

Mapping the Field of Facilitation

To help provide an understanding of the diverse influences on facilitation, here is a range of approaches that have contributed to the development of the field.

Consensus building

Many indigenous peoples have used and use consensus-building approaches to decision-making. For example:

Wisdom circles – indigenous Americas

A wisdom circle is a way for small groups of people to create a safe space within which to be trusting, authentic, caring and open to change. A wisdom circle is designed to encourage people to meet in small groups, to listen and speak from the heart in a spirit of inquiry. The wisdom circle is opened and closed with a ritual of the group's choosing, using a talking object, and inviting silence to enter the circle. The circle is held spiritually and energetically and creates a space for deep listening and connection.

In their 1998 book, *Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self-Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups*¹, Charles Garfield, Cindy Spring and Sedonia Cahill outline ten 'constants' or guidelines for creating and holding wisdom circles.

Traditional Maori decision-making – indigenous New Zealand

Traditional Maori decision-making is characterised by the following:

- Consensus is preferred even if it takes time. Allow time to consult well, as once a decision is made things are actioned quickly and decisively.
- Emotion is expected, vented and tolerated especially when mana is challenged. Reconciliation is then part of the way forward to the consensus decision.
- Strategic withdrawal may occur and leave the 'take' (the subject of discussion) on the floor. People may turn to te reo Maori and tikanga Maori in conflict situations.
- Speakers and waiata are important. Whakapapa determines the order of the speakers. More than one person is likely to be involved in the consultation process. You should also be prepared to sing a waiata.
- Silence is important and does not mean consent. What is not said is noted.²

Friends Meetings - Quaker movement

Consensus decision-making has been a centrepiece of the Religious Society of Friends for over 350 years, at times seeing them through extremely difficult decisions and divisions.

Each member of the meeting is expected to listen to that of God within themselves and, when led, to contribute it to the group for reflection and consideration. A decision is reached when the meeting as a whole feels that the 'way forward' has been discerned. This may mean that those who are informed on or passionate about a given issue are willingly deferred to. However, in other cases some members of the meeting will 'stand aside' on an issue, meaning that the meeting has achieved a sense of unity, but that, for their own personal reasons, they are unable to agree with the result. In still other cases a meeting may reach a sense of unity notwithstanding that some members remain opposed, although the meeting would probably proceed only after considerable time was spent in discernment to ensure that the concerns of the dissenting members have been heard and the sense of the meeting is clear.³

Women's movement - Starhawk

Consensus decision-making played an important role in the women's movement in the 1960's and onwards. Participative processes were encouraged and consensus was strongly favoured because it provided an equal voice for all women and was an alternative to hierarchical ways of doing things.

Starhawk, a feminist and activist from USA, distinguishes 'power with' from 'power over' in her book *Truth or Dare*⁴ and describes ways of reaching cooperative decisions. On her website she describes consensus as a process for people who want to work together honestly in good faith to find good solutions for the group.

It cannot be used by people who do not, can not or will not co-operate. Consensus should not be attempted in a group with people who want to maintain their wealth and privilege or want to dominate or control others. In these situations, nonviolent struggle would be more appropriate.⁴

Radical education

Education which challenges the status quo and uses facilitated strategic questioning has been influential. For example:

Conscientization - Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and policy maker credited as the source of many of the concepts that make up Development Education. Freire wrote several books, his most famous entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*⁸. While initially concerned with the problem of illiteracy in Latin America, this book is now extremely well known for its assertion that education can conquer oppression and is a means for liberation and social change.

Conscientization is a process by which the learner advances towards critical consciousness. The objective of conscientization is to empower the knowledge and resources of groups, by facilitating a learning process that becomes critical, transitive and raises consciousness, with the potential of

liberation. Open questions, which help to uncover embedded social and political oppression, are used by the learning facilitator.

Strategic questioning – Fran Peavey

Fran Peavey, a social change activist from USA, wanted to talk to people around the world and develop in herself a “global heart”. Fran’s method of working in sensitive areas of social change involved listening and asking questions, often obvious ones which no-one wanted to ask for fear of appearing stupid. Fran called her way of working *strategic questioning* and developed the skills of asking questions that will make a difference. Strategic questioning is a powerful tool for personal and social change as it helps people to discover their own strategies and ideas for change. It is a process that changes the listener as well as the person being questioned.

