"There are bodies which certify the content of MBA, nursing, social work, taxidermy, accounting, education, even massage therapy curricula, why not one for OD?"

ODEA: An *Idea* Whose Time is Here

By Matt Minahan

It seemed like a radical idea at the time: students in OD graduate programs would automatically be members of the OD Network. They would receive the Network's full range of publications, including the *OD Practitioner*—the oldest continuously published journal about OD in the world. They would have access to the Job Exchange; the OD Tool Kits; the coaching and mentoring programs and other OD Network benefits, especially valuable to OD graduate students. Thus was born the idea of an OD Education Association.

Many of the people who would form the foundation of the OD Education Association (ODEA) met at conferences called Building OD and Change as an Academic Discipline, hosted by Larry Starr at the University of Pennsylvania in 2007, and then at Benedictine University that fall, hosted by Therese Yaeger and Peter Sorensen. It was there that the seeds for ODEA were planted, at a dinner attended by Rosa Colon (Benedictine), John Conbere (St. Thomas), Alla Heorhiadi (St. Thomas), Maggie Hoyer (OD Network), David Jamieson (then Pepperdine), Bob Marshak (American University), Matt Minahan (Johns Hopkins/OD Network), Dick Woodman (Texas A&M), and a few others.

The group agreed to convene a more organized and purposefully inclusive meeting of the program directors of OD academic programs at the University of St. Thomas in the spring of 2008. Future meetings were all about formation, with a handful of stalwarts but different members at each meeting, trying to work out what was the nature of the group, what did it mean to belong to it, how would the organization be funded, which schools would be included, would schools with programs like leadership and psychology be invited, etc.

By the fall of 2009 at the OD Network conference in Seattle, there was enough of a consensus to create what would become ODEA: an association of schools committed to the OD Principles of Practice, as published at: *http://www.odnetwork.org/?page=PrinciplesOfODPracti*

After a couple of iterations, the group drafted and committed to the following:

The purpose of the ODEA is to establish, advance, and promote the body of knowledge required in OD education, via

- sharing knowledge among member programs and beyond;
- periodic review and updates to the core body of knowledge by member programs;
- certifying OD academic programs of member programs that desire it;
- providing a forum for collaboration and research among member programs and beyond; and
- influencing the standards and process used for certifying/assessing OD practitioners.

The full charter, including the governance structure and benefits of ODEA membership is posted at: *http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.odnetwork.org/resource/resmgr/Docs/ODEA_Charter_v1c.pdf*

Typical meetings of the group have included a round robin of schools reporting

their enrollments, curriculum changes, use of technology, the evolution of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), international residencies, access to university services such as library materials, career development services, budgeting, scheduling, hiring of quality adjuncts, assuaging deans nervous about experiential educational methods, and the role of T-groups and other laboratory education strategies. In some ways, the meetings had the feel of a support group, brainstorming, problem solving, community of practice, and family reunion.

Leadership

As with many self-managing systems, the leadership of the group took some time to coalesce. The first conveners of face-to-face meetings—John Conbere at University of St. Thomas, Larry Starr at the University of Pennsylvania, and Ira Levin at Alliant—were among the thought leaders for the group. In addition, William Koenig of the Leadership Institute of Seattle (LIOS) at Seattle University, Joanne Preston of Colorado Technical University, David Jamieson of the University of St. Thomas, Katherine Farquhar and Bob Marshak at American University, Jim Maddox at Friends University, and Toni Knott and Sherry Camden-Anders of Alliant were among those who led projects or contributed significantly to the formation of ODEA. The practitioner perspective was present in Rosa Colon, Chief Learning Officer at Christiana Health Care in Delaware, who is also an adjunct professor at Bowling Green University.

Almost all decisions in the first several years were proposed by group members and made by consensus. The leadership rotated among the members, depending upon who was leading a project, developing a draft document, or convening a group.

At the group's meeting in New Orleans in 2010, Peter Sorensen and Therese Yaeger of Benedictine, sensing a need for consolidation and direction, waited until he was out of the room, and then nominated David Jamieson of St. Thomas as the leader of the group. A quick unanimous vote affirmed his role, moments before he returned to the meeting.

International

From the very beginning, ODEA has reflected the overwhelming concentration of OD programs in the US. Over the years, program directors have attended from OD programs at Assumption University in Bangkok, Ateneo University in Manila, Konan University in Tokyo, University of Monterey (Mexico), plus interest from schools in Austria, Ghana, and Italy.

