

# TEAM BUILDING FROM A PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to measure the impact of a psychodynamic, Tavistock stance, team building event. Its task is to provide opportunities for learning about team behaviour and dynamics. Consultants offer interpretations in the form of working hypotheses about what is happening in the here-and-now. This refers to the basic assumptions (dependency, fight/flight, pairing) and its relevant dynamic concepts. Post measured, qualitative research findings, indicate an increase in knowledge about the team's unconscious behaviour, a realisation of own identity, boundaries, potential and a strong sense of empowerment to act collectively in problem solving.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel van die navorsing is om die impak van 'n psigodinamiese, Tavistock beskouing, spanbou gebeurtenis, te meet. Die taak is om leergeleenthede beskikbaar te stel oor eie spangedrag en -dinamika. Konsultante bied interpretasies aan in die vorm van werksipotese oor die gebeure in die hier-en-nou. Dit verwys na die basiese aannames (afhanklikheid, veg/vlug, afparing) en die relevante dinamiese konsepte. Post-gemete, kwalitatiewe navorsingsresultate, dui op 'n toename in kennis oor die span se onbewuste gedrag, 'n besef van eie identiteit, grense, potensiaal en 'n sterk sin van bemagtiging om op 'n kollektiewe wyse op te tree in probleemoplossing.

According to many predictions, future organisational success will rely increasingly on effective group behaviour and team building (Robbins, 1998). Most large South African organisations have started building effective work and management teams over the last decade (Kruger, 1999). This task is performed by Industrial/Organisational psychologists and Human Resources practitioners acting as internal and/or external consultants, and who are traditionally trained to work from the functionalistic and/or humanistic paradigm(s).

The **functionalistic approach** (Morgan, 1980) is regulative and pragmatic in orientation and it tries to understand behaviour in a way which generates useful empirical knowledge. Its assumptions are that society has a real and concrete existence and a systematic character oriented to produce an ordered and regulated state of affairs. Behaviour is seen as being contextually bound in a real world of concrete and tangible social relationships. Within this approach, the team would be exposed to predetermined exercises where after typical roles, generally played in groups, would be ascribed to participants, for example according to the Belbin (1993) theory. The focus on order, regulation and concreteness, makes this a mechanical approach to team building, in the sense that the team's behaviour is measured against expected behaviour. Furthermore, because the so-called facilitator tells the team how it should behave, dependence on outside authority is created, which disempowers the team (Miller, 1993).

The **humanistic approach** (Quitmann, 1985) sees the person as more than the sum of his/her parts, being principally good, existing in a human context, acting in awareness, making choices and living purposefully. Within this approach the team would focus on its development through the theoretically predicted group processes of forming, storming, norming and performing (Bergh & Theron, 1999:262-263), as well as on membership skills of listening to and giving one another feedback (Luft, 1984). Although this approach refers to growth in terms of self-actualisation, respect and openness as core values (Rogers, 1975; 1982), the focus is more on individual growth and interpersonal effectiveness (Cilliers, 1995a; 1995b; Cilliers & Wissing 1993), than on team behaviour. Sometimes, in working from these assumptions, reference is made to "group dynamics" (Kruger, 1999:50-52), which in further investigation, refers to the processes of the group and not its dynamic behaviour (such as the team's - collective - unconscious behaviour with its underlying anxiety, splits and defence mechanisms - Miller, 1993).

As alternative to the above mentioned traditional team building approaches, this research suggests the Tavistock stance, which originated at the Tavistock Institute in the UK (Miller, 1989; 1993), and the AK Rice Institute in the USA (Coleman & Bexton, 1975; Coleman & Geller, 1985). This approach has become synonymous with the study of organisational behaviour and consulting to organisations form the **psychodynamic approach**.

Although Freud and Jung - as the fathers of psychoanalysis - did not comment directly on the application of psychodynamic principles in the world of work (Czander, 1993:11), especially Freud's theories were used as basis for this purpose, incorporating the work of Melany Klein on child and family psychology (De Board, 1978:25-34), Ferenczi on object relations (De Board, 1978:22-24; Hugg et al., 1993:138-146) and Bertalanffy on systems thinking, developing into the open systems model (Czander, 1993:43; De Board, 1978:86-111; Hirshhorn, 1993; Hugg et al., 1993:130-137, 193-197). This has been used in group relations working conferences for over 50 years (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:125-133; Lawrence, 1979:1-19; 53-68), developed into a workable organisational theory (Bion, 1961; 1970; Lawrence, 1979; Miller, 1976; 1983; 1993) as well as an organisational consultancy stance (French & Vince, 1999; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:97-104; Lawrence, 1979; Neumann et al., 1997).

