

Creating Inclusivity through storytelling

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The experiential workshop will rely on storytelling as methodology to create an insight into the topic of Inclusivity. The notes attached present a literature study on the phenomena of Inclusivity and the methodology of storytelling and will serve as content for the process workshop to be facilitated from a Rogerian perspective. The turbulent, complex and chaotic external environment, changes in this world and the reaction of leadership on these changes, forms the context of the model that will be presented. Although not discussed in this written intervention paper, the underlying philosophy of Emotional Intelligence as described by BarOn (2005) is supported by this attempt.

An archetypal story will be told, and unpacked in an inclusive manner through facilitation. Theory on storytelling and Inclusivity will be shared during the interactive session.

Conversation is at the heart of the new inquiry. It is perhaps the core human capacity for dealing with the tremendous challenges we face. To engage in great civilisation we need to ask questions that matter. We cannot afford to spend our time on issues that can't hold our attention, that don't touch our hearts. The culture of conversation is a different culture, one that could make a difference in the future of our world."

Institute for the Future, In Good Company: 2006: 5
Innovation at the intersection of Technology and Sustainability

1. Introduction

Different facilitation techniques, group work techniques, group process work and analytical processes have been applied over the last few decades in change enablement processes. The researcher agrees with Wheatly (2005) that people are more polarised, more overwhelmed, more impatient, more exhausted and more withdrawn than ever to partake in yet another problem-solving process or teambuilding and great care should be taken not to implement change initiatives mechanistically.

The methodologies of storytelling are discussed with the purpose to understand how Inclusivity can be created. As the essence of storytelling centre around crucial conversations and real organisational dilemmas, it can contribute significantly to organisational understanding and awareness and enhance the probability that the interventions / change effort will be sustainable.

2. Storytelling

“Without the continuity of storytelling and the messages they contain from the leadership of the group, the people of any tribe or corporation will forget who they are.”

DePree, 1989

2.1 Introduction

Narratives can be used as a valuable lens for understanding and managing organisations in the 21st century. It is often seen as something ephemeral, something relevant mainly to entertainment or something that only children enjoy and primitive societies engage in. There is, however, valuable application for storytelling in the new world of work. Often top executives in large corporations are rarely seen by employees. Stories about them can create confidence in the organisation (Brown, Denning, Groh & Prusak, 2005). Every organisation seems to create stories (narratives) as a way of

making sense of organisational life. The story told to new employees, the informal discussions during a smoke break, the speech of the CEO during a videoconference are all part of organisational storytelling. Narrative and storytelling constitute an obvious and central aspect of every functioning organisation. Cultural messages are passed down in stories (LeBaron, 2005).

2.2 What is storytelling?

Stories are the carriers of behavioural norms and teach us how to behave. According to Brown et al (2005), people display remarkably stable behaviour over time and, although there are subtle changes, the continuity and endurance of behavioural norms have a great deal to do with stories. Stories help to explain the social fabric of the organisation. Brown et al (2005) argued that any discussion of an organisation that does not place narrative and storytelling at the centre is bound to be misleading and incomplete. Stories become embedded in legends and myths. Stories about the past constrain behaviour in the organisations. These stories can have so much power that economists call it path-dependency, implying that the road you take will determine where you go. Stereotypes are created because humans tell stories about other humans (Brown et al, 2005). Stories are one of the ways in which knowledge, such as social knowledge, is transmitted and therefore it is critical in knowledge management strategies. Storytelling can be applied with great success during translation of strategy or archetypal stories can be used in growth processes. Storytelling can take many forms – it can be the managing director that passionately speaks to the people, someone with a life lesson that translates learning through the story, it can be during creation of strategy or translation of values. Employees can be taught how to write their own stories or stories could be told dramatically through theatre (Du Plessis, 2004).

2.3 Core assumptions and principles

People can recall something easily when it is told in a story (Brown, Denning, Groh & Prusak, 2005). Weick (1995) identified the need to make sense of the organisation and

the environment as the strongest impulse in many organisations. As a story needs context (Brown et al, 2005), organisational stories refer to the organisation at a specific time and place. Storytelling is one of the ways in which norms are transferred (Hechter & Opp, 2001). Stories endure and, although the names referred to change, the behavioural lessons are the same.

