

Conceptual Models in Organizational Consultation

Dale R. Fuqua and DeWayne J. Kurpius

Human organizations are potentially very complex systems operating in even more complex environments. Fundamental to the consultant's effectiveness is his or her ability to conceptualize among these complexities. Several general conceptual models that facilitate the consultant's conceptual work are reviewed. Also, fundamental to the effectiveness of consultation is the consultant's ability to empower consultees conceptually. Several principles related to achieving this objective are presented and discussed. The authors conclude with a discussion targeted to the objective of integrating conceptual models in consultation practice.

Human organizations are potentially very complex systems operating in even more complex environments. There is considerable variability across organizations on key features like size, mission, structure, technology, processes used, and so forth, which further complicates and challenges our efforts to think about organizational consultation. Adding even more weight to the challenge, organizational consultants are asked to provide a wide variety of services including technical expertise, problem-solving skills, education and training, evaluation, change prescriptions, organizational diagnosis, data collection, and utilization, to list only a few common ones. Probably related substantially to the range of needs that organizations are capable of experiencing and expressing, organizational consultants represent many professional training backgrounds including education, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, business, management, and others.

In this complex milieu of organizational consultation, the consultant-consultee relationship often begins with a perceived problem in the organization for which the consultee seeks outside help. Problems perceived by the consultee have typically created some significant discomfort for at least some members of the organization. Organizations rarely seek help to deal with problems that are either comfortable or easy to solve in the current organizational context. Of course, the nature of perceived problems varies extensively. Depending on the general level of organizational functioning, the initial meeting with the consultee is focused on the nature of the problem. In less functional organizations an important focus may be on who is to blame for the problem, why it shouldn't have developed, or disagreement and conflict regarding the nature of the problem. The consultant, fully armed with a problem-solving model, proceeds to guide the organization through a series of process objectives carefully designed to lead to a resolution of the problem. At least occasionally, the model used by the consultant leads to a satisfactory solution, and the relationship is terminated.

It has become a principle in education and psychology that it is far better in the long run to teach others to be effective problem solvers than it is merely to solve a given problem for them. Thus, the more effective organizational consultants will leave the organization with a model that has been learned and can be independently implemented. To induce this effect is no small matter. Most problem-solving models provide for participation in the process, effective use of data, communication, and planning. For many organizations experiencing difficulties, these kinds of activities may require fundamental changes in the way they perceive and conceptualize their organizational environment. The dramatic change required would be obvious to anyone who has tried to implement participatory decision-making strategies, for example, in a traditionally bureaucratic organization.

Although there are many ways a consultant may be helpful to an organization, "the greatest contribution a consultant can make to an organization is to help leaders and members effectively conceptualize the mission, structure, and process of their organization" (Kurpius, Fuqua, & Rozecki, 1991, p. 2). Helping organizational members expand, extend, and adapt their conceptual framework for understanding and managing their organization is an empowering process that can continue to improve organizational performance and the quality of lifelong learning after the consultation contract is completed. Perhaps this is the most certain approach to creating positive, enduring change.

One of the greatest assets in organizational consultation is the wealth of models available for effectively conceptualizing organization structure, change, process, culture, and planning. Individually these models represent a system of concepts in an integrated framework that provides a pattern for understanding, thinking about, and manipulating one or more dimensions of an organization. Some are derived from organizational theory, and others are borrowed from other professional areas. This article was designed to provide an overview of eight conceptual models deemed to be extremely useful in helping organizations and then to provide a discussion concerning how the models might best be used.

SYSTEMS THEORY

The impact of systems theory on organizational consultation has received widespread recognition. "Whether implicitly or explicitly, current models of organizational consultation are based upon systems theory" (Brown, Pryzwansky, & Schultz, 1987, p. 99). Kurpius (1985) observed that systems theory has not only become generalizable across definitions of consultation but also has "considerable influence on the actual intervention selected" (p. 368). Beer (1980) pointed to the potential for social systems models to "provide managers and organizational consultants with a useful framework for collecting data systematically and diagnosing the causes of specific organizational outcomes, attitudes, and behavior" (p. 37). Kast and Rosenzweig (1974) pointed to the utility of systems theory as a common basis for communication among scientists from different disciplines. Regardless of specific applications or definitions, it is difficult to escape Williams's (1978) conclusion that "modern theory views an organization as a total system rather than concentrating on a single aspect without regard for its relationship to the whole" (p. 41).

Interdependence. Definitions or descriptions of systems theory typically include a description of elements of a system and the complex interaction of the elements. Beer (1980), for example, defined systems theory as "the ideas that help explain the dynamic interrelationships of several parts of a larger whole as it interacts with its environment"

(p. 17). Similarly, Kurpius (1985) described a system as "an entity made up of interconnected parts with recognizable relationships that are systematically arranged to serve a perceived purpose" (p. 369). Interdependence, as a central concept in systems theory, is based on the assumption that a human system has elements or parts, and refers specifically to the complex, dynamic interconnectedness of these elements. Williams (1978) reflected the centrality of the interdependence concept by saying, "The systems approach to studying organizations focuses attention on the fact that, because these variables are always influencing one another, we can understand any given part only by understanding how it influences and is influenced by all other continually changing parts" (p. 42).

Structural models. A key factor in understanding and using systems theory is the structural model employed to depict the fundamental structural elements or parts of the system. Fortunately, there are several useful models available (Beer, 1980; Brown et al., 1987; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1974; Williams, 1978; Havelock & Huberman, 1978), and

both the commonalities and distinctions of these models are worth serious study. The structural model described here was developed by Kurpius (1985) and is depicted in Figure 1. The four basic components depicted in Figure 1 include framework, methods, people, and goals.

These basic components are included in most structural models of human systems. Also, note in the figure that each of these four components can be further delineated into common subparts that are rich with meaning in terms of understanding how a human organization functions. The arrows in the center of the diagram are included to indicate that the components are constantly interacting in both a reciprocal fashion and in an indirect fashion. For example, consider how intricately related human motivation is to an element of the organizational framework, the rewards system being employed. Organizational rewards are constantly being shaped by the motivation of people in the system, just as the motivation of organizational members is constantly being shaped by the existing organization rewards. Thus, one can easily see a reciprocal, direct relationship between rewards and motivation. Suppose, however,

