

**Action/Leadership Logics and Action Inquiry for Personal and
Organization Development with Diverse Groups**

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Abstract

This paper documents the use of frameworks and tools of Adult Development Psychology in an Organization Development Intervention (ODI). Specifically, the intervention used Action Logics and Leadership Logics as the framework for understanding adult development, and Action Inquiry as the tool for development. Harthill's Leadership Development Profile and the Centre for Creative Leadership's Leadership Culture Survey were used as measurements of individual and team development, respectively.

The assessments showed that two of the three teams, and 14 of the 28 participants, made significant shifts in their development, and reported enhanced personal and team effectiveness. Nine other participants said that the process had been impactful for them. In addition, a number of the participants shared that they felt the process had helped them in their practice of OD.

The findings of this research illustrate the applicability of Adult Developmental Psychology frameworks and tools as a methodology for personal, team, and organisation development. In light of the outcomes of this study, this method of OD could be used by those who want new ways of navigating through the fast changing and complex environments that many organizations are now facing.

Keywords: Adult Developmental Psychology, Stages of Development, Action Inquiry, Action Logics, Leadership Logics, Leadership Development, Organization Development, Leadership Culture Survey, Leadership Development Profile.

Organizations of all types from around the world are facing an increased pace of change and higher levels of complexity (Charan, 2009; O'Hara & Leicester, 2012). Traditional approaches to getting results and resolving issues, which used to be successful in the past, are losing their effectiveness (Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Cannon, 2011).

Adult Developmental Psychologist Robert Kegan (1994) believes there is a mismatch between the expectations of organizations in today's world, where people are supposed to be self-initiating and able to think and act in the highest interest of the entire enterprise versus the levels of psychological development in most adults.

Given these circumstances, it is more important than ever that people and organizations utilize more expansive strategies in order to succeed in the current environment (Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Torbert, 2004; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

New Forms of Leadership Required

Due to the increased complexity of the environment that many organizations now face, new forms of leadership are required (Bradford & Cohen, 1998; Kupers, 2007; Petrie, 2011). There has been an evolving trend from leader as hero, to leader as collaborator and enabler between two or more people to get things done (Marion & Uhl-Bein, 2011; McGuire & Rhodes, 2009). This new perspective of leadership stresses the individual as well as the group dimensions of leadership, and is seen as any individual or collective process or action whose aim it is to improve the organization in some way (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009; Volckmann, 2005). In this new way of thinking about leadership, it is not something limited to people in a position of authority or positional power (Petrie, 2011).

What does this new type of leadership look like? Cleveland(2002) states that effective individuals in the future will be reflective and will “positively enjoy complexity and constant change”. Carson, Tesluk and Marrone (2007) point out that high levels of complexity and ambiguity in the environment call for more shared leadership, especially among professionals. The notion of leadership as a culture rather than in a position is becoming more relevant in today’s workplace environment (Kotter, 2001; McGuire & Rhodes, 2009).

New Forms of OD (Organization Development) Required

What is the current state of OD, and how are OD practitioners doing in supporting healthy organizations and doing capacity-building in today’s more complex environment? Olson and Eoyang (2001) believe that the old OD style of diagnosis and rational planned change has limitations, and propose a new paradigm of OD. They state that the new paradigm needs to be better aligned to a world with higher levels of complexity than when the field was first created. Similarly, Bushe and Marshak (2009) support a more dialogic approach to OD, one that focuses on the meaning making frames of the client rather than the traditional model of simply diagnosing and treating a system. While this new approach to OD does not invalidate the previous ways of practicing OD, it does recognize the limitations of the diagnostic model. In the dialogic method, members of the organization do their own meaning-making of how their structures, processes, strategies, leadership, and culture fit their operating context (Bushe & Marshak, 2009).

Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this research project was to investigate how Action and Leadership Logics could support both personal and organization development. This research objective was explored through the following four questions:

1. What benefits, if any, will be experienced by the individuals who participate in this project, and what measurable changes will be found in the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) assessments?

2. What benefits, if any, will be experienced and reported by the teams who participate in this project, and what measurable changes will be found in the Leadership Culture Survey (LCS) assessments?
3. How will the interplay of individual and team dynamics support development, and how will the results of the LDP and LCS co-relate to each other, and if so, in what ways?
4. How can the stages of development frameworks and tools support OD consultants to be more effective?

Literature Review

For individuals as well as organizations, the capacity to manage complexity, ambiguity, and change is critical for success (Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Torbert, 2004; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Anderson and Anderson (2001) say that effective organizations welcome questions and challenges to ensure that complex issues are adequately addressed, and they resist the temptation to over-simplify situations and solutions.

How can people and organizations better learn and grow and be better able to manage complexity and change? Adult Developmental Psychology provides a useful and comprehensive set of theories and tools for supporting human's ability to handle the challenges of life (Berger, 2012; Brown, 2011; Cacioppe & Edwards, 2005; Phaffenberger, 2005; Torbert, 2004).

Adult Developmental Psychology

Kegan (1994) defines Adult Developmental Psychology as a psychological evolution of meaning-making systems, and goes as far as to call human beings meaning-making machines.

Developmental theory has been around since Plato's Republic (Loevinger, 1998), the philosophies of Buddha (Page, 2011), and the Vedic principles of a lower and higher self (Harung, Heaton, & Alexander, 1995). Cook-Greuter (2000) and Wade (1996) both point out that many religions with origins in Asia have long

believed in spiritual practices that support shifts in consciousness. In the west, developmental views have been present in writers such as Hegel and Baldwin, sharing their views on the process of human development (Pfaffenberger & Marko, 2011).