The above-mentioned psychodynamic stance is well known and used in Psychiatry in Europe and the USA (Menzies, 1993; Miller, 1976; 1980; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994:49-118; Rioch, 1970). Its application in organisational psychology is growing internationally. In South Africa however, very few Industrial/Organisational psychologists and/or Human Resources practitioners know about this stance or have been exposed to such training. Research from this stance in team building situations have been reported (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:44-54; French & Vince, 1999; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:103-113; Kets de Vries, 1991). However, these studies are conceptual in nature and no impact studies could be found in the existing literature.

## AIM OF THIS RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to measure the impact of a team building event presented from the psychodynamic approach or Tavistock stance.

## RATIONALE AND HYPOTHESIS FOR PRESENTING TEAM BUILDING FROM THE PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

The rationale for studying team behaviour from the psychodynamic approach can be stated as follows (Coleman & Bexton, 1975; Czander, 1993:123-143; French & Vince, 1999; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:175-179; Hirschhorn, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991; Lawrence, 1979; Miller, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Some team behaviour are clear and explicit. Others have to do with needs and anxieties that are unconscious. When this is discovered, team members find themselves unexpectedly resistant to change. The team usually assumes that there is a right way of behaving or a set of rules for its conduct, when in fact these are conventions that the team has developed collectively. These are then used to disguise unexamined relationships of power and authority.

From the same above-mentioned sources on the Tavistock stance, a few basic hypotheses about team behaviour can be formulated.

- Team members approach the work situation with unconscious and unfulfilled family needs which manifest in the work situation. An example is when unfulfilled needs for recognition or affection expected from parents, are played out in the relationship with the manager, who represents male or female authority.
- Team members bring unconscious and unresolved conflict, for example with parental authority, into the team. Because the role of the manager excludes relating to the team member in the way a father or mother would, the team member experiences frustration.
- Team members unconsciously play out unfulfilled past needs for power over and competition with siblings and the parental figure. Because colleagues are not siblings or parents, the need does not fit the reality of the here-and-now work situation. This leads to confusion, anxiety, anger and aggression.

## THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH TO TEAM BUILDING

Bion's (1961) three basic assumptions explain individual (the micro system), team (the meso system) and organisational (the macro system) behaviour as well as the dynamics between them. These assumptions are generally accepted as the cornerstones of psychodynamic group work (French & Vince, 1999; Kets de Vries, 1991; Miller, 1993; Rice, 1963; Rioch, 1970).

### Dependency

The assumption is that team members, in the same way as children in a family, unconsciously experience dependency from (imaginative) parental figures or systems. Because these needs are irrelevant in the work place, and thus not met, team members experience frustration, helplessness, powerlessness and disempowerment. Typical remarks in this regard are, "why is the boss not giving us more attention?" and "what do you want us to do?". These expressions are seen as projections of own anxiety and insecurity, and indicate work and emotional immaturity. Organisationally it manifests in the need for structure in remarks such as "we need a committee to investigate" or "we need to structure this department more". This defence against anxiety results in the manipulation of the authority figure out of its role, for example from supervisor to parental figure in view of the fantasy of then "we will be safe/cared for".

### Fight/flight

The assumption is that the here-and-now of team work is filled with anxiety. In trying to get away from this discomfort, team members unconsciously use fight or flight as defence mechanisms. Fight reactions manifest in aggression against the self, colleagues (with envy, jealousy, competition, elimination, boycotting, sibling rivalry, fighting for a position in the group

and for privileged relationships) or the authority figure. Flight reactions manifest physically in for example avoidance of others, being ill or by resigning from the team or organisation. Psychological flight reactions would include defence mechanisms such as avoidance of threatening situations or feelings, rationalisation and intellectualisation. In a meeting for example, this would mean talking about "them" and "out there" issues, and thus avoiding taking ownership of "what this behaviour is saying about us".

### Pairing

The assumption is that in order to cope with anxiety, alienation and loneliness, the team member tries to pair with perceived powerful team members and/or subgroups. The unconscious need is to feel secure and to create. The unconscious fantasy is that creation will take place in pairs. Pairing also implies splitting up (Hugg et al, 1993:31-43), which may happen because of experienced anxiety in a diverse work place. Examples are the splits between black and white, male and female, senior and junior and old and new. Unconsciously the individual or the team tries to split up the whole and build a smaller system, to which he/she can belong and feel secure in. It also manifests in ganging up against the perceived aggressor or authority figure. Intra and intergroup conflict may for example result from pairing.

