The Future of Organization Development: A Delphi Study Among Dutch Experts

Fritz Korten[a]; Léon De Caluwé[ab]; Jac Geurts[c]
[a] Twynstra Group, Amersfoort, The Netherlands [b] VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands [c] Department of Organizational Sciences, Tilburg University, The Netherlands

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The Future of Organization Development: A Delphi Study Among Dutch Experts

FRITZ KORTEN*, LÉON DE CALUWÉ*,** & JAC GEURTS†

*Twynstra Group, Amersfoort, The Netherlands, **VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, †Department of Organizational Sciences, Tilburg University, The Netherlands*

ABSTRACT *From this Delphi study among Dutch experts, the future of organization development (OD) emerges as a loosely coupled community of practice, linking very diverse members, professionals as well as scholars. One finds different priorities and values in this community, some of them even dilemmatic. The authors argue that diversity and complexity are strengths not weaknesses of a 'sustainable' OD. Referring to organizational concepts such as requisite variety and resilience, the authors stress that OD networks should, in the future more than in the past, make sure that a diverse set of ambitions can be discussed, promoted, fostered, accommodated and realized.*

KEY WORDS: Organization development, Delphi study, the Netherlands

Introduction

Worley and Feyerherm (2003) asked over 20 American 'founding fathers' of organization development (OD) to reflect on the future of OD, given that serious doubts exist as to the relevance of the research field and discipline. In the Netherlands, as in the USA, the OD discipline is both very successful and the subject of frequent critical discussions. Dutch OD professionals are active, visible and well-organized. There are several professional organizations, scholarly groups and training programs. Numerous publications by Dutch authors appear every year in the national and international media. In short, OD is 'big' as well as contested in the Netherlands and this observation prompted the research team to put Worley's and Feyerherm's question 'Where to take OD from here?' to leading Dutch OD experts. This study attempts to gather and describe the

visions, views, opinions, and insights of OD experts in the Netherlands, in order to create a picture of the desired future of OD. The study reported in this article repeated an interview study conducted into OD in the USA by Worley and Feyerherm (2003). The motivation was to add Dutch learning to the agenda for the modern OD discipline. The research design followed that of Worley and Feyerherm, but their approach was broadened by adding elements of the Delphi technique.

This study resulted in six underlying basic views on OD. These six views can best be characterized as the 'fuzzy categories' of the collective OD ambition. These are six partly overlapping, but quite contrasting, views on the essence and thus the desirable future of organization development. The future of OD as it emerges from this study is that of a loosely coupled community of practice, linking very diverse members, professionals as well as scholars. This community reflects the diversity and complexity of modern organizational life. Thus one finds different priorities and values in this community, some of them even dilemmatic. All these ambitions seem important and necessary for the future 'sustainability' of the OD practice. In line with both classic and modern OD concepts (Marshak and Grant, 2008), such as requisite variety and resilience, it is argued that it is the community of practice as an organizing whole that has to make sure this diverse set of important ambitions is discussed, promoted, fostered, accommodated and realized. The central research question is:

> What is the desired future development of OD according to professionals in Netherlands?

This general question was translated into the following sub-questions: (1) how do Dutch experts react to the summary of trends and critiques that emerges from the literature; (2) what specific future developments do they want to see happening; (3) what is their agenda for action; and (because a strong divergence in opinions could be expected); (4) what causes differences in answers to the above questions and how to assess these differences?

The structure of this article is as follows. First, we briefly describe the conceptual base of the study. Second, we translate the main research question into a practical research design. Third, the central section presents the results of the Delphi among the Dutch OD experts. Fourth, the final section is interpretive and ends with conclusions and discussion.

Conceptual Inputs for the Study

The questions and results of the Worley and Feyerherm (2003) study served as the primary basis for the field work. To collect additional statements of criticism on OD and thoughts on trends for the future of OD, a survey was conducted of the literature both preceding and following the Worley and Feyerherm article. Their publication was followed up in December 2004 by a thematic issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (Burke, 2004; Bradford and Burke, 2004; Greiner and Cummings, 2004; Wirtenberg *et al.*, 2004). Since 2004, the annual meetings of the Organization Development and Change Division of the