The modern version of developmental psychological theory began with a focus on children, and how they develop thinking abilities (Coon & Mitterer, 2008). Jean Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1972) pioneered child development stages, but his stages focussed on cognitive development (McCauley, Drath, Palus, & O'Connor, 2006), and ended at around age 18 (Kegan, 1982; Cook-Greuter, 2000). It has been noted that adult development is different from child development, as child development is more biological and adult development is more experiential (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). Thus, adult development does not come automatically; it requires some combination of experiences and reflections. For example, how much a person learns from a relationship or job situation can vary widely, depending on the person's ability to reflect, to inquire into the meaning and lessons of the experiences.

Maslow (1971), a humanistic psychologist, popularized the idea of stages of adult development, with a hierarchy of needs. While Maslow's theory is well-known, there is not much empirical evidence to support that this is actually how people develop (Marshall, 2009). Erik Erikson, Jane Loevinger, Lawrence Kohlberg, Clare Graves, and Robert Kegan are among the psychologists who have put forward theories and frameworks on how adults develop (O'Loughlin, 2011). Each researcher offered frameworks to explain stages of adult development, and then tried to understand how some adults were able to develop to the mature wisdom of exemplary human beings, while others did not (Berger, 2006).

Each of the researchers identified distinct stages (otherwise labelled as meaning-making/sense-making systems) that are more effective in dealing with the complexities of life than the preceding stages (Cook-Greuter, 2004). The stages unfold in a specific sequence, and that each stage transcends and includes the

previous stages (Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007; Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2003; McCauley et al., 2006; Palus & Drath, 1995; Pfaffenberger & Marko, 2011). A movement to later stages does not invalidate previous stages, just as running does not invalidate walking or crawling (Palus & Drath, 1995).

While growing older comes with more life experiences and lessons learned, it is still often insufficient to meet the challenges of the times (Kegan, 1994). Lasker and Moore (1980) made an important distinction between phases of central life tasks (school, marriage, having children, retirement, etc.), as opposed to stages of adult development, measured by maturity of thought. Stages of life are different than phases, as they look at the degree to which people integrate multiple perspectives, admit uncertainty, tolerate ambiguity, examine beliefs, suspend judgements, and adjust opinions when new information becomes available (Granello, 2010). While most adults grow through the various phases of life, shifts in the stages of development are quite rare once people reach adulthood (Day et al., 2009; Harung et al., 1995; Manners, Durkin, & Nesdale, 2004).

Developmental Theory in Leadership and Organization Development

When it comes to managing complexity and high rates of change, the field of adult development provides many insights into how people can better navigate the challenges they face at work (Kegan, 1994).

Rooke and Torbert (2005) believe that Action Logics are more important than leadership philosophy or styles in determining effectiveness in times of uncertainty. Laske (2006) noted that our work with people ought to focus less on behaviors and more on people's meaning-making systems, which would include how people make sense of their environmental conditions. While modifying behaviors might create short-term results, shifts in a person's sense-making system builds his/her capacity for flexibility, creativity, and cognitive abilities (Laske & Maynes, 2002).

People at later stages of meaning-making are able to frame environmental conditions as opportunities as opposed to threats (Sharma, 2000). Brown (2011) says that people with more expansive meaning-making abilities are more capable of effectively managing complexity, by creating solutions with sustainable impact, as opposed to reacting to situations in a way that creates unintended consequences. Brown goes on to say that people with more conventional ways of making sense of the world may not be able to fully adapt to the complex challenges that many organizations now face, like finding successful ways to integrate environmental concerns with profits or influencing stakeholders when one has no formal authority. Brown proposes that the concepts and ideas of Adult Developmental Psychology can support people to better cope in these new contexts. In the realm of consulting, Rooke and Torbert (2005) conducted a 10-year study which showed that CEOs or their lead consultants needed to be at later stages of adult development in order to create organization transformation.

These Adult Developmental theories and frameworks have not been used by the business world until today because, because these theories are complicated and take time to understand and apply, but that now academics and practitioners are coming together to make this work more accessible (Berger, 2012).

Framework and Tools used in this Research

Key elements of this research are Action Logics, Leadership Logics, and Action Inquiry.

Action Logics

Torbert (2004) named the stages of development “Action Logics”. Action Logics are defined as the various principles used to construct our understanding of self, our environment, our way of being in the world, and how we react when our safety and are threatened (Herdman-Barker & Torbert, 2011). The more expansive a person’s Action Logic (or one’s sensemaking or meaning-making system), the more effective one is in dealing with complexity and uncertainty (Torbert, 2004).

Torbert used the word “Logic” rather than “Stage” because he felt that the word “stage” has a static, structural, mental quality to it, whereas the Action Logics are meant to be more dynamic and include a wide range of ways of being in the world (Herdman-Barker & Torbert, 2011).

The labels used for the Action Logics, ranging from the earlier/lower to the later/highest stages, are Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, and Alchemist (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). The descriptions of the Action Logics can be seen below in table 2, along with the strengths of each Action Logic and the research percentages, from the Harthill database of approximately 5,000 managers who have taken the LDP.