Each school came with its own philosophy and specialized view of what it means to teach OD. In the end, the group concluded that the field is strongest when each school selects and commits to its own theoretical grounding, but that each school had to do a better job of teaching the other viewpoints as well.

Essential Elements

As is often the case when OD folks gather, one of the earliest conversations among the program directors revolved around how each school defined OD and how they were teaching it. There was clearly much in common across the programs, but also some substantial differences that were too large to reconcile easily. At the same time, two of the directors said that their deans were skeptical of the value of their OD programs, did not know where they fit in the school, and were considering reducing their budgets, reducing library support, and even eliminating their programs. Over lunch at one of the early 2009 meetings, they developed a request that the group create a certification or stamp of approval with which the directors could demonstrate to their deans that their OD programs had legitimacy. There are bodies that certify the content of MBA, nursing, social work, taxidermy, accounting, education, even massage therapy curricula, why not one for OD?

From those two seeds arose what would become the Essential Elements—twelve content areas that the program directors agreed should be included in all OD programs. That would have been hard work under any circumstances, but with short meetings two or three times a year and periodic conference calls, it was quite an effort.

In advance of drafting the Essential Elements, we asked the 25,000 members of the OD Network's LinkedIn group and on the ODNet email discussion lists, "What do you want to see in new OD program graduates?" Among the many replies were

» People who genuinely have an appreciation for a systems view and can offer a sense of learning, passion, and humility.

» It is imperative that OD students be prepared to tie the results of their work to the bottom line of their clients' organizations. To remain credible and viable as OD consultants, whether as internals or externals, we must help organization leaders understand our worth in the language of numbers and dollars.

» I rather strongly believe that OD needs to be "taught" more like Human Resources: as a "generalist" function with a variety of "specialty" areas. Ideally, an OD "undergrad" or Master level program would cover the breadth of OD "specialty" areas and a doctoral program could cover one or two specialty areas.

» I think we need to prepare OD consultants to be much more capable of leading/consulting to large-scale change, especially transformational change. That means all of the systems and structures that need to change, AND culture, mindset, relationship and behavior... for all of the organization affected by the change. That is big work, and I find so few consultants positioned to do this work, or comfortable in this role. I think OD practitioners need to be more strategic, and see themselves as able to do the enterprise-wide change work... more as strategic change consultants working in close relationship with executive sponsors from DAY ONE of a change

effort. Secondly, I think OD practitioners need to learn about how to set up the organizations they work with to be far more capable of succeeding at major change as a strategic discipline in the organization, not a nice-to-have when called on—IF called on. This means enterprise-wide change methodology, infrastructures, enterprise change agenda, and Strategic Change Centers of Excellence or Community of Practice, and even a Strategic Change Office—all to support the success of change. Rather than wait for the "real world" to teach us about these needs, we already know them, so our academic programs need to advance their thinking and the content they teach about how OD practitioners can be used, should be used for long term value to the business... through being much better able to deliver tangible results from business-critical changes.

There was general agreement among the OD program directors to all of the comments, but there was much discussion about the tension between teaching generalists versus specialists (as reflected in the comment about HR education). Should one school teach only a systems approach, another teach only a socio-technical model, and others teach only an appreciative perspective? Each school came with its own philosophy and specialized view of what it means to teach OD. In the end, the group concluded that the field is strongest when each school selects and commits to its own theoretical grounding, but that each school had to do a better job of teaching the other viewpoints as well.

There was a lot of conversation about how OD schools should prepare students to be credible in the C-suite. How far into business operations do OD graduates need to go on their first day at work? Do they need to know supply chain? Business process re-engineering? HR policy and compliance? Adult learning theory? Financial analysis? Is coaching a skill or a knowledge area? Or are these matters for business, MBA, and other programs? This was the biggest stretch for many of the most traditional programs committed to a human relations philosophy. In the end, the comment above about understanding the bottom line and strategic enterprise-wide change prevailed and "Organizational Acumen and Mastery" was added as a subset of "Systems Perspectives."

There were a dozen drafts and updates, developed by individuals and small groups mostly via email and conference calls, which then allowed the group to use it at face-to-face meetings for final draft review and decision making. Some of the hardest work was determining how many Essential Elements the programs could manage, and which topics were major categories and which were subheadings. As you can imagine, every academic has her or his own view of the hierarchy of knowledge and topics, so there was quite a bit of disagreement, especially around Systems Perspectives and Global Culture which represented the newest knowledge areas for OD and was the farthest from the core human relations philosophy found in most schools.