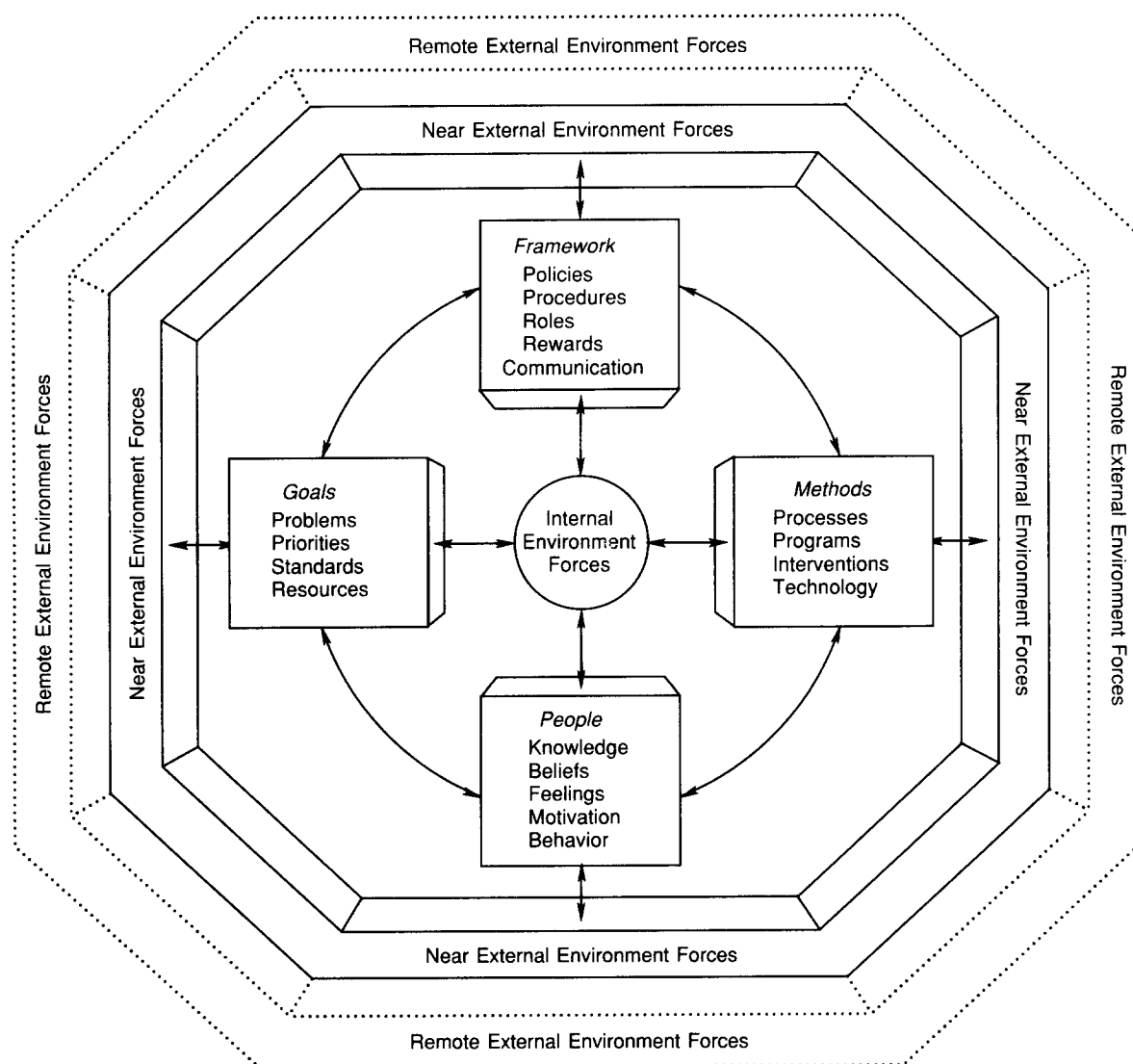


FIGURE 1
Structural Model of a Social System

a new technology is being introduced in an organization, for example, computerized inventory. Such an innovation usually gives rise to motivational issues. The technology, however, may require changes in the organization's framework (e.g., changes in policies and rewards). That is, one might wish to develop new rewards for applications of the technology that, in turn, lead to enhanced motivation. The new technology, then, might directly affect people's motivation (in this case it might appear as counter-motivation), but changes in organizational framework (rewards) might lead to enhanced motivation to apply the new technology. Thus, technological changes could produce direct and indirect effects on motivation of organizational members.

Another key feature of Figure 1 is the inclusion of three levels of environment—the internal environment, the near external environment (e.g., the community), and the remote external environment (e.g., international commerce factors that affect the organization's market). This emphasis on the influence of levels of environment introduces the concept of "open systems" to be discussed subsequently.

The structural model depicted in the figure has many applications, some of which are addressed separately. A structural model like this one, however, can be a major aid to the consultant in conceptualizing the complexities of the consultee organization. Perhaps of greater long-term importance, the model may provide the consultees with a broader, more systematic way of thinking about their organization. Clearly, as Beer (1980) suggested, the model provides "a useful framework for collecting data systematically and diagnosing the causes of specific organizational outcomes, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 37).

Open systems. It is essential that the consultant understand that human organizations are "open systems" (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1974; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Every human organization is constantly being changed by its environment, sometimes dramatically and sometimes in extremely subtle ways. For organizations to be effective, they must constantly monitor key indicators of their environment. Effective planning for the longer term is greatly facilitated by a thorough appreciation of evolving environmental influences. In addition, every organization has some potential to influence important dimensions of its environment. The long-term viability of most organizations will hinge to some extent on how effectively they anticipate and shape factors existing in their environment. "Open systems" is a key concept in systems theory that emphasizes the critical interaction of the environment and the organization.

Equifinality. Equifinality is a key concept in systems theory. Given the complex, highly interactive nature of components of a system, many different paths may lead to the same result (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1974). Brown et al. (1987) similarly contended that many alternative solutions exist to any given problem. From a systems perspective, this concept is empowering. Because of the dynamic interdependence of components of a human system, the point of origin of a particular intervention is less important. If low staff morale is a primary problem, intervention could focus on the psychosocial component (e.g., job enrichment), or the organizational framework (e.g., policy changes, enhancing communication, revising rewards), or the goals component (e.g., revising or expanding organizational priorities). From the systems perspective, improving staff morale may be accomplished through interventions with several different organizational components. Not only does the concept of equifinality allow for considering among several intervention targets but it also allows for constructing powerful multidimensional strategies that can be applied simultaneously at different points in an organizational system.

From a different perspective, the principle of equifinality is a reminder, because each component of a human system is so interdepen-

dent on every other that an intervention at any point in the system will almost certainly create effects throughout the system. Consultants who work with organizations need to consider the broader potential impact of changes in any component of a system. Planning efforts should include information and contingencies designed to monitor and minimize the negative impact of unintended effects of intervention. This point also reinforces the principle of including all those to be affected by an intervention in the planning process.

Structural change versus human behavioral change. Traditionally, helping professionals have focused primarily on efforts to change individual behavior through counseling and psychotherapy. The needs of any society, in fact, are met to some extent by enforcing some degree of conformity by individuals to societal expectations. Given the interdependence of human systems, however, focusing only on changing the behavior of individuals is inefficient and often futile. One of the key and most promising features of systems theory is that it provides for structural change in addition to behavioral change (Aplin, 1978).

Referring back to Figure 1, framework, goals, and methods collectively describe the structural aspects of an organization. The people component, of course, includes the strictly human dimensions of behavior, motivation, attitudes, and so forth. In systems theory, then, changing people is only one option. As Kurpius (1985) pointed out, "Addressing the system's goals, framework, and methods of operation is a better predictor of *lasting change* than is the practice of changing people" (p. 369). Practically speaking, changing organizational structure may prove to be more effective and more efficient, at least in some cases. Philosophically, adapting organizational structure to meet the needs of people is a useful alternative to changing people to accommodate organizational structure. Systems theory provides a useful model for determining whether structure or behavior (or both) are to be targeted for change.

