

ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT:
A REVIEW OF THE
LITERATURE

By

MARLA J. BENNETT

Bachelor of Music Education

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1974

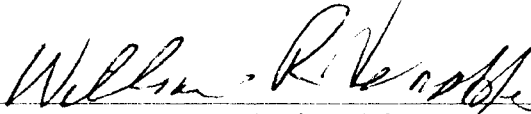
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
December, 1994

ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT:

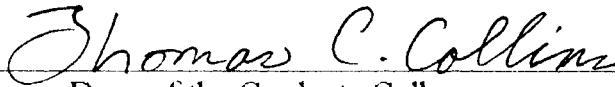
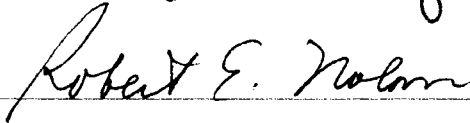
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Thesis Approved:



Thesis Adviser



Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I sincerely thank my master's work committee--Drs. William Venable (Chair), Robert Nolan, and Gary Oakley--for guidance and support in the completion of this research. I also thank Mrs. Wilda Reedy for her saintly patience and assistance.

Being a commuter student, I rarely had the time or opportunity to integrate ideas about the excellent courses with peers at the university level. I spent a lot of time thinking about adult learning theories, organizational theories and other vital concepts addressed in the HRD program, as I traveled those 100 mile segments.

I must acknowledge the Higher Power that moved me in this direction to attain a Master's level degree. Having been employed for the last seventeen years for two of the largest corporations in the service sector of the United States, the knowledge I have gained from this educational experience has made sense of the corporate insensitivity that affects the common worker. Being a small cog in the big wheel is life and reality for millions of us. I only hope that I can, in some way, contribute to improving life in corporate America with the wealth of knowledge I now have.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The downsizing of the organization, the reconstruction of the corporation, and reduction-in-force (RIF), are terms about making the business of industry more effective, more efficient, and more competitive in a global economy. American industry in the 90's is experiencing competitive pressure to improve its products, performance, and services because global markets continue to expand into the US. The influx of Japanese goods, specifically cars and computers, in the 80's, announced this challenge.

How industry reacts to this competition is seen, externally to society, in advertising slogans, such as "Made in America" or in commercials using comparison data to show that the American made car has all the features of the expensive import without the price. How industry reacts to the competition is heard externally as well. Major airlines disconnect service legs, lay off employees, or file bankruptcy.

What happens to the corporation, internally, is less obvious to the public. Examination of profit margins to determine strong or weak sales of an item help the business identify possible need to discontinue a particular product line. Boards of Directors meet. Managers evaluate. Organization development (OD) activities focus on helping departments initiate and manage change.

Organization assessment is a tool for looking at all components of the corporate system. Since the system is made up of people, employees, human resource development (HRD) input becomes essential. "The charter of *most* HRD functions is to help the human

resources of organizations become more competent and productive and to help organizations meet their goals" (Chalofsky and Reinhart: 1988: p. 30).

In the field of human resource development, the diagnosis of human performance problems generally implies that the HRD staff utilizes the appropriate intervention to solve the problem. When production decreases, or when performance skills in a job seem inadequate, needs assessment assists the HRD professional in defining the nature of the problem.

Some HRD professionals give much attention to justifying training solutions by the needs assessment process. In industrial or educational settings, HRD responsibilities include designing training tasks. Training needs analysis, a tool specifically used to identify training solutions, may or may not be the appropriate diagnosis of a human performance need or problem. In many approaches, training is assumed to be the solution to problems. Renard and Sinnock (1990) stated:

Unfortunately, the trend of managers, trainers, and others responsible for solving problems within an organization has been to apply these inappropriate approaches. Rather, problems of an organization should be identified first and then the appropriate interventions for solving them should be determined (p. 12).

Fox (1990) shared experiences about the maturation process of training needs assessment within the HRD unit of the organization where he worked. In a fifteen year study, divided into five year segments, three distinct growth periods emerged. First, training by popular demand provided courses in response to requests made by managers and employees. Next, training by management directive emphasized planning from higher levels in the organization to focus on gaps in performance problems. Finally, training

through strategic planning and needs assessment addressed the potential of well defined employee development programs. His report on this process of growth illustrated that as they "became more aware of the potential of well defined employee development programs, they began to understand the necessity to define needs clearly in terms of results and payoffs. A strategic approach integrated the identification of performance gaps with emerging future requirements" (p. 10).

HRD practitioners and the organizations that employ them do not always know how to effectively address human performance problems. They tend to lack an understanding about how to assess needs.

Statement of the Problem

Training needs assessments fail to address human performance problems at the organizational level. Needs assessments, while more effective, become inadequate when the hierarchy of the organization is not considered. This problem is clarified by Deden-Parker (1980) to cite Kirkpatrick (1977) who stated:

The risks involved in developing training programs based on such incomplete assessments of need are many and obvious: Costly training may prove ineffective because the existing problem was not amenable to a training solution; training may fail to improve performance because it does not identify and address critical skill or knowledge deficits; or trainees and their supervisors may resist training imposed from above [and] may, therefore, fail to participate in training or to transfer training to their actual work situations (p. 3).

Another example of this problem is found in an article by Kaufman and Valentine. They cited Stolovitch to state that "training needs assessment is an oxymoron: it is

internally inconsistent. If one knows that training is the solution, why do a needs assessment?" (1989: p. 14). This issue is highlighted by Renard and Sinnock (1990) who stated:

An organization should first conduct a generic needs assessment (NA) to identify problems within the organization and to determine whether employees require training in certain areas or whether interventions other than training could provide appropriate solutions. If a requirement for employee training is indicated, the organization should conduct a training needs assessment (TNA) focused on performance gaps. Many organizations, unfortunately, undertake a TNA before conducting an NA in the hope that training of the employees will result and problems, although as yet unidentified, will disappear (p. 12).

With the above illustrated understanding of the difference between needs assessment and training needs assessment, further examination of needs assessment shows its adaptability as an overarching process. Burton and Merrill (1977) stated: "It is possible at least in theory to conduct educational needs assessment on a global level down to the level of a module within a course" (p. 28). As part of the needs assessment, Mills, Pace, and Peterson (1988) suggested that organization systems analysis serves as an instrument for employees to voice feelings, concerns, and needs. Organization systems analysis in this sense alludes to organization assessment.

Needs assessment activities within a group or a department may not identify the root causes of a performance deficiency or discrepancy. The hierarchy of the organization, the operating structure, and the political parameters among departments can affect performance effectiveness. These factors affect any intervention HRD may use, and they

need to be examined prior to any intervention. To effectively identify and diagnose human performance needs, organization assessment provides more definitive solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify definitions, applications, and processes in organization assessment. The definitions of organization assessment are limited to needs assessment, strategic thinking, systems thinking, and organization assessment. The applications or use of the definitive terms in an organization assessment clarifies the purpose. The processes of organization assessment research identify models to support the applications. Through an exhaustive review of the literature, an examination of organization assessment furnishes the researcher with indicators of needs or deficiencies across the organization.

