WORLDWORK:
FACILITATING DIVERSITY IN THE WORLD, IN THE ROOM AND IN THE MOMENT
RHO SANDBERG, KATE TUCKER, STEPHEN SCHUITEVOERDER
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INTRODUCTION

Members of an organisation have divergent interests, values and perceptions, making interactions between each other dynamic and complex. This diversity often reflects the challenges within the larger society, not only on issues of position and rank, but also economics, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, personal history and more. Sometimes the challenges of diversity are expressed; but more often are felt in the non-verbal behaviour, attitudes and overall atmosphere.

In this session participants will learn about and experience a group facilitation method known as **Worldwork**, a powerful tool for working with complex organisational dynamics, supporting diverse voices to be heard and creating awareness about the effect of our subtle biases and unconscious use of rank and power.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce the **Worldwork** methodology and through it deepen our facilitation and engagement skills as OD practitioners.

2. Support the expression of marginalised voices, exploring the experiences of diversity for OD practitioners attending the conference in the interests of community building of conference participants.

3. Cultivate practitioners' insight into conscious and unconscious dimensions of diversity, power and rank, raising their personal awareness as individuals and agents of organisational change.

BACKGROUND

Worldwork is a small and large group facilitation method used by **Process Work** consultants and OD specialists. It has been used to facilitate group interactions ranging from executive leadership teams to large forums of 400 participants.

Worldwork finds its roots in Process Oriented Psychology, developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell and his associates, which later became known as Process Work. The application of Worldwork and Process Work in organisations was pioneered by Dr Stephen Schuitevoerder, Dr Max Schupbach and Dr Julie Diamond. It has been enriched by a number of OD practitioners around the world including Rho Sandberg and Rebecca Lang in Australia; Zed Xaba, Yasmeen Rubridge and Genvieve Kieser in South Africa; Cathy Bernatt, Toko Yokoyama and Kanae Kuwahara in Japan; and Pat McLagan in the USA.

A Process Work approach to organisational consulting, coaching or facilitation is based on the following tenets:

- All experiences (including problems, challenges and symptoms) are regarded as containing the seed of something important, needed and useful.

- When unfolded every challenge or experience offers meaning and at times the remedy to the problem at hand, or at least creative options for dealing with it.
- Organisational disturbances and symptoms are therefore an invitation to growth and wholeness. Our challenge as consultants and facilitators is to know how to unfold these experiences and discover the gold within.
- A systemic world view in which all levels of experience (intrapersonal, interpersonal, team and organisational) are connected and capable of influencing and informing each other either directly or indirectly.

DIVERSE ORGANISATIONAL APPLICATIONS OF PROCESS WORK AND WORLDWORK

Process Work is used in diverse ways within organisations including strategic planning and business development, executive and team coaching, facilitating decision making, exploring diversity in the workplace, enhancing collaboration and team communication, as well as building workplace relationships.

Consistent with strategic OD practice, the precise form our interventions take are fluid and dynamic. The manner in which Process Work consultants work with issues and parties reflect the client's aspirations, the challenges they face and the underlying, emerging process (i.e. growth and developmental opportunities these contain). Process Work emphasises awareness and following the stream of any given process (both for the client organisation and within the practitioner).

Worldwork has been applied in the corporate, public sector and community organisations, including Fortune 100 companies, Business Schools and UNHCR. It has been used for community development and consultation (Australia, Fukishima, South Africa, Switzerland), with governments and in conflict zones (Israel, Palestine, Balkans, Kenya).

Process Work interventions in organisations take diverse forms including, but are not limited to:

- Individual coaching

- Facilitating discussions, tensions and conflict between individuals or stakeholder groups

- Designing interventions which support the under-developed or avoided ways of interacting and working e.g. courageous conversations, appreciation in critical environments, diversity-related programs

Worldwork interventions may take the form of:

- Personal sharing and storytelling - sharing into the center of the group.

- Disagreement or polarity-based work in which the group focuses on the center. While the group may be polarized - it is a discussion, often more intellectual in nature, even if passionate - and not a personal interaction between one person and another.

- Polarized group process. The group is constellated according to the polarity through roles, with a deep exchange between these roles.

WORLDWORK & PROCESS WORK IN ORGANISATIONS: UNDERPINNING CONCEPTS

The Known & Familiar Culture

Any organisation or group has a known and familiar culture, a way of being that is comparable to an individual's identity or personality. That culture is maintained by shared practices, explicit and implicit norms, rules, protocols and rituals (or habits). Some things fall within an organisation or group's culture while other things fall outside the organisation's cultural norms and collective comfort zone.

Edges

Organisational cultures, like an individual's identity, are confined by what Process Work consultants call the **edge**. Edges represent the boundary or point of transition between the known and the unknown or less familiar. They help to maintain the organisational culture and brand identity. However they also cause problems. Edges limit the adaptability of organisations and teams, restricting their capacity to engage with changing circumstances and disruptive forces. They also interfere with the flow of communication and relationships within the organisation.