DATA-BASED MODELS

Every organizational consultation uses, either formally or informally, data and information in supporting change efforts in one way or another. There is, however, a substantial body of literature supporting a "data-based" model of consultation. Newman and Fuqua (1984) defined *data-based consultation* as the following:

... the simultaneous and systematic application of methods of inquiry and strategies of human systems intervention. It is distinct from applied research because it emphasizes the human interactional process. Survey-guided development is one of the activities considered to be data-based consultation, and it represents one of the major models for organizational intervention. (p. 206)

Fortunately there are many useful models in the literature for conducting data-based interventions (French, Bell, & Zawachi, 1978; Harvey & Brown, 1982; Hausser, Pecorella, & Wissler, 1977; Nadler, 1977; Stufflebeam, 1973; Van De Ven, 1980; Varney, 1977). The specific purposes and methods of these models vary somewhat, but each includes a series of ordered process objectives for guiding data utilization. Newman and Fuqua (1984) presented a seven-stage process model for data utilization in the organizational context based on the models from the literature.

1. Planning

Development of a systematic plan that is based on specific objectives and addresses time-line, methodology, resources, and related planning issues

2. *Data collection* Application of methods identified in the plan to gather targeted data
3. *Analysis of data* Careful examination, analysis, and evaluation of each aspect of the data collected
4. *Synthesis of data* Integration of information from the data into more global interpretations
5. *Data feedback* Shared information generated with those involved in the change process to refine interpretation of data and to facilitate participation
6. *Follow-Up* Evaluation of the effectiveness of the process of data collection and use with respect to the original objectives
7. *Taking action* Planning, implementation, and evaluation of organizational action based on the new information available

In addition to this process model for data utilization, there are many principles for improving the probability that data-based strategies will be successful meeting organizational objectives. Several of these principles relate directly to human factors in the consultation process and are listed as follows.

1. *Planning* Data that are collected and used according to a systematic plan developed by consultees before initiating data collection are more likely to be successfully compiled and used.
2. *Ownership* Increased involvement of consultees in data planning, collection, and use serves an important motivational function in facilitating appropriate action by consultees based on the data.
3. *Accessibility* Open access to data and information, once compiled, lessens resistance to its use.
4. *Communication* A structure that allows for open discussion of information throughout the organization provides for more complete interpretation and reduces resistance to subsequent change intervention.
5. *Inclusion* Horizontal and vertical inclusion of organizational members in the data-based process facilitates communication, increases the use of data, and can serve to reduce resistance to change.

Although these human factors and process principles are fundamental to effective data utilization, the characteristics required of the data are equally important. The most essential characteristics of the data underlying data-based organizational interventions are listed and described as follows.

1. *Quality* The data must be technically adequate (i.e., reliable and valid) to be useful in guiding the change process.
2. *Adequacy* Information once compiled must provide an adequate response to the purpose it was designed to serve. When questions remain following feedback of information, additional data are required.
3. *Relevance* Data collection can be an expensive, burdensome process. Consequently, it is advisable to limit data collection to identifiable functions.

4. *Cost efficiency* "Shot-gun" approaches are rarely effective and can create stress for consultees. The resources available for re-allocation to data collection and processing should be carefully considered to reduce the organizational stress encountered. Realistic data-based plans will include cost-efficient use of resources.
5. *Presentation* Data collection and processing must be designed to meet the needs of those who will use the information. Complex statistical presentation of data, for example, will often be inadequate in communicating meaning to consultees without statistical training.

Data-based models may serve as the primary mode of consultation or may serve only to facilitate the implementation of another model in organizational interventions. Certainly, data-based models have proven to be effective in organizational diagnosis, planning, problem solving, and organizational development in general. One should consider, however, the potentially far-reaching effects of teaching organizations to use data-based methods that include (a) developing more open and effective communication systems, (b) providing training to organizational members in data-based methods, (c) clarifying leadership needs of the organization, (d) enhancing staff morale and cohesiveness, and (e) increasing the motivational level of staff by increasing ownership in organization outcomes (Newman & Fuqua, 1984).

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Kurt Lewin (1951) originally developed the model for force field analysis, and it has since proven to be extremely useful in the context of analyzing and managing organizational problems. It is a relatively simple model, but one that is highly adaptable and easily expandable. Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the model.

In general the model depicts change as some intentional movement from a current situation (problem) to a futuristic, more desirable state (goals). The current state of affairs is maintained by an "organizational equilibrium" in which two sets of forces are observable. The "driving forces" represent the organizational and environmental factors that support the targeted change. The "restraining forces" might be characterized as barriers to the change, factors that tend to keep the organization in a static condition. An equilibrium exists as long as these two sets of forces are maintained in some degree of static balance.

Given this model, there are two basic intervention approaches, one consisting of adding driving forces and the other consisting of eliminating or reducing restraining forces. Of course, the more powerful approach to facilitating change would be to add driving forces and eliminate restraining forces simultaneously. By so doing one introduces a state of disequilibrium. The disequilibrium remains as long as change is in progress. As the goals of the intervention are realized, the organization returns to a state of equilibrium under the new conditions.

This model basically conceptualizes change as movement across time, which is useful. The model can easily be expanded to represent successive approximations of the desired state of affairs. The concepts of equilibrium and disequilibrium in a social system are realistic reminders of the psychosocial implications of change. In particular, the force field analysis model is an excellent one for organizing and systematically delineating problem definition, the development of goals, the development of an intervention strategy, and an analysis of relevant factors in the organizational context. The model is so easily visualized that it has often been used as a group planning model.