Significance of the Study

The significance of organization assessment to the HRD professional lies in providing strong indicators of organizational attitudes, behaviors, and deficiencies. As a barometer for the need of organizational change and development, the HRD staff can detect appropriate solutions. Rummler and Brache (1988) stated the relevance of the performance system in the following way.

Any time we try to improve an individual's *output* solely by changing the *input* of knowledge or information or skills to that individual, we are making the naive assumption that the person exists in a performance vacuum, isolated from and immune to the rest of the organization (p. 45).

The relationship to be found between organization assessment and systems thinking is also pivotal. A system approach to diagnosing human performance problems views the

entire organization as a system of inter-active and inter-related parts. Kaufman (1983) identified inputs, processes, products, and outputs and outcomes to define organizational movement. A system approach provides an integrated process for organizational analysis.

Assumptions

The assumption was made that the value of organization assessment is clarified by examining training needs assessment and needs assessment. First, training needs assessment is a solution, training, looking for a process. Second, needs assessment is a process to identify probable causes or solutions. Third, organization assessment is an overarching process that examines organizational attitudes, behaviors, and elements. These elements include inputs, processes, products, outputs, and outcomes. Needs assessment activities further investigate the human performance problems that are identified in the organization assessment.

The assumption was also made that needs assessment is the investigative process to examine and identify needs or problems. Needs analysis can be used during the investigation, as a subset of the needs assessment process, to more closely examine specific deficiencies or problems.

Another assumption was made that in order to effectively conduct an organization assessment, knowledge of systems thinking is critical. Systems thinking as an umbrella includes in rank order (1) systems theory, (2) system approach, (3) systems approach, and (4) systematic thinking.

Definitions of Terms

The following list of terms is provided to assist the reader in the study. Definitions listed may have other descriptors, but only those relevant to the focus of organization

assessment are listed.

Analysis: the process of breaking down a whole into its parts to identify the nature of each part (Kaufman, 1985).

Assessment: the act of evaluation or appraisal to identify flaws in the organizational system or gaps in a performance system.

Change Agent: one who influences and supports changes in organizational behavior (McLagan, 1989).

Diagnostic ability: process of understanding the wide variety of human resource (HR), issues and needs that change with the condition of the business. The state of the economy and the level of skill and knowledge of the organization's personnel can also be factors that influence the HR issues (Chalofsky and Reinhart, 1988).

Human resource development (HRD): the integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (McLagan, 1989).

Inputs: the current, existing organizational starting conditions, including all resources, laws, rules, regulations, or policies. Inputs are the ingredients and raw materials that the organization may or must use or consider in meeting its internal and external requirements (Kaufman, 1983).

Metaphorical language: symbolic language used in organizations to explain the system.

Models: a plan, method, or illustrated procedure that sequentially identifies and explains its steps providing a framework for investigation.

Needs analysis: act of identifying and evaluating needs, then placing them in priority order during the assessment process.

Needs assessment: a process that identifies, documents, and justifies the gaps in outcomes, outputs, and products. Specifically, it is a tool for determining valid and useful problems that are philosophically and practically sound (Kaufman 1979, 1983).

Organization analysis: act of identifying and prioritizing discrepancies between corporate performance and corporate goals (Deden-Parker, 1980).

Organization assessment: process of examining system-wide variables through the use of a human resource audit to provide the organization with data on the internal capacity of the human resource function and data from the line concerning the kind of services the organization needs at the operational, managerial, and strategic levels (Tichy, Fombrun, and Devanna, 1982: p. 58).

Organization development: a system-wide process of data collection, diagnosis, action planning, intervention, and evaluation aimed at (1) enhancing congruence between organizational structure (2) developing new and creative organizational solutions; and (3) developing the organization's self-renewing capacity (Beer, 1983).

Outcomes: the end-result of the combined effects of all of the other organizational elements (inputs, processes, products, and outputs). Outcomes are those impacts that an organization can or will have for the success, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and survival of itself and all individuals that it will or might affect (Kaufman, 1983).

Outputs: the organizational results which the organization can or does deliver outside the organization. Outputs are the aggregated Products which together form the delivered capability of the organization (Kaufman, 1983).

Proactive techniques: steps to solve problems using an external view, which assume nothing about the organization, including its goals, objectives, and personnel assignments

(Kaufman, 1983).

Processes: the ways and means for accomplishing results using the inputs. Processes include any how to do it procedure, method, curriculum, operation, or delivery methods and means which can or will produce the results required. Training is a process, as are other words ending in "ing". Any method, technique, or procedure is a process and thus must be considered as a means to a useful end (Kaufman, 1983).

Products: the "en-route" results the organization accomplishes on its way to providing required results through organization effectiveness and efficiency. Products are any single results which may be combined with other products to yield total organizational results, which will contribute to meeting organizational and societal requirements (Kaufman, 1983).

Reactive techniques: steps to solve problems where the need has already been identified; also considered an internal process, referenced as "fighting fires" or "quick fix" (Kaufman).

Strategic plan: a proactive, long-range plan, based on broad goals. A strategic plan provides a general direction rather than specific details on how to achieve specific goals (Geiger and Wills, 1988).

Strategic thinking: concept of the organization as an integrated, holistic, responsible system, rather than as a splintered aggregate of disassociated parts (Kaufman, 1983).

System: a collection of parts which interact with each other to function as a whole (D. Kaufman, 1980).

System approach: a holistic and external method which includes all elements of the organization. Proactive in the view, it makes no assumptions about the organization

(Kaufman, 1983).

Systematic approach: a methodical, internal and reactive manner of viewing the organization.

Systems approach: an internal process as a reactive measure to solving problems and specific to training effectiveness.

Systems theory: a way of thinking about asking and answering questions.

Understanding systems as sets of interrelated parts that work toward a common goal, systems theory dissects the organization into its interrelated parts, or departments, or processes (Jacobs, 1989).

Systems thinking: the process of generating insight into the important organizational phenomena that help us understand our assumptions, examine our perceptions, and learn from the process (Hartshorn, 1989).

Organization of the Study

Chapter I states the problem that the HRD function can be limited by providing only an organization's training needs. Narrowly defined needs, such as providing training, diffuse the effectiveness of HRD and of its real value to organizational development. The purpose of the study is to identify organization assessment research: definitions, applications, and processes. Chapter II provides a review of the literature relative to organization assessment. The parameters used to define the study include needs assessment, strategic planning, systems thinking, and organization assessment. The examination of these concepts supports their use in organization assessment. Models of assessment demonstrate these concepts as relevant methods to diagnose human performance needs. Chapter III examines the methodology of the research. Chapter IV

presents organization assessment surveys as processes to analyze, identify and assess organizational needs. Five types of organization surveys are presented. An analysis of the defined parameters of the research further illustrates their effective utilization in organization assessment. Chapter V summarizes the study, provides conclusions, and makes recommendations for further research and practice. Implications of the need to improve current methods to gain credibility in the field of HRD complete the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To understand the value of organization assessment in diagnosing human performance problems, the review of related literature covers four areas. The areas include needs assessment, strategic planning, systems thinking, and organization assessment.