Stories have salience. Purposeful storytelling can reach large numbers of people rapidly and it does not cost much. Narratives communicate naturally as human nature reacts to authenticity and universal truths. Storytelling communicates collaboratively, persuasively, holistically, contextually, intuitively, entertainingly, interactively, emotively and kinetically in order to invoke action. Brown et al (2005) stated that storytelling spurs double-loop learning, reaching quickly into the deeper recesses of the psyche, and changes values and attitudes. This methodology has the ability to let us unlearn what we have been taught.

During transformational efforts storytelling can be utilised to create shared understanding, to understand the reason for the change, relate to the transition and to describe how behaviour should be in the new reality.

2.4 Criteria for storytelling

Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005) mentioned that stories could be used for entertainment, conveying information, for nurturing, promoting innovation, preserving organisations and also changing organisations. Jung (1981) described archetypal stories as stories that are not subject to the laws of time and space. A person can experience a good story as if he/she has lived it him-/her. Brown et al (2005) stated that the conventional view of communication is to ignore the internal dialogue that every individual possesses. They stated clearly that it is not the story that has a large impact; it is the process of storytelling.

A good story is funny, clever or moving. A story has to be true to one's own sense of how things work (Brown et al, 2005). Storytelling can be used to translate tacit

knowledge into consciousness. Stories must be understandable, told from the perspective of a single protagonist (a person who is in a situation that is typical to that of the organisation), give certain strangeness, but still be plausible and embody the change idea as fully as possible. The story should be as recent as possible to convey a sense of urgency.

Huss (2004) stressed the importance of authenticity during storytelling. Brown et al (2005) stated that it is best if the story is true, told in a minimalist fashion and has a happy ending. They stated clearly that the storyteller must be passionate, as he/she translates an emotive message with the story. A story has to be true to one's own sense of how things work (Brown et al, 2005). When done right, storytelling is invisible to the listener. Storytelling can be used to translate tacit knowledge into conscious awareness and shared insight.

2.5 Steps of storytelling

There are no definite steps in storytelling. It is, however, critical that shared experiences are created by storytelling. It is valuable if the story is analysed after it has been told. In organisations, stories can be told with great effect to translate norms, share visions and promote change initiatives. If the leader shares passionately from the self, the audience relates to the authenticity and responds emotively (Brown & Denning & Groh & Prusak, 2005). A good story is funny, clever or moving. It can be used to communicate complex ideas, motivate people to change, getting people to work together, share knowledge, deal with rumours, transmit values and lead people to a shared outcome.

2.6 Differences between storytelling and other approaches

Storytelling is the way in which humans share other people's expertise, reliability and trustworthiness. Due to the fact that organisational operations are increasingly becoming virtual, this perceived outcome becomes increasingly important. Brown et al (2005) stated that there are no alternatives to telling stories – no system or human

resources department can do it. Storytelling in person is intensely interactive, whereas other forms of communication are passive. Storytelling can help a person to see reality in a new way.

Everybody has a different way in which he/she hears a story, a different way to be engaged and to experience. Archetypal storytelling allows for the listener to interpret the story in his/her own way. Tacit knowledge, which forms part of the intellectual capital in an organisation, can be identified as the most important resource in any organisation (Dess & Picken, 2000). Storytelling can be used with great success in organisations. Storytelling can ensure strategy translation and creation of shared meaning, and thus significance and buy-in in organisations. The power of a story is unleashed through application to employees' lives.

2.7 Critique of storytelling

Stories may be seen as nebulous, ephemeral, subjective and unscientific. Much should still be done to convince traditional line managers that storytelling must form an integral part of their leadership skill set. Recognising the importance of storytelling may be a leadership challenge of the new economy of work. Stories may be subjective (Dess & Picken, 2000) or even be culture-specific. Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005), however, argued that the cultural differences are much less significant than the similarities. Often stories consist of archetypal wisdom that is applicable across cultural boundaries.