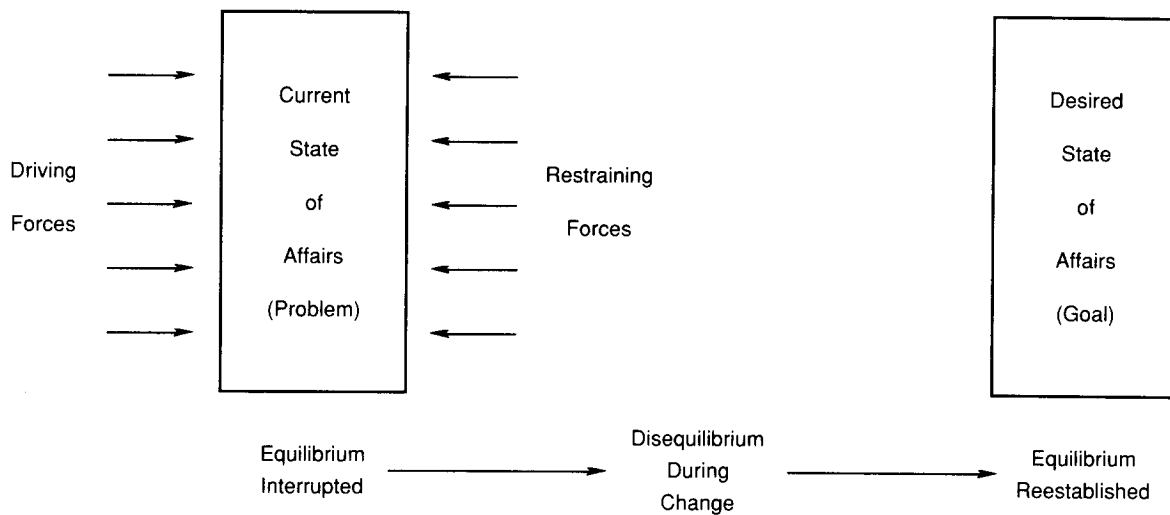


FIGURE 2
Lewin's Force Field Analysis

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is a model for organizational change and development that has become highly visible during the past decade. As compared with other planning processes, it has been characterized as (a) being more process than product oriented, (b) utilizing visions that are distinct from the steps required to actualize those visions, (c) emphasizing involvement of as many stakeholders in the process as possible, (d) representing change as a significant force and not simply as an obstacle, (e) being fluid, long term, and intuitive, and (f) being committed to the future survival of the people involved in the planning process (Bryson & Roering, 1987; Davis, 1982). Strategic planning is perhaps best characterized as futuristic and visionary. Lorange (1980) suggested that strategic planning should provide answers to four general questions:

1. Where are we going (mission)?
2. How do we get there (strategic program)?
3. What is our blueprint for action (action plans)?
4. How do we know if we are on track (internal and external analysis)?

Fox (1987) similarly characterized planning in terms of six general questions as follows:

1. Where are you (operationally, environmentally, and in terms of current capacity)?
2. Where do you want to go (assumptions and forecasts, possibilities, objectives)?
3. What opportunities or constraints can you identify that will affect movement toward desired ends (federal and state laws, competition with other providers, new technologies)?
4. How do you get there (policies, strategies, resources)?
5. Who is responsible (organization, staffing, delegation)?
6. How do you monitor results (priorities, outputs, budgets, controls)?

Systematic, well-developed responses to each of these questions can produce a written document designed to guide an organization as it

develops toward a futuristic state. The consistent potential for internal and external influences to arise emphasizes the importance of having an adequate strategic plan. This is an obvious feature of successful strategic planning efforts.

Kurpius, Burello, and Rozecki (1990) presented a strategic planning model that has been field tested with a variety of organizations. This strategic planning process is summarized in Figure 3. The elements of the model represented in Figure 3 are briefly described and discussed as follows.

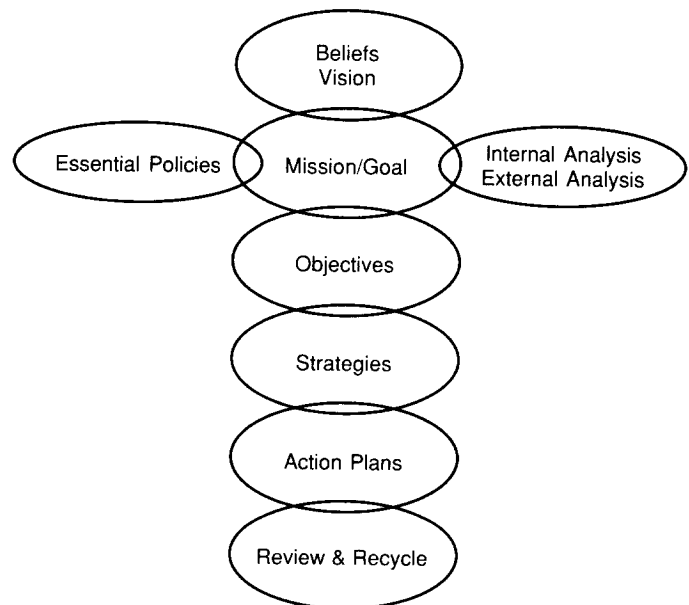


FIGURE 3
The Strategic Planning Process

1. *Sharing beliefs and creating the vision.* Strategic planning begins with the sharing of individuals' beliefs relative to the organization. It is critical that these beliefs be made explicit. Extensive participation by stakeholders is essential if the full range of relevant beliefs is to be identified. As a pool of beliefs held by members is developed, discussed, and prioritized in terms of the organization's future, the foundation for the strategic plan is laid. Kurpius et al. (1990) emphasized that "the beliefs are a formal and precise expression of the organization's values, code of ethics, and overall convictions. The focus is not on long, rambling, hazy philosophical statements" (p. 5).

The development of the vision is a creative process that requires maximum participation. The vision is a futuristic image reflecting the purposes and hopes of the entire organization. It is necessary to suspend evaluative thinking in the early stages of developing the vision. The vision should correspond to the most important beliefs of the organization. It is critical that the vision result from a consensus-based process.

2. *Mission, goals, and objectives.* The mission statement is a succinct statement of the organization's vision. The mission statement serves the purpose of *operationalizing* the vision and focusing the organization's attention and energy. Again, consensus regarding the mission statement is critical. Goals and objectives may be used to make the mission more explicit and functional. At the level of objectives, the mission and goals of the organization should be expressed in observable, measurable terms.

3. *Internal and external analysis.* Concurrent with the development of the mission and goals of the organization, a thorough analysis of factors internal and external to the organization that will potentially affect progress toward the mission must be conducted. Both predictable and unpredictable factors should be addressed. When concrete information exists, it should be systematically gathered and assimilated. "Specific external factors to be addressed in the external analysis include demographic, political, economic, social, and technical factors that affect movement toward the mission" (Kurpius et al., 1990, p. 6). The internal analysis focuses on the organization itself including culture, resources, structural issues, personnel, and so forth. There are two key objectives during these analyses: (a) to effectively anticipate predictable events and (b) to provide adequate adaptability in the plan to respond to unpredictable events.

4. *Essential policies.* Also concurrent with the development of the mission and goals, the essential policies represent the basic parameters required to implement the mission. It is difficult to overestimate the role of essential policies in operationalizing the mission (Cook, 1986). The overriding purpose of essential policies is to align member behavior with the achievement of the mission.

5. *Strategies.* Strategies represent the means by which specific objectives are achieved. The allocation of resources is a key element in developing and deploying strategies to achieve the desired objectives. Strategies "represent the general method by which the mission and objectives are translated into operational terms" (Kurpius et al., 1990, p. 7).

6. *Action plans.* Action plans are clear, specific directions for implementing all of the preceding steps in the strategic planning process. Action plans must specify the person who is responsible, resource allocation, strategies and methods, and outcome evaluation plans for each objective.

7. *Recycling.* As action plans are implemented, there will inevitably be new information becoming available. Objectives may need revision. Essential policies may need to be revised or extended. Resources may prove to be inadequate for specific strategies. Unpredictable events may require fundamental shifts in the strategic plan. Recycling emphasizes

that strategic planning is an open-ended, ongoing process subject to continual revision, adjustment, and improvement.