Academy of Management (www.aomonline.org) have devoted serious attention to the future of OD. The OD Network, OD Institute and International OD Association have jointly established the Global Committee on the Future of OD with the intent 'to explore the future of the OD profession and provide practical recommendations on how OD practitioners worldwide can prepare for future opportunities' (http://orgdev.programshop.com/public/). As a summary of the review of the literature, the most frequently voiced points of criticism concerning OD are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Criticism of organization development (Korten, 2006)

1. The link between applying OD and its effect on corporate results is too weak; organizations demand that OD has a clearly added value (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Greiner and Cummings, 2004; Wirtenberg et al., 2004)
2. There is insufficient clarity regarding the definition and semantics of OD. Moreover, many feel that OD lacks a solid theory about organizational change (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Worley and Feyerherm, 2003; Boonstra, 2004; Bradford and Burke, 2004; Wirtenberg et al., 2004; Marshak, 2005)
3. The economic, technical and cultural demands imposed on organizations by their environment will sooner or later be shouldered onto OD. After all, these organizations are clients of OD, but OD practitioners show little responsiveness to the demands of those organizations (Greiner and Cummings, 2004; Wirtenberg et al., 2004; Marshak, 2005)
4. There is an ongoing debate on the nature of OD. There are authors (Wirtenberg et al., 2004 and Ten Have, 2005) who feel that OD puts too much emphasis on the 'soft sociological aspect' of organizations, at the expense of the 'hard economic aspect'. Conversely, others (Bradford and Burke, 2004) believe that OD puts too little emphasis on the 'soft sociological aspect'. According to some, OD lacks a balanced approach, whereas others hold that it lacks one single and particular distinguishing characteristic.
5. Some concern is voiced with respect to the quality of the OD practitioner. What quality assurances are there? When is a person entitled to describe him/herself as an OD professional? What makes an OD professional successful? This is still insufficiently clear (Worley and Feyerherm, 2003; Bunker et al., 2004; De Sonnaville, 2006).
6. Another debate concerns the values of OD. Some authors feel that OD is too deeply rooted in and focused on the humanist and democratic (starting) values of OD (Marshak, 2005). Other authors (Bradford and Burke, 2004; Greiner and Cummings, 2004) believe that OD has become too value-free.

To identify past and future trends for OD mentioned in the literature, three methods were used. The first was an analysis of how topics evolved in the consecutive editions of the best-known handbook in the field: *Organization Development and Change* by Cummings and Worley (2008). Next, a recent Dutch reader was examined that brings together many innovative interventions in the field of OD (Boonstra and De Caluwé, 2007). The final part of the preparatory search was focused on recent OD literature dealing with failure of the 'one-value-organization' with their exclusive focus on shareholder value (Wierdsma, 2007). For reasons of space, only some results of the survey of the Cummings and Worley handbook are illustrated here. The authors published the first version of their handbook in 1975, with a new edition appearing every three to five years, the most recent dating from 2008 (9th edition). Cummings and Worley's approach is to track the leading publications about organization

development and change in journals and books, and to add the new topics to the handbook. The study checked which topics have been addressed over time and which topics are discussed at present.

The book's content has changed considerably over the years. In 1975, there are four categories of intervention. The authors refer to these as: 'micro human process' (e.g. consultation and T-groups), 'macro human process' (e.g. survey feedback and organization grid), 'techno-structural' (e.g. task enhancement) and 'human resources management' (e.g. career development and 'management by objectives'). The category labeled 'strategic changes' does not appear until 1985. From then on, however, every edition lists new interventions in this category. The first edition (1975) describes 'micro human process' interventions. This theme does not undergo any development (no new topics) in subsequent years. It is not until 2003 that this category draws (renewed) interest through topics such as: coaching, training and development, and active listening. The topic of 'T-groups' (also known as 'sensitivity training' and very popular in the 1970s) has incidentally disappeared by then! With respect to 'macro human process', the organizational grid has been deleted. In the 1990s, this theme is expanded with the 'search conferences' and 'large group interventions'. The 'techno-structural' interventions undergo immense growth during 1975 and 2001: from 'socio-technical thinking' and 'self-directing teams' to involving employees, trimming down and 'business process re-engineering'. The latter topic is also the last new topic in this area. The 'human resources management' interventions also burgeon between 1975 and 1993: reward systems, performance management and well-being are among the topics. Yet no new interventions are added after 1993.

In the 2003 edition, the latest topics in the area of interventions are aimed at 'individuals and micro processes' and at 'strategy'.