These areas of research are supported by definition of an effective HRD unit. In the following list of elements, items 1, 4 and 8 relate to needs assessment; items 3, 5, 6 and 7 relate to strategic planning; items 2, 9 and 10 relate to systems thinking. All ten critical elements in rank order of HRD effectiveness, according to Chalofsky and Reinhart (1988: pp. 17-24) reflect the significance of the study of organization assessment to the HRD professional.

1. HRD function has the expertise to diagnose problems in order to determine appropriateness of potential solutions.
2. HRD manager maintains an active network with other key managers in the organization.
3. There is a corporate Training & Development mission statement or a corporate HRD policy.
4. The evaluation of training focuses on behavioral change or organizational results.
5. The HRD manager routinely participates in corporate strategy sessions with other key staff persons and senior managers.

6. Training needs associated with major changes in the organization are anticipated.
7. Allocations of HRD resources are based at least in part on the priorities of the organization.
8. The HRD function conducts needs assessment to determine organization requirements.
9. The roles, responsibilities, and priorities of the HRD function are clearly defined.
10. The HRD management and staff routinely meet to discuss problems and progress with current programs.

In summation of the critical elements for effective HRD, Chalofsky and Reinhart stated: "The key idea that jumped out at us was that effective HRD functions are responsive to the needs of their customers (the larger organization they serve) in a responsible, professional sense rather than a reactive, 'fighting fires' sense" (1988: p. 26).

This review of related literature further unites the four areas with definitions and applications. The models provide the reader with greater understanding of organization assessment as a process. These models also contribute to performance technology as a blueprint for action.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is important to the HRD practitioner. General consensus in the literature supports the statement. "Need is fundamental to the concept of needs assessment because the basic argument is that the solution that results from the assessment should address the need" (Sleezer, 1992: p. 35). Without a thoroughly conducted needs

assessment, any intervention for problem identification or problem solving would be less than creditable.

Kaufman and English (1979) defined needs assessment as the determination of documentable and important gaps between current outcomes and desired outcomes, and the placing of those gaps in priority order for closure. They described it as a humanizing process for the most effective and efficient use of both the practitioner's and the learner's time.

The tools used in the process of needs assessment provide information. These tools include questionnaire, focus group, observation, interview, subject matter analysis, and extant data analysis (Rossett 1992, Zemke & Kramlinger 1982).

The reasons for doing a needs assessment can be grouped by purpose. Rossett (1982, 1989) identified four purposes: finding optimal performance; finding actual performance; finding feelings about the subject, skills, system, or technology; and finding the cause or causes of a problem. Kaufman suggested "that the success of any performance system lies in defining measurable results to be accomplished, and efficiently achieving the objectives" (1985: p. 21).

Burton and Merrill (1977) identified five types of needs to also consider in the needs assessment process. These types of needs include:

1. normative need: compared to industry standards;
2. felt need: what employees think they need to solve a problem;
3. expressed or demand need: management determination that training is needed for employees to perform more effectively or efficiently;
4. comparative need: when one segment of the organization is operating at a lower level

than another segment, both of which are assigned the same task; and

5. anticipated or future need: when resources are projected for a department or group to achieve maximum performance.

Needs assessment has many different names. Sleezer (1992) pointed out that other names include front-end analysis, needs analysis, and performance analysis. She suggested that the important point for those involved in the process is to understand and to use the same view.

Benjamin (1989) reviewed use of the terms needs analysis and needs assessment. He defined the difference between the two processes as needs analysis being the overarching process that includes needs assessment. Kaufman (1985) defined the two in exactly the opposite way. He stated that analysis is part of the overarching assessment process.

Because many HRD practitioners are responsible for training activities, a logical mistake for them to make is to consider needs assessment as a part of the training process. The concept is that a needs assessment is the first step in almost any training project (Rossett, 1990; Cline & Seibert, 1993). Training is assumed to be the solution to many organizational problems (Renard & Sinnock, 1990). A training needs assessment in this sense identifies and justifies training activities. The crux of the issue here is as Rossett stated: "If trainers don't uphold criteria for what constitutes a good assessment, then they can't expect support from the organization" (1990: p. 41).

In scenarios where needs assessment validates training needs, the role of the HRD practitioner could be limited by organizational structure to that of a trainer. The role of a trainer, according to King and Roth, (1983) is that trainers do not necessarily focus on organizational goals and thus do not impact directly upon them. They are perceived as a

liability or as an expense. In a profit-oriented environment, this lack of contribution correlates to loss of credibility. King and Roth cited a 1979 survey to illustrate this. In an ASTD survey of 2,800 trainers, 40 percent identified credibility to be the most important behavioral trait for HRD practitioners and trainers.

Training Needs Assessment Model

Sleezer (1993) reported that a number of existing training models differ slightly, but in general they contain five major phases: Assess the needs, design the training, develop the materials and instruction, implement the training, and evaluate the training. Describing the Performance Analysis for Training, (PAT), Sleezer (1991) stated that three elements of the first component of PAT, organization characteristics, decision-maker characteristics, and analyst characteristics influence the direction that the needs assessment will take.

Sleezer illustrated this integrated process of negotiation by using overlapping rings for these characteristics. The perceived training opportunities or needs were identified where the rings overlapped. The second phase of the PAT identified where (organization analysis) the training should take place in the organizational chart; what type (work behavior analysis) of training should occur; and who (individual capabilities) needed the training. The third component provided worksheets to detail and guide the process of PAT.

The training function can play an important part in enabling the organization to achieve its objectives. By focusing on the goals and mission of the organization, trainers become an integral part of the strategic planning process. Likewise, any models or recommendations for strategic planning processes and recommendations for organizational change are based on thorough and professional front-end analysis (Chalofsky & Reinhart, 1988).

Strategic Planning

A clear mission, or vision of where an organization wants to be in the future, is essential to a good strategic plan. A mission expresses the long range purpose of an organization. The mission should require the organization to stretch; it should be difficult to reach but realistically attainable. An organization must define its mission before it can begin to identify appropriate strategic directions, since the purpose of a strategic direction is to support the mission (Geiger & Wills, 1988: p 7).