Marginalisation

The desire to maintain the status quo and existence of edges mean that certain aspects of the organisational experience are ignored, disowned and sometimes actively repressed. The problem with disowning or ignoring the marginalised parts of any system (whether individual, team, organisational or social) is that they start to cause issues as they go underground. Deeply held frustrations and anger come out in unhealthy ways e.g. sustained silent or exclusionary treatment, verbally belittling or hyper critical styles of communication through to outright culture of bullying.

Roles and Ghost Roles

Adopting a systemic view Process Work consultants listen for **roles** within organisations - perspectives, experiences or phenomena that are greater, and often more diffuse and widespread, than the individuals who give voice to them. In particular we note **mainstream roles** which fit with the predominant and accepted culture and those which are **marginalised**. We think of the latter as **ghost roles**. Sometimes these ghost roles threaten or challenge the mainstream culture, while at other times they simply offer another alternative which has been unexplored or developed as a result of organisational edges.

To illustrate the concept of roles and ghost roles let's consider organisations such as medical institutions or universities where excellence and expert competence is central to role identity and incompetence, indecision or uncertainty is not acceptable. The mainstream role, which is usually widely accepted and rewarded, is that of an all knowing expert. Conversely the ghost role carries characteristics such as uncertainty and the identity of the learner. The pressure to meet professional, organisational and community organisations means that characteristics associated with the ghost role are pushed underground and not part of the usual organisational discourse. Numerous professional problems such as reluctance to acknowledge limitations, patient complaints, bullying and the over prescription of antibiotics and other drugs result, as does high stress upon individuals, negative health impacts, drug and alcohol abuse.

Diversity

Worldwork supports diversity within groups and organisations, as critical to optimal performance. When the marginalised role is not surfaced and ultimately integrated the group's full potential is not realised, e.g. if doubts and incompetence are marginalised mistakes are feared and people don't take risks or learn, they keep vital information to themselves and fail to collaborate more generally.

Power, Rank & Conflict

The phenomena of mainstream vs ghost roles is present in all groups. In many situations the marginalised voices are not allowed to speak as it causes tension. At an interpersonal level, the implicit power dynamics linked to mainstream and ghost roles lead to tension and conflict. Often those in mainstream roles don't even realise the effect that they have on the marginalised (e.g. a group of men on a senior leadership team with one woman).

Worldwork is a way to bring out all the voices and allow them to be heard. The method invites the tension and interaction between roles to allow understanding and transform organisational dynamics.

STAGES IN A POLARISED WORLDWORK GROUP PROCESS:

The following outline indicates the basic route through a Worldwork group process. It may be adjusted or changed depending on group needs.

SITUATION	FACILITATION
1.Consensual relating relative comfort, harmony and un-addressed issues	Awareness, Sensing the atmosphere Potential issues emerge
2. Issues emerge	Sorting, clarify issues Awareness of edge to bring up issues.
3. Choosing an issue	Consensus sought - agreement to work on an issue. Facilitators hold down agreement making. Timing is important.
4. Surfacing different feelings, opinions etc.	Help bring out different roles... role playing, Encourage secondary roles and ghosts.
5. Interaction of roles.	Allow interaction of roles. Support alchemical cooking Watch one sidedness, get polarities out of way. Encourage realness. Go to the essence of what person says.
6. Edges/ Hot spots/ Framing	High emotions Note indicators of edges, hold down edges Keep awareness Weather report Watch for double edges Care for all.
7. Interaction and Unfolding	Notice and state signals and feeling changes. Notice cycling and resolution.

A FEW OF THE MANY TECHNIQUES & SKILLS USED IN PROCESSWORK AND WORLDWORK

Surfacing Ghost Roles

When roles are more hidden and less supported we call them ghost roles. They hang around in the atmosphere impacting everyone but few (or perhaps no-one) identifies with them. Usually they go against the accepted norms of that group and to express them is risky in some way. They are marginalized within the group repressing diversity.

To identify a ghost role listen for:
- Tensions in the atmosphere
- Gossip
- Indirect hints
- Moods
- Silences
- Hot moments
- Third parties (i.e. someone talked about who isn't present)
- Feelings

Looking For Edges

During the group process, the edges that lead to the formation of ghost roles are likely to appear in the room. How do we know a group has reached an edge?

- Issues skip
- Participants move quickly over something
- Laughter
- Silence
- People talk about something but don't act it
- Participants talk about topics which have low heat
- Third parties (people or institutions out of the room are discussed)
- And more…!

Meta-skills

There are several important meta-skills used in Worldwork. Whilst they may appear to operate in the background they are central to achieving powerful outcomes.

- Non-attachment. A quality that develops through working on own issues (burning own wood)
- Awareness of: getting caught, personal involvement, group edges etc.
- Fluidity
- Eldership
- Connection to non-linear experiences.
- Deep democracy, an attitude of openness to all roles, guesthouse.
- Tenacity: a capacity to hold unconventional and less supported positions.
- Beginners mind, not knowing.

FACILITATORS

Dr Stephen Schuitevoerder (US),
International Consultant, Founder Process Work Institute, Oregon
stephen@processconsulting.org
+503 452 1626

Rho Sandberg (AUS),
Director Global Coaching Institute
rho@globalcoachinginstitute.org
+61403656063

Kate Tucker (AUS),
Director Inhere Consulting
Kate@inhereconsulting.com.au
+61409996561