Developing
Organisational Wellbeing

Why this content might be relevant to you

- You would like to explore your organisational culture and identify some of the patterns of behaviour that people have adopted

- You would like to explore how to change negative patterns and enhance some of the more positive ones

- You would like to explore how good leadership and governance structures can enable innovation and change

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- This presentation is largely based on the article 'Organisations Get Stuck Too' by Critchley and Casey

- Additional materials for this module build on aspects of organisational culture that it raises

- Critchley, B. & Casey, D. (1989) Organisations Get Stuck Too, Leadership & Organization Development Journal Vol.10(4)

Organisational culture

- Organisational culture is often described as 'This is the way we do things around here.'

- Organisational culture is a pattern of collective behaviours which might include the organization values, visions, norms, language, systems, symbols, beliefs and habits.

- There may be more than one culture in an organisation, but there are sometimes different and conflicting cultures that co-exist across departments or faculties.

- The organizational culture may have negative and positive aspects.

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Organisational culture and getting stuck

Individual and groups work at different levels:

- The conscious level – we know this because plans are produced and actions are taken to achieve goals

- The unconscious level – we know this because sometimes we become aware that something is 'going on' on that we cannot really account for

- Sometimes organisations seem to get stuck in patterns of behaviour that they seem unable to shake

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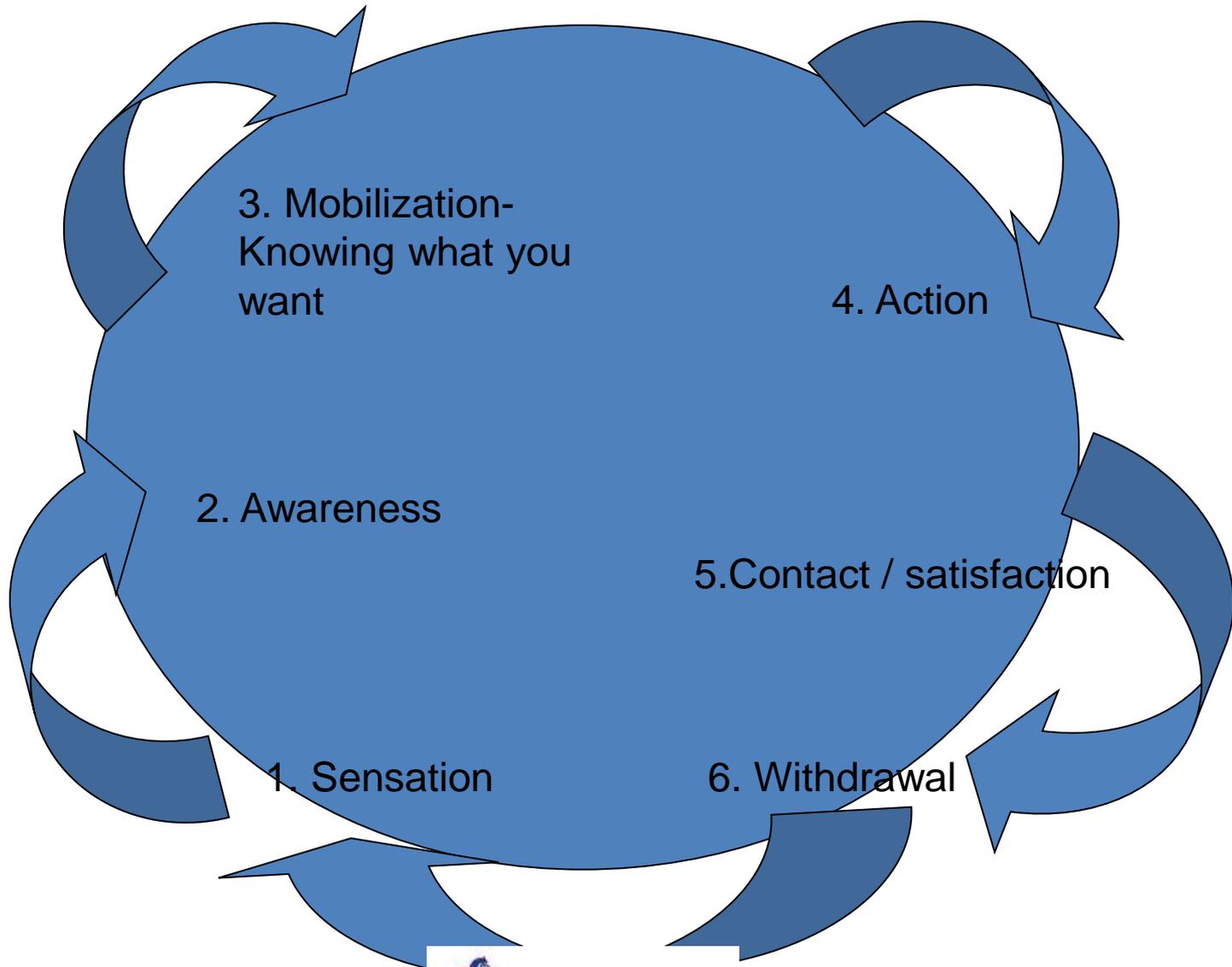*Improving Education Together*

Difficulties in the change process

- When organisations try to change, they can come up against powerful processes that prevent transformation and which operate in ways which people they don't understand (or are really aware of) but which, paradoxically, seem to have been created by the organisation.

- Sometimes, you can make a change to an organisation – for example, by adopting a new method of communication which should solve a problem. But it doesn't. So to ensure that change can happen, we try to uncover some of the unconscious processes that are at play.