Heart Politics

The name of Fran Peavey’s book *Heart Politics*⁹ inspired a group of people in New Zealand to call their network by that name. This social change network began a relationship with Fran and she visited one of their gatherings at Tauhara Retreat Centre, Lake Taupo in central New Zealand. Tauhara Centre is a place where people from all spiritual and peaceful traditions can come together to meet and learn.

The Heart Politics network, which grew from some earlier festivals of cooperation, had their first gathering in 1989, and have grown and developed in New Zealand, Australia and the USA since that time. Two main residential gatherings are held in New Zealand each year and one in Australia. Heart Politicians also meet in their local cities and towns and at related gatherings such as men’s and women’s gatherings and gatherings dedicated to dialogue, leadership and cultural change. Circle sharing, home groups, use of open space techniques and dialogue on social change issues are all features of the gatherings. Some Heart Politicians refer to the gatherings as an opportunity for soul work. The purpose of the Heart Politics gatherings was recently defined by the trustees as “conscious and intentional culture building for sustainability and the common good” (see the paper on *Strategic Questioning*¹⁰ by Fran Peavey and Vivien Hutchinson, *Heart Politics Revisited*¹¹, and the Heart Politics Website¹²).

Alternative conflict resolution

Alternative methods of conflict resolution which do not rely on litigation use facilitation. For example:

Alternatives to violence (AVP)

The AVP program began in 1975 when a group of inmates at Greenhaven Prison (New York) were working with youth coming into conflict with the law. They collaborated with the Quaker Project on Community Conflict, devising a prison workshop. The success of this workshop quickly generated requests for more, and AVP was born.

AVP is dedicated to reducing the level of violence in society by introducing people to ways of resolving conflict that reduce their need to resort to violence as the solution. The Alternatives to Violence Project is designed to create successful personal interactions and transform violent situations.¹³ AVP programmes now take place in many countries around the world.

Alternative conflict resolution - Chris Moore

Formal negotiation, mediation and facilitated problem solving as an alternative means of dispute resolution are now widespread and well developed. Chris Moore and his colleagues at CDR Associates in Boulder, Colorado were significant contributors to this development. Publications include *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* and *Natural Resource Conflict Management*.¹⁴

Group work involving individual therapy

Group work for individual therapy uses a variety of facilitated methods.

T-groups – Kurt Lewin

In its origins the T-Group is the principal tool of a particular form of education - the Human Relations Laboratory - in which traditional educational power and authority relations are abandoned, albeit within tightly organised limits, and anarchy is experienced. The learners become their own subjects and no longer objects to be filled with packages of knowledge. The learner in the T-Group learns from his own and others' immediate experience by researching it, giving and gaining accurate and open information about it, and engaging in a shared process of making sense of events¹⁵. Lewin, an immigrant to the USA from Germany in the 1930's, is considered one of the founders of social psychology and coined the term 'action research'.

Encounter Groups – Carl Rogers

Encounter groups are facilitated groups where group members authentically encounter each other (and themselves). An environment of (supposed) safety and trust is created that enables members to express their feelings and accept themselves for what they are. Encounter groups most often have a leader experienced at getting people to open up. The group may meet for several hours a week over some period of months, or it may meet as a marathon group for 24 continuous hours or more, with individuals dropping out for naps.

It is thought that the intensity and prolonged time of the marathon group will break down social resistance faster, and accomplish as much as groups whose meetings are interspersed over longer periods of time. The goals of encounter groups include examining one's behaviour and values, learning about people in general, becoming more successful in interpersonal relationships, and developing conflict resolution skills.⁵

Open encounter – Will Schutz

Developed at Esalen, California in the 1970's and 1980's, open encounter is an approach that combines group therapy, psychosynthesis, bioenergetics,

psychodrama, Gestalt, and other group methods *in the moment*. The approach encourages openness and honesty in all human relationships. Schutz believed in stripping away every last vestige of convention, secrecy, defensiveness, and social conditioning until finally the pure and shining gem of unadorned human nature would be revealed for all to behold.¹⁶

Encounter can be experienced as a somewhat blunt instrument as participants often work through their issues by projecting them onto others. The recipient is then triggered into their own issues but may also feel somewhat clobbered in the process.

