

Steps for Metaphor Reflection (version 2.0)

This tool is based work by Jeroen Hendriksen.

Metaphor Reflection leads to new perspectives through interaction with images which have been elicited.

INPUT

Step 1 One participant (the reflector) introduces a recent experience from their professional practice. He or she talks about the experience, both the facts as well as the emotions which the situation evoked. The situation is described, using only one or two sentences, and the trigger in one or two more sentences, and then a question is formulated in one sentence. The trigger can be a positive experience or a problem.

Step 2 The other participants ask the reflector a few open, non-directive questions to clarify the input, such as 'who, what, when, where and how' questions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Step 3 The group divides into sub-groups of three or four participants. Each sub-group looks at the situation from the point-of-view of either the person (reflector) or the surroundings (team or organisation, depending on the input situation). This results in a metaphor from each sub-group which is drawn on a flip chart. This implies:

- a metaphor which the sub-group feels is characteristic of the reflector (the person) in the situation described;
- or a metaphor which depicts how the sub-group views the team or organisation (the surroundings), in which the reflector functions in the situation described.

Step 4 The reflector gives a short reaction to the metaphors and the relation between them. Next the group analyses both perspectives, that of the person and the surroundings. What can the group say about the relationship between the 'person' metaphor and the 'surroundings' metaphor? What does the 'person' metaphor say about:

- the way in which the reflector deals with their tasks, responsibilities, colleagues, team, manager or the organisation?
- the behaviour displayed by the reflector?

What does the 'surroundings' metaphor say about:

- the functioning of the team and the role of management?
- the business culture, rules, atmosphere, and co-operation within the organisation?

What is the relationship between the two metaphors?

The above questions can be adapted to the situation if necessary.

Step 5 Each participant formulates, in one full sentence, what they think the essence of the input is and writes this on a flip chart. The reflector then reacts to the sentences.

CONCLUSION

Step 6 Finally, the reflector indicates what they have gained from this activity and comes back to the starting question. Is he or she now in a position to go forward with the results? What knowledge does he or she think is needed to deal with the problem?