Table 2. Overview of Action Logics (adapted from Rooke and Torbert, 2005)

Action Logic/ Stage	Characteristics	Strengths	% of research sampling profiling at this action logic
Alchemist	Disintegration of ego-identity; blends opposites; creates “positive-sum” games	Good at leading society-wide transformations	1%
Strategist	Aware of paradox and contradiction; process AND goal oriented	Effective as a transformational leader	4%
Individualist	Self-curious; aware that how one sees the world impacts how they experience the world	Effective in consulting roles	10%
Achiever	Longer term goals; open to feedback; appreciates complexity	Well-suited to managerial roles; action and goal-oriented	30%
Expert	Interested in problem solving; seeks continuous improvement	Good as an individual contributor	38%
Diplomat	Observes protocol; avoids inner and outer conflict; conforms to group norms	Good at supporting others, helps to bring people together.	12%
Opportunist	Short-term focus; can be manipulative; rejects feedback	Good in emergencies and in sales opportunities.	5%

Table 2 gives a brief description of each of the Action Logics, as well as the percentages of the primary Action Logic of those managers who have taken the LDP. While each person at times acts in any of the Action Logics, each individual has a center of gravity Action Logic where one tends to spend the most time in one's thinking and decision-making (Torbert, 2004). The percentages are indicative of the numbers of people at each of these primary, or center of gravity, Action Logics.

The earliest stage is at the bottom of Table 2, Opportunist. Opportunists, who make up 5% of the respondents, tend to be short-term focussed and can be manipulative. As people progress to later stages, they move up to Diplomat, then Expert, and so on. When someone is assessed at an Achiever Action Logic, it means that his/her primary meaning-making system would be described in the achiever profile. Because this person has already been in the Expert, Diplomat and Opportunist modes, he or she could easily access those Action Logics. On the other hand, this person may not access the Individualist Action Logic very often, because this is a stage later than Achiever stage.

Assessing Action Logics, or Individuals Stages of Development

Measuring someone's complexity of thinking is a challenging and important process (Krettenauer, 2011). Laske (2006) says that assessing someone's stage of development is both an art and a science, and that becoming a reliable assessor can be taught and learned.

A person's primary Action Logic can be assessed with the LDP (Leadership Developmental Profile) from Harthill Consulting, www.harthill.co.uk. While no person operates from a fixed stage or Action Logic (Drewes & Westenberg, 2001), the LDP assesses a primary and range of action logics where a person operates in his or her life. Cook-Greuter (2004) says that the LDP is the most reliable, valid, and cost-effective assessment in the field of developmental psychology. For instance, a study done in 2008 was conducted on 805 LDP profiles. Between the two raters involved, in only one of the 805 profiles was a

profile assessed at more than one Action Logic difference (Torbert and Livne-Tarandach (2009). While validity is somewhat more difficult to ascertain, a number of experiments that have shown high external validity of the LDP, using in-basket exercises, feedback exercises, team projects, and research on organization transformations (Fisher et al., 2003; Herman-Barker & Torbert, 2011).

Transitions to Later Stages

A transformational shift in this research study is defined as a move to a later stage of development, and an expansion is exemplified by an increase in effectiveness within current stages. No one person needs to move to a later stage, because for an organization or society to effectively function, it helps to have people who operate within defined roles and structures (Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007; Graves, 2005). At the same time, organizations and societies can benefit from having members who can effectively deal with large amounts of ambiguity, complexity, and change (Cook-Greuter, 2000), and who are able to embrace the complexities of the world we live in (Graves, 2005). Petrie (2011) indicates that the future of development will have more emphasis on vertical development.

McGuire and Rhodes (2009) describe vertical stage development as a three-step process. First, a person awakens to new possibilities of sensing and doing things. Secondly, the person then challenges and unlearns assumptions and tests new assumptions, and then in the third and final step, new ideas get stronger and begin to overtake the previous ones. This is how individuals can shift to a later stage of development, and how they can do it proactively.

Palus and Drath (1995) also list criteria for readiness for meaning-making shifts, in the context of developmental programmes. Some considerations for readiness include openness to new ideas, complexity of job challenges, stability of current life circumstances, and environmental conditions. The fundamental criteria for shifts seem to be when persistent inconsistencies occur in a person's life that cannot be incorporated into their current sense-making paradigm (Baron & Cayer, 2011; Hy & Loevinger, 1996; Kegan, 1982). For most adults, it is usually

life circumstances and some adversity that account for a person searching for a new way of making sense of what is happening in their life (Berger, 2012; Kegan, 1982).

Leadership Logics

CCL (Center for Creative Leadership) has been working with Torbert and his ideas for a number of years (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009). McGuire and Rhodes combined their interest in a more collectivist approach to leadership with their understanding of Torbert's Action Logics, and they created what they call "Leadership Logics". The Leadership Logics are a condensed version of the seven Action Logics, which were shown in table two. McGuire and Rhodes describe the three Leadership Logics as follows, along with the corresponding Action Logics:

1. **Dependent-Conformer** (includes the Opportunist, Diplomat, and Expert Action Logics): In this stage people create a social system where colleagues rely on each other to understand and construct reality.
2. **Independent-Achiever** (includes the Achiever and Individualist Action Logics): In this stage people are driven for results, are independent thinkers, and are highly adaptive to the environment.
3. **Interdependent-Collaborator** (includes the Strategist and Alchemist Action Logics): At this stage the culture is such that people are able to be transformers, even in the midst of change and uncertainty. They are able to create win/win scenarios across complex systems.

While these three categories seem separate from each other, there is actually a significant amount of overlap (McCauley, Palus, Drath, Hughes, McGuire, O'Connor, & Van Velsor, 2008). Some amount of all three areas is helpful for teams, to be dependent on each other when necessary, to be independent at times, and to work inter-dependently (Smith & Berg, 1987).

