Demandingness as OD Change Agent in Restoring Normal Organisational Life in Abused and Neglected Organisations

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This study was conducted in organisations where the implementation of change failed after repeated attempts. We were asked to look into organisational reality for the reasons why these attempts failed and what kind of other intervention strategy could be helpful in overcoming the arrested OD. The theory of organisational neglect was used as a lens for the diagnosis. In cases where signs of organisational neglect were detected a previously developed and described method for restoring normal organisational life was applied.

In studying the role and the style of the OD change agents in cases of abused and neglected organisations we discovered that a successful change agent has an authoritative and demanding style. This role is different from the focus on implementing solutions as an empirical-rational strategy or coaching the process of change as a normative re-educational strategy. The change agent in abused and neglected organisations cannot work in a normal relationship with members in the organisational system because reciprocity is lost.

This study shows how the change agent works and under what conditions he can be successful.

Keywords: OD change, dark side of organisations, leadership and parenting, abused and neglected organisations, consulting styles

INTRODUCTION

This study represents an actual theme in management literature: the dark side (Shepherd, 2019). The body of research on the dark side over the past 25 years is substantial: for instance the dark side of organisations and management (Vaughn,1996; Hanlon, 2016), destructive leadership (Tepper 2000 and 2007; Padilla et al., 2007; Einarsen et al., 2007; Skogstad et al., 2007), destructive followership (Duffy et al. 2002; Thomas et al., 2017) and organisational trauma (Bailleur, 2018).

A contribution to the literature on the dark side of leadership is the parallel between parenting and leadership resulting in the theory of organisational abuse and neglect. Neglect in the workplace is the prolonged lack or absence of supervision and control of organisational development, which leads to patterns of harmful interaction between management and staff (Kampen, 2015; Kampen & Henken, 2018).

Subsequently, a method to restore from arrested organisational development (OD) was presented (Kampen & Henken, 2019). The current study focusses on the role of the change agent in detecting, diagnosing and intervening in abused and neglected organisations. By 'change agent' we mean the independent consultant that is assigned to tackle this specific organisational problem as well as internal consultants such as HR business partners. The existing literature on consulting styles appeared to fall short on the role of the change agents in abused and neglected organisations (Schein, 1988; Kubr, 2002; Kakabadse et al., 2006; Reitsma, 2013). The research on consulting styles has one overall assumption in common, i.e. that there is a mutual relationship between the consultant and the client system. However, that is exactly what is missing in abused and neglected organisations.

OD STRATEGIES AND THE ROLE OF THE CHANGE AGENT

We use a proven change paradigm in OD literature to distinguish the roles and styles of change agents. One basic assumption is that people are willing to accept change if you explain why change is necessary, what it will bring them and thus convince the members of the organisation that this will work better for them. This is called the empirical rational strategy (Chin & Benne, 1976). The fundamental assumption is that men are rational and that men will follow their rational self-interest once this is revealed to them. In the empirical rational strategy the role of the change agent can be described as 'project manager', 'expert' and 'trainer', who develops and presents the best solutions to the problem at hand, based on facts and evidence based practices. The members of the organisation do not participate in the development of the solutions. They adopt the solution presented when it is in line with the self-interest of a person, group or organisation.

In the 'normative re-educative' change strategy, on the other hand, men are guided in their actions by socially funded and communicated meanings, norms and institutions: in brief by a normative culture. Men must participate in their own re-education if they are to be re-educated at all (Chin & Benne, 1976). So people must participate in the change process. In the normative re-educative strategy the role of the change agent is coaching the process and make people aware of their unconscious and preconscious bases of action. This strategy is aimed at change of norms and attitudes as the initiators of behaviour. The model of changing in these approaches is a cooperative, action research model. By experiencing other ways of interacting people can explore and develop new competences and relations. They can understand and feel what the new situation means. And they develop self-efficacy in handling their role in the new situation. In change literature based on the assumption of the 'normative re-educative' strategy (Chin & Benne, 1976) as best way to change, there is little attention for the fact that learning is a difficult process that needs unlearning. This needs an element of the third strategy Chin & Benne (1976) mentioned, the use of authoritative power in the form of demandingness and supervision.