## PSYCHODYNAMIC TEAM BEHAVIOUR

These include anxiety, boundaries, taking up a role, representation, authority, leadership and followership, relationship and relatedness, and group as a whole.

### Anxiety

Anxiety is accepted as the basis of all team (and organisational) behaviour (French & Vince, 1999; Lawrence, 1979:206-208; Menzies, 1993). In order to cope with this discomfort, the team unconsciously needs something or someone to contain the anxiety on its behalf (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:5-22). This is done by means of defence mechanisms, serving the purpose of gaining a sense of safety, security and acceptance in the work place. Projection may be used to blame management for what goes wrong. For example, the team may expect the manager to contain its anxiety about losing jobs, securing jobs in a difficult labour market or negotiating with the union on its behalf. The team may also expect the existing structures like laws, regulations, procedures, organigrams, job descriptions and idiosyncratic ways of solving problems, to act as containers for anxiety. The moment the level of anxiety in the system rises, the need for structure is expressed in for example "let's make a rule about . . .", "why don't you put this on paper" and "let's discuss this in future . . .". Projective identification takes place when feelings or other behaviours are projected into another team member or subsystem, who then accepts and internalises the behaviour - influencing the self as well as the other (Neumann et al, 1997:145). An example would be when the team is unconsciously making the human resources manager carry the feelings - or so called "soft issues" - on behalf of the team, and then this person becomes a soft-spoken and caring team member. Rationalisation and intellectualisation are used to stay emotionally uninvolved and to feel safe and in control (Miller, 1993).

### Boundaries

In the same way psychoanalysis refers to ego boundaries, distinguishing between the individual and the environment, the team member, the team and the organisation as interactive parts of the total system, operate inside and across its boundaries (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:55-62; Czander, 1993:203; Hirschhorn, 1993:31-39; Kets de Vries, 1991; Lawrence, 1979; Miller, 1993; Neumann et al, 1997). The purpose of setting organisational boundaries is to contain anxiety, thus making the workplace controllable and pleasant. Examples of boundary management in teams are time, space and task (Miller, 1989). Time boundaries are used to structure the working day (starting, going home, meetings) in an endeavour to order, struc-

ture and contain. The space boundary refers to the work place itself, for example to know exactly where to sit or stand whilst working, having an own desk, cabinet, locker, office or building. It may be argued that having to work in an open plan office, creates anxiety because of the lack of clear space boundaries. The task boundary refers to knowing what the work content entails. The anxiety about not knowing what to do and according to what standard, is contained in structures such as the job description and organigram. Another example of a boundary issue is the forming of team identity (Miller, 1993), which, if not managed effectively, creates a lot of anxiety in team members. Also important is the desire to be in (for example the manager's "good books"/or accepted) versus the anxiety of being out, rejected or ostracised.

#### **Taking up a role**

To take up a team role (Czander, 1993:294; French & Vince, 1999:209-223; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:205-210; Hirschhorn, 1993:40-56; Kets de Vries, 1991; Lawrence, 1979:235-249), implies uncertainty and risk. Anxiety is not simply rooted in the team member's internal "voices" or private preoccupations, but it reflects real threats to professional identity. If the team member's anxiety becomes too difficult to bear, he/she may escape by stepping out of role. An example would be when the "professionally caring" human resources practitioner expresses frustration and anger in a real way. Anxiety is transformed along a chain of interaction through the psychological process of projection and introjection (Hirschhorn, 1993). Psychological violence happens inside the individual as a result of the interplay between anxiety created by real uncertainty, and anxiety created by threatening "voices" within. These mostly parental voices are punishing the team member, and paradoxically, he/she can feel bad even before he/she has failed in reality. This anxiety chain leads team members to violate boundaries and other team members. When anxiety mobilises behaviour, the team member experiences others not as they are, but as he/she needs them to be, so that the others can play a role in the individual's internal drama (Hirschhorn, 1993:50).

#### **Representation**

This occurs when a team member or the whole team crosses a boundary (Lawrence, 1979:103-109; Kets de Vries, 1991). The crossing of individual (micro system) boundaries happens in interpersonal communication. The crossing of meso system boundaries happens in meetings between teams or departments. An example would be when the human resources department has a planning meeting about training with the production department. The crossing of macro system boundaries happens when a team member or whole team meets with an individual or group from another organisation. The issue of representation refers to the authority given to the person crossing the boundary on behalf of someone else, the team or the organisation (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Unclear authority boundaries seem to immobilise and disempower representatives to another parts of the system.