While organizations operate in all three Leadership Logics, there does seem to be some benefits for an organization's culture to be more in the

Interdependent Leadership Logic, especially those facing more complex challenges. McCauley et al. (2008) found that such organizations had higher levels of information sharing, more shared sense-making, and more improvements to systems and processes. They also found that Interdependent organization cultures resulted in enhanced organization capabilities to address system-wide challenges. McCauley and the team note that not everyone in these organizations saw the Interdependent culture as beneficial. They report that some people found some of the processes to be messy and complex. However, as has been explored, complex times call for more dynamic approaches (Anderson & Anderson, 2001). The journey to Interdependence is not an easy one, and some people are more adept for managing the transition than others (McCauley et al., 2008).

Appaneal, Chrobot-Mason, Cullen, and Palus, C. (2012) believe that collaborative leadership cultures can span across organizational boundaries, so not only are there strong teams in such an organization, but strong relationships across functions and with other stakeholders.

Assessing Leadership Logics, or Team Stages of Development

Team stages, or Leadership Logics, can now be assessed with an instrument called the Leadership Culture Survey (LCS). CCL has developed the LCS to assess the overall levels of meaning-making in an organization. The LCS is an assessment of 33 elements of organization culture. Each of the 33 items has three choices, each one representing a cultural dimension of the Leadership Logic (Dependent-Conformer, Independent-Achiever, and Interdependent-Collaborator). Rather than a simple choice of the three answers, raters assess each of the three elements, to provide a robust picture of the culture elements of the Leadership Logics. This construct of the LCS is consistent with the idea that teams operate across all three areas, with some overlap in their types of interactions.

Action Inquiry – Definitions and Tools

What is Action Inquiry? Most people know what action is, and what inquiry is. What happens when you put these two together into Action Inquiry?

Torbert (2004) describes it as “a way of simultaneously conducting action and inquiry, as a disciplined leadership practice that increases awareness and effectiveness, and eventually can lead to a transformation to a higher/later meaning-making stage”. Regardless of positional power, anyone can practice action inquiry. Action Inquiry has both short and long-term benefits. The short-term benefit is to be more thoughtful and effective in our decisions and interpretations of our world (Fisher et al., 2003). After all, it is not experience in itself which creates development and wisdom, but the ability to learn from those experiences that matters most (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The long term benefit is that the practice of Action Inquiry can lead to expansions and transformational shifts in Action and Leadership Logics (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009; Simcox, 2005; Torbert, 2004). Practicing Action Inquiry can also help develop energy and vitality (Cannon, 2011).

The practice of Action Inquiry is informed by three tools, The Three Perspectives of Knowing, the Four Territories of Experience, and the Four Frames of Speech (Torbert, 2004). The first tool to be examined is the Three Perspectives of Knowing, which ensures that various perspectives are considered possibilities for sense-making and action. A picture of the Three Perspectives of Knowing, with short explanations, is seen in Figure 1.

THREE PERSPECTIVES OF KNOWING



Figure 1. Three Perspectives of Knowing, adapted from Torbert (2004)

Looking through the lenses of the Three Perspectives of Knowing, defined in figure 1, ensures a rigorous process for exploring and assessing personal, team, and organization development (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Hartwell & Torbert, 1999). A team can be mindful to blend all three ways of knowing into their conversations, to ensure a balance of perspectives. Simcox (2005) says that looking at the world through the subjective, inter-subjective, and objective frames enables people to be more present to what is happening.

The second tool of Action Inquiry is called the Four Territories of Experience. Covering all four territories across all three Perspectives of Knowing ensures that our thinking is comprehensive. A description of the Four Territories is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The Four Territories of Experience (source: Torbert, 2004)

By paying attention to all four territories outlined in Figure 2, a person is likely to gain a wide range of insights. The territories, in order from the top to the bottom of the pyramid in Figure 2, are as follows: the fourth territory means paying attention to our intentions and vision; the third territory is where we pay attention to strategies, and sense-making modes/action logics; the second territory focuses attention on skills, behaviors, and patterns; and the first territory explores

the impact and consequences that we are experiencing in the outer world (Torbert, 2004).

Benefits of the mindful practice of Action Inquiry with the four territories include: deeper understanding and refinement of our intentions, expanded capacity to develop effective strategies that reflect our aspirations, more skilful action, and sharpened awareness of impact on others (Fisher et al., 2003). Fisher et al. go on to note that eventually, with enough practice and skill, we can become capable of refining any of the four territories in the moment of action. A person with mastery of the four territories can diligently notice outcomes, and check on the intentions, strategies, and actions that might be causing those outcomes. If necessary, adjustments can be made at any of the territories. Rigg and Trehan (2008) note that the four territories of experience make it more manageable for people to do the difficult task of critical reflection at work, as the model provides a structure for strategic thinking and dialogue.

The third tool of Action Inquiry is a model for engaging in mindful conversations, where action (talking) and inquiry (reflection) exist in the moment, called the Four Frames of Speech (Fisher et al., 2003). The focus is on the second Perspective of Knowing, the social perspective, which concerns itself with mutuality. The four frames are as follows, with brief descriptions:

1. Framing: Refers to explicitly stating the purpose and context of the discussion, as well as assumptions that may or may not be shared among the members.
2. Advocating: Refers to explicitly asserting an opinion, belief, feeling, or perception.
3. Illustrating: Involves telling a story or giving an example which provides more meaning to the advocacy.
4. Inquiry: Asking questions with the intention of learning something from others.

Conversations are made up of these four frames of speech. Action in organizations is created from conversations, and we are deeply influenced by the quality of the interactions we have with others (Fisher et al., 2003).

Action Inquiry in Action

Action Inquiry is not something to be studied as much as it to be practiced (Porter, 2002). Using the tools outlined in the previous section of this dissertation, teams that practice Action Inquiry are better able to solve their current issues, and also to build capacity to deal with future challenges (Kiely & Ellis, 1999). A team is an ideal practice field for Action Inquiry, with a small group of people coming together for a common purpose (Porter, 2002).