Design of this Study

The research design of this study can be characterized as 'qualitative forecasting', i.e. it aims to identify and combine subjective judgments of the future (Dunn, 2004). From the various techniques that can be used in qualitative forecasting, the policy-directed Delphi technique was chosen as the most appropriate. This is a research method in which the knowledge of a group of experts is combined through an iterative process spanning two or more rounds of data collection (Geurts and Vennix, 1989; Dunn, 2004). Two rounds of data collection were organized: one round of interviews in which experts were interviewed individually using semistructured in-depth interviews (averaging 70 minutes), and a collective workshop round (of 3 hours) in which the interview results were fed back into the group to elicit further in-depth discussion of the desired future of OD.

Taking its cue from the study by Worley and Feyerherm (2003), this study also focused on leading experts in the field of OD to harvest their learning. To find these leading experts the reputation method was used (Flick, 1998), asking 10 persons active in the OD field as adviser, researcher or both (thus, 'insiders'): who do you consider to be the leading experts in OD in the Netherlands? This

produced a list of 45 names. These names were subsequently checked through desktop research (using the Internet) with respect to the following criteria: (1) Dutch nationality, (2) active within the OD field in the Netherlands, (3) scientific publications in the OD field, and (4) named as top expert by at least three of the ten insiders. This left a list of 28 Dutch OD experts, 22 of whom responded positively to the invitation to participate in this study (14 of the 22 experts participated in the workshop). The group comprised 5 female and 17 male experts, varying in age between 35 and 70. The group consisted of highly respected, self-assured and self-aware professionals: they represented a certain way of working, have a proven reputation, refer to their own relevant experiences and different client groups, and believe in specific approaches or values.

Interviewing of the individual experts followed a semistructured approach. The points of criticism of OD as found in the literature (Table 1) were put to the experts in the form of challenging statements. The experts were furthermore questioned about the past and desired development of OD by confronting them, among others, with the trends found in the Cummings and Worley handbook.

Interview transcripts were subjected to content analysis, using a pattern-coding technique to identify themes, trends, contradictions, etc. in the views of the experts (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The goal of the workshop was to deepen and interpret the results obtained so far. The results from the interview round were collected in a presentation held at the start of the workshop. During this workshop, the experts were explicitly asked to formulate as sharply as possibly their key messages for the future development of OD. There was no need for the experts to reach consensus.

Data were recorded on video, wall charts and by taking notes, and subsequently subjected to a content analysis. A summary was made of the main thrust of the discussion per topic, the amount of time spent discussing that subject was measured (frequency), and the number of different experts that engaged in the discussion was tracked (diversity). This second round of data collection and refinement was not part of the study conducted by Worley and Feyerherm.

The researchers did not expect, and indeed did not discover in the data, one unambiguous set of visions, views, opinions and insights shared by all experts. The group was composed to achieve a variety of expertise, experience and views on the field of OD. This means that opposing views were deliberately incorporated. If one were to apply classic logic to create a classification of such material any given element could only belong to one category. Yet such a clear-cut distinction is generally not found in nature, and is certainly not found in human visions of the future. That is why a classification procedure motivated by fuzzy set theory was developed. This theory of classification allows for a certain measure of vagueness and inaccuracy (Zadeh, 1965; Eyzenga and Westerhof, 1997). The parameters may be vague, the elements can overlap, but the distinctions should nonetheless be significant. This method helped to cluster the important, different and often-conflicting desired developments and proposals for action. Not every expert that participated in the study would be comfortable with all items in the set of categories.

Results: Future Directions and an Agenda for OD

The results of the Delphi study are summarized in two tables. Table 2 contains ideas that were interpreted as statements of a desired direction for the development of OD. Table 3 orders statements that are clearly calls for action. Table 3 can be read a 'To Do' list for OD as it emerged from the field work. The section below will first describe each direction for OD and then present a summary in Table 2.

Table 2. Desired directions for organization development (OD)

Desired directions for OD

Core theme	No. of citations	No. of transcriptions (max. = 22)	Example citation
Balance hard and soft sides	69	22	The client demands that you can act with a view to development as well as to business processes.
Adopt a more demand-driven approach	65	20	Yes, identify what the real questions are for organizations at the present moment.
Become more situational and more context-driven	48	16	It no longer clearly connects to its environment, so that should happen more.
Revamp the original core of OD	39	14	(...) But our starting point remains OD, you cannot let that paradigm be trampled underfoot. But (...) you need to involve those other values too.
Return to the core and stick to that	37	8	(...), stick to your trade. And I agree with those that say that you should tackle the harder side, but my question is: should OD do that?
Be open to other approaches	36	17	And for that you should incorporate all sorts of approaches, or be familiar with them (...).
Positioning as one of the approaches	34	14	There is no cure-all theory, different situations call for different approaches.
Better link between practice and science	27	16	(...), I believe that science should seek out the practical field.
More or less value-bound	22	13	OD should certainly search out the things and values that drive people (...).
More reflection	12	8	The best groups are groups that, from time to time, reflect on and ponder what they are doing and where they want to go from here (...).