HRD has been evolving as a professional field during the last twenty years. It has evolved from the more basic role of providing training within the organizational structure. "Needs assessment is evolving as a result of the experience, reflection, and conceptualization of people across disciplines" (Moseley & Heaney, 1994: p. 64). McLagan (1989) described HRD as being the integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve group or organizational effectiveness. Chalofsky and Reinhart stated:

Part of the HRD function is to provide information that will help the organization maintain effective operations now and in the future. Few line organizations can afford the time and money that would be required for working staff to monitor changes, evaluate needs, and make recommendations for improvements.

Corporations depend on their HRD functions to do this for them (1988: p. xi.).

The strategic plan provides general direction on how to achieve the goals of the organization. It asks the question: what will the future bring and what must our organization do to be responsive and survive? Kaufman (1990) identified three levels of

strategic planning and thinking. These levels of planning clarify the question to be answered. Mega-level planning addresses the society as client. Macro-level planning addresses the organization. Micro-level planning addresses the internal organization. He also suggested that whatever the level, proactive or reactive modes occur. Reactive planning modes attempt to make a quick fix for a problem. Proactive planning modes seek to create an improved reality by modifying organizational objectives.

Another view of strategic planning presented by Nielsen (1983) synthesized the concepts of comprehensive planning and short-run operations planning. He suggested that the need to coordinate long-term decision making with short-term internally changing processes created a more responsive strategy. His synthesis aligns with Kaufman's (1983) definitions of system and systems approach. Comprehensive planning is a proactive technique. Consider what societal outcomes will be affected. The product should be valuable in society and be an improvement for society. This creates a strong, organizational system approach. The short-term operating plan functions as a reactive technique, a quick-fix for the internal organization, using the systems approach.

Strategic planning or thinking sets the stage for defining organizational development needs. What future outcomes can be identified? Kaufman stated: "In setting useful organizational policy and plans, it is critical that needs assessment, strategic planning, long-range planning and the resulting operational planning begin with outcomes" (1983: p. 9).

Strategic Planning Model

Kaufman (1990) presented a strategic planning model with three levels of strategic planning and thinking. The mega-level, whose primary client is external, society, asks questions regarding future needs, individual and collective quality of life in which we and

our external clients live. The macro-level, whose primary client is internal, the organization, asks questions regarding concern for the quality of products that the organization delivers to its external clients. The micro-level, whose primary client is the individual or small group, asks questions regarding the quality of life within the organization.

Four phases that outline the strategic planning model as a framework for action are (1) scoping, (2) data collecting, (3) planning, and (4) implementation and evaluation. Within the four phases are thirteen steps. The four phase, 13-step strategic planning model requires scoping during the first phase to identify on what level, mega, macro, or micro the assessment will occur. Kaufman recommended the macro-level because it deals with issues such as "what is", "what should be", and "what could be." The second phase, data collecting, includes activities to (2) identify beliefs and values, (3) identify visions, and (4) identify current missions. From this data (5) needs are identified. The third phase, planning, requires (6) identifying matches and mismatches: integrate visions, beliefs, needs, and current missions. Next (7) reconcile differences, (8) select a preferred future based on the reconciliation, (9) identify missions, (10) identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, (11) derive decision rules, and (12) develop strategic action plans. The fourth phase, implementation/evaluation, activates the plan by (13) putting it to work through implementation, evaluation, and revision.

Systems Thinking

In reference to the need for HRD to use systems theory, Jacobs (1989) offered another view of HRD. Organizational problem settings can best be framed as human performance systems. Human performance systems can be best understood through the

use of a systems approach. Consequently, the HRD practitioner should responsibly monitor and diagnose ineffective performance systems to find out if any components are missing or inadequate. Otherwise, performance outcomes of individuals and the organization cannot be reliably predicted.

Systems thinking and system approach are proactive; they view the organization much like the public would view the organization. What does it produce? How does it serve the public need? How efficiently is it perceived to operate? These questions identify systems thinking and a system approach from the outside in: an external view. Systems approach and systematic approach are reactive processes or techniques. They view the organizational structure, the operational flowchart, and corresponding departments. Cost efficiency, quality control, and production performance identify only a few topics addressed in the systems and systematic approaches. These are internal processes.

The system approach (Kaufman, 1968, 1970, 1972) attempted to put means and ends into useful perspective; it intended to design a set of ways and means to identify, verify, and resolve problems. This model of system approach broke with past tradition by clearly identifying and justifying problems prior to the selection of solutions (Kaufman, 1979: p. 23).

Kaufman and Bowers (1990) stated "that there can (and should) be a proactive, large, focused approach---a system approach---to organizational and societal improvement which starts with assessing the current needs, problems, and opportunities, selecting the ones for action, and then systematically analyzing and resolving them" (p. 8). This system approach is fundamental to effectively diagnosing human performance problems. Using this framework allows the HRD professional to survey performance problems from various

perspectives and allows integration of related problems.

Within the organization, systems approach and systematic approach can also effectively diagnose performance problems as subsystems. Kaufman and Bowers (1990) stated that a systems approach presumes that a need or problem has already been identified. The action required is to analyze or provide solutions.

The distinction between these processes is perhaps more important when the literature seems to interchange them. McClelland (1992) used the term systems approach in providing a framework for a training needs assessment. As discussed earlier, a training needs assessment is a reactive exercise in that the need or problem has already been identified. Seven steps McClelland identified in using this systems approach could arguably be considered a system approach. These steps included the following. (1) Determine whether to use internal or external resources. (2) Define the goals of the assessment. (3) Select the most appropriate methodology. (4) Gain management commitment. (5) Administer and control the assessment. (6) Analyze the results. (7) Present upper management with the results and recommendations.

Lawrie wrote that "an increasing number of organizations are adopting a systems approach to HRD which, by its very nature, helps the organization move into proactive and self-renewing training and development" (1986: p. 20). He used systems approach to identify what this study has defined as a system approach.

Systems theory includes the concepts of both system approach and systems approach. Jacobs stated that "systems thinking is both systematic and relational. Systematic thinking is methodical, coherent, and intentional. Relational thinking accounts for the connections, interactions, and influences that impinge upon all systems" (1989: p. 30). Using this

concept of systems theory, a system approach, like systematic thinking, evaluates the organization through methodical, coherent, and intentional search. Next, a systems approach, like relational thinking, identifies the connections, interactions, and influences of the subsystems.

Sleezer (1993) stated that:

thinking of organizations as systems provides the analyst with a framework for separating the symptoms of problems from the causes and for avoiding the temptation to presuppose that training is the solution. By viewing the organization as a system, the analyst gains insight into the mutual influences among the organization and the external environment, the whole organization's systems and subsystems, and the performance of the whole organization and individuals' actions and performance (p. 24).

System Approach Model

Kaufman and Bowers stated "that there can (and should) be a proactive, large, focused approach--a system approach--to organizational and societal improvement which starts with assessing the current needs, problems, and opportunities, selecting the ones for action, and then systematically analyzing and resolving them" (1990: p. 8).