Physicist David Bohm (2004) proposed that high quality dialogues can increase consciousness development and collective intelligence, and noted that it requires individuals to observe their own thoughts and feelings, a state of active reflection. Baron and Cayer (2011) state that the tools of Action Inquiry are ones that create high quality dialogue, and lead to high quality actions.

Action Inquiry is especially helpful in times of accelerated change and increased complexity, as the recurring theme in Action Inquiry is the constant cycle of action and reflection (Fisher et al., 2003). This cycle allows teams to enhance their knowledge through action, and then take more enlightened action based on the reflective learning, so that teams can remain effective in a fast changing world (Ellis & Kiely, 2000). By uncovering their existing patterns and mental models, teams are able to more quickly expand their collective intelligence (Folkman, 1999).

The more a group engages in the practice of Action Inquiry, the wider their perspective, and the more likely they are to be agents of transformation (Drath, 2005; Porter, 2002).

Individual and Team Development Dynamics

*“For the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength
of the wolf is the pack.” – Rudyard Kipling*

As a team goes stronger, so do the individuals. Hackman (2002) points out that teams can potentially be great platforms for personal learning, interdependent behaviors, feelings of belonging, and can enhance interpersonal relationships. Palus and Horth (2005) explain that in the new workplace of higher complexity and chaos, shared interests and passions are more useful than lines of leadership.

Haslam, Reicher, and Platow (2011) assert that neither leadership nor followership is even possible without a sense of ownership by each and all, which makes it possible for the leader and followers to transform each other, and point out that development occurs between an individual and his or her environment. Learning is enhanced when people work together to collectively make better sense of their environment (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Action Logics and Action Inquiry, for OD Consultants

A unique aspect of this project was working with the concepts of Action Logics and the tools of Action Inquiry with OD professionals. Yorks and Nicolaidis (2006) believe that the ideas and tools of developmental theory can enhance the practice of Organization Development, by broadening awareness of how consultants and clients reflect and make sense of events and realities.

Argyris (1991) says that professionals need to look inward and reflect on their own mental models and behaviors, instead of blaming others or the system when things go wrong. In his study of management consultants, a profession with some similarities to OD consultants, Argyris found that the consultants were passionate about improving others and the organizations they worked with, but tended to be defensive when they were asked to improve themselves as the way to create more change. To look at one's self can be challenging for many people.

For OD consultants to use the full suite of Action Inquiry tools offers a spectrum of possibilities for those brave enough to commit themselves to its practice. Drath (2005) said that practicing Action Inquiry is not easy, but it opens up possibilities for rethinking everything we say and do. . As Argyris (1991) wrote, “Learning to reason productively can be emotional – even painful. But the payoff is great” .

A number of studies of stage development have been done with counsellors (Blumentritt, 2011). These studies found that counsellors at later stages of development displayed greater empathy, more awareness of their own feelings, less projections, and thus more objectivity with clients. To be effective OD Consultants, the ability to remain both empathic and objective is important (Brown, 2010). Carson et al. (2007) have done research with consulting teams which shows that teams with shared leadership are more effective than those with traditional top-down leadership.

Other research has shown a connection between OD competencies and the stages of development. Joiner (2009) and Young (2002) have found that that later stages of development are able to deal with diverse stakeholders and multiple priorities. Merron, Fisher, and Torbert (1987) found that individuals at later Action Logics are more likely to treat problems as opportunities; to reframe, coach and learn, rather than just seeing problems as something to solve.

In her attempt to answer the question “Is higher better?” Blumentritt (2011) gives the popular management answer of “it depends”. However, she concludes that for those in the helping professions, higher (or what has been called later in this project) is better. Understanding a person’s stage of meaning-making and being at least at this stage ourselves as a consultant and coach, can significantly increase the chances of a successful intervention (Bennet, 2010; Berger, 2012; Kegan, 1994; Laske, 2006).

Criticisms of Developmental Theory

Like any field of study, developmental theory has its critics. There are two main criticisms of developmental theory: one is that it is hierarchical and elitist (Berger, 2006; Rooke, 1997), and the other is that it is challenging to measure a person's current stage (Stein & Heikkinen, 2009). Both of these criticisms are reviewed and addressed below.

One of the key challenges in sharing adult developmental theory is for people to know that later/higher is not always better, and that this framework represents just one dimension of being human. Hy and Loevinger (1996) remind us that stage of development does not indicate social adjustment, mental health, or overall well-being.

McGuire and Rhodes (2009) shared that being at a later stage of development does not make someone a smarter or better person, just more expansive when dealing with higher levels of complexity and ambiguity.

After all, effective individuals are only required to operate at a level that is as high as the environment they are dealing with, therefore higher may not always be necessary (Berger, 2012; Kegan, 1994). Corbett (1995) posits that some organizational contexts may not support individuals at a later stage, particularly organizations that expect its people to focus on tangible results as the main criteria for effectiveness. In these contexts, asking reframing questions can be seen as a loss of focus on the bottom line.

The second significant criticism of adult developmental theory is that measuring a person's stage is difficult (Stein & Heikkinen, 2009). Stein and Heikkinen question the reliability and validity studies of many of the stages of development assessments, including the LDP. Cook-Greuter (2011) points out that the LDP has high levels of reliability and validity, given its global database, psychometric robustness, proven effectiveness, and predictive qualities.

Torbert, Livne-Tarandach, Herdman-Barker, Nicolaidis, & McCallum (2010) have conducted numerous research projects that showed high internal consistency of the LDP, along with a growing number of studies showing external validity. Some of these were mentioned earlier in this paper.

