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What are the Problems and Challenges Facing ODC Programs (and Field) Today?

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

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Comments

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

Building ODC as an Academic Discipline
Penn Conference
April 7- 8, 2006
Comments from Dave Jamieson (representing Pepperdine)

What are the problems and challenges facing ODC programs (and field) today?

- **What to include.** What is OD? How wide and deep in various content areas. Particularly, how much small group, T-group, personal development, management, org behavior, strategy, design, etc. Also what constitutes a certificate vs. degree. And what should be required for practice?
- **Relevance to business while honoring core values.** Explaining/using what we have to offer in language useful to executives, while keeping our “roots”. Making the case for OD. Problem with programs and the field. Balance of some agreed upon core values with practical, economic concerns of global business.
- **Gaining field experience.** Getting some form of supervised experience in real organization change settings is crucial to developing good practitioners. Improving quality of practice is necessary to prove value of field.
- **Minority recruitment.** Including males today! Mixed demographics provides a richer learning environment, yet the field has not attracted many diverse groups. Majority is increasingly younger to middle-aged females.
- **Competition with other “disciplines” like HR, leadership, etc.** Masters programs increasingly containing or being centered on other content areas that may sell better to employers or may be claiming some or all of field. Reality may require more collaboration with sister disciplines in orchestrating sustainable change.

How well are ODC programs addressing these challenges?

- Each program uses a definition and carves out its breadth and emphases. Some go more towards the individual and some more towards the organization. Some incorporate more related disciplines such as psychology or HR. The curricula are not universal, but increasingly built on common competency base.

- Some programs include more core business content. Some downplay the business angle and concentrate more on social/global issues, non-business organizations, etc. Using alums to bring relevance into program.
- Most programs are addressing this with field work built into classes, internships, requirements of job experience or current employment. Experiential learning and practice sessions in classes are also aimed at this.
- Some are targeting different populations. Most use their alumni networks. But this remains a problem.
- Competition now probably pulls students away. Some programs have created good integrations. Probably need to find a way to build the needed collaboration and integrations for successful practice.

What are the strengths of existing programs that can be used to build a more secure academic discipline of ODC?

- Most share the common competencies that have been developed. The overlap is probably around the core competencies.
- Most use some experienced faculty (either full-time or adjunct), not just people with academic experience. This provides real grounding to students and insight into how theory relates to practice.
- Limited core texts with common coverage.
- Most programs draw heavily from HR specialists who want to operate in a broader, more impactful way. This suggests that there is a body of knowledge and set of skills they seek in coming to OD. It also helps to build the integration.
- Many have thesis requirements, leading to research and knowledge for the field. Many encourage publishing, conference presentations and interaction with more academics, leading to better interaction between practitioners (most students are working adults) and academics.