Balance Hard and Soft Sides

OD should discontinue the one-sided emphasis on the soft (social–scientific) side of organizations, and seek a balance with the harder (strategic/business

Table 3. To do list for organization development (OD) in the future

Instruction list for OD in the future

To Do	Description
Systematic evaluation	OD should improve its empirical underpinning by a stronger link between practice and science. This will also enable the development of a general integrated OD theory for organizational change.
Declare identity	OD can become more distinct by making clear choices in what it does and does not do for clients ('it should focus'). This will also clarify the definition and semantics of OD, and what OD can do for organizations.
Be proactively client-oriented	By being more sensitive and responsive to the (complex) situation and context of the client, OD's added value will become clearer. It is all right for OD to be more assertive and vocal, thereby presenting an effective alternative to other approaches.
Adopt an open attitude	By emphasizing the 'hard' side of organizations as well and by using knowledge from other approaches, OD adopts an open system perspective and ceases to be a naive movement. This does not however mean that OD should be able to tackle everything; it should not become a cure-all approach.
Cherish quality	Focusing on assuring the quality of (new generations of) OD professionals also means focusing on the quality and continuity of the approach.
More reflection	By reflecting more on the approach, OD can maintain a critical stance. There should also be more reflection and exchange among OD professionals. This will enable people to learn from each other and will promote discussions in the field (for example, about the value-driven nature of OD).

operational) side of organizations. The simple fact is that organizations consist of these two sides and OD should not neglect this fact.

Adopt a More Demand-driven Approach

Because OD takes place within organizations, organizations represent the demand side of the OD approach. For OD is about developing people and organizations, in the context of and driven by the goals of that organization. In doing so, OD should start focusing on and responding more to the real issues that today's organizations are facing, and it may well take a more proactive approach to that demand side.

Become More Situational and More Context-driven

OD should become more aware of and responsive to the situation in which an organization operates. Thus, one should always start by asking the question: is this a situation in which the OD approach is the right approach to deploy? If so, then OD should always take its cue from the context in which the organization is operating. OD should thus adopt more of an open-system perspective.

Revamp the Original Core of OD

OD should hang onto the healthy and powerful aspects of the old core of OD. Yet where necessary, the weaker aspects should be abandoned and replaced by new powerful core values of today's world. The OD core should be revitalized, thus giving OD a makeover.

Return to the Core and Stick to That

The discipline should stick to its own trade and should cherish the old core of OD; it is from this that the approach derives its identity and effectiveness. OD should therefore continue to focus on the human processes within organizations, to counterbalance the harder approaches that focus more on the content of business processes.

Be Open to Other Approaches

OD is too much of a one-sided approach to satisfy the demands of contemporary organizations. That is why OD should be much more open to other approaches that, for example, focus on the strategic, financial–economic, technical and philosophical side of organizations. There is much that OD can learn from those approaches.

Positioning as One of the Approaches

The discipline needs a clearer definition of what OD actually is and what distinguishes it from other (strategic or technical) approaches. OD should not be positioned as the container approach for organizational change: OD must declare its identity and emphasize what it can do for organizations.

Better Link Between Practice and Research

The link between scholarly research and practical professional work has to be improved. On the one hand, scholars should seek out the practical field and conduct more practice-oriented research. Researchers should be open to a variety of scientific norms and principles, because the classic empirical criteria are difficult to realize when studying OD interventions. On the other hand, OD professionals should seek out science to assess and evaluate their interventions, thereby making these more 'evidence-based'.

More or Less Value-driven

Some of the respondents feel that OD should insist more on the norms and values that are intrinsic to the OD approach. Empowering people, for example, is a mission that OD needs not be shy about and this means becoming more explicitly value-driven. Conversely, another group of respondents feels that OD should drop the moralistic tone that it traditionally employs. By becoming less value-based,

OD will seem less naive and will be perceived less as a social or ideological movement.