2.8 Conclusion

Stories are a very powerful way in which to convey complex, multi-dimensional concepts. While a certain amount of knowledge can be reflected as information, stories hold the key to unlocking the vital knowledge, which remains beyond the reach of easily codified information. It can be viewed as a knowledge management tool, as it helps people and organisations to discover the hidden values in ideas and intellect. Storytelling communicates collaboratively, persuasively, holistically, intuitively, entertainingly, movingly, freely and interactively (Huss, 2006).

3. The Philosophy and concept of inclusivity

“You can’t grow peaches on an oak tree. To grow peaches the root must be peach friendly.”

Thomas, 1992

3.1 Introduction

During the previous paragraphs emphasis were placed on the methodology of storytelling. In this section, the focus shift to the reason why storytelling will be applied in organisations, namely to (amongst other outcomes) create Inclusivity

3.2 The concepts of Inclusion, a climate of Inclusion and Inclusivity

“Inclusion is not a separate activity. It’s an integral part of the things we do day in and day out. When you talk about a performance appraisal, you build in Inclusion; when you give feedback, when you talk about goal setting and salary, you build in Inclusion. That’s the next level.”

Perea, Cited by Hyter and Turnock, 2005

The concept of Inclusivity is still relatively unknown and not well documented and researched. Almost no academic literature and research could be found on a climate of Inclusivity. Slightly more work was found on the topic of Inclusion. Surprisingly, the majority of published work is from the field of educational psychology (Kraft & Sakofs 1985, Erickson 1987; Spindler & Spindler, 1992 and Russel 2004). Some reference was made to a “climate of Inclusion” by LeBaron (2005) and Katz and Miller (2003), who contributed significantly by approaching the topic from an Organisational Change and Development perspective. The work of Katz et al (2003) is closest to actually pin-pointing the topic and describing strategy on how to implement a climate of what they refer to as “Inclusion”. LeBaron (2005) had similar thoughts, but focused on the interface between climate and conflict.

Inclusion is a term that is used by people with disabilities and other disability rights advocates to refer to the idea that human beings should openly, freely and happily accommodate a human being with a disability. It goes beyond mainstreaming, the process of ensuring that a person with disability diversity is put alongside those without such differences in the hope that each will adapt and learn from and about each other.

Hyter and Turnock (2005) described the power of Inclusion in the context of unlocking potential and production of the workforce and presented a business case for an inclusive model of human resource development. They however presented the concept in the context of development and argued for leadership to create a “climate of development”.

A definition for the concept of Inclusion was found in The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (2007): “*The act of including or the state of being included*”.

The only definition that could be found for the concept of Inclusivity was on Wikipedia, the electronic encyclopaedia. The Wikipedia defines **Inclusivity** as “*a mash up of inclusive and interoperability. It is a new business term that implies a strategy to both seek out partners (be inclusive) and Organisational Change and Development an open standard (allowing interoperability). Now little more than a meme, Inclusivity is at the heart of organisations wishing to thrive in a participatory culture.*”

This definition can be divided into two concepts, namely that of “*a strategy to both seek out partners (be inclusive)*” and “*Organisational Change and Development an open standard (allowing interoperability)*” Leaders should focus on ensuring that employees experience a sense of **involvement** and **participation**, (Coetsee, 2001) while focussing on creating a climate conducive for openness and sharing (Miller & Katz, 2002). **Interoperability**, a terminology adapted from the field of information technology refers to the connecting of people, data and diverse systems (IEEE, 1990). The term can be defined in a technical way or in a broad way, taking into account social, political and organisational factors. Miller (2000) described the concept of interoperability, also in the context of information technology, as the active engagement in the ongoing process of ensuring that systems, procedures and the organisational culture is managed in such a way that opportunities for the exchange and sharing of information are maximised. Synergies are thus unleashed. The

researcher is of the view that the concept of interoperability can be adapted with ease in the field of Organisational Change and Development as the effort to optimise culture is mutual to both fields of study. Throughout this thesis it is argued that it is important that leadership in organisations should create a climate conducive for unleashing individual gifts, individual voices. In the field of Organisational Change and Development the concern is, amongst others, on optimising individual behaviour or engagement. Later in this paper, these concepts derived from the definition, namely involvement, participation, engagement (commitment) and synergy are discussed in the attempt to introduce a framework for Inclusivity through studying the psychology of Inclusion.