The model below aligns each step with some tools needed for the process. Arrows would run back and forth from the eleven steps into a feedback loop, not illustrated here, to indicate that each step is a continuous process and a proactive approach.

Figure I

System Approach Model
 adapted from Kaufman and Bowers (1990)

STEPS IN A SYSTEM APPROACH	SOME TOOLS TO GET THERE
I. Identify system and search space (target and scope of attention)	Strategic planning and thinking
II. Identify needs and opportunities	Needs assessment
III. Prioritize and select needs and opportunities	Needs assessment
IV. Analyze needs and opportunities	Needs analysis, front-end analysis, goal analysis, problem analysis, performance analysis
V. Identify possible methods and means to meet the needs and opportunities	Methods-means-media analysis
VI. Select methods and means (including costs/results analysis)	Cost/results analysis (cost efficiency, cost benefit, cost utility analysis)
VII. Make/buy/obtain methods and means (including design, analysis, and systems development)	System(s) design, system(s) development, instructional systems development (ISD), performance technology
VIII. Implement selected methods and means	Management control, PERT, CPM, performance technology, Instructional technology
IX. Determine en-route effectiveness and efficiency (and revise as required)	Formative evaluation
X. Determine end-of-project/program activity effectiveness and efficiency	Summative evaluation, goal-free evaluation
XI. Revise as required.	All tools listed in steps I through X could be applied.

Organization Assessment

While systems thinking allows us to view the organization as integrated and interrelated parts, organization assessment allows us to view the organization's human element. The concepts are bridged by organization development, organizational change, organizational behavior, and organizational improvement.

Bolman and Deal reviewed the evolution of growth in the field of organizational development. Likert's theory, developed in the 1960's, was that many beliefs about effective management were wrong because these beliefs failed to consider the human element. He designed survey research to distinguish management styles. "Likert's theory rested heavily on survey data and was instrumental in the evolution of survey feedback as an approach to organizational improvement" (1991: p. 169). In the 1980's, Mirvis was cited for suggesting a shift in organizational development.

Mirvis believed that the shift was from a facilitative, person-centered approach to a more directive, organization-centered one, and it came to be viewed as a strategy for helping organizations achieve and maintain stability in the face of changing and turbulent environments (Bolman & Deal, 1991: p. 170).

Bolman and Deal developed a framework for viewing organizations. They based this on four schools of organizational theory and research. These perspectives were the structural frame, human resources frame, political frame, and symbolic frame.

The structural frame emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships. The human resource frame recognizes that organizations are inhabited by individuals who have needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations. The political frame represents different interest groups competing for power or resources. The symbolic frame views

organizations as tribes, cultures, or theaters. This reflects abandoned assumptions of rationality; and ritual or myth replaces rules or managerial authority.

Gordon focused on leadership practices for perpetuating organizational growth. He suggested that total quality management, (TQM), as a continuous improvement process, "requires a change in the way the organization works. . . This change in culture focuses on providing the customer with a high quality of product or service" (1991:p. 18). He also suggested that if the organization is unresponsive to the need for change, performance technology efforts and its employees are in eventual jeopardy.

Culture is an important organizational dimension for three reasons. According to Lahiry, culture represents the values, beliefs, and expectations shared by its members; it exerts pressure on its members to conform to shared codes; and culture shapes people's behaviors. "From an organization development standpoint, the concept of organizational culture suggests an avenue for fostering changes in behavior and attitudes in order to bring about desired results" (1994: p. 50). "Changing an organization's culture, then, would seem to have the potential for greater long-term, sustained benefits than changing its products, services or delivery methods" (Tosti and Jackson, 1994: p. 59).

A perspective offered by Tosti and Jackson was that "organizational alignment occurs when strategic goals and cultural values are mutually supportive, and when key components of the model are linked and compatible with each other" (1994: p. 63). Culture is an important issue when addressing organization change because as a behavior it is most resistant to change. Tosti and Jackson suggested that the reasons align with those shared by Lahiry: behaviors are value-driven and group-wide.

Another issue relative to organization assessment is the use of metaphor. Like the

culture of an organization, metaphorical language affects our thought processes in fundamental ways. One of Bolman and Deal's organizational theories, the symbolic frame, which uses myth and ritual, is representative of metaphorical thought. In viewing the culture of an organization, the symbolic ritual of metaphorical language can affect employee performance. Cleary and Packard (1992: p. 232) discussed that many metaphors used come from the military and from sports.

Phrases such as "mission," "attack" the problem, "kill" an idea, "lost a battle" because he or she "didn't have the firepower" or "was outgunned," and "a loose cannon on the deck" are often heard in organizations. . . Such terms are so common that their implications are rarely considered by organization members. Many of these metaphors may support and enhance inappropriate intraorganizational and personal competition and conflict. . . For example, women are not as likely to have had military or athletic experiences. Therefore, they are at a disadvantage when these male-oriented metaphors are used.

Larwood (1992) summarized that the examination of metaphors within the organization is as important as other observations. Cleary and Packard (1992) stated: "Our conscious application of metaphorical thought to organizational analysis provides us with a useful tool to deal with the complex and often times irrational and paradoxical nature of organizational life" (p. 234).

According to Argyris, (1990) another view of organization assessment is gained by conducting an organizational diagnosis. The diagnosis usually takes the form of a survey, especially in large corporations. Argyris suggested that "most of these surveys, when implemented correctly, bypass the organizational defense patterns and thereby drive them

underground in the short run and reinforce them in the long run" (p. 84). He explained that organizational defensive routines are actions or policies that prevent individuals or segments of the organization from experiencing embarrassment or threat. Simultaneously, they prevent people from identifying and getting rid of the causes of the potential embarrassment or threat. "Another fundamental problem is that the knowledge gained from these surveys, stated Argyris (p. 84), on such topics as leadership, disempowerment, initiative, and risk taking is difficult to use in order to take action."

This chapter has provided a review of literature related to organization assessment. Needs assessment data illustrated concepts, tools, purpose, types, and relevance to the mission of the organization. Strategic planning data identified planning processes relative to organizational development. Systems thinking integrated strategic planning with identifying type of need. To think of organizations as systems assists the HRD practitioner in the cohesive effort needed to understand all the influences on the system. The organization assessment data illustrated the human factors, culture and language. It introduced the concept of survey, leadership, and organizational theories.

Organization Assessment Model

The holistic planning model, designed by Kaufman (1983) and presented here as an organizational assessment model, is a system approach for improving organizational effectiveness and impact. Kaufman stressed that organizational improvers needed a model that would do the following:

1. define and relate available tools, techniques, models, and approaches,
2. determine what each is capable of providing,
3. determine which, if any, and in what possible combinations, are the

individual models and approaches useful for meeting the requirements for useful and measurable organizational improvement and impact,

4. relate the roles and responsibilities for application of each useful approach, tool, technique, and model at the various levels within any organization (p. 3).

