Chapter 3
Leadership and the role of the change agent

Learning Objectives

• To identify different types of OD practitioner
• To choose and contract an OD professional to lead a change process
• To understand the necessary competencies required to be an effective OD professional
• To understand the role, values and ethics required of an OD professional

Who is the Organisation Development Practitioner?

• There are three types of person who are now involved in leading a change process in an organisation
  – OD Professionals
    • With qualifications, training and experience
  – Professionals from other related disciplines
    • With OD skills gained ‘on the job’
  – Managers and administrators
    • With applied OD skills gained ‘on the job’
OD Practitioner as Leader of Change

• Increasingly, organisations call on OD practitioners to lead a change process. They are often involved in:
  – Working with the organisation to clarify the issue or problem
• The organisation must then select an appropriate OD practitioner
  – Will it be the external or ‘in-house’ OD professional, a professional in the organisation with related professional and OD skills or a manager with OD skills?
• OD practitioners are now expected to have a wide array of personal and professional skills
  ❖ Are these expectations realistic in one person?

A Generally Agreed List of Basic Knowledge and Skills

• Intrapersonal skills
  – Self-awareness and enquiry
• Interpersonal skills
  – Sustaining effective relationships with individuals and groups
• General consultation skills
  – Managing all facets of the consulting process
• Organisation Development theory
  – Knowledge of OD change processes

A Dizzying Array of Expectations

• Various scholars have tried to identify the competencies of an OD practitioner
• For example
  – diagnostic ability, basic knowledge of behavioural science techniques, empathy, knowledge of the theories and methods within the consultant’s own discipline, goal-setting ability, problem-solving ability, ability to do self-assessment, the ability to see things objectively, imagination, flexibility, honesty, consistency and trust
• There is little consensus about their importance in effective OD practice
One Approach: A Consultant Styles Matrix

The Professional OD Practitioner

Advantages of an Internal Change Agent
**Disadvantages of an Internal Change Agent**

- Lack of objectivity
- Overly cautious, likely when dealing with internal power structures
- May lack certain skills and experience in facilitating organisational change

**Advantages of an External Change Agent**

- Expertise that is unavailable internally
- More objective perspective into the organisation development process
- Ability to probe difficult issues and to question the status quo
- They are also afforded some deference and power

**Disadvantages of an External Change Agent**

- Extra time required to familiarise themselves with the organisation
- Organisation may be wary of outsiders
- Perception within the organisation that outsiders have little invested in outcomes
Thinking about Marginality

- The marginal person is one who successfully straddles the boundary between two or more groups that have differing goals, value systems and behaviour patterns
- Some people are better at marginality than others; they are said to have a ‘marginal orientation’
- Some personal characteristics identified are:
  - low dogmatism, neutrality, open-mindedness, objectivity, flexibility and adaptable information-processing ability
- The marginal role of the OD practitioner can have positive effects when it is filled by a person with a marginal orientation

Emotional Demands

- Research has identified that the OD role is emotionally demanding
- The role requires EI – Emotional Intelligence
- EI refers to the ability to recognise and express emotions appropriately, to use emotions in thought and decisions, and to regulate emotion in oneself and in others
- Evidence suggests that EI increases with age and experience and can be developed through personal development

Summary

- Three sorts of OD Practitioners
  - The OD professional
  - In-house staff with related professional specialist roles and OD skills
  - In-house managers with basic OD skills
- Selecting and contracting the right OD practitioner to lead the change process
- OD Practitioner Competencies
  - Not yet clearly established but some general agreement emerging in the field
- The OD Professional
  - Role, values and ethics