There were also conflicts around the purpose of the Elements and how they would be used. Some schools were asking to be "certified" as using them. Other schools wanted to be "accredited," but that has a very specific and largely negative connotation for most universities, as it is seen as a tortuous two-year bureaucratic process, and could be too easily confused with official licensure bodies, which this group did not want to become. In the end, the group decided to call it a "program review," and avoid the right/wrong, yes/no, up/down connotations of the previous words.

One important element of the more rigorous certifications from other bodies that the group did build in for its own review was the self-assessment. Almost all in the group had "received" an outside review for accreditation, and agreed that the self-study was the most valuable element and included it as an early step in the ODEA program review.

Once a year, the ODEA schools revisit the Essential Elements, but have not made any changes to the original set—yet!

The full, unabridged version of the Essential Elements is at *http://www.odnetwork.org/?page=EssentialElements*

OD Essential Elements

OD PDs Program Review Criteria

The items in *italics* are optional, at the discretion of the school.

Foundations of ODC

1. History and evolution of organization development and change: an understanding of the social, political, economic, and personal forces that led to the emergence and development of OD and change, including the key thought leaders, the values underlying their writings and actions, the key events and major concepts and writings.

2. Systems Perspectives: considers the role of the individual and the relationships among people in larger systems; the ability to think, organize, and engage at the level of individual, group, and whole system through single and double loop learning; an understanding of how human systems evolve over time and respond to internal and external pressures; how cause-and-effect relationships are circular; how organizational effectiveness depends upon the interdependence of the parts and how well the individual parts fit into the whole, and the effectiveness of the whole depends upon how the parts fit together; how chaos and complexity and other emergent theories inform human and organizational systems; recognition of how these perspectives enable and support sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. Optional subfields include:

a. Organization Design, the decision process associated with formulating and aligning the elements of an organizational system, including but not limited to structural systems, human resource systems, information systems, reward systems, work design, political systems, and organization culture; and

b. Organizational Acumen and Mastery: the ability to read and understand basic financial and performance data from the organization; sufficient knowledge of the sector, industry, or organizational environment to

be credible as a partner, advisor, or consultant to senior management; the ability to make a contribution to the leadership and management decision making of the organization.

Theories, Models and Practices of Change

3. Classic and emerging theories and models for change: the basic Action Research model, participatory action research, planning models, change typologies (e.g., fast, slow, incremental, quantum, revolutionary, etc.), models for transformation change, Lewin's change model, transition models, and newly emerging constructionist and interpretivist methods such as Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogic OD, etc.

4. Designing/choosing appropriate interventions: understanding how to select, modify, design, and evaluate effective interventions that will move the organization from its current state to its desired future state; understanding the implications of design choices; creating conversations within the organization about the organization, how it operates, what it is good at, and how it could improve, and measuring the impact of changes that are undertaken. These might include the optional subfields of:

a. ***Facilitation and process consultation for individuals, groups and teams:*** *the ability to assist an individual or group toward a goal; the ability to choose from a variety of intervention options based on the needs of work; the ability to intervene in the system such that the client system maintains ownership of the issue, increases its capacity for observing and reflecting on its own behaviors and actions, and develops increased capacity; includes differentiation of roles, observation and intervention into processes, including communications, decision making, stages of group development, task and maintenance leadership, handling conflict and difference.*

b. ***Process Improvement Methods:*** *the ability to apply organizational development concepts to improve manufacturing, service operations and the supply chain. Knowledge of organizational and leadership issues that must be addressed when implementing process improvement methods such as: lean and quality principles including strategies to successfully implement improvements in different organizational environments.*

Leading Change and the Use of Self

5. Leading the consulting process: the ability to enter a system; develop effective relationships; contract for goals, outcomes, and resources; discover and diagnose/assess; design/select appropriate interventions at the appropriate level of the system (i.e., individual, group, team, enterprise, system) and at the appropriate breadth and depth; implement those interventions; manage un-programmed events; evaluate the results, outcomes, and impact of change projects; and provide closure and exit.