However, this does not indicate the assessments are perfect. Krettenauer (2011) and Cook-Greuter (2000) acknowledge the difficulty of doing an accurate assessment, pointing that this challenge becomes greater at later stages. Krettenauer (2011) states that even having an inaccurate measurement does not necessarily invalidate the theories themselves. Even if the reliability and validity of the instrument was not so high, one could state a case that having an approximate knowledge of the terrain and one's place on a map is still better than having no idea at all of one's location and itinerary. As Alvin Toffler (1991) said, "It is better to have a general and incomplete map, subject to revision and correction, than to have no map at all". Harris and Kuhnert (2008) believe that just having an awareness of the meaning-making stages can assist in development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is illustrated below in Figure 3.

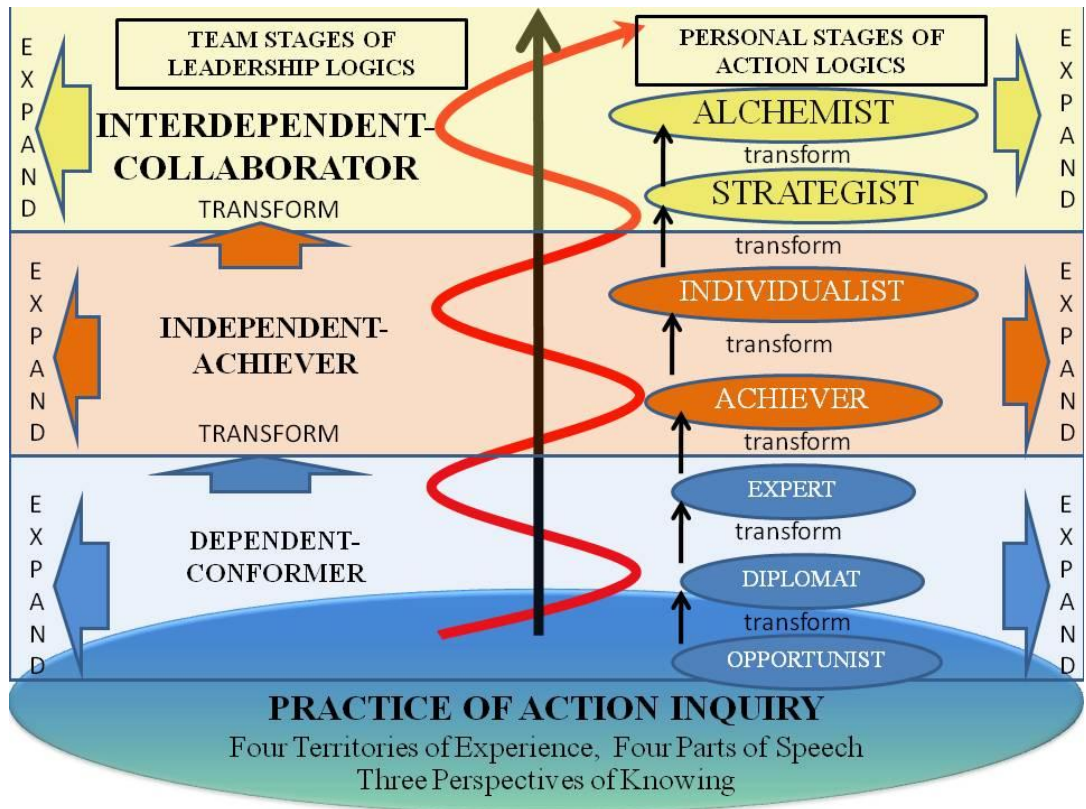


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of this Research Project

Figure 3 is the visual representation of the main ideas in this research study. The bottom of the diagram is the fertile soil of developmental movement, the practice of Action Inquiry. The left side of the diagram represents the three team stages, the Leadership Logics, while the right side represents the seven individual stages, the Action Logics. Horizontal development is a way to expand within a stage, while vertical development is a transformation to the next stage (Cook-Greuter, 2004). The spiral in the middle represents the dynamic interplay between the individual and team development.

Research Methodology

This research study was designed with the principles of Participatory Action Research. It allows for everyone, not just academics and researchers, to be part of building theory to connect action and research (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). Reason and Bradbury (2001) share five features of Participatory Action Research as follows: 1. Practical knowing, 2. Knowing into Action, 3. Participation and Democracy, 4. Emergent Development, and 5. In service of Human Flourishing.

Participatory Action Research uses a number of methodologies to achieve the five dimensions. Quantitative methods provide data to be analysed, while qualitative methods are particularly useful to explore topics in depth, especially ones that have not been explored before (Camic et al., 2003).

Combining different types of research is meant to increase both the validity and practicality of the research, and to tap into the transformational potential of social sciences (Reason & Torbert, 2001). Yorks and Nicolaides (2006) state that the distinction of Participatory Action Research is “essentially the difference is to work *with* the system rather than *on* the system” (p. 145).

Teams/Participants in this Research

Three teams with a total of twenty eight people, all in the field of OD, participated in this research project. Two of the teams are based in Singapore, one in the Corporate and one in the Government sector, and the third one is based in Myanmar, in the non-profit sector. Since the team members were all in the field of OD, this research project could support the participants to better serve as consultants. Coaches and consultants at later stages are more effective in working with clients (Laske, 2006).

The teams chose to participate based on their aspirations to be better consultants and stronger teams as a result of their involvement in the project, to build their capacity to serve their stakeholders.