More Reflection

It would benefit the further development of the approach to engage in more reflection. By reflecting and exchanging views and opinions, an approach can learn from what went before and acquire knowledge for the future.

Table 2 summarizes the core themes of the desired directions. The table also indicates how often each theme emerged (frequency) and in how many different transcripts this occurred (diversity). Finally, one citation, as an example, is quoted per theme.

Especially during the workshop, experts say that OD should acquire more 'focus', so that it can become more distinct. Yet at the same time – and this they perceive as a dilemma – OD should expand its applicability, so that it can be used in more places, and in more instances, in more and more varied organizations. Table 3 presents the desired agenda for OD, formulated as concrete instructions for the field, as identified by the Dutch experts.

These results were with the results and conclusions of the study of Worley and Feyerherm (2003) among American 'founding fathers' and many similarities merged. The main difference, however, between the two studies is a discussion that clearly features in the Netherlands, but seems less relevant in the USA. The discussion in the Netherlands concerns the question of how OD should show and apply its power. Some of the Dutch respondents feel that OD should return to its core: of applying the old humanistic core values to helping organizations improve. Other Dutch experts see this as a typical 'seventies mentality' and thus old-fashioned. According to them, OD must adapt to the world of organizations today; it should seek to balance the soft and hard sides, should seek to work alongside other approaches, and should be open to renewal. This hot issue among Dutch experts may also exist among the American 'founding fathers', but it was not reported by Worley and Feyerherm (2003).

Conclusion

Clearly, there were heated debates among the Dutch experts. However, they did produce future directions and an agenda with action points for the future of OD. But, they did not agree. They perceived the concept of OD in many different ways. It gradually became clear to the research team that an expert's fundamental perspective on OD is likely to have a strong influence on his or her view concerning the desired future development of OD. It also appeared that the group of experts assembled for this study held significantly divergent views on the nature OD. Six underlying basic views on OD emerged from the analysis. These six views suggested themselves as the 'fuzzy categories' of the collective OD ambition. These are six partly overlapping, but quite contrasting, views on the essence and thus on the desirable future of organization development.

The following paragraphs describe, summarize and present these six views, creating a palette of conflicting but important ambitions that should drive the

future of OD. Because these separate views were strongly characteristic of (clusters of) individual respondents, each ambition is labeled as a social category.

1. *The Evidence Seekers*

It is important to perform more research into the effectiveness of various types of interventions (including OD interventions): OD needs to accumulate more evidence concerning the interventions. This is a plea to develop an (applied) social science, with much attention for the evaluation of interventions and for the construction of a body of knowledge regarding the effectiveness and non-effectiveness of the intervention repertoire. OD should invest in obtaining more knowledge about indications and contraindications for use. Whatever proves to work in practice is good. OD is clearly an applied behavioral science. This plea is voiced by By (2005), De Sonnaville (2005) and more recently Baaijens *et al.* (2009).

2. *The Moralists*

The values underlying OD are the most important part of the OD approach. This mainly concerns humanist values, such as respect for people, tolerance and understanding, democracy and participation, individual autonomy and personal responsibility. This view sees OD as an ideology, as a (humanist) movement. This means that people's intentions play a major role, making it a matter of finding and increasing a group of 'believers' among the change agents (organization consultants and managers), as well as among client organizations and principals. The discussion on the importance of moral values is also fueled by the failure of an one-sided focus on shareholder value (De Caluwé, 2009) and the wish to not only serve capital.

3. *The Professionals*

OD is a discipline and OD practitioners constitute a profession. The discipline concentrates on various developments, which can summarily be described as relating to just about everything except what you learn at business schools and in MBA programs. The discipline and the practitioners can be distinguished mainly through the knowledge that they use (the handbooks in this field), the training programs that they follow, the role models that they acknowledge, and the typical commissions and 'best practices' that they perform. There is a professional community of people calling themselves OD practitioners that exchange experiences, accumulate knowledge and further advance the discipline. There are dedicated training programs for the prospective practitioners (see, for example, the discussion prompted by Mintzberg at various occasions).

4. *The Sense-makers*

What sets OD practitioners apart is that they know themselves and their strengths, as well as their weaknesses. They see themselves as an 'instrument' that exerts influence over the direct environment by way of interaction and sensemaking.