Sometimes a concept can be better understood if one studies **what it is not**. Faqua and Newman (2002) mentioned that Inclusion greatly increases the understanding of the problem, broadens the realm of ownership and is likely to influence the impact of various interventions across the system. Exclusion, on the other hand, can also be powerful. It can motivate people to resist change either passively or actively, and it increases the sense of isolation and alienation of individual experiences. Faqua and Newman (2002) explained that exclusivity can lead to suspicion, and those valuable human resources and perspectives are then lost. Indifference or apathy can manifest when respect, support, ownership and trust is low in organisations (Schutte, 1996; 2003; 2004; 2006).

3.3 The philosophy of Inclusion

Inclusivity implies the Inclusion of differences. The quest to understand differences asks transition for a movement from the visible realm of behaviour to the unconscious level and the symbolic. In diversity issues, there is much more under the surface than above it. LeBaron (2005) said that much more is being sensed, felt and intuited than what can be verbalised, and therefore the ability to bridge differences will change any ambiguity. The ice-berg metaphor (yet again) comes to mind.

Inclusivity would imply that all the different voices are heard in the organisation – different voices due to different race, gender, personality type, nationality, spirituality, exposure, education, worldview and all the other diversity factors explored in this thesis. People only voice their opinions if the environment is conducive for allowing mistakes and vulnerability and no blaming or other power games take place (Covey, 2004, Schutte, 2006). If a person feels threatened, defence mechanisms kick into place, infighting, pairing, flight and flight behaviour take place (Cilliers, 1999). One cannot make a mistake out of fear, and therefore someone else is blamed. A person cannot fight the internal and the external world together (Jung, 1953). If energy is focused on self-preservation, it cannot be spent on performance, customer service, safe behaviour and innovation and creativity. Personal dynamics can disable a person to take up authority and claim his/her space (Cilliers, 1999). However, if the climate is conducive and diversity appreciated and valued, the gift of the individual psyche can materialise to the benefit of the individual, team and organisation. The paradoxical nature of Inclusivity becomes clear. In order to enhance the engagement of individuals in organisations, involvement in the doing (strategy – the what) should happen while simultaneously congruency exists around the being (values – the how).

The heart of an organisation is its members, who should work effectively together to ensure organisational productivity (Covey, 2004). Chung (1997) explained that ethnicity influences the psychological climate in an organisation, and if members do not perceive their relationships in similar ways, there is potential for mistrust and disrespect between different groups. This, for example, manifests in different social events for different groupings. As there will always be diversity in organisations this challenge will always present itself to leadership. Organisational Change and Development work should be done to minimise this risk. The more the cultural aspects of an organisation are articulated to employees, the more cohesive and stable the collective behaviours of the workers will be (Gershon, Stone, Bakken & Larson, 2004). The opposite also applies, namely if aspects of the culture are ill-defined, shifting, not reinforced, not communicated and/or not supported, both the employees' collective perceptions and

their behaviour will be inconsistent. Gershon et al (2004) explained the importance of alignment between individual values and beliefs with that of the organisation.

In recent years, a number of studies emerged from the Social Identification Theory (SIT) literature (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams, 1986; Hennessy & West, 1999; Hinkle, Taylor & Fox-Cardomone, 1989 and van Knippenberg, 2000), as well as the other contemporary organisational literature (Russo, 1998; Testa, 2001), which examine the way in which organisational behavior especially identification, which translates into engagement were published. Grice, Paulson and Jones (2002: 24) described the concept of identification congruence and cited Gallois, Thluchowska and Callan who stated that *“two targets of identification are likely to be compatible when the core values associated with each are similar, and when categorisation of the self in terms of one group does not preclude categorisation of the self in terms of the other group”* Gallois, Thluchowska and Callan (2001) further examined how membership in multiple organisational groups influences individual acceptance of organisational change. The results of the study indicated that employees who exhibited a high degree of compatibility between multiple identification targets that were nested in the organisational hierarchy, were most open to the changes and assessed the change most positively. Kaplan and Norton (2006) and Heroldt, Ungerer & Pretorius (2000) described the importance of translating strategy and ensuring identification with organisational strategy. Van Tonder (2004) stated that creating individual, group and organisational identities are critical in building change resilience in organisations.