Phase 1. Pre-ODI (ODI – Organization Development Intervention)

The three teams were told of the scope of the project, the commitment involved, and the possible benefits of engaging in the process. After the teams agreed to participate, the participants were asked to complete the following two assessments:

1. The LDP (Leadership Development Profile), a sentence completion form by Harthill Consulting, which assesses the Action Logic of individuals

For example, a sentence completion of “**rules are...**” can be answered in a multitude of ways. The answer/completion of “to be followed” is simplistic and a cliché, and would be scored at an earlier action logic than the more thoughtful and nuanced answer such as “**rules are...meant to be broken when they do not apply.**” Table 3 offers an example of a sentence completion across seven of the Action Logics for this “Rules are...” stem.

2. The LCS (Leadership Culture Survey) from the Center for Creative Leadership, which assesses the Leadership Logics of teams and organizations.

Below is a sample item from the LCS, with a 6 point scale to assess the various dimensions of the culture of the organization, in this case, on decision-making.

Important decisions are made...

a) by multiple people working across organizational boundaries	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) within separate businesses, functions, or groups	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) by a few leaders at the top of the organization	1	2	3	4	5	6

These two assessments, one for personal and one for the team, created a snapshot of the individual and team stages before engaging in the ODI.

The Organization Development Intervention (ODI)

The ODI began with a workshop for each of the teams, so they could each gain a better understanding of the history of adult developmental theory, gain Clarity on the framework of the Action Logics and Leadership Logics, along with the construct of the LDP and the LCS. They also were introduced to and practiced the tools of Action Inquiry, and introduced to the additional dialogic tool of the 4-player model, to enhance awareness of individual and team dynamics. Each team developed team action plans on how they could be more effective, based on their LCS results.

The workshops were followed by coaching sessions for each of the participants. The purpose of the sessions was for the participants to better understand their LDP, and for each person to decide to either consolidate in their current action logic and/or to purposefully transition to the next stage. Each person also developed two sets of action plans, one for their personal development, and one that would help to facilitate the team's development.

So each team member of the three teams to choose action plans that will help their team to expand and/or transform, and each team chose action plans to expand and/or transform its culture. Therefore, the individual supports team development, and the team supports personal development.

After the workshop and coaching session, each person was given some reference materials, which consisted of the Personal and Organization Transformations book (Fisher et al., 2003) and laminations of the major frameworks and tools from the process. To help sustain the learning, monthly emails were sent to the participants, to remind them of the frameworks and idea of the project, and their action plans.

Phase 3. Post-ODI

After slightly more than a year, it was time to re-assess and see what emerged from the process. The two assessments were taken again, to gather

qualitative data. Interviews of the teams and individuals were conducted in order to ascertain their experiences of the process and get qualitative information.

Summary of Findings

The summary of finding is in four sections, related to four research questions of this research study, on personal development, team development, the interplay between personal and team development, and then on findings for OD practitioners.

Personal Expansions and Transformations

The first research question of this study asked: What benefits, if any, will be experienced and reported by the individuals who participate in this project, and what measurable changes will be found in the LDP (Leadership Development Profile) assessments? Half of the participants shifted to at least one later Action Logic, and they each expressed that they had more expansive perspectives, which validated the reported shift. This experience of expansion was not limited only those who have shifted on the Action Logics. Nine participants also reported an expansion in their perspectives despite not having shifted to a later Action Logic.

As Cook-Greuter (2004) has pointed out, having a map of the terrain of adult development is useful for personal growth. Participants found the framework a useful guide for where they are on their personal development journeys, and to identify their potential next stage of development.

Team Expansions and Transformations

The second research question asked: What benefits, if any, will be experienced and reported by the teams who participated in this project, and what measurable changes will be found in the LCS (Leadership Culture Survey) assessments?

Similar to benefits reported by the individuals, teams also reported benefiting from the frameworks and tools of this process. One team experiences a

transformation, both in terms of the LCS and their reported experiences, one had a significant expansion, while the third was relatively stable in their LCS. The teams that transformed and expanded practiced the tools of Action Inquiry, being more purposeful about how they meet and communicate, facilitating higher levels of engagement.

The team that remained stable was led by a positional leader who did not support the process. After the research study was completed, this top leader shared that he was disappointed at not being assessed at the latest/highest Action Logic in the team, and let his ego get in the way of the process. This was a significant insight and led to a recommendation for further undertakings of similar research.

Interplay Between Individual and Team Dynamics

The third research question for this study was: How will the interplay of individual and team dynamics support overall development, and how will the results of the LDP and LCS co-relate to each other, and if so, how?

A strong correlation was found between personal and team stages of development. In the three teams, both the pre and post-ODI assessments showed the connection between the Action Logics (personal) and the Leadership Logics (team). The concept of symbiotic development was an idea that many participants found useful. Thinking explicitly about the connection between how team development could support individual development, and vice versa, helped them be more intentional about supporting growth and development, for the team and for each other. Experts in team effectiveness say that high-performance teams focus on both personal and team development (Bellman & Ryan, 2009; Hackman, 2002; Levi, 2011). What was somewhat distinctive in this project, is the focus on dynamic development, in the sense that the individuals can contribute to the team as they develop, and the team can support the development of the individuals.

Adult Developmental Framework and Tools for OD Practitioners

The last research question asked: How can the stages of development frameworks and tools support participants to be more effective in their role as OD consultants?

The findings indicated that the understanding of the Action Logics framework can help OD consultants expand their ability to more effectively respond while engaging their clients. A number of participants reported that they were asking more questions, being more aware of group dynamics, and checking in with clients on the purpose and intention of initiatives more often.