This overview of strategic planning reveals that it has elements in common with other change models like decision making, problem solving, and process consultation. It is unique, however, in its primary focus on the future, on the development of a vision of what the organization might be, rather than what it isn't. It frees organizational members from the traditionally reactive position of problem solvers. It provides a structured format for creating desired futuristic states. The strategic planning process can lead to organizations better prepared for the future, or at least more adaptive ones.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING

Nelson and Burns (1984) introduced the High Performance Programming (HPP) model as follows:

The HPP model illustrates concepts that assist in transforming an organization into a high performance system. The structure of the model provides a nested framework for diagnosing current levels of performance and for understanding the potentials for performance at the highest levels. (p. 226)

The substance of the model consists of four "organizational frames" or functional types of organizations:

1. The reactive organization
2. The responsive organization
3. The proactive organization
4. The high-performing organization

The culture of each type of organization is characterized along 11 dimensions including the following:

1. Time frame
2. Focus
3. Planning
4. Change mode
5. Management
6. Structure
7. Perspective
8. Motivation
9. Development
10. Communication
11. Leadership

The HPP model focuses primarily on how people can transform organizations from the lowest level (the reactive organization) through the frames to the high-performing organizational level. The comparisons and contrasts of the frames along each of the 11 cultural dimensions provide a wealth of ideas, easily applied not only to organizational diagnosis but also to organizational intervention or transformation. The four types of organizations are characterized briefly as follows.

Level 1—The reactive organization. The reactive organization is one badly in need of renewal. The organization lacks a shared focus, and management is preoccupied with assigning blame for poor outcomes. Members spend a disproportionate amount of time avoiding

aversive consequences, and leaders spend much of their time enforcing policies that often lack relevancy to any common purpose.

Level 2—The responsive organization. The responsive organization is more functional, having achieved some clarity of purpose and goals. The organization has some capability to adapt to changing environmental circumstances. Leaders actively coach members in the direction of organizational goals, and some cohesion has developed among work teams.

Level 3—The proactive organization. The proactive organization focuses on the future. Leadership has become focused on developing purpose for the organization. Members focus on the quality of their contribution to organizational successes. The organization is actively involved in planning and development strategies.

Level 4—The high-performing organization. Leaders in the high-performing organization are fully invested in empowering organizational members. There is a common focus on organizational excellence. Communication throughout the organization is relatively unrestricted. The organization is in a constant state of evolution guided by a common vision. Organizational members prize highly their identity with the organization, and the opportunities for self-actualization are substantial.

In the HPP model the goal is realized by helping the organization transform along the 11 cultural dimensions. Consider the leadership dimension as an example. The organizational frames are associated with leadership activities as follows:

1. The reactive organization——“Enforcing”
2. The responsive organization——“Coaching”
3. The proactive organization——“Purposing”
4. The high-performing organization——“Empowering”

To move from the proactive level to the high-performing level, leaders must move beyond maintaining an integrated, focused purpose for the organization. To reach the high-performing level, leaders must learn to engage in activities that empower individual members, which requires a focus on the potential of individuals and support for individual growth and development well beyond that required for routine performance.

We hope this brief overview “wets the appetite” of the reader for the HPP model. The original work on the model (Nelson & Burns, 1984) is worth reading. The combined potential of HPP for organizational diagnosis and intervention makes it thought provoking and useful. The general idea that organizations can be transformed through successive developmental levels is one worth considering.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The concept of organizational culture is a relatively recent one that has achieved some popularity as a very general label for social and behavioral patterns observed within organizations. It currently lacks common definition, however, as Schein (1990) noted in his opening remarks in an excellent article on the topic:

To write a review article about the concept of organizational culture poses a dilemma because there is presently little agreement on what the concept does and should mean, how it should be observed and measured, how it relates to more traditional industrial and organizational psychology theories, and how it should be used in our efforts to help organizations. The popular use of the concept has further muddled the waters by hanging the label of “culture” on everything from common behavioral

patterns to espoused new corporate values that senior management wishes to inculcate. (p. 109)

Schein went on to offer his definition of organizational culture as (a) a pattern of basic assumptions; (b) something invented, discovered, or developed by a group; (c) something learned in trying to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration; (d) something that has worked well enough to be considered valid; (e) something that is taught to new members; and (f) something learned that offers the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Obviously, this definition includes many important dimensions of an organization's functioning. Ibrahim (1985), Schein (1985), and others have used variations of categories introduced by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) to more clearly elucidate some of the underlying dimensions of organizational culture. These include the following.

1. *Human nature.* How is human nature defined and categorized? (a) What value does the organization place on doing the right thing? (b) Are individuals viewed as inherently good or bad?
2. *Human relationships.* How are human and organizational relationships defined? (a) Hierarchical—ordered positional succession, (b) collateral-mutual—primary attention given to group welfare, and (c) individualistic—individual goals paramount.
3. *People and nature.* What is the relationship of people to nature? (a) Harmony—organization harmonious with nature and (b) subjugation and control—people exploiting natural resources.
4. *Time orientation.* What is the temporal focus within the organization? (a) Past—focusing on past successes, failures, and activities; (b) present—focusing on the present situation only; and (c) future—valuing a focus on strategic planning for the future.
5. *Activity orientation.* What is the modality for self-expression? (a) Creativity and self expression valued, (b) goals and tasks valued as most important, and (c) profit and success valued as most important.
6. *Homogeneity versus conformity.* How does the organization view its members? (a) Homogeneity valued and encouraged, (b) diversity and distinctiveness prized and rewarded, and (c) individual differences tolerated.
7. *Teaching and instruction.* How does the organization acculturate its members? (a) Individuals expected to learn the culture independently, (b) groups formed that teach and model cultural norms, and (c) assimilation more highly valued than acculturation.

The systematic analysis of organizations along these dimensions might provides a reasonable framework for beginning to understand the culture of the organization. Of course, each of these dimensions could be further reduced to smaller categories yielding a wealth of specific questions worth answering in the process of organizational analysis.

There are three very good reasons why consultants need to be aware of and sensitive to these dimensions of organizational culture. In the consultant role, one is somewhat of a “guest” in the organizational setting. As Schein (1990) pointed out, one of the major functions of organizational culture is to reduce the level of discomfort that organizational members feel when they are unsure of what to expect. Although consultants sometimes may need to create discomfort, in general, as a guest or outsider, consultants who are sensitive to the cultural expectations of an organization will respect the comfort needs existing in the organization. Perceived problems (or solutions) in an organization are often framed in terms that are consistent with some aspects of an organization's culture. To be helpful in interpreting competing problem definitions, the consultant may need to develop some insight regarding cultural dimensions. Finally, particularly in dysfunctional organizations, specific dimensions of the existing culture may represent the

primary problems being experienced. This is often the case for organizations with a stable culture and a rapidly changing external environment.

An important feature of organizational culture is that its most important aspects are not directly observable. Of course, certain aspects of organizational culture can be observed (e.g., dress codes, communication patterns and styles, and leadership styles). The most critical aspects of culture (assumptions and values), however, are not at all observable, at least not directly. Furthermore, even though organizational members learn to behave consistently with a set of assumptions, they may not be able to identify or articulate them. In dysfunctional organizations when conflicts exist regarding values or assumptions, there may be powerful sanctions actively imposed for even discussing them.