The researcher is of the view that through a process of Inclusivity everyone in the organisation can get the opportunity to align their individual values and performance to that of the organisation. Congruence on **“the doing”** in organisations is critical and can be achieved through a process of radical Organisational Change and Development called Inclusivity.

The idea that human beings are defined and constituted by their narratives has come to dominate vast regions of the human sciences – in psychology, sociology, political

theory, literary studies, religious studies and psychotherapy (Strawson, 2004). Everybody has a story to tell. Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005) describe it as “an art of possibility”. By implication, everybody can create his/her own outcome. Brown et al (2005) passionately argued for the sharing of and listening to people’s stories and stated that it should not be about being the most powerful. Rather everyone else should be made more powerful. Brown et al (2005) explained that there is a way to ensure that change in organisations is more effective, efficient and humane. It involves approaching things in a collaborative and non-adversarial (read inclusive) way. They believed so much in this approach that they argued that it works even in the difficulty of downsizing, distrust and competition. The post-modern leader must create an empowering environment of openness and trust in which employees are enabled to achieve organisational goals in a self-directed manner. Less Organisational Change and Development and manipulation of employees and more respect for the potential of spiritual beings are required (Denton & Bower, 2003). Congruence on “**the being**” in organisations is critical and can be achieved through Inclusivity.

Individual behavior is influence by a person’s self-view and appraisals of others with whom they interact (Polzer, Milton and Swann, 2003). Therefore, interaction between individual group members will unfold smoothly as long as there is mutual understanding of differences. This interpersonal understanding has its origin in the need for certainty, coherence and predictability. Polzen, Milton and Swann (2003) stated that in facilitating the harmonious interaction between individuals with substantial differences, congruence will liberate diverse members to contribute fully to their group. As a result, interpersonal congruence becomes a mechanism through which groups can fully leverage on diversity.

In order to promote Inclusion, leadership often has to help employees overcome their natural inclinations. Faqua and Newman (2002) warned against the perception of exclusion in dysfunctional organisations where Inclusion can be interpreted by the organisation and exclusion can be viewed as a safety or controlling strategy. The view is raised that these strategies will only serve to maintain existing dysfunctional

behaviour. Katz and Miller (2003) prompted managers to undertake an organisational assessment and to provide data feedback.