Psychodrama and Sociodrama - Jakob Moreno

Psychodrama is the name given by Moreno to the method he developed for helping people become more creative in day to day living. It has applications in many different areas in which people are learning, changing and relating to others, in training, education, healing, spiritual life, business, performing arts and in organisations. Practitioners of this powerful method integrate all levels of a human being: their thinking, their intellect, their imagination, their feelings and their actions in their social context. In this way, learning can be applied directly in actual living situations at work, outside the home, in other organizations and in close relationships.

Under the guidance of a trained practitioner known as the director, the method involves improvisational dramatic action. The script for this drama is 'written', moment by moment, out of the purposes and concerns of an individual, or the group where the method is being applied. Group members take active part in one another's' dramas so that they bring it as close to life as possible. In this way group members may generate and practice new behaviours and ways of thinking and test them out for their impact on those around them before they do this in the actual work or life situation. The consequences can be examined and new decisions made as to how to apply the learning.⁶

Group development

Methods focusing on the development of the group include:

Tavistock method - Wilfred Bion

The Tavistock method originated with the work of the British psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion. Convinced of the importance of considering not only the individual but also the group of which the individual is a member, in the late 1940s Bion conducted a series of small study groups at London's Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. He reported his experiences in a series of articles for the journal *Human Relations* and later, as the book *Experiences in Groups*¹⁷.

The theory is that groups have a manifest, overt aspect and a latent, covert aspect. The manifest aspect is the work group, a level of functioning at which members consciously pursue agreed-on objectives and work toward the completion of a task. Although group members have hidden agendas, they rely on internal and external controls to prevent these hidden agendas from

emerging and interfering with the announced group task. Tension always exists between the two; it is balanced by various behavioural and psychological structures, including individual defence systems, ground rules, expectations, and group norms.

The method is formally applied in a group relations conference to study the ways in which authority is vested in leaders by others, to study the factors involved as they happen, to study the covert processes that operate in and among groups, and to study the problems encountered in the exercise of authority. A consultant confronts the group by drawing attention to group behaviour by means of description, process observation, thematic development, and other interventions, some of which are designed to shock the group into awareness of what is happening.

Community building – Scott Peck

M Scott Peck wrote several books on group work and as part of his work he developed a model of the four stages of community outlined in his book *The Different Drum*.⁷ This model is a very helpful way of describing the natural development of a group over time. The four stages are:

Pseudo-Community - This is when people meet and are being very nice to each other, avoiding any kind of conflict.

Conflict and Chaos - Members have moved through being nice and begin to challenge one another. Individuals struggle to win, and have their norm prevail.

Emptiness - This stage requires members to give up something to allow the group to move on towards achieving its purpose.

Authentic Community - People begin to speak with vulnerability and authenticity. There will be sadness, joy and extraordinary individual healing. Community is born.

Community development

Community development involves the wider community and developed out of social work practice in the UK in the 1950's onwards. Community development uses facilitation in many ways and has been an important influence in developing the theory and practice of facilitation.

ICA Technology of Participation - Brian Stanfield

In the 1970s the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), based in Chicago, Illinois, USA began to create community development projects around the world. Initially 24 were created, one in each time zone. These demonstration projects were followed by Human Development Training Schools in which the local people, working with the Institute's staff, explained to people in surrounding communities how progress had been made in the first community.

The methods developed by the ICA to conduct its planning and training programs are now called the Technology of Participation (ToP). These methods have been used by businesses, government agencies, schools, and private voluntary organizations to encourage reflection, conduct participatory

planning and problem-solving and guide systematic implementation. They have been used to build leadership capacity and to institutionalize teamwork as organizational practice.

The basic group facilitation methods include the *Focused Conversation* and *Consensus Workshop* methods and a short-term *Action Planning* process. ICA books include *Winning Through Participation: Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation*¹⁸ by Laura Spencer and Brian Stansfield's books, *The Art of Focussed Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*¹⁹, and *The Courage to Lead: Transform Self, Transform Society*.²⁰

Organisational development

The use of facilitation in organisational development grew in the 1980's and onwards. Examples are:

Appreciative inquiry - David Cooperrider

Appreciative Inquiry was pioneered in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva²¹, two professors at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, USA. Appreciative Inquiry is used widely to bring about collaborative and strengths-based change in thousands of profit and nonprofit organizations and communities in many countries.

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of being and seeing. It is both a worldview and a process for facilitating positive change in human systems, such as organizations, groups, and communities. The main assumption of Appreciative Inquiry is simple; every human system has something that works right - things that give it life when it is vital, effective, and successful. Appreciative Inquiry begins by identifying this positive core and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, sharpen vision, and inspire action for change.