Because of the unobservable, covert nature of some dimensions of organizational culture, this is a rich area for exploration during the consultation process. Initially, consultees need to develop an awareness of the key, relevant aspects of their own culture. The limiting and enabling aspects of the culture need to be examined. The relationship of culture of perceived problems needs to be analyzed. The effects of organizational culture on the organization's continuing ability to respond to environmental demands are key in strategic planning. Finally, the effects of organizational culture on the quality of life for organizational members is so profound that active attention to it is of substantial social concern in every organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE CYCLES

Organizations are not static, but instead have natural life cycles that are somewhat predictable. All organizations have a beginning and an ending, and there are some meaningful concepts that can give order and relationship to the intervening development stages of organizations. Figure 4 represents a model of potential developmental stages of organizations.

The developmental cycle is divided into four ordered quadrants that correspond to four organizational change stages including (a) development, (b) maintenance, (c) decline, and (d) crisis. Also, the arrows

through the center of the figure represent the belief that organizations have the potential to engage in renewal during the decline substages. That is, organizations experiencing decline can strategically recycle to a developmental stage. Of course, this normally requires an awareness of the symptoms of decline.

Prior to describing the four quadrants in Figure 4 in more detail, we need to offer several qualifying points. The developmental stages proposed are not as distinct or discrete in practice as the figure might suggest. There are, of course, wide variations in the rate of movement through these developmental stages. Even the specific characteristics of each stage might vary substantially across organizations. Still, the model can accommodate the idiosyncrasies of organizational cases well. The actual value of the model is in aiding consultees in conceptually organizing their unique developmental history and in conceptualizing appropriate renewal strategies.

What follows is a more detailed description of each of the numbered quadrants in Figure 4.

Quadrant 1. Early development on any project or organization tends to be confusing and disorganized with many uncertainties. Goals, roles, leadership, priorities, time lines, and problems are some of the common things that need clarification and structure. As gains are made, progress moves toward mid-development where entry in Quadrant 2 occurs.

Quadrant 2. Entering Quadrant 2 is the start of recognized progress. Members have a better understanding of purpose, progress, and overall mission. Less anxiety exists, collegialism is experienced, and feelings of success are beginning. Toward the end of Quadrant 2, most of the development and testing are completed, and the product (e.g., curriculum, programming, policies, products) has been field tested and is ready for institutionalizing. Thus, one moves into early maintenance. Maintenance is important and needed so that finished products can be put into recognized operational practice. In the later maintenance stages, however, Quadrant 3 is early decline.

Quadrant 3. Late maintenance is a period when decline will occur if one does not improve the product (e.g., revise courses in the curriculum, retrain staff). As indicated by the arrows in Figure 4, effective

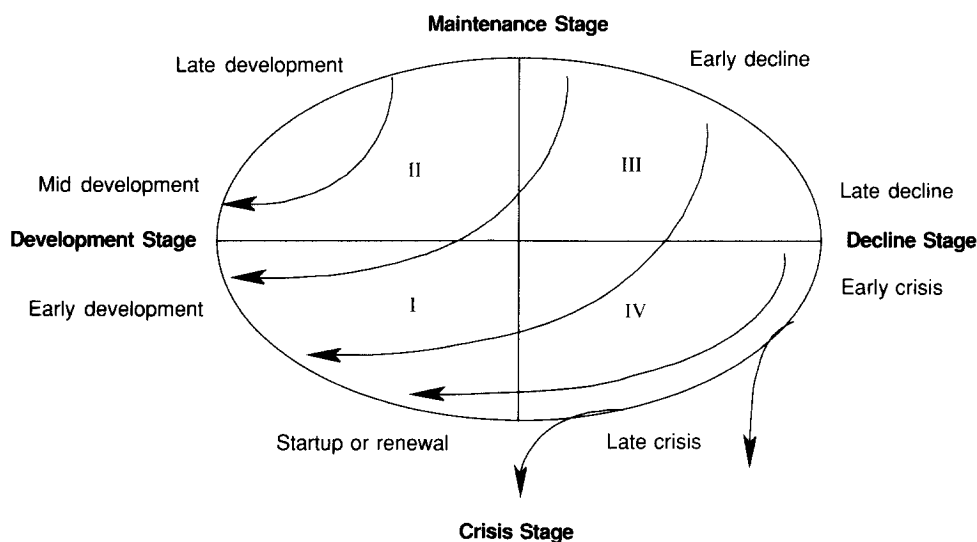


FIGURE 4
Organizational Change Cycles

organizations recycle back to development so that minor changes can be made. Less effective organizations hang on to the old practices and continue to move into decline. During early decline some members are clinging to old practices while others are attempting to change and improve the old product. Sometimes early development and late decline manifest similar behaviors (i.e., disagreement, unclear goals, and conflict). If recycling to development does not occur, ones goes past the midpoint of decline and enters Quadrant 4, which is crisis.

Quadrant 4. Early crisis is a time when it is becoming certain that change is essential. Some members think it is too late while others believe that it is still possible to move to development and salvage the product. If rapid movement does not occur in early crisis, it is common for outside forces to take over. That is, someone from the outside will take over the operation in some way by cutting funding, removing staff, or even discontinuing the project.

With this overview of organizational change cycles in mind, one might point to a few critical conceptual issues in using the model. First, the overriding function of the model should be to help consultees more effectively conceptualize their organization and their strategic options. External environmental factors will influence the development of the organization throughout the cycle. The vulnerability of the organization to threatening external influences, however, may be expected to be higher during some stages (decline and crisis) than in others (maintenance). Corresponding in a similar way, the organization's capability to capitalize on environmental opportunities will also be greater during some developmental periods. The range of strategic options available to the organization in achieving renewal may be reduced across the declining and crisis stages. Consequently, the timing of renewal efforts may be essentially important.

PARADIGM SHIFTS

It has been nearly 30 years since Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduced the concept of paradigm shifts in his now classic work titled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The concept of paradigm shifts is not at all new to the counseling profession (Newton & Caple, 1985). Kuhn used the concept of paradigm to describe the fundamental conceptual framework people use to give order, meaning, and explanation to their observations of the world around them. As long as the prevailing paradigm served these purposes, it could remain intact. As observations and knowledge accumulate that cannot be adequately explained by the existing paradigm, however, a paradigm shift must occur. The paradigm shift represents a change in the fundamental conceptual framework people use to give meaning to and explain their observations. The shift in paradigms involves retaining elements from the old paradigm while assimilating new elements to accommodate the previously unexplainable phenomena.

Organizations exist in constantly changing environments. Even the internal environment of an organization can change fairly radically because of personnel changes, changes in leadership, or an evolving resource base. Many of the competitive dilemmas facing organizations in the United States were unthinkable even 25 years ago. Because so many organizational realities are constantly changing, historical conceptual frameworks for managing organizations are increasingly proving to be inadequate. What is often needed is a fundamental change in the conceptual framework that organizations use, or borrowing Kuhn's concept, a paradigm shift.