The contribution of Gestalt theory

- The Gestalt cycle describes a natural cycle of interaction between the organism and its environment. All our interactions can be said to move through the different phases, from feeling, becoming aware, knowing what we want and acting on it, through to contact, satisfaction and finally withdrawal. (see next slide)

- Sometimes, for many reasons, the phases of the cycle become 'interrupted' and identifiable patterns of behaviour can result according to which phase it is. We can then get stuck in these behaviour patterns.

- The cycle is relevant for both people and organisations as in both there are conscious and unconscious processes. 'Organisations can get stuck too!'

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THE GESTALT CYCLE

3. Mobilization- Knowing what you want

4. Action

2. Awareness

5. Contact / satisfaction

1. Sensation

6. Withdrawal

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Different types of stuck behaviour

In their work, Critchley and Case identified the following types of stuck organisation:

- Suppressed

- Hysterical

- Knowing and angry

- Frightened

- Task

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INTERVENING WITH STUCK ORGANISATIONS

- START WITH DIAGNOSIS
  Try to work out what kind of organisation that you are
  This provides a picture of the dilemmas, paradoxes, polarities, etc. that produce the stuckness.

- INTERVENTION
  An intervention is what you do about it
  This requires the integration and use of thinking, feeling (seeing), acting
  Start where your department/faculty/school is
  Think about working with the suggestions in the slides

- RESULT: STUCK ORGANISATIONS ARE RELEASED!!

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Diagnosing 'stuck' characteristics

When we examine stuck organisations they can be said to have different characteristics. Here are some ways of assessing these:

- Mechanism – how this is done
- 'Clinical type' – based on observation
- Energy – how people interact with each other and tasks
- Emotional tone – what are the main ways people express themselves
- Symptoms – what traits are obvious

And ways to address these:

- Induction – what they want you to do to help them
- Trap – doing what they want!

(after Earl Braxton, Tavistock Institute, 2007)

The Suppressed Organization:
(Interrupted Before Sensation)

- Mechanism: Desensitization (lack of feeling)
- 'Clinical type': Schizoid
- Energy: Withdrawn behaviour
- Emotional Tone: Rigid, flat, formal
- Symptoms: Avoid feeling, rely on rules, procedures, control systems, little strategic thinking
- Induction: "We do not need any help"

Trap: Get them to feel (they are defended against that)

(after Earl Braxton, Tavistock Institute, 2007)

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STRATEGY: Suppressed Organisation

What to try with the suppressed organisation:

- Provoke them into consequences of withdrawn behaviour

- Focus on outside dangers (if there aren't any, you're in trouble!)

- Energy is invested in withdrawn behavior, so start there: BEHAVIOUR first (how to relate to the outside world), then RETHINK and ADJUST

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The Hysterical Organization:
(Interrupted Before Awareness)

- Mechanism: Deflection
- 'Clinical type': Histrionic
- Energy: Heightened emotionality
- Emotional Tone: Drama, excitement
- Features: From crisis to crisis, avoid awareness, stuck in feeling, gossip and intrigue
- Induction: "Tell me what to do. And then I will not do it"

Trap: Tell them what to do

(after Earl Braxton, Tavistock Institute, 2007)

STRATEGY: The Hysterical Organisation:

What to try with the hysterical organisation:

- Engage and empathize with their emotions, then

- Build problem-solving skills

- Strengthen their thinking

- Their energy is invested in FEELING, so start there (empathize). Then show them how to THINK through joint diagnosis.

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The Knowing and Angry Organization: Interrupted Before Mobilization

- Mechanism: Introjection
- 'Clinical type': Passive aggressive
- Energy: Resistant Behaviour
- Emotional Tone: Cynicism, blaming, stubborn, hopeless
- Symptoms: Unable to mobilize energy to achieve focus; passive; small groups talk, not in open forum
- Induction: "Solve my problem (if you can…but you cannot)"
- Trap: Diagnosis and Feedback

(after Earl Braxton, Tavistock Institute, 2007)

STRATEGY: The Knowing and Angry Organization:

What to try with the knowing and angry organisation:

- Confront their passivity

- Provoke into mobilization, then support in experimentation (you cannot out-passive a passive!)

- The energy is invested in PASSIVE BEHAVIOUR, so confront this behaviour (the games organization is playing with itself), invite EXPERIMENTING with new behaviours, so help them FEEL BETTER about themselves.

The Frightened Organization:
Interrupted Before Action

- Mechanism: People project feelings onto others
- 'Clinical type': Paranoid
- Energy: Suspicious, vigilant
- Emotional Tone: Secretive, low trust, fearful
- Symptoms: Putting things off, fear of action, over-drafting reports, many people cc-ed people on emails, meetings as places to avoid risk
- Induction: "You do something about them (but don't believe you will)"
- Trap: Confront senior team with the issues; get them to do something

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STRATEGY: The Frightened Organization:

What to try with the frightened organisation:

- Energy invested in THINKING about what might go wrong if you do something, so start there

- Cognitive work on diagnosis, then

- Share so can start to experience and FEEL SAFE

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The Task Organization:
Interrupted Before Contact

- Mechanism: Retroflection (resisting aspects of self)

- Clinical: Obsessive/Compulsive

- Energy: Frenetic activity, exhaustion

- Emotional Tone: Serious, joyless, striving, stressed

- Symptoms: Assumption is that success lies in doing things better, compulsive quest for more expertise, accuracy, efficiency

- Induction: "Please get me the latest model or state of the art technique"

Trap: Provide latest model, try to do better than they do

(after Earl Braxton, Tavistock Institute, 2007)

STRATEGY: The Task Organization

What to try with the task organisation:

- Energy invested in THINKING, so start to THINK ABOUT HOW THINGS GET DONE

- Then move onto how to MANAGE FEELINGS while doing the task.

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