They are able to deliberately apply this interaction and the capacity to influence to individuals, groups and organizations. They know very well what they want and what they do not want; they are mission-bound on a personal level and can connect to people that have similar missions. This view is strongly expressive of the belief that all change can essentially be understood in terms of interaction and sensemaking between (two or more) people.

5. The People's Advocates

OD has an important task to fulfill, especially in this (past?) era of shareholder value dominance and a one-sided emphasis on economic parameters. OD is a kind of 'countervailing power' that should offset this shareholder and economic value with its own alternative values, offering a different orientation. In doing so, OD does need to learn to relate to the top segment of organizations and to convey its message persuasively here as well. That message must also be conveyed in the public arena. This will make OD a counter-movement (counter-veiling power) and will trigger dialectical mechanisms.

6. The Pragmatists

The last view that emerged can best be typified as 'contextual professionalism'. This means that dilemmas (and the discipline of OD encounters many) can only be solved in the field of practice and through concrete action. Thus, OD should rely on the mechanisms of the free market. Principals and managers that are attracted to certain approaches will choose for these, and other principals will choose differently. In the same way, organization consultants will seek out principals and client organizations with whom they feel comfortable. So let the different forces interact freely, and everything will work out fine.

These six views are indeed 'fuzzy sets'. There are overlaps and the boundaries are not sharp. But in each view a different core and different values for OD can be recognized. The explanatory relationship between an expert's fundamental perspective on OD and his or her vision on the desired future development of OD was not presupposed while conducting the study, and can be seen as a concomitant insight, alongside the conclusions of the study. This insight prompts further explication as well as further research.

The findings of this Dutch study have been presented here without knowing exactly how representative or different the Dutch OD situation is from that in other parts of the OD world. It would take complex comparative studies to establish this insight. The Dutch OD colleagues are certainly very well-connected to the global scholarly network and they are active in international professional associations. The Dutch experts prove to represent a very diverse set of views and insights, a diversity that can also be witnessed when one participates in international fora and meetings. Also the Dutch organizations on which or experts reflect are very diverse. The Netherlands has a very open, global and service-oriented economy and its (many different) organizational cultures are fed by Anglo-Saxon, Rhinelandic, Scandinavian and Latin cultural elements (Hofstede, 1991, 2001). It is the diversity of views in particular that are suggested here

as a potentially very productive Dutch input to the debate in the global OD community.

So how can OD proceed from here? What do the results of this study add to the practical implications that Worley and Feyerherm (2003) derive from their study? These authors formulate three recommendations. First, in the development of prospective OD practitioners the individual's development, the professional practice and the theory should remain balanced. Second, practitioners in the field should start to make explicit and to formalize the knowledge that is applied tacitly. Third, it is necessary to establish a well-balanced research agenda.

It is clear that Worley and Feyerherm stress the importance of knowledge, research and reflection in their agenda for the future. Their views seem to correlate with those of The Evidence Seekers and The Professionals. However, the future of OD as it emerges from the study reported here is not exclusively that of an axiom-driven and well-structured, empirically tested form of applied social science. Nor does OD seem to develop via a clear bifurcation in the road ahead, as Bushe and Marshak (2009) suggest. They juxtapose (classical) diagnostic OD with a new style of 'dialogic' OD which seems to correlate most with the ambitions and principles of the Sense-makers.

OD, as it emerges from the Dutch practice, is now and will most likely remain in the future a loosely coupled community of practice, linking very diverse ideas, practices, professionals and scholars. The members share and cherish their identity as OD devotees. They all subscribe to a very broad common professional goal and that is to contribute to modern society by improving its most defining element: its complex (network of) organizations. OD is a complex system that organizes to influence other complex systems, i.e. organizations. This suggests that one can apply OD concepts to the future of OD. Ahsby's famous Law of Requisite Variety comes to mind here (Ashby, 1958). So do the many publications of Karl Weick (1976, 1982/2001) in which he shows how loosely coupled systems can use diversity, self-determination, dialogue and local learning to develop innovation and resilience.

The OD community of the future should reflect the diversity and complexity of modern organizational life because that is strength not weakness. Thus, one finds different priorities and values in this community, some of them even dilemmatic. It is unavoidable and clearly beneficial that this results in different preferences, styles and ambitions. All these ambitions seem important and necessary for the future 'sustainability' of the OD practice. They do not have to be realized or combined in each person or each project. In line with the above-mentioned classic and modern organizational concepts such as requisite variety and resilience, it is the community of practice as an organizing whole that has to make sure that in the future more than in the past, this diverse set of important ambitions can be discussed, promoted, fostered, accommodated and realized.