The process of learning implicates 'unfreezing' from the habits and norms that members of the organisation are acquainted to (Lewin, 1947). This learning process is painful (Schein, 1998) and learning means daring to enter the zone of discomfort (Wierdsma, 2004). This process of unlearning needs help, support and coaching to be able to 'move' to a new desired situation and be able to accept and get used to this situation. In experiencing the situation the new norms 'refreeze' as the new 'normal' that is accepted.

In an abused and neglected organisation (ANO) however, there is no 'normal'. The members of the organisation never learned how to handle change. They suffer from 'consulting fatigue' (Gilbert, 1998). In daily organisational life the members of an ANO receive no feedback on how they perform and get no response to their needs for attention and support. Their superiors do not seem to care how they carry out their tasks as long as they deliver results. This is called a management by exception or a laissez faire leadership style. The subordinates experience that their ideas for improving the ways the work is done are ignored. As a result people find their own way of handling situations in daily organisational life. They develop their own norms about how to act in difficult situations. They learn how the informal organisation works to get things done. They develop strategies how to survive and stick to norms for self-preserving.

So when an empirical rational strategy is applied people can use a range of arguments why this solution will not work in their situation. Their personal needs are neglected by the organisation, so they distrust that

a solution in the interest of the organisation, will be in their personal interest as well. When the normative re-educative strategy is applied in an ANO people do not want the step in the uncertainty of 'unfreezing', because their experience is that they never get attention or response to their ideas and needs. They learned how to survive on their own and became very smart in pretending that they are eager to learn while protecting their own way of doing in organisational life including deviant behaviours and personal advantages.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted as part of consulting assignments for restoring arrested OD. We selected 60 cases where 2 or 3 attempts for organisational change had failed and we were asked to detect the underlying reasons for failure and to propose and conduct a different intervention strategy.

From a perspective of the change agent we were interested in:
- A. What kind of role was adopted by the change agent in the OD strategy that failed?
- B. What kind of role of a change agent is needed in the case of arrested OD?

In contracting the help to overcome the failing OD we demanded to start with an evaluation of the OD strategies applied thus far. We added questions about how the change agents had helped to formulate and implement interventions. As part of this evaluation we discovered that there was a limited variety in styles used by the change agents or consultancy firms.

We collected data from the sources available about performance, HR, written plans, evaluations of the change efforts and had access to daily organisational life, where we could talk to members of the organisation at all levels and observe the behavioural patterns in daily organisational life. We asked managers, from direct supervisors to members of the executive board, to keep a diary, reflect on their findings, analyse the symptoms of organisational neglect and formulate the change effort seen from their role.

By doing this we introduced the first two phases of the method to restore arrested OD (Kampen & Henken, 2019).

We collected organisational narratives and kept a diary about the role of the change agent in applying the phases of the learning cycle of OD (Vaara et al., 2016).

SHORTCOMINGS OF CONSULTING STYLES IN ABUSED AND NEGLECTED ORGANISATIONS

In the evaluation of the failing attempts of organisational change we paid special attention to the style the change agents applied in their approach and implementation of the change. Building on the distinction between an empirical rational strategy for change and a normative re-educative strategy for change we could describe two styles attached to the aforementioned strategies:

Solution Style: The Expert, the Project Manager or Trainer

Offering solutions for specific organisational problems is essential in this style. The work of the change agents is presented in terms of 'services' such as 'business solutions', 'HR solutions' or 'digital transformation'.

The solutions that are offered are based on expertise, data, benchmarks and economic principles. It is a supply market for consultancy firms and training companies. The organisation knows what it gets. The implementation of the solutions is a structured and rational approach with steps and milestones.

The change agent has a tool kit full of evidence-based solutions and instruments. The knowledge in how to work with the solutions is carried over in manuals, handbooks and training. The change agent develops expertise about how to implement the solutions in profit- or non-profit organisations or a specific type of organisation, for instance hospitals.