The Organizational Elements Model, OEM, and the Six-Step Problem Solving Process are essentially two models within the Holistic Planning Model. These models help the organization assessment process by defining key issues. The OEM identifies five elements: **inputs** as raw materials and **processes** as the means, methods, and procedures are used to scope the internal organization to define organizational efforts; **products** as en-route results and **outputs** as products of the organization, which are delivered to society, are used also to scope the internal organization to define organizational results; **outcomes** as the effects in and for society, such as self-reliance or contribution, are used to scope outside, external to the organization, at the societal level to define societal results and/or impact. These system approach tools help the practitioner in identifying by deductive reason, *what is*, and by inductive reason, *what should be*.

The Six-step Problem-Solving Process requires the practitioner to: (1) identify problem based on needs, (2) determine solution requirements and identify alternatives, (3) select solution strategies, (4) implement, (5) determine effectiveness, and (6) revise as required. Feedback occurs between each step during the revision step. The relationship between this model and the OEM is stated by Kaufman (1983: p. 7) "that each time one seeks to close the gaps between *what is* and *what should be*, the problem solving process may be used".

Kaufman suggested that assignment of personnel to the assessment be as follows: professional/technicians and middle managers to the inputs, process and products; senior managers to the products and outputs; and executive senior managers to the products, outputs, and outcomes. Because the organizational elements, OEs, interact with each other, personnel assigned to the organization assessment should also. "In the 'system' fashion, the relationship among the OEs is dynamic and interactive" (p. 8).

Metaphor Analysis Model

Cleary and Packard (1992) presented a model for assessment and change of organizations using metaphor. The metaphor analysis model process consisted of two stages (Cleary & Packard, 1992: p. 235) as follows.

The first stage, assessment, begins with a sensing of the organization: observing symbols, objects, facilities, and language with an eye toward metaphorical content. Next, themes are developed. Words and metaphors that represent significant organizational processes or issues are compiled and analyzed. Third, key implications for organizational functioning based on metaphors in use are postulated. Finally, the positive and negative effects of these metaphors are assessed. The second stage, planning, consists of the development, based on the assessment, of an overall approach or strategy and action steps.

Cleary and Packard suggested that this model should be used as an embellishment to established OD intervention methods. They suggested that while the model provides rich insight to the culture of the organization, the concept of it is new and required further study and testing.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To examine the literature on organization assessment, a comprehensive search was focused in the following databases: ERIC, Psychlit, and the Dissertations/Theses Index. Within each of these databases, the subject areas were identified. These areas included organizational assessment, organization development, organization needs, and organization needs assessment. Considering the current interest and growth rate of organizational development activities, the time frame, 1980 to present was utilized (Chalofsky & Reinhart, 1988; McLagan, 1989; Fox, 1990; and Tosti & Jackson, 1991).

The initial search for literature within the identified subject areas was rather fruitless. Twenty journal articles and five theses were reviewed. Twelve of the journal articles were found in the PsychLit database, and eight were found in the ERIC database. The five theses were reproduced through the EDRS.

With knowledge of trade journals specific to HRD, a physical search was conducted through journal indices. These journals were identified to include: *Training, Performance & Instruction*, *Training & Development Journal*, and *Performance Improvement Quarterly*. *Human Resource Management*, and *Personnel* were also examined, not because of their HRD specificity, but for their comparable views from a business management position.

A vast number of articles were found for inclusion in the study of organization assessment research. When given, the cited references of the selected articles were then

examined for supplementary sources of literature available.

A key factor that developed during the research which shaped the form of the study was the lack of understanding between needs assessment, training needs assessment and organization assessment. All five theses on organizational assessment were simply needs assessment activities within the organization. These studies focused solely on training and employee development issues. Thus, two additional areas of research, needs assessment and training needs assessment, were included in the study.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEYS AND ANALYSIS

Organization Assessment Survey

This chapter reviews the use of survey instruments used as the primary processes of organization assessment. "Attitude surveys, in fact, can serve at least 10 major functions in an organizational planning process" (York, 1985: p. 70). These include: (1) an inventory of human assets. (2) organization development. (3) a management audit. (4) communication. (5) employee development. (6) quality of work life. (7) motivation. (8) letting off steam. (9) assessment of change. (10) the bottom line.

The benefits of a standardized survey sometimes outweigh a custom designed one. He added that:

The major advantages of a standardized survey are: Reliability information has already been developed, item analyses have already been conducted to ensure the inclusion of the best items, and comparative data has already been collected on similar companies so that results can be more meaningfully compared to results of other employee groups (p. 71).

York suggested that there should be enough core items to accurately measure major areas of the organization assessment. The major organizational variables are: (1) leadership. (2) job satisfaction. (3) co-workers. (4) work environment/conditions. (5) pay/other benefits. (6) career advancement. (7) company commitment. (8) personal or

work stress.

Employee attitude surveys should be conducted every year, but York suggested that every two years was the average. Factors that affect the frequency include: "timing and implementation of actions from the previous survey, the frequency of major organizational changes, the long range planning schedule of the organization, and the rate of employee turnover" (p. 73).

Hendrix (1985) developed a survey instrument known as Organization Assessment Package (OAP). The goal was to accurately assess organizational effectiveness. The OAP serves as a diagnostic instrument. It focuses on aspects such as employee characteristics, equipment and tool availability, and job enrichment components. The criterion is limited to attitudinal components, thus providing a common metric across organization types and levels. Hendrix stated:

The survey development requirements established by the management consultants were that the instrument should measure organizational factors as comprehensively as feasible, have sections which could be administered separately or as a part of the total package, and should provide a data base for organizational research (p. 96).

The contingency model from which the OAP is based is the Organizational Effectiveness Model. The three components of the model are management style, situational environment, and criterion measures: job satisfaction, organizational climate, and perceived productivity.

Bullock and Bullock (1984) suggested "that attitude surveys are often used in feed back interventions because they provide the highest quantity of high quality information"(p. 9).

The goal of their research was to compare two feedback models of organizational change. Describing their theory, their practice, and their results, the models were called the Pure Science Model and the Science-Action Model. The significant difference between the two was the use of an intervention team in the role of change agent during the second intervention. Both surveys were used in the same manufacturing company. Time lapse between the interventions was eight years.

The Michigan Organizational Assessment Survey is a paper and pencil survey consisting of standardized scale items measuring a wide spectrum of work attitudes. These are validated through alpha reliability assessments and factor analysis. The standardized instrument can be supplemented by site specific items; intervention teams or on-site task force groups can aid in the site specific supplements. This instrument was used in the intervention process.

The results of the first intervention were negative. There was no discussion of the data between management and employees. The intervention team met only once with the manager. "There were no problems identified, no decisions made, and no organizational change" (p. 20). The results of the second intervention were positive. There were meetings; committees were formed to help solve identified problems; and management held off-site meetings to encourage participation and to address the issues.