References

Ashby, W.R. (1958) Requisite variety and its implications for the control of complex systems, *Cybernetica* (Namur), 1(2), pp. 83–99.

Baaijens, J., Kenis, P. and Meeus, M. (2009) Evidence based consultancy. Een haalbare kaart? [Evidence based consultancy. A feasible option?], *Management en Organisatie*, 63(1), pp. 79–95, (in Dutch).

Boonstra, J.J. (rev ed.) (2004) *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning* (Chichester: Wiley).

Boonstra, J.J. and de Caluwé, L. (eds) (2007) *Intervening and Changing. Looking for Meaning in Interaction* (Chichester: Wiley).

Bradford, D.L. and Burke, W.W. (2004) Is OD in crisis?, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(4), pp. 369–373.

Bunker, B.B., Alban, B.T. and Lewicki, R.J. (2004) Ideas in currency and OD practice: has the well gone dry?, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(4), pp. 403–422.

Burke, W.W. (2004) Internal organization development practitioners: where do they belong?, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(4), pp. 423–431.

Bushe, G.R. and Marshak, R.J. (2009) Revisioning organization development, diagnostic and dialogic premises and patterns of practice, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45(3), pp. 1–21.

By, R. (2005) Organisational change management: a critical review, *Journal of Change Management*, 5, pp. 369–380.

Caluwé, L. de (2009) NieuWEXXXXbestuurscultuur vraagt om gedreven kartrekkers [New governance culture demands driven leaders], in: *Frisse Blikken* (Den Haag, The Netehrlands: Randstad Urgent) (in Dutch).

Cummings, T.G. and Worley, C.G. (2001) *Organization Development and Change*, 7th edn (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College).

Cummings, T.G. and Worley, C.G. (2008) *Organization Development and Change*, 9th edn (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College).

Dunn, W.N. (2004) *Public Policy Analysis, an Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall).

Eyzenga, G. and Westerhof, E. (1997) *Fuzzy Logic in de Bedrijfswetenschappen* [Fuzzy Logic in Business Administration Studies] (Assen, The Netherlands: van Gorcum) (in Dutch).

Flick, U. (1998) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (London: Sage).

Geurts, J. and Vennix, J. (1989) *Verkenningen in beleidsanalyse: theorie en praktijk van modelbouw en simulatie* [Explorations in Policy Analysis. Theory and Practice of Model Building and Simulation] (Zeist, The Netherlands: Kerckebosch) (in Dutch).

Greiner, L.E. and Cummings, T.G. (2004) Wanted, OD more alive than dead!, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(4), pp. 374–391.

Have, ten, S. (2005) *Veranderen als onderneming* [Changing as a business]*, Holland Management Review*, 101, pp. 32–47 (in Dutch).

Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill).

Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 2nd edn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).

Korten, F. (2006) Things to do for OD; a search for the future development of OD in the Netherlands, Master's thesis, Tilburg University, 2006.

Marshak, R.J. (2005) Is there a new OD? *Seasonings*, 1(1).

Marshak, R.J. and Grant, D. (2008) Organizational discourse and new organization development practices, *British Journal of Management*, 19(S7), pp. S8–S19.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).

Sonnaville, H. de (2005) *Retorische aspecten van professionaliseren. Een zoektocht naar beroepsvorming bij organisatieadviseurs* [Retorical aspects of professionalization. A search for profession development in consultancy] (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: University Press) (in Dutch).

Weick, K. (1976) Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, pp. 1–9.

Weick, K. (1982/2001) The management of organizational change among loosely coupled elements, reprinted, in: K. Weick (2001) *Making Sense of the Organization*, pp. 380–403 (London: Blackwell).

Wierdsma, A. (2007) A methodology for increasing collective competence: a context for co-creative change, in: J. Boonstra and L. de Caluwé (eds) *Intervening and Changing*, pp. 243–260 (Chichester: Wiley).

Wirtenberg, J., Abrams, L. and Ott, C. (2004) Assessing the field of OD, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(4), pp. 465–479.

Worley, C.G. and Feyerherm, A.E. (2003) Refections on the future of organizational development, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 39(1), pp. 97–115.

Zadeh, L.A. (1965) Fuzzy sets, *Information and Control*, 8, pp. 338–353.