Systems thinking – Peter Senge

Systems thinking allows people to make their understanding of social systems explicit and improve them in the same way that people can use engineering principles to make explicit and improve their understanding of mechanical systems. This broad view helps one to identify the real causes of issues and know where to work to address them. There are certain principles of systems thinking that guide one to see this broad view. Systems thinking is the basis for the approach to developing the learning organization. Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline*²², and its companion, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*²³, are seminal works about systems thinking and its application to organizations. Senge identifies five "component technologies" that are the basis for building learning organizations (and systems thinking in individuals). These are vision, teamwork, personal development, mental models, and systems thinking. The five disciplines are all very relevant for facilitators.

Large Group interventions

In 1992, Billie Alban and Barbara Bunker edited a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* dedicated to exploring what they saw as an emergent social technology – Large Group Interventions. They wrote the book *Large Group Interventions – Engaging the Whole System in Rapid*²⁴ in 1996. In it they present a comprehensive overview of the main methods that had emerged at that stage. They began many of the conversations about this new field of change practice in that book and at many organisational development conferences and workshops around the world.

Approaches within *Large Group Interventions* include: Search Conference, Future Search, Real Time Strategic Change, ICA Strategic Planning Process, The Conference Model, Fast Cycle Full Participation Work Design, Real Time Work Design, Participative Design, Simu-Real, Work-Out and Open Space Technology.

Search Conference - Merrelyn Emery

The search conference method grows out of the socio-technical systems theory and practice work of Eric Trist and Fred Emery and is most clearly articulated in Merrelyn Emery and Ronald Purser's 1960 book *The Search Conference: A Powerful Method for Planning Organizational Change and Community*.²⁵

Search Conference is a participatory, democratic planning method that seeks to speed up responses to changing environments and develop cross-functional collaboration. Goal formulation is an important part of the process. Search Conferences try to build commitment, initiative, and innovation among people throughout an organization or community. The phases are:

Phase 1 (The Past): Participants share their perception of changes over the past five to seven years.

Phase 2 (Appreciating the Environment): The environment is 'appreciated' by focusing on the system's past, present, and future.

Phase 3 (Reality): Constraints are addressed and groups of participants select a strategic goal and work in self-managed teams to develop action plans.

Phase 4 (Implementation): The final phase of the conference occurs after the conference itself, and focuses on implementation. It usually includes changing the organization's way of working.

World Café - Juanita Brown

Designed by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, World Café is a useful method for discussing issues in a relaxed and informal way.

In World Café a focus question is chosen, people discuss the question at small tables and then move between tables sharing thoughts and building on one another's insights and also writing and doodling on the paper tablecloths as they go. The key to creating a successful World Café conversation is

employing seven guiding principles, which when used in combination foster courageous conversations and collective intelligence.

The World Café process is particularly useful when you want to generate input, share knowledge, stimulate innovative thinking, and explore action possibilities around real life issues and questions. The method works well for large groups (see www.theworldcafe.com).

Public participation

Facilitation is now used at many community forums and public meetings. The new-style public meeting will be led by facilitators rather than a chairperson and the aim will be to maximise public participation using facilitated processes. There may be discussion and dialogue in both small and large groups and there may also be some computer assisted recording and polling of views, priorities and points of agreement and difference. This is in contrast to the old-style public or town meeting which took the form of a heated public debate with a few voices dominating, tempers become frayed and motions and amendments put and voted on using majority voting.

Public participation processes are becoming so popular that an international network of practitioners have formed themselves into the International Association of Public Participation, known as IAP2. Their website is www.iap2.org The IAP2 homepage states that:

The International Association for Public Participation, working through its members, helps organizations and communities around the world improve their decisions by involving those people who are affected by those decisions.

IAP2 has over 1000 members in 16 countries. Resources listed on their website include related organizations and networks.

Useful Book

A enjoyable book which helps to map the field of facilitation is called *The Tao of Democracy: Using Co-intelligence to create a world that works*²⁶ by Tom Attlee. The book covers collective intelligence, democracy and wholeness, consensus making, cooperative and holistic politics, dialogue methods and citizens deliberative councils.

The developing field

This chapter has introduced a range of methods that are important in the development of the field facilitation. It is not however by any means an exhaustive list. See what other methods you can find, perhaps by searching on the Internet.

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