One implication for research was that the feedback process was pivotal in motivating the employees to take part in the second intervention. Bullock and Bullock suggested that "scientific knowledge and social change are not incompatible, but rather complementary" (p. 26).

Stephan, Mills, Pace, and Ralphs (1988) designed an organizational assessment survey

specific to HRD functions in *Fortune* 500 companies. The first survey occurred in 1986. A follow-up survey completed the next year, 1987, was the basis to report the dynamics of change in the marketplace. They believed, philosophically, "that people can and must cope with change, that employees are central to the corporate strategic vision, and that management and labor, as part of a participative structure, will meet the challenges of the future" (p. 27).

The survey included 19 questions grouped under three main categories: management issues, management development, and HRD in general. In reporting the results, scales and percentages were used. The survey was mailed to 492 out of the possible 500, and 179 respondents completed the survey. HRD managers and professionals completed them.

Implications of their study suggested that:

For American industry to remain competitive, it must (1) cope with and respond to international and global opportunities and competition; (2) manage the impact of technological developments; (3) fulfill expectations to produce more without an increase in resources; and (4) develop a results-oriented perspective (p. 26).

Also vital to HRD was the concern was that "while respondents still view credibility as a problem, the need for the HRD function to meet the adjustments of technology, redeploy displaced workforce members, and recruit and retain excellent employees will help to strengthen the profession's status" (p. 32).

The Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI), developed by Meyer and Allen, (Lahiry, 1994: p. 51) presents an integrated model of organizational commitment. They identified three types of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment related to employees' emotional attachment to the organization. Continuance commitment

referred to the employees' cost of leaving the organization. Normative commitment was reflected by the employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization.

The questionnaire survey measured the extent to which an organization encouraged certain behaviors or thinking styles. The resulting organizational culture profile characterized three main culture patterns. These included the constructive, the passive/defensive, and the aggressive/defensive cultures. The constructive culture styles included achievement, self-actualizing, encouraging, and affiliative descriptors. Passive/defensive were identified by approval, conventional, dependent, and avoidance. Aggressive/defensive culture styles included oppositional, power, competitive, and perfectionist descriptors.

The OCI survey was used in a large manufacturing company, across three divisions. A stratified, random sample of supervisors and managers from the three divisions participated in the survey. Only 25 percent, 188 employees, returned completed surveys. Statistical analysis showed no significant differences among the culture patterns of the three divisions. This suggested the company had a strong culture. The level of commitment varied. The study showed that a constructive culture pattern was not found to be related to commitment. A relatively high correlation between the aggressive/defensive pattern and continuance commitment did occur.

The implications from the survey suggest that OD practitioners realize that "a high level of continuance commitment may well keep an employee tied to an organization, but it is unlikely to produce a high level of performance" (Lahiry, 1994: p.52).

Analysis

The purpose of this study was to identify definitions, applications, and processes in

organization assessment. The parameters were identified as needs assessment, strategic planning, system approach, and organization assessment.

Needs Assessment

Preliminary investigation to identify which type of need best addresses the problem is crucial. During the investigation, more than one need may also occur. Placing identified needs in priority order makes efficient use of the needs assessment activity. For instance, if management believes that a training need exists, as in the expressed or demand need, the target population, employees, may be interviewed. The employees targeted for the training may provide feedback of a felt need. They may suggest different data that they believe will solve the problem. The essential point is to remain objective. If the solution has been formulated and defined before the assessment process has occurred, the intervention is not a needs assessment.

The results of the needs assessment should provide information to assist the HRD staff with the appropriate intervention to the problem or problems. The PAT training assessment model clarified the difference between needs assessment and training needs assessment. Its specificity to identifying and implementing training programs within a group illustrated the limitations of TNA for addressing organizational problems.

One of the results reported in the development and testing of the PAT model "was that the organization had changed over the year in which the needs assessment had been done" (Sleezer, 1991: p. 367). Organizational realignment involving a shift in decision making responsibilities from the president to senior managers affected the future implementation of the PAT recommendations.

Strategic Planning

Geiger and Wills used an example of strategic planning with participants at a National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI), convention. The mission statement was to become the outstanding NSPI chapter. Participants identified qualities that supported that mission. The qualities became the strategic direction of the strategic plan. Those were then prioritized to determine how easily they could be accomplished and what value those qualities would be to the chapter. The results were plotted on a grid according to value and ease of accomplishment.

Using Kaufman's Strategic Planning Model, the exercise could be identified as micro level because participants were from NSPI chapters from around the country. Each was thinking of an individual chapter in numerous states. The qualities that NSPI members identified to support the mission fell into the data collection process of the model. Kaufman's third step, planning, could be seen during the prioritization process, where members used the grid. Essentially, "mission, vision, value and strategy statements thus serve to tell people 'what we are about,' and to guide us all in setting priorities and choosing how to behave" (Tosti and Jackson, 1994: p. 60).

Systems Thinking

An analysis of systems thinking as it applies to organization assessment provides both clarity and cohesion, once there is agreement of the terms. The purpose of identifying use of terms with contradictory meanings is to illustrate a lack of consensus in the literature. Using an inverted triangle to illustrate their use in this study supplies the cohesion. At the top of the triangle is the overarching process, systems theory, under which system approach is found. Third systematic approach and fourth systems approach complete the triangle.

In analyzing an organization, a performance problem, or a philosophy for HRD, using systems thinking allows the user to separate symptoms from causes as Slezzer suggested. Putting means and ends in useful perspective by identifying whether a proactive approach is necessary or a reactive approach is sufficient clarifies the level of the system. To quote Kaufman, "An accident victim should have first aid before being taught safety" (1990: p. 7). This illustrates the effective use of reactive systems approach within the larger proactive system approach.

Organization Assessment

Although organization assessment includes understanding systemic variables, knowing how these variables affect organizational members, and finding the correct strategies for implementing system level changes, the human element cannot be underscored. As Argyris illustrated in discussing organizational defenses, people fearful of speaking critically about their supervisor or other staff components, diffuse the real organizational issues. Without thorough investigation of organizational needs, any intervention process will fail to achieve the desired behavioral or other change.

Using organizational theory to interpret and understand organizations, Bolman and Deal's frames for viewing them clearly attempt to identify the variables at work. While each frame is different, all frames can be seen within a corporate entity. Co-workers may have very different perspectives, one a structural, the other a human resources, for instance; this conflict undermines effective performance. The structural frame stresses rules, regulations, formal reporting roles and methods to which there is a strict adherence. The human resources frame emphasizes that human beings are basically good and want to do good work. A worker who operates under this frame may fail to follow the required reporting

methods of the structural frame, feeling or believing that a more efficient, purposeful method would be just as effective in operational terms. The integration and acceptance of these different views is essential for organizational growth and stability.