Our research shows that this style falls short in abused and neglected organisations for the following reasons:

- The need for change is seen as a disqualification of the performance of the staff;
- The solution does not address the real problems members of staff encounter such as the shortage of human resources, the right equipment or the lack of adequate support;
- The solutions ignore malicious leadership such as lack of consideration for people, the nonresponse to emotional needs, the lack of presence of direct supervisors when subordinates need them;
- There is no ownership in adopting the solutions, it feels like something from outside;
- The rational approach ignores organisational reality, the informal organisation, existing emotional stress and the ways people cope with problems;
- The interest of individuals and even groups is not in line with the interest of the organisation as a whole. Their primary interest is in surviving in daily organisational life;
- The cohesion between members of staff is in the aversion of management and 'the organisation', not in achieving the goals of the organisation.

Participative Style: The Process Consultant

This is an approach where everyone can participate in the change process.

The assumption of this style is that a broad-based support contributes to the acceptance of the desired change. All positions and roles in the organisation that can tackle the current problems get a chance to give input and generate ideas of how things can be done better or smarter. All contributions are welcome and are not weighed in advance.

The change agent does not add expertise about what is the best way to solve these problems. His professionalism is not in the solutions but in how the process of communicating, bringing together of ideas is organised. The change agent restrains from using power because the participants themselves need to learn how to settle disputes and work together.

The participants develop a desired situation 'B' by acting in a 'B' process. The change agent facilitates the process without interfering.

Our research shows that this style falls short in abused and neglected organisations for the following reasons:
- The approach assumes that people take responsibility in their role;
- The change agent is not demanding in who participates or to the degree of participation in the process. Individuals or even teams can choose not to participate at all. As a result they are not committed to the outcome;
- Informal coalitions have open possibilities to influence and even frustrate the process of change;
- The social climate is unsafe for newcomers;
- Supporting ideas that counteract the existing balance of power or are a threat to interests of old campaigners are not tolerated;
- Individuals who participate in the desired change are seen as opposing to the dominant norms and they will pay a price and will be excluded from the inner circle or informal group;
- The informal hierarchy is dominant and will preserve their positions;
- The informal leaders will do everything to demonize the intentions of the change agent.

ADDING DEMANDINGNESS TO THE NORMATIVE RE-EDUCATIVE STYLE OF THE CHANGE AGENT

So, on one side of the spectrum is the consultant that offers 'solutions' that worked in other comparable situations and the organisation only has to implement them. And on the other end of the spectrum is 'process consulting' (Schein, 1998) where the consultant does not add expertise or answers but only coaches the learning process of the client who is intrinsically motivated to change attitude and behaviour. In abused and neglected organisations the assumption that a broad-based support contributes to the acceptance of the

desired change is certainly not valid as we experienced in our practice. We also experienced that the solution style approach did not work because of lack of engagement and distrust. We therefore propose to add an element to the normative re-educative strategy that might be overlooked in the OD literature: re-education needs help and guidance and the unfreezing of norms and habits is not self- evident, it needs demandingness, it needs consideration and structure in the process of learning and development. The social change needs an authoritative style of the change agent.

This needs redefining the role of the change agent in guiding this process of unlearning, socializing and re-education. Drawing on literature of child development we describe the role of the change agent as the 'more knowing other' with permission to be demanding (Vygotsky, 1978; Redl & Wineman, 1951). This differs from traditional roles in consultancy.

The Normative Element in the Authoritative Style

In counteracting arrested OD, it is crucial to focus on what has been lacking: routine and leadership. Restoring a normal organisational life is a precondition for organisational change and development. Just as in a neglectful child-rearing situation, the top priorities are to stabilize relationships and restore order to daily life.

Our study showed that in successful intervention strategies the change agent focusses on five interventions to restore a normal organisational life. The help is aimed not only at operational management and employees, but also at support staff, senior management and the board.

Every Member of the Organisation in Position, to Start With Leading Roles

Management plays a pivotal role in the recovery process. It is responsible for the development of the organisation, just as parents are responsible for their children's development. The board holds ultimate responsibility for the recovery. Direct supervisors are the primary change agents because they deal directly with staff. Senior management sets boundaries for daily organisational life, provides support for the direct supervisors, monitors compliance with agreements and is primarily responsible for taking action when direct supervisors fail to assume responsibility.