Some participants were also engaging with clients with an awareness of their own Action Logic as well as an estimate of the primary Action Logic of their clients. Given that Action Logics represent how we make meaning and interpret life's events (Torbert, 2004), this understanding enhanced the OD consultants' ability to create alignment and understanding of the issues, to reduce misunderstandings, and thus increase the chance of an effective interventions. This supports research that says that consultants and coaches are more effective when they are at a later stage than their clients (Berger, 2012; Laske, 2006). Some participants were also teaching the tools of Action Inquiry to their clients, in order to facilitate the expansion of the client's capacity to engage in high quality reflection and dialogue.

Limitations of this Study

There are two limitations worth noting in this study: 1. this is a small sample size, a total of 28 people all living either in Singapore or Myanmar, and 2. All three of the groups in this research study were doing OD work. A logical follow-up study to this one would be with a larger, more diverse sample.

Conclusions Drawn from the Findings

The findings generated from this research give important insights into how individuals and teams can benefit from the framework and tools available in Adult Developmental Psychology. The following sections present conclusions drawn from the study.

Understanding of Action Logics paired with a Change in Life Circumstances are a Powerful Combination.

The understanding of the framework of Action Logics with the LDP assessment, combined with a change in life circumstances, can be a powerful combination for transformation. Of the 14 participants who transformed to a later Action Logic, eight of them reported changes in life circumstances. Only one person with a change in life circumstances did not experience a transformation.

Expansions and Transformations can Happen without a Life Change

While having a change in life circumstances helped to support transformation, this study also showed that it is possible to transform without life changing events in life. Anderson and Anderson (2001) say that this kind of transformation is driven by the intrinsic desire to learn and develop.

Six people in this study transformed to a later stage, by becoming aware of the Action Logics framework and profile, and the tools of Action Inquiry.

Teams can be Purposeful in Creating their Way of Working Together

Teams that commit to changing their dynamics, and that have a plan to do so, can create shifts to higher levels of interdependence and shared leadership, and at the same time support team effectiveness. The items in the LCS, and the tools of Action Inquiry, provide the foundational elements for expansions and shifts for a culture of leadership.

Dynamic Growth is an Upward Spiral of Development

There is a symbiotic relationship of development: as the team expands and transforms its capacity, then the individuals can also expand and transform, and vice-versa. It is possible that this dynamic can be conceptualized and operationalized with or without the frameworks and assessments of Adult Development Psychology.

OD Practitioners find Action Logics and Action Inquiry helpful in their Work

Lastly, the findings of this project illustrate that the concepts provided by developmental psychology, specifically Action Inquiry and Action Logics, are a helpful guide for development of OD professionals. This work is particularly important considering that people at later Action Logics are better able to support the development of others and the transformation of organizations (Blumentritt, 2011; Laske, 2006; Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

Recommendations

As has been seen from this research project, individuals and organizations can benefit significantly from the process. What follows are ideas on how these concepts and tools can be effectively introduced and applied for maximum impact.

Be proactive in Engaging Top Leader on the LDP Report

A top positional leader not being assessed at the latest Action Logic of the entire team can potentially affect his/her support for this type of initiative. Thus it is important to coach the top positional leader of the team as part of the contracting phase of the process, to help prepare him/her for such possible assessment outcomes.

The leader can be told that this can be a powerful leadership opportunity, how he/she managed the situation, if someone in the team is assessed at a later Action Logic. Leadership can be exhibited by learning to understand how to ensure that individuals at all Action Logics are fully embraced for the thinking they bring to the team (Fisher et al., 2003). This would also show vulnerability and humility. The advice on how to handle feelings that might arise out of not being at a later stage can be communicated to all team members, but in advance to the positional leader.

Conduct Research outside of the OD Function

Given that all of the people and teams in this research were in the field of OD, and generally in favor of developmental activities: How will teams

from different functions, from outside OD, respond to this research?

**Explore the Dynamic Interplay between Personal and Team Development,
without the frameworks of Adult Developmental Psychology**

Collinson (2005) states that it is time to upgrade our thinking about the dynamic relationship between the individual and the team, given the environment that most organizations are now facing.

Team members could be asked to make personal commitments to strengthen the effectiveness of the team, and the team can create norms and a culture that makes it easier and more likely for the individuals to develop as being a member of the team. As has been seen in the Conceptual Framework of this project, an upward spiral of development could be triggered, perhaps without the Action and Leadership Logics.

Explore Action Logics and Effective OD Practice

There is also research to be done on the connection between Action Logics and being an effective OD professional. Some research has shown that those at later stages are more effective in supporting personal and organization development (Blumentritt, 2011; Laske, 2006; Rooke & Torbert, 2005), but not specifically for OD practitioners. In this research project, OD practitioners reported that the frameworks and tools were helpful in their work with clients, but their effectiveness was not measured.

Conclusion

Albert Einstein said “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them” (Berger, 2006). Kegan (1994) claims that many people are in over their heads with the demands of modern life. If these statements are true, then we as individuals and as a collective have to find ways to shift, to better manage the world we live in. By presenting a developmental roadmap with action inquiry tools as part of

individual and organization development journey, we can increase the chances of individuals and groups being effective as we move into a future filled with a considerable amount of complexity, diversity, and uncertainty (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Kurt Lewin said that there is nothing so practical as a good theory (Brown, 2010; Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2010). By making this practical theory more accessible to more people, each and all of us will be better prepared to manage and create a future where we can collaborate inter-dependently for a world that works for everyone.

The frameworks and processes used in this project helped to answer the calls

for new practices for leader development (Bennis, 2007), leadership culture (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009), and Organization Development (Marshak, 2005). With continued work in this area, the field of OD can provide new ways of growing an organization's capacity to fulfill its mission and strategy, now and in the future.

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