6. Values-Based: adheres to the statement of values in the OD Network's Principles of Practice, including: respect and inclusion, collaboration, authenticity, self awareness, empowerment, sustainability, capacity building, corporate social responsibility, etc. Ref: *http://www.odnetwork.org/?page=PrinciplesOfODPracti*

7. Use of self: bringing values, knowledge, skills, and experience to bear on the work of an OD consultant or leader; able to be self-reflective; being honest with self and others; ability to recognize, challenge, and change one's own mental models; knowing and holding appropriate boundaries; using self-disclosure wisely; skillfully communicating; appropriate conflict and confrontation skills; seeking and offering feedback; speaking truth to power.

Cultural Competence and Diversity

8. Organizational Culture: the patterns of shared assumptions, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, values, and norms that govern actions and interactions within organizations and with their outside environments. Understanding that organizational culture is embedded in a larger social context, how it is affected by cross cultural and global forces, the recognition of power and privilege dynamics within organizations, and acknowledging that organizations are made up of multiple cultures, including those cultures brought in by diverse individuals, as well as the cultures that develop within teams and professional groups.

9. Global culture: the study of differences across nations and cultures in the ways in which people and organizations act, interact, and react. Understanding that an emerging global culture driven by multinational organizations and widespread communications media encourages the mixing of cultures, enables people around the world to embrace common causes, and potentially raises standards of living. But the emerging global culture has also proven to be injurious to indigenous populations, languages, cultures, and natural habitat, slowly reducing diversity and devastating traditional ways of life.

10. Diversity and Inclusion: understanding that **diversity** is about valuing the uniqueness of each individual on characteristics such as culture, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. and the ability to manage the related tensions and complexity. Understanding that **inclusion** is about engaging differences to create a culture in which people are valued and honored for what they contribute on characteristics such as race, gender, and culture so they can fully contribute to team and organizational performance. Ability to work effectively across cultural perspectives in a conversation, project, or work relationship.

Organizational Diagnosis, Assessment and Research

11. Organizational inquiry: field research methods; design of data collection methods, including interview protocols; questionnaires, and surveys; content analysis; designing change evaluation processes; evaluating the meaning of information through synthesis *and* analysis, expansionism *and* reductionism; ability to use and choose wisely among a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, especially those used in Action Research.

12. Organization assessment: the ability to align methodology choices with the needs of the project and client, and the philosophy and world view of the consultant; the ability to conduct an inquiry into a system's effectiveness; the ability to see the root cause(s) of a system's current level of effectiveness at all levels of the system: individual, group, organization, multi-organization; ability to observe and assess activity both at the task/transaction level and also at the processes level; ability to engage stakeholders in the assessment process; the process of sense-making from the data.

One important element of the more rigorous certifications from other bodies that the group did build in for its own review was the self-assessment. Almost all in the group had "received" an outside review for accreditation, and agreed that the self-study was the most valuable element and included it as an early step in the ODEA program review. Once a year, the ODEA schools revisit the Essential Elements, but have not made any changes to the original set—yet!

ODEA Programs

Over the past few years, ODEA schools have taken up the leadership of the OD Network's Student Paper Program and Student Research Colloquium, which attract upwards of 60–70 submissions in many years.

The ODEA members have become central to the planning of OD Network conferences as well. Sherry Camden-Anders of CSPP at Alliant University and Richard Stackman of the University of San Francisco helped design the student track and hosted a reception and several other events for students at the Network's conference in San Jose in 2013. They also managed the marketing and outreach to graduate students around the Bay area and well beyond.

Now in 2014, ODEA is completing its third full year as an independent affiliation of the OD Network, and its first full year of student membership, with 509 students and faculty.

Today's ODEA is comprised of seven graduate schools: American University, Benedictine University, Bowling Green State University, CSPP at Alliant University, Pepperdine University, the University of St. Thomas, and the University of San Francisco. Details on these schools and the universities affiliated with ODEA can be found at: *http://www.odnetwork.org/?page=ODEAMembers*

Having our first graduates out of the nest and into the real world of OD is a supremely satisfying feeling for all who have contributed so significantly in making ODEA the idea whose time is now.

Matt Minahan, EdD, is President of MM & Associates, an international consulting firm specializing in strategy, structure, leadership development, and communications. He is on the Board of Trustees of the OD Network and an active member and volunteer for NTL Institute. He teaches in the MS and Key Executive programs at American University and has published numerous articles in the field of OD, contributed to the *NTL Handbook of Organization Development and Change*, and is a contributing editor to the *Handbook for Strategic HR: Best Practices in Organization Development from the OD Network*. He can be reached at *matt@minahangroup.com*.