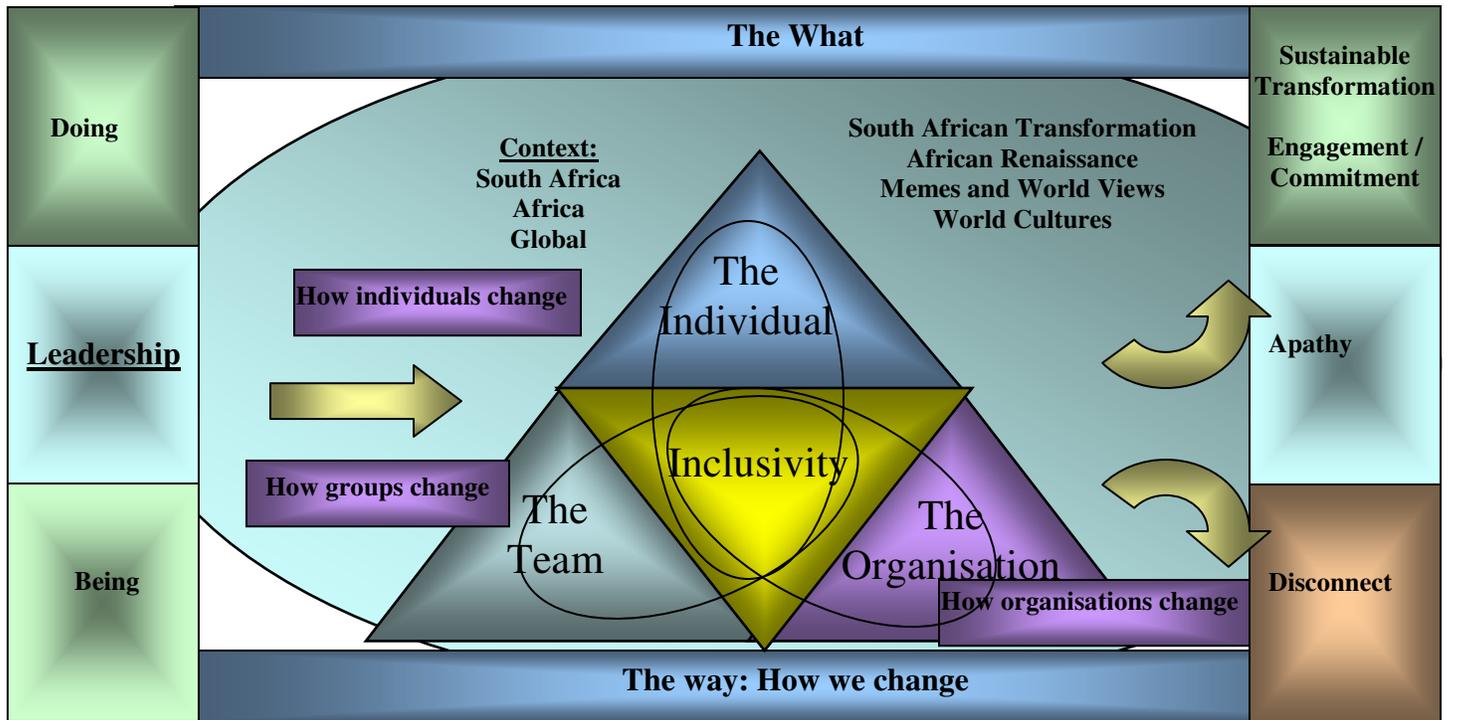
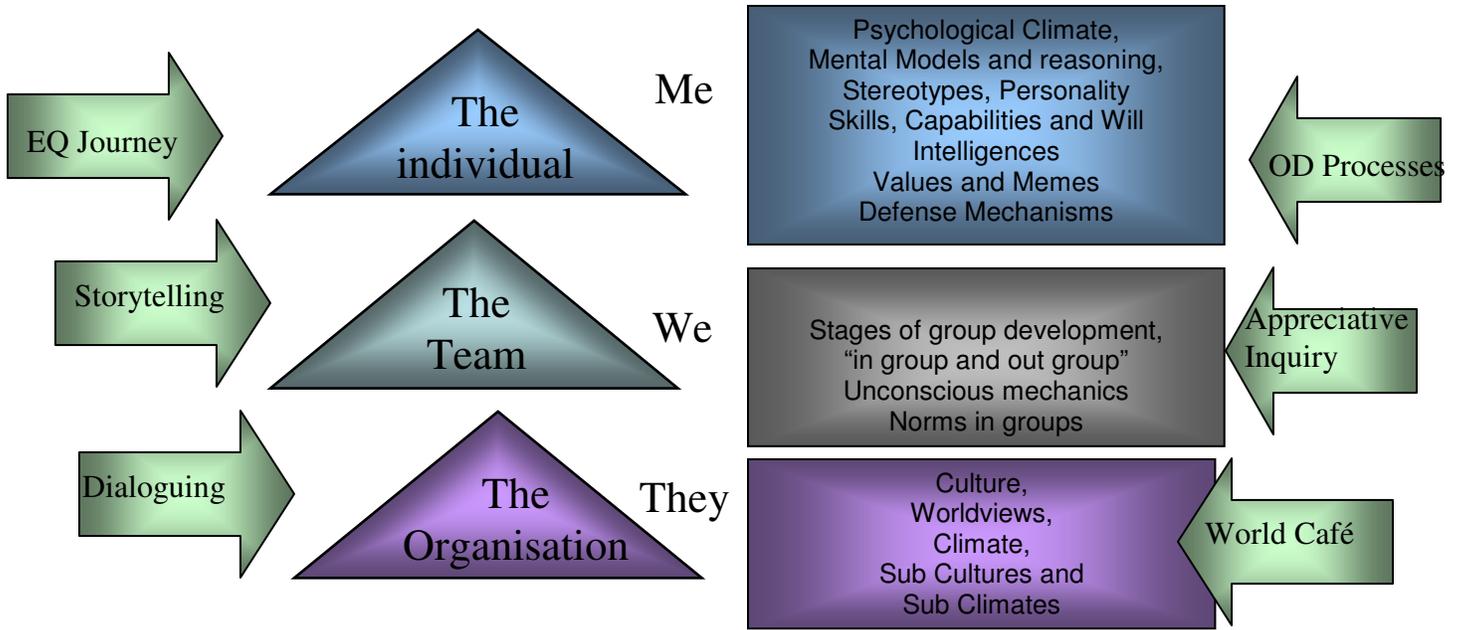
Feedback from a climate study, for example the Benchmark of Engagement Quotient, can be translated to all the people in the organisation by means of appreciative inquiry or industrial theatre, to ensure that people in the organisation feel included – that their voices are being heard. A pre-measure before a transformational intervention and a post-measure a few months later can provide solid business evidence for the degree to which a climate of Inclusivity has emerged. Through the implementation of various diversity programmes, Organisational Change and Development interventions and strategies, individual and group awareness can be enhanced and organisational assumptions and common beliefs reprogrammed. By linking and aligning the initiative to the strategic work of the organisation, diversity and Inclusion can become a way of doing business (Katz & Miller, 2003).