These different views also incorporate culture, or the values, beliefs, and expectations shared by its members. To understand the dynamic between the organization and the groups of people it comprises, Lahiry suggested that the content of those cultures is as important as the strength of those cultures. Therefore, defensive cultures or elements should be reduced before implementing any culture-change programs.

Armenakis and Redeian recommended the use of metaphors during an organizational change process. They suggested that "information underscoring the necessity for change should be presented from both a change agent's and a change target's perspective" (p. 246). Following the use of constructive metaphor instead of destructive metaphor, Armenakis and Redeian cited Bridges (1991) to illustrate how to diffuse defensive or destructive messages.

Rather than employing a metaphor such as "the ship is sinking," which connotes "abandon ship," he recommended describing the period preceding the closing as its "last voyage," during which time "crew members" could systematically plan their next "expedition/voyage" following final "disembarkation." (p. 245).

Organization Assessment Survey

To reiterate, as Bullock and Bullock suggested, surveys can provide the highest quantity of quality information. Surveys are the key method to identify, diagnose, and evaluate organizations. Bullock and Bullock (1984) cited Nadler's (1977: p. 146) model to assess outcomes and feedback processes.

First, did the feedback generate energy? With no energy, there is no potential for

change. Second, what is the direction of the energy? Feedback energy can be directed into constructive problem-solving energy or it can be directed toward resistance and anxiety, which does not produce change. Third, are there structures and processes to convert this problem-solving energy into organizational change? Without these structures and processes, the energy results in frustration and failure. Organizational change is possible only if all three questions are answered positively with evidence from the feedback process (p. 12).

An analysis of the surveys presented shows a multitude of feedback dimensions. The importance of generating energy to promote change was indicated in the Science-Action Model. Energy was generated through the off-site meetings and the intervention team working as change agents to promote the participation and consequent feedback.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to identify definitions, applications, and processes of organization assessment. The parameters of the search were selected to clarify and demonstrate both the similarities of and correlations to each. The selected parameters were needs assessment, training needs assessment, strategic planning, systems thinking and organization assessment. The goal was to provide a framework for the HRD professional. To advocate a strategic position in corporate decision making processes, the understanding and use of these methods were illustrated as essential. Credibility as mentioned was vital.

In defining needs assessment, reasons were identified for the needs identification action, and why the TNA process fell short of providing the necessary assessment of need. Discussion about the conflict in overarching processes incited caution about the use of semantics. Types of need, tools, and techniques were identified to complete the assessment. Consensus was that the needs identification should encompass the entire organization to produce a better analysis of the organizational system.

In defining strategies, strategic planning and thinking, ideas of mission and long range planning were acquired. HRD's role, in providing information to the strategic planning process for well-defined goals, and in orchestrating organizational development efforts was identified. Systems thinking literature introduced the organization as a system. This system of ways and means, of proactive and reactive approaches to problem resolution, and of viewing the system as sets of integral and interrelated parts provided greater insight to

possible problems.

Literature on organization assessment introduced the human element. In defining organizations as cultures, organization development efforts would be better designed for behavioral, attitudinal, or performance improvements. Awareness of organizational theories and of metaphorical language illustrated the complex, sometimes turbulent nature of the human element in organizational systems.

The models unified the descriptive concepts of needs assessment, strategic planning, systems thinking, and organization assessment. Characteristics of the decision-makers, of the organization, and of the analyst correlated with the macro-level of the strategic planning model. The system approach integrated strategic planning in targeting the system for organizational improvement.

This cohesion of concepts, applications, and processes to define organization assessment from the human resource developer's perspective offered a broad knowledge base. From this base, an organization assessment could be more successfully orchestrated.

Conclusions

The following conclusions illustrate the need for the effective use of organization assessment in solving human performance problems throughout the organization. Training cannot address in one step all of the possible interventions easily identified in an organization assessment. The human or organizational culture factors, which can vary within the system, cannot be changed with one training intervention. As the literature reviewed has shown, if a behavior needs to be changed, cultures within the system must be examined and analyzed because they are value driven and group-wide. Only group consensus supports change. Bullock and Bullock's report on the two surveys clarified that issue.

A proactive needs assessment requires looking at the entire organization as a human system to detect, survey, analyze, validate and solve human performance problems. This approach also dictates long range planning in order to incorporate future organizational requirements. These organizational requirements become the subject of systems thinking. A proactive needs assessment, in this sense, becomes an organization assessment. Definitive elements of their relationships are found in the words essential, plan, strategy and evaluation.

An overview of this study of literature concludes that organization assessment is the best process for solving human performance problems. Only by considering the many aspects of the system through organization assessment can a realistic picture of the organization be seen. This overarching process provides the framework for further investigation utilizing the following tools in rank order: 1) needs assessment, 2) training needs assessment, and 3) needs analysis.

Recommendations

For HRD professionals to become the credible source in organizations, they should first adopt the Ten Critical Elements of an effective HRD. Doing so would integrate HRD with the line to sense the pulse of the organization. Participation in corporate strategy sessions would then support the use of a proactive system approach.

The HRD staff should develop an organization assessment model, much like the framework presented in this study. An all encompassing model that uses metaphor analysis, culture surveys, attitude surveys, and general organization assessment to define the nature of the workplace would provide a rich, well-engineered diagnosis of the human performance system.

performance system.

Needs assessment activities can identify effective problem solving methods.

Incorporating a well-defined needs assessment model like the System Approach Model or the Holistic Planning Model would bridge the prior organization assessment into those models' processes. The appropriate intervention can be determined at that point. The business of HRD in contributing to the profitable goals of the organization through the enhancement of productive performance of its most valuable resource, its employees, would be solidified.

Implications

Credibility is vital. Budgetary constraints within HRD impact the quality of the work any investigative activity can take. If the time allowed for a needs assessment is insufficient to complete a thorough investigation, practitioners could wonder how a department could possibly conduct an organization assessment. The issues are credibility and strategic planning. To establish the connections with the line and to know what is happening in the organization saves investigative time for the HRD staff. To identify with appropriate upper management directors and to become involved in the entire strategic planning of the organization assists the HRD purpose through systems thinking. By demonstrating ethical, diagnostic capabilities once those ties with the line and upper management have been made, credibility can then be established. Cost savings will occur in organization assessment when HRD fulfills an active role in the integration of the organization's mission and of its vision through its most valuable asset, its employees.

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VITA^v

Marla J. Bennett

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT: A REVIEW OF
THE LITERATURE

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Enid, Oklahoma, on July 20, 1951, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Clarence K. Bennett.

Education: Graduated from Hennessey High School, Hennessey, OK in May 1969; received Bachelor of Music Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK in May 1974. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Human Resource Development at Oklahoma State University in December 1994.

Experience: Raised in the country of Northwest Kingfisher County, Oklahoma, the youngest of six children, five of whom graduated from Oklahoma State University; have been a single mother, raising one child; have been employed as a substitute teacher, choir director, research librarian, bookkeeper/analyst, and delivery services technician.