Support departments are just what their name suggests: their role is to support the recovery process by supplying knowledge, information and tools. They lend management support and make their expertise available to operational management. Support staff such as HR can never play the leading part in a recovery process.

Tackling Transgressive, Dysfunctional Behaviour by People in the Organisation

This pertains to undesirable or impolite behaviour at work which in many cases has gone unchecked for years, such as: frequent absenteeism, lateness, leaving early, taking time off during working hours, intentionally dawdling and taking longer to finish work, not answering phone calls or e-mails, gossiping about co-workers, criticizing direct supervisors behind their back, denying the existence of agreements, not completely finishing duties, and unauthorized trading of shifts with co-workers. Such 'bad' behaviour can increase payroll costs by up to 30 percent (Pearson & Porath, 2009). To get a grip on such work-related dysfunctional behaviour, direct supervisors must explicitly state their expectations regarding behaviour and call out subordinates when they fail to meet them. Sometimes, however, this is not enough. Direct supervisors may have to draw a line, making clear there will be consequences if the transgression recurs.

Restoring Work Routines

Neglected organisations obviously have rules and procedures, agreements and instructions, just like healthy organisations. The difference is that none of them are enforced. Hence, employees start to ignore them or interpret them in self-serving ways. This is how unwritten rules start to replace written ones (ScottMorgan, 1994). Of course, this happens in all organisations to an extent, but while in healthy organisations it may be intended to circumvent excessive bureaucracy, in cases of neglect unwritten rules are primarily aimed at self-preservation. Most organisations hold meetings at regular intervals. In neglected workplaces, attending meetings may have become optional; everyone is free to prioritize another activity.

Another routine is vacation and leave. Unlike healthy organisations, where everyone is supposed to submit their requests before a particular date, neglected organisations have no strict deadlines and a solution can always be wangled for late requests. If not, employees simply call in sick. Job performance evaluations have become empty rituals or fallen by the wayside altogether because management is too busy dealing with other matters.

Restoring work routines is relatively simple because it involves no more than enforcing existing rules and procedures. Yet, this requires a lot of time and attention from everyone involved, particularly direct supervisors. They need to tackle something they have let slide for years. A majority will accept this and ultimately appreciate the enforcement and monitoring with thoughts like: 'Phew. Someone's finally taking charge'. A minority who used to benefit from operational management's laissez-faire approach will resist vehemently, as the return to routines often entails constraints on personal freedom or exposure of incompetence.

Normalizing Interactions at Work

This normalization has nothing to do with correcting the misbehaviours mentioned above, but to the encouragement of positive interactions among co-workers and to humanizing relationships at work. For example: lending a hand when a co-worker has a big backlog, paying a co-worker a genuine compliment, or noticing that a usually talkative co-worker has been uncharacteristically quiet for a few days. Other examples are: speaking up when a co-worker is treated unfairly and when realizing someone has made a mistake. Often this pertains to behaviour that is taken for granted or that people hesitate to bring up because it makes them uncomfortable. One type of interaction that is difficult to broach is the separation of work and private life. This pertains to friendships between co-workers, co-workers taking vacations together, and love relationships on the work floor between co-workers or a supervisor and a subordinate. Interventions are aimed at teaching the team to intervene on their own, in the here and now (Lewin, 1947a+b). This entails that people in the organisation have to learn to reflect on how another person's behaviour affects them and to say this directly to the person involved.

Teams, the smallest organisational unit, play an important part in the recovery process. They are the thin end of the wedge, where the first changes in the organisation's daily life have to take hold. Team dynamics are a microcosm; what is missing in teams is also missing in the organisation as a whole. If the interactions within teams are poor and are found to reflect the situation in the organisation at large, this is a clear sign. It indicates that management and staff do not broach subjects which they fear may lead to conflict, that they do not set limits, and do not correct or encourage each other. In other words, there is no reciprocal interaction between management and staff and the teams are disengaged. At the same time, these teams often form a bloc against 'the enemy,' usually management and the change agent. They are welldefended bastions. In their closedness, they offer their members a type of security, or rather false security, which is not unlike the feeling shared by WWI soldiers in trenches. Within the team, strict social rules apply that every member has to comply with. All it takes is for one team member to stick their head over the top of the trench and the whole team will come under enemy fire. Faced with the outside world, the team denies reality, fights changes tooth and nail and/or shows outward compliance. These team dynamics often coexist in a kind of pseudo-cohesion in which no one dares take anyone else to task.