For the purpose of this paper and experiential workshop, the **operational definition of Inclusivity** is:

“A radical organisational transformational methodology which aligns the doing and the being side of the organisation around commonly defined principles and values, co-created by all. It is a systemic approach that focuses on underlying beliefs and assumptions and challenges patterns in the individual, group and organisational psyche to spend energy and engage in a sustainable, inclusive manner with the purpose to achieve shared consciousness.”

The process can be systemically explained by the following framework:

Sustainability through Inclusivity and OD interventions on all dimensions



4. Conclusion

Inclusivity unleashes **energy in a system** to perform. Energy according to science laws can be classified as positive, neutral or negative. Einstein taught us that energy can not be destroyed, however, through friction it can become less – the principle of entropy. Energy can however be transformed from one form to another (Oxtoby & Nachtrieb, 1996). Emotions can be described as forms of energy (Middelton-Moz, 2000). All the emotions that characterize human reactions to change, are also forms of energy in the individual psyche. These emotions should not be suppressed but made conscious in order to deal with them. Collectively speaking, emotions within the unconscious of the organisational psyche should be acknowledged and dealt with, as it can not be destroyed and will manifest in destructive, dysfunctional behaviours if being suppressed and not addressed.

In a climate of inclusivity, the energy in the system can be perceived as positive. Everybody is involved and shares their different viewpoints, nonperformance is not tolerated and everyone takes up personal authority. High levels of support, trust and respect are experienced. Leadership can be humane and vulnerable as mistakes can be shared and dealt with quickly. The energy in the system is in a virtuous cycle and all the emotions mentioned here reinforce again the climate of inclusivity.

In a system where the energy to perform is negative, a vicious cycles exists. People do not feel trusted, supported and respected. Therefore individual defense mechanisms are in place and group dynamics become destructive. In fighting happens, people withdraw and power plays and political gamesmanship is at the order of the day. Personal emotions can not be shared without penalty and nobody will admit to mistakes as everyone covers their own back. The blaming game will be alive and well. Jung (1953) said that a person fights either the internal or the external world at a time – not both worlds together. If a person thus focuses internally in order to cope, the external work is being neglected. This will manifest in lower levels of customer service and deterioration in the quality of work. Leaders should do everything in their power to

shorten the period of time that an individual spends energy to self-preserve or adapt. This individual change process can be accelerated by building emotional resilience, improving reality testing and influence current mental models. Methodologies that can be applied to build change resilience include storytelling, dialoguing and world café techniques.

If a system is neutral, it is indifferent – either does not care any more, could not care less or have tried to often without any reaction to implement change. Voices are not brought to the organisational table and people just do enough to survive.

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