It is common to be asked into an organization as a consultant only after its typical problem-solving strategies have failed. Consultees in these organizations are often confused about why their traditional

methods have failed (but they may not want to discuss it openly). One way to explore their dilemma is to examine the general paradigm or conceptual framework they use in giving meaning to their observations regarding the organization. When this existing paradigm is inadequate to explain their current realities, the consultant may facilitate a paradigm shift.

Helping organizations achieve a paradigm shift is a challenging task. During the change from one paradigm to another, there will be significant confusion (Newton & Caple, 1985). Significant personal threat can be involved in letting go of familiar concepts in favor of new ones. At the most dysfunctional level, organizational members confronted with organizational collapse may even find the demise of the organization preferable to giving up concepts that have worked well in the past.

Assuming that adequate motivation does exist to engage in paradigm shift thinking, how does the consultant practically facilitate the process of this change? Several basic process objectives need to be accomplished.

1. Consultees need to deliberate and explicate the current paradigm being used. What are the most fundamental beliefs being used in conceptualizing the organization's current dilemmas? Is the predominant paradigm common across members? Whose beliefs are predominant? Why? Are multiple paradigms being used? If so, what conflicts have been experienced?
2. Careful delineation of current demands on the organization needs to occur. How do current dilemmas differ from historical ones? What are the specific elements of current organizational dilemmas?
3. The current realities that are unexplainable by the existing paradigm must be identified. What changes have occurred? In what specific ways is the current paradigm inadequate? Which new realities have to be addressed?
4. The consequences of failing to change need to be identified? What happens to the organization if we choose not to change? Are the consequences tolerable? Who is most affected by the consequences?
5. The resources necessary to change need to be identified. What information is necessary? What support is available for individuals affected by the changes? What organizational dimensions (e.g., policies) need to be changed?
6. The models, theories, and concepts available to alter the current paradigm need to be identified. What have other organizations done in response to these shifting realities? Are new concepts required? How much change is enough?
7. Consensus regarding the required changes in beliefs, concepts, and assumptions needs to develop. The paradigm shift will affect people throughout the organization. Everyone affected by the paradigm shift needs to be aware of proposed changes.

Consultants often have the opportunity to help consultees "fix" problems. This kind of help can often be accommodated by the existing paradigm. When paradigm shifts are required, consultants have a unique opportunity to influence the longer term management of the organization. Ultimately, helping organizations to effectively understand and manage their shifting realities is a worthwhile goal.

APPLYING CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Knowledge of individual conceptual models for understanding and changing human organizations has to be carefully operationalized if significant human benefit is to be achieved. This operational process, of course, begins with the selection of models to be operationally applied in the consultation relationship. Obviously the selection and application

of models will reflect the values, training, experience, assumptions, and skills of the consultant, all of which will have some real impact on consultation outcomes. The assumptions, beliefs, values, perceived and real needs, skills, and preferences of the consultees, as well as other characteristics of the organization, however, all need to be carefully considered in selecting and operationalizing a conceptual model. In our experience, it is frequently the case that even skilled consultants can enter a consulting relationship with a well-developed, powerful, conceptual model that may fail because of a lack of relevance to the phenomenological experience of consultees. This perspective leads to our first principle for applying conceptual models.

Principle 1 The selection and application of conceptual models should be carefully tailored to the perceived needs and characteristics of consultees and their organization.

The second principle was suggested in the introduction of this article.

Principle 2 The consultant's private use of powerful conceptual models is consistent with service provision contracts, but limits the consultees' assimilation of information and concepts.

Consultants are frequently contracted to provide a service, expertise, or some other product with fairly limited parameters. Certainly, conceptual models are appropriately applied in the consultant's own thinking about an organization in providing specific services or products. Unless the conceptual model is made explicit with the consultee, however, little impact is possible regarding how the organization is understood and conceptually managed internally.

Principle 3 The ultimate goal in applying conceptual models is to expand the consultees' conceptual framework, thereby empowering them well beyond any specific problem and intervention context.

Any individuals that have much history in a specific organization can become entrenched in traditional ways of viewing the organization's assumptions, beliefs, methods, members, and so forth. In the extreme case this entrenchment can come to represent "defensive-routines" that prevent members from learning new, more functional behaviors, and thereby reinforce the internal mechanisms that created the problems in the first place (Argyris, 1991). To free organizational members from these kinds of "conceptual prisons," the consultant must facilitate changes in their fundamental conceptual approaches to understanding the hows and whys of their organization.

Principle 4 The most effective strategic processes will continue well beyond the consultant's exit.

Principles 3 and 4 are closely related. An expanded conceptual framework will enable organizational members to understand and manage issues differently across situations and contexts. In fact, this kind of empowerment not only leads to increased effectiveness across situational issues but also provides cognitive mechanisms that can be applied to organizational development long after the consultant's contract is completed.

Principle 5

The most powerful conceptual applications will involve a developmental intervention including teaching, cognitive modeling, collaboration, and feedback.

Assuming the ultimate goal in the application of a model is to change the consultees' conceptual framework, a social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) approach suggests that several elements of the learning experience should be used. The concepts and more general framework for the concepts must be learned (teaching). Observation of the consultant applying the concepts (cognitive modeling) should provide details of the thought process as well as analytical outcomes. Participation in the application of a given model (collaboration) provides an opportunity to practice and develop the operational skills necessary to apply the model. The social learning theory sequence can be completed as consultees receive feedback on their applications.

Principle 6

Conceptualizing organizational issues is more powerful as a shared process.

Ensuring appropriate participation in applying conceptual models is a useful principle from three different perspectives. First, when more organizational members are exposed to concepts, ideas, information, and conceptual frameworks, more individual learning and development can occur. Second, including more members improves the probabilities of having accurate information, breadth of perspective, and so forth available during the process. Thus, the adequacy of planning outcomes can be enhanced. Third, increased participation is a well-known strategy for meeting certain critical process objectives (e.g., ownership, communication).

Principle 7

The acquisition and application of multiple conceptual models is more likely to produce effective outcomes and long-term empowerment than is any single model applied alone.

Given the potential complexity of organizations, their subsystems, and their environments, unidimensional approaches to change are not often very successful. Although some conceptual models are complex and multidimensional (e.g., systems theory), it is simply not possible to identify one conceptual model that can adequately address the range of needs experienced within complex organizations. Although we are aware that some consultants have established successful practices by marketing fairly well-focused interventions, this approach requires great care in selectively targeting organizational clients. We believe that consultants who have a thorough exposure to many different models for conceptualizing organizational change are much more likely to be in a position to be helpful in a general sense to their client organizations. A logical extension of this belief is that organizational members who have a broader conceptual framework for managing their particular organization are also more likely to be effective.

INTEGRATING CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Gallessich (1985) identified a major dilemma facing consultants:

Consultation practices have expanded far beyond their theoretical and empirical foundations. Early conceptualizations no longer guide practitioners nor do they answer critical questions regarding the nature of consultation and its variants. To break this impasse a new paradigm is needed, and research priorities must be shifted so as to address basic

questions regarding the nature of consultation. One approach to the current dilemma involves the unification of existing concepts and practices through construction of a meta-theory. (p. 345)

She went on to provide three examples of the kinds of questions that need to be addressed: (a) What are the universal characteristics of consultation? (b) What parameters are common to all consultation approaches? (c) What are the fundamental variants in the universe of consultation?