The recovery strategy must simultaneously:
- put a stop to harmful interactions that keep unhealthy group dynamics in place;
- help people unlearn these interactions;
- encourage the learning of new interactions that make room for employee's needs, qualities, and skills;
- reinforce these new interactions;
- place demands on, and set boundaries for, employees who are unlearning harmful interactions and learning new ones.

Rebuilding Basic Structures and Functional Relationships in the Workplace

This fifth intervention process is the most drastic because it affects the way everyone works. This intervention pertains to standardizing work processes, for example: standard client registration in health care, or recording student results in education. In neglected organisations, such work processes have never been standardized because management always feared staff's reaction to change and avoided making waves. Employees have therefore learned to record information in their own idiosyncratic, unverifiable manner out of concern for their clients or students. Another example of a basic structure in need of rebuilding, and one that was for instance very relevant to the situation at the Public Transport System of Amsterdam, is rosters. In a situation of neglect, management's laissez-faire conduct will have left room for dozens of exceptions based on private problems, rights granted in the past that have become entitlements, requests for leniency, and deals to favour friends or loved ones in the workplace. The original reasons for these exceptions are no longer pertinent; the exceptions have begun to lead a life of their own.

CONTRACTING THE ASSIGNMENT

We saw that the following conditions need to be in place to ensure a successful consulting process. This includes conditions 'from the start' and conditions regarding the relationship between the change agent and the board and internal change agents.

The Board of Directors Wants to Face Organisational Reality

The board of directors has a genuine interest in the origins of the failing of OD-interventions and faces the discomfort of the organisational reality. The board takes responsibility in their role and has a reflective attitude for their own. The board wants to explore the root causes of the arrested OD. The board has taken notice of the concept of organisational abuse and neglect and discovers that it gives tongue and meaning to the phenomena in the organisation. The board is anxious to learn what kind of interventions will work and accepts that this has consequences for their policy and approach to change management. By confronting organisational reality and their own responsibility the board acts as a role model for the other stakeholders.

There is Supplementary Budget to Make Up the Arrears

There is an early 17th century Dutch proverb: 'the costs precede the gains'. This saying applies to the restoring of arrested OD. There is a need to reinvest in people, in systems, in quality of leadership and staff. The costs of turnover in management positions need be met: 40 to 50% turnover in direct supervisors and up to 70% in senior management positions.

The change agent is contracted for at least two years and is a mentor for again two or three years.

Back-up for the Executive Board From the Supervisory Board

This condition implicates that de board of directors will commit to the job of restoring normal organisational life for five years and the supervisory board gives a full support to the board. This means that they stay in role: committed but at distance, not interfering. They can face the inevitable backlash and are aware of undermining activities by stakeholders in and around the organisation. They don't get nervous when the labor unions put pressure on politicians or when members of the organisation find a platform in the media to expose their emotions. The change agent will help the board as well as the supervisory board in how to contain these pressures and negative emotions and to keep the supervisory board informed about what is real and what is fake news.

TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOARD AND CHANGE AGENT

The consultant confronts the members with the organisational reality of the organisation. This requires a trusted relationship between members of the board and the change agent in order to address the following three elements succesfully.

Convinced That This Approach Addresses the Root Causes of the Arrested OD

The concept of organisational abuse and neglect is evidence based, it is however not a recipe, not a solution. The organisation and the change agent engage in a laboriously process that needs full effort from both the commissioning board and the contracted change agent. You can put that on paper, but it will be tested several times during the process. Going through disappointments and depressions will ultimately strengthen the conviction that the approach helps. So both parties need patience, time and the ability to sit on their hands. So the change agent proves to be a trusted partner for the commissioning board. The change agent offers stability, vicinity and in doing that provides social security for the whole system.

