the idea would be printed above. Each trend thought had its own line and its own color, which helped specific trend thoughts to stand out when viewing the map as a whole. If someone’s idea was similar to an initial trend line, a line would be drawn from the initial line listing the idea as a subset.

Soon the map took on the shape of an octopus with arms stretching in all directions. It also became a visual of the ideas of the people involved in the conference. The power of seeing all of the ideas in front of your eyes, in one picture was very powerful. It was also decidedly non-linear yet incredibly relational. Words would jump at you with no progression from a to b to c. The map physically presented the great variation of thoughts provoked by a single question. The trends included everything from the destruction of the planet; the end of the U.S. as a global power; Asia’s dominance over the western world; terrorism and gay marriage.

The most important trends agreed on by most consisted of: organizations struggling with today's speed and complexity; consumers of OD demanding faster, sooner, cheaper; packaged solutions including change management elements; preference of short term solutions to long term goals; multicultural, multigenerational workplace; individuality awareness.

“What is the relationship of the statements on the map? The relationship is the question in the center of everything being viewed and discussed. It is incredible to physically see how diverse the responses can be to one question. This is the very powerful aspect of the mind map.

Day Two

Larry Starr summarized the proceedings of day one. Glen Varney then spoke briefly concerning the development of competencies, and how you perpetuate and sustain OD through research and study.

The first speaker of the morning was Jane Wheeler, Director of the Masters of Organization Development Program at Bowling Green University. She presented a PowerPoint and spoke to the question of major concerns and issues related to faculty and teaching ODC. Jane was passionate in her lack of acceptance of the idea that OD is sick and in trouble. She believes OD scholars need to create a positive response to the present circumstances. She also feels that OD continues to be full of opportunities and possibilities. She asked everyone to read the Bradford and Burke book “Reinventing Organization Development” which offers the premise that OD should be more relevant today than ever before.

The small groups then began discussions based on the presentation and the issue: major concerns and issues related to faculty and teaching ODC. Prominent points of discussion included: the lack of university funding of academic programs; the need for scholars and academics for developing the knowledge base OD can grow on; facilitation in teaching students to learn how to learn; scholarly writings being added to the already numerous expressive writings in the field; a lack of people actually entering the OD field after studies are completed; identifying the body of knowledge suitable for teaching in OD as well as the ability to develop tools to assist the students' development.

The next speaker of the morning was Steve Schepman, Director of the Masters of Science in Organization Development Program at Central Washington University. He addressed the subject: Major concerns and issues related to research designed to expand and update core knowledge in ODC.

Steve began by listing his program's concerns. Of the 221 graduates of the MSOD program at Central Washington University, over the last 16 years, only 5 had published and none had published in OD journals. If programs are to be based on action research, a student needs more than one year to actually complete an action research thesis, since a student attending a fulltime OD program has that limited amount of time. His experience with the OD program is of a diverse student body. The students are older and working and want that "bag of tricks" to help them practice OD sooner rather than later. Steve summarized his presentation by offering these connected questions: how do you keep the "S" in MSOD; do we need to keep the "S" in MSOD; and who do we need to credential for?

Again we examined the issue within smaller groups using flip charts to write down people's ideas on this subject. Dominick Volini, of Right Management Consultants offered a humorous but cogent remark that in a Meyers-Briggs survey, OD practitioners are all "N's" (intuition, dreamers) so there is no "S" in MSOD. Major points of discussion included: the need for programs to be built around a central thesis; the need for evidentiary based interventions instead of consultant's intuitive feeling that "this is the right thing to do"; the need to use synthesis – systems thinking in OD, not reductionist analysis; the necessity of students experiencing actual field work in their programs; the need to articulate the philosophy of OD in order to develop the thesis; and the need for more Meyers-Briggs' "S" (pragmatist) in all of our OD programs.

Eric Goodman, Acting Dean of the Graduate School of Management of Kaplan University spoke to the third issue which was: Resources are available to rebuild or to start new ODC programs.

Eric stated, "To succeed, we need to disturb the present". He asked the questions, "Who is your audience and what is the content". He also asked what resources are needed to facilitate learning versus teaching? A quick outline reveals his thoughts.

1. Purpose

- a. Students need to learn how to continuously learn. There is nothing that can be taught that will work in a fast changing climate therefore the need to learn how to learn is vital.
- b. The best way to learn is to teach it to someone – if it is not codified, you cannot learn it without teaching it.
- c. We need evidence from students that they have learned how to learn.

- d. We need to know the how, the why and the sustainability of what we do. We need to create programs and processes that will continuously aid learning. We need a continuous accreditation process for the discipline of OD.

As part of the discussion process following the presentation, Dominick Volini and Rosa Colon (an OD doctoral graduate) responded to the question in a sales/operational planning redesign for the academic setting. The goal is to generate greater value for the university, students and program by shifting to a synergistic learning process as opposed to the present poorly funded process. The system consists of the university, OD program, faculty, students, organization and the greater society. The university would hire the organization, made up of faculty and students to supply their resources (faculty and students) to work on various issues negatively affecting the university. This would offer the students the requisite field experience, the needed funding for the OD program and the improvement in the overall operations of the university due to the input from the students and faculty of the OD program. At the same time the field of research would be expanded in the very academic setting where the research is needed.

Prior to the end of the conference, we were addressed by representatives of the OD Network and the NTL Institute. Larry Starr had the final words which relayed the message that his expectations had been significantly met. He was unsure what would happen from here, as he is new to OD. He stated that he threw a party and learned. He had hoped that others would share his experience, and his expectations were met here as well.

My Final Observations

The conference was an intense experience. I had an awful headache after the first day because I was overwhelmed by the people, the ideas, concerns, commitment, and the intelligence of the gathered attendees. It was an amazing experience to sit, converse with and listen to Marvin Weisbord, Glenn Varney, Russ Ackoff, Arthur Freedman, and the list goes on.

The commitment to the task and the urgency expressed were palpable. It was impossible not to be aware that something very important was occurring. A great deal of sharing and listening was happening. I don't mean to make this sound as if a worshipful silence prevailed as the gods looked down upon man and shared all knowledge. There were many instances of people making side comments to friends as well as looks of disbelief and concern when some of the speakers seemed to be a bit off mark. At the same time the commitment to task was always evident.

I spoke with several of the attendees during lunch or break and all of them were glad to be a part of the process occurring at this conference. John Pourdehnad told all assembled after Russ Ackoff had left the conference that from everything Russ had heard he felt that the people involved were heading in the right direction. I think he was right. After two days, the attendees were upbeat. Two mentioned to me they looked forward to the next conference because they found the sharing of ideas to be helpful. The presence of others in the field in this intense two day event also offered a feeling of partnership and community, a less isolated feeling.

Of course the conference wasn't just meant to make people feel good. A lot of work was accomplished and the creation of knowledge occurred. Everyone was

pleased when Larry mentioned that the data and information gathered from this conference, including the presentations and papers will be put together in some fashion and be made available to those who attended. I'm just very glad to have had the opportunity to be a part of the process and I also look forward with anticipation to the next.