An adequate response to these questions and the dilemma they address would truly be an ambitious but worthwhile task. In a much more applied context, however, consultants need to be able to utilize concepts (if not unify them as Gallessich suggested) across conceptual models. This task can be accomplished by implementing an eclectic model much as is currently done in eclectic counseling and psychotherapy. This would be true whether one views "good eclecticism" as the construction of a hybrid theory from elements across models or merely as the application of concepts drawn from different theoretical sources.

One might prefer, however, to conceptualize the task; there are very real, practical reasons that the integration of conceptual models during organizational consultation will prove to be useful. This can be easily understood in terms of the complexity of organizations, the differing practical value of the models, or both. Frankly, we are much more aware of the need for integration of the models in practice than we are of any totally satisfactory way to accomplish this objective. Still, the principle of integration of models is so important in the practice of consultation that we believed it important to raise the issue.

The reader is asked to consider, as an example, the application of the data-based model presented earlier in combination with the systems theory model. It is relatively easy to see that the systems model could provide a useful way to explore the different sources or kinds of data to be targeted. As another example, the force field model presented can easily be incorporated as a part of any problem definition process. Another example of integrating models can be seen if one superimposes concepts from organizational culture over the psychosocial component of the systems theory model. The role of organizational change cycles

obviously should be incorporated in the process of implementing strategic planning.

Table 1 was prepared as a more concrete example of how several of the models already presented might be practically applied during the process of organizational diagnosis.

The Nelson and Burns (1984) organizational types from the HPP model are listed across the top of the table, and five other models already presented are listed down the left-hand side of the table. The individual entries in the table are meant to be prototypical questions that might be used to explore the organization's status. Concrete answers to these and related questions might be useful in determining what type of organization is involved, what kinds of problems are being experienced, what model(s) might be most useful, and so forth.

Gallessich's (1985) characterization of the status of theory in consultation continues to be accurate. Practicing consultants, however, now need to respond to complex organizational needs from diverse conceptual models. We believe that an immense potential exists for integrating appropriate conceptual models on a case-by-case basis. In the longer term there can be no doubt that consultation theory and research need to be heavily focused on developing and testing more comprehensive theory.

REFERENCES

- Aplin, J. C. (1978). Structural change versus behavioral change. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 56, 407-411.
- Argyris, C. (1991). Overcoming client-consultant defensive routines that erode credibility: A challenge for the 90's. *Consulting Psychology Bulletin*, Fall, 30-35.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Beer, M. (1980). *Organization change and development: A systems view*. Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing.
- Brown, D., Pryzwansky, W. B., & Schulte, A. C. (1987). *Psychological consultation: Introduction to theory and practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bryson, J., & Roering, W. (1987). Applying private-sector strategic planning to the public sector. *American Planning Association Journal*, 53, 9-22.

TABLE 1
Integrating Conceptual Models

Conceptual Model	Operating Frames			
	Reactive	Responsive	Proactive	High Performing
Systems Theory	Where is the breakdown? What subsystem is causing the problem?	Who's responsible for what?	How do we refine our system for the long term?	How does a system achieve flexibility?
Organizational Culture	Who is causing us pain and why?	How do we resolve conflict?	How is our culture affecting us?	How do we manage our culture for improving the quality of life?
Strategic Planning	How do we alleviate the pain in the short term?	What needs to work better? How do we correct it?	How do we develop a plan for moving forward?	How does strategic planning become part of our system?
Organizational Change Cycles	How did we "bottom out" developmentally?	How do we cope with these circumstances?	How do we get to the developmental phase?	How do we monitor and influence normal developmental cycles?
Paradigm Shift Thinking	How can we relieve stress without changing our thinking?	What thoughts need to be adjusted?	Is our thinking congruent with our purposes?	How can we continually update our knowledge and our thinking in a changing world?

- Cook, W. (1986). *The planning discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Management Group.
- Davis, S. (1982). Transforming organizations: The key to strategy is context. *Organizational Dynamics*, 10, 64–80.
- Fox, H. (1987). Strategic planning in small firms. In W. King & D. Cleland (Eds.), *Strategic planning and management handbook* (pp. 557–568). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- French, W. L., Bell, C. H., & Zawachi, R. A. (1978). *Organization development: Theory, practice and research*. Dallas, TX: Business Publications.
- Gallessich J. (1985). Toward a meta-theory of consultation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13, 336–354.
- Harvey, D. F., & Brown, D. R. (1982). *An experiential approach to organization development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hausser, D. L., Pecorella, P. A., & Wissler, A. L. (1977). *Survey-guided development II: A manual for consultants*. La Jolla, CA: University Associates.
- Havelock, R. G., & Huberman, A. M. (1978). Social systems and innovation systems. In R. G. Havelock & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Solving educational problems: The theory and reality of innovation in developing countries*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Ibrahim, F. (1985). Defective cross-cultural counseling and psychotherapy: A framework. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13, 625–638.
- Kast, F. E., & Rosenzweig, J. E. (1974). *Organization and management: A systems approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Katz, K., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations*. New York: Wiley.
- Kluckhohn, F. R., & Strodtbeck, F. L. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kurpius, D. J. (1985). Consultation interventions: Successes, failures and proposals. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13, 368–389.
- Kurpius, D. J., Burello, L., & Rozecki, T. (1990). Strategic planning in human service organizations. *Counseling and Human Development*, 22, 1–9.
- Kurpius, D. J., Fuqua, D. R., & Rozecki, T. G. (1991). The power of consultants conceptual thinking: Paradigms, models and processes. *Consulting Psychology Bulletin*, Fall, 2–12.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper.
- Lorange, P. (1980). *Corporate planning: An executive viewpoint*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Nadler, D. A. (1977). *Feedback and organization development: Using data-based methods*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Nelson, L., & Burns, F. L. (1984). High performance programming: A framework for transforming organizations. In J. Adams (Ed.), *Transforming work* (pp. 226–242). Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.
- Newman, J. L., & Fuqua, D. R. (1984). Data-based consultation in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 30, 206–212.
- Newton, F. B., & Caple, R. B. (1985). Once the world was flat: Introduction and overview. *Journal of Counseling and Developing*, 64, 163–164.
- Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist*, 45, 109–119.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (1973). Educational evaluation and decision making. In B. R. Worthen & J. R. Sanders (Eds.), *Educational evaluation: Theory and practice* (pp. 148–160). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Van De Ven, A. H. (1980). A process for organizational assessment. In E. E. Lawler (Ed.), *Organizational Assessment*. New York: Wiley.
- Varney, G. H. (1977). *Organization development for managers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Williams, J. C. (1978). *Human behavior in organizations*. Cincinnati, OH: Southwestern Publishing.

Dale R. Fuqua is a professor and chair of the Department of Applied Behavioral Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater. **DeWayne J. Kurpius** is a professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology at Indiana University, Bloomington. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Dale R. Fuqua, Department of Applied Behavioral Studies, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.