The Board of Directors Gives Permission to the Change Agent to be Demanding in an Authoritative Style

This 'permission to act' differs from the given authority of a project manager. A project manager takes over a certain task and the responsibility to realize it from line management, for instance the development and implementation of a new timetable or information system. And after delivering it the task and responsibility is handed over to the line management. The change agent who is guiding the OD has the permission to demand responsibility from the stakeholders in their roles. Being in role is not the case in an abused and neglected workplace, everyone is in a survival mode, so this will be the first step, bringing supervisors and managers in position. In doing this the change agent will stay on their side to help them practice in their role. This is often new and difficult: inabilities will surface. The change agent has permission to confront stakeholders with their inabilities and to demand to step in the zone of discomfort. The board stays in role when stakeholders try to avoid responsibility or even try to undermine the change agents role.

Alignment Between External and Internal Change Agents

Before the external change agent is asked to help, there often has taken place an internal agenda setting process. Internal change agents, such as HR-business partners or coaches, have read about the concept and recognized signs of neglect. When they succeed in introducing this perspective on the existing and often recurring organisational problems to the board and the board takes notice this will be the first step in aligning the role of the internal and external change agent. This alignment should broaden during the intervention process. The external change agent transfers the knowledge of the concept and how to work with the method of OD and the instruments. The external change agent acts as a mentor to the internal change agents.

This cooperation between the external and the internal change agent also offers a more constant proximity because the internal change agent is always available and knows all the hidden dynamics and informal coalitions (Rodgers, 2006). It is also a way of return on investment.

THE PROCESS OF RE-EDUCATION IN THE AUTHORITATIVE STYLE

The method to restore from arrested OD was drawn from intervention research describing the timing and selection of interventions of the change agents (Kampen & Henken, 2019). The method represents the process of re-education that is led by the change agent. The method of OD that the change agents apply, consists of a learning cycle in six phases:

FIGURE 1
LEARNING CYCLE OF OD
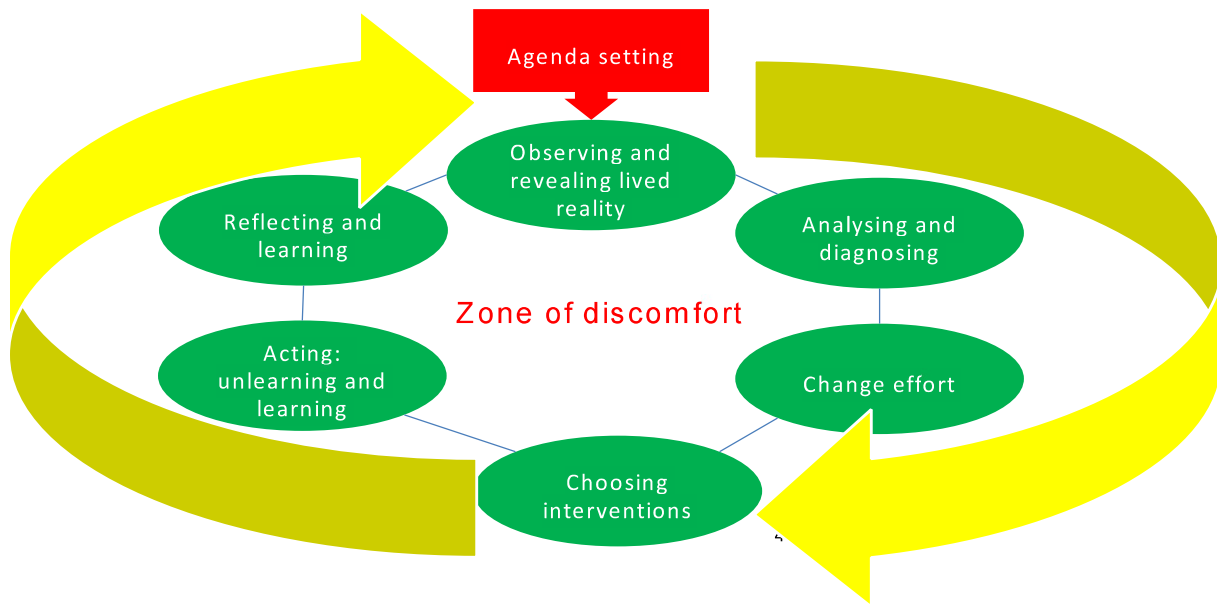
(Kampen & Henken, 2019)

In this research we build on this structure of the six phases to illustrate how the role of an authoritative change agent is carried out in the cases we studied.

Observing and Revealing the Lived Reality

This phase involves uncovering the behaviours, behavioural patterns and habits in daily life of the organisation. This is done by management in conjunction with staff and with the help of the OD change agent. The OD change agent introduces the method of OD to line managers and HR staff. Supervisors keep a diary to document their observations and what they think is remarkable. OD change agents focus in particular on patterns that people in the organisation no longer notice, situations they ignore, or perks they have come to regard as entitlements. Supervisors are urged to look for behaviour that transgresses boundaries. These boundaries may pertain to duties, roles or procedures, but also decency, the line between private life and work, or even personal boundaries, such as when employees intimidate or ignore their direct supervisors, deliberately go over their heads, or even harass them outside office hours. This phase could be detected in the cases as a process of data collection with the aim of looking at organisational reality. This process continues during the learning cycle. The line managers receive a 'multi ride ticket' to consult the external change agent.

Analysing and Diagnosing

This phase is about analysing the patterns of behaviour, the dynamics, the informal coalitions. Members of the organisation are asked to complete a review consisting of questions like: what are the unwritten rules, when are you included or excluded as a newcomer, who sticks to obtained personal favours (in rostering for example), how does the informal hierarchy look like, what are habits and what goes without saying, do people share long histories, do they earn a favour from a colleague or their superior, do colleagues meet outside work etc. The diagnosis includes recognizing the signs of neglect. This will be 'a look in the mirror' as leadership is often lacking. Members of operational as well as senior management have to step into the 'zone of discomfort' (Wierdsma, 2004). The change agent has the permission to act demanding and to confront individual managers who shy away from their role and behaviour.

This phase showed signs and patterns of resistance to face the truth by those responsible for daily affairs and operations. This is often projected on the external change agent, who is said not to understand how things work in this particular department.

Change Effort

The change effort is aimed at restoring a normal organisational life. Setting the norm in 'normal' organisational life means specifying what is 'good' and what is 'bad'. The change agent is a demanding companion to the managers in helping them to discuss the norm, reflect on their leadership behaviour and guide them in personal development and overcome their omissions. The change effort must simultaneously:
- put a stop to harmful interactions that keep unhealthy group dynamics in place;
- help people unlearn these interactions;
- encourage the learning of new interactions that make room for employees' needs, qualities and
- skills;
- reinforce these new interactions;
- − place demands on, and set boundaries for, employees who are unlearning harmful interactions
- and learning new ones.

Implementing this change effort means going to the 'zone of discomfort' as a direct supervisor: it requires a different style, it requires presence, being there when people need you. In addition you will need support and trust from your superiors, the members of senior management. This phase shows a 10 to 20% turnover in senior management because of their management by exception or laissez faire leadership style, their reluctance to change or their incompetence in coaching the team managers. The change agent is obliged to confront the senior managers with their role in restoring the arrested OD. But the decision to replace a senior manager is always on the executive board.

Choosing Interventions

This phase is about intervening in daily reality. Supervisors set clear limits and monitor whether these are transgressed. Direct supervisors who tend to be lenient need help to grow a backbone. Their superiors must be highly adept at distinguishing between stakeholders' inability or unwillingness to change. A person whose inability is offset by a willingness to learn needs intensive coaching and a lot of practice. When someone's inability is caused by incompetence and unsuitability for the role, however, this person's future as a supervisor must eventually be reconsidered.

The change agent participates in daily organisational life, reflects on attitudes and offers help in effecting change in behaviours.

This phase showed an increase in turnover of 40 to 50% in positions of direct supervisors. The change agent is partner in evaluating the HR reviews of the members of management and staff.

Acting: Unlearning and Learning

The fifth phase in the OD method is known as 'set an example' (and stop dwelling on the past). Establishing and following fixed routines brings organisational life to regularity and stability. It makes life, and management's behaviour in particular, predictable again, giving the employees a sense of safety. Interventions are aimed at teaching the team to intervene on their own, in the here and now (Lewin, 1947a+b). This entails that people in the organisation have to learn to reflect on how another person's behaviour affects them and to say this directly to the person involved. Team meetings are held to this end, focusing on:
- increasing the participants' self-knowledge and awareness of their own behaviour;
- increasing the participants' sensitivity to other people's behaviour;
- developing a joint understanding of what constitutes normal and abnormal behaviour in this particular context;
- increasing the participants' awareness and understanding of group dynamics;

- increasing the participants' diagnostic skills in interpersonal and intergroup interaction.

The change agent offers help in timing and developing the team meetings, diagnose the group dynamics and choose the right interventions in group behaviour. The change agent supports the team manager but never takes over the role of team coach. At the end of each session the change agent analyses the group dynamics and how the team manager interacted with his team members.

This phase showed a decrease in motivation and productivity (10 to 15%) of staff members in the first year, a stabilization in the second year and an increase of satisfaction and productivity (25 to 30%) in the third year.

Reflecting and Learning

Restoring normal organisational life is done during working hours. That's why peer reflective sessions are being held on a regular basis. The sessions are facilitated by the change agent in cooperation with the HR business partners. To reflect on the effects of the interventions and the progress being made one- or two-day conferences are held. The change agent offers input from relevant theory of leadership, (destructive) behaviour and OD strategies, in particular the concept of abused and neglected organisations. All the members of the management team participate and reflect on the organisational development and their own leadership. This also includes working as a team. Working on recovery in situations of organisational neglect requires both operational management and consultants to be resilient in the face of an avalanche of negative emotions. Such 'negative capability' (French, 2001) implies remaining patient when at a loss for words, allowing oneself to glean information from an emotion, and being able to absorb anxiety and formulate a palatable response. This means being able to keep a cool head in difficult and hostile conditions. The change agent helps to contain the negative behaviours and absorb emotions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study the role and the style of the change agent are described as inherent to change strategies. The assumption is that different approaches to change need different styles of the OD professionals who implement the strategies. The rich and diverse practice of change management shows however that there are no exclusive categories of styles: often there is a combination of the 'expert'-role and the 'process'role. We found that empirical rational as well as normative re-educational approaches of change failed in abused and neglected organisations. The styles of the change agents respectively as 'project manager/trainer' or 'process consultant' in the previous attempts for organisational change proved to be ineffective because the conditions of trust in intentions for organisational change or motivation to learn are missing.

We found that the style of the change agent in restoring normal organisational life can be described as demanding normative re-educational. So an element of power is needed to organise and conduct a collective learning process that gradually turns destructive social interaction into constructive social interaction. The demandingness also includes norms in social behaviour. We call this an authoritative style. Just like in parenting.

Change agents are commissioned by the board to play this counselling role and receive explicit support from the board.

The demandingness applies to taking responsibility in role for all members of the organisation and to participate in the collective learning process: this is no non-binding.

The role of the authoritative change agent is at risk of taking over the responsibility for OD from line management, comparable to the role of a 'project manager' which is a form of outsourcing the implementation of change.

The role and style of the change agent in an abused and neglected organisation is based on the research of a therapeutic child development climate. This type of climate is comprised of therapists and social workers' attitudes and behaviour, rules, structured time and activities. An organisation is not a therapeutic institution. Nonetheless the setting is a reference for the type of climate that is a pre-condition for recovery of arrested OD. It gives words and meaning to what is needed and the style of the 'organisational worker'. The demanding normative re-educative style is therapy for members of the organisation.

Further research is needed towards the application of the styles of change agents related to the change strategies. How are styles related to different phases in OD? In abused and neglected organisations the recovery is aimed at taking responsibility for tasks and behaviour: this implicates that the change agent can gradually go to a process role.

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