#### **Authorisation**

This approach distinguishes between three levels of authorisation (Czander, 1993:266; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994), namely observing, delegated and plenipotentiary authority. Observing authority implies being restricted in giving and sharing information about the team across the boundary. Delegated authority refers to more freedom in sharing, but with a clear boundary around the content thereof. Plenipotentiary authority gives the team member total freedom to cross the boundary, and to use own responsibility in decision making and conduct. The argument is that when a team member is sent to communicate, negotiate or sell across the boundary of the own team without a clear indication of level of authority, it creates anxiety which hinders rational decision making and reporting back to colleagues inside the team boundary (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:63-73; 134-138; French & Vince, 1999:112-126; Hugg et al, 1993:15-30, 86-88; West et al, 1995:47-56; 195-202).

#### **Leadership and followership**

Leadership is defined as managing what is inside the boundary

in relation to what is outside (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:23-29; 139-143; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; West et al, 1995:57-70). For example, a team member takes individual leadership when negotiating on his/her own behalf for a salary increase. Leadership of followers applies when an individual - not necessarily the designated leader or manager - acts or negotiates on behalf of others in the team. This role has its own boundary within the team, and is experienced as very powerful by the member as well as the group.

#### **Relationship and relatedness**

The Tavistock stance is based on the study and understanding of human relations. This implies the relationships between team members, which refers to any type of face-to-face or telephonic interaction in the team, as it happens in the here-and-now of the event (French & Vince, 1999; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:166-170; Neumann et al., 1997; Shapiro & Carr, 1991). On an unconscious level, the team (and the organisation) is always in the mind of the team member, influencing behaviour as such. This is referred to as relatedness or "the organisation in the mind" (Shapiro & Carr, 1991). This concept originated from a basic child cognisance of the family he/she belongs to. In organisational context, it seems that the team member's fantasies about the team and the rest of the organisation, act as a driving force for a lot of its behaviour.

#### **Group as a whole**

Originating from analytical psychology, the concept of collectivism is used (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:144-146; Hugg et al, 1993:165-187; Wells, 1980). It refers to one part of the system acting, or carrying emotional energy, on behalf of another. For example, the production department (or blue collar workers) may work under appalling and dirty conditions and thus "carrying the filth", so that the office staff (or white collar workers) may have good-looking and air-conditioned offices, "carrying the cleanliness and order" on behalf of the total system. Another explanation is to say that these two sections manage different organisational boundaries, each with its own rules and appearances. Collectivism also implies that no event happens in isolation and that there is no co-incident in the behaviour of any team (or organisation).

### **THE PSYCHODYNAMIC TEAM BUILDING EVENT**

The Tavistock (Leicester) model (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:1-4; Higgin & Bridger, 1965; Lawrence, 1979:1-19; Miller, 1989; 1993) is used as base for structuring the team building event. The event consist of team and staff members and is seen as a temporary institution, developing its own dynamics, rituals, ways of working and culture. The primary task of the event is to provide opportunities for the team to study its own behaviour in the here-and-now of the event. This task is educational - each participant uses own authority to accept what proves valid and reject what is not.

Staff members are not observers of the learning taking place, but are actively involved in it (Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993:1-7; 92-97; Gabelnick & Carr, 1989:53-58; Hugg et al, 1993:57-70; Lawrence, 1979:116; West et al, 1995:71-74). They act as consultants to the process and the dynamics, taking place in the here-and-now. On the basis of their own observations and experience, they offer working hypotheses in the format of interpretations, about the manifesting assumptions and psychodynamic team behaviour (as discussed above). Further, they take responsibility and authority to provide the boundary conditions - task, space and time - in such a way that all participants can engage with the primary task of the team building event.

The total team building event consist of intense experiential learning sub-events, namely plenaries, large, small and inter-group events, discussions, review and applications events. The description and task of these events are as follows:

- Plenary. The team and three staff members are present. The



total event as well as the intergroup event opens and ends in plenary. This provides the opportunity to share information about the learning.

- Large group event. All team and three staff members, in the role of consultant, are present. The primary task is to provide opportunities for the team to learn about their team's behaviour as it happens in the here-and-now of the total system. Chairs are placed in a spiral formation.
- Small group event. The team is divided by the staff members into subgroups of between six and ten with one staff member, in the role of consultant. The primary task is to provide opportunities for the team to learn about their subgroup's behaviour in the here-and-now of a small team system.
- Intergroup event. The team has the opportunity to form subgroups among themselves and to interact with other groups so formed. The primary task is to provide opportunities for the team to learn about authority, leadership, followership and representation over team boundaries. Consultancy is offered by staff members.
- Discussion. The team and three staff members are present. The primary task is to provide opportunities for the team to learn about the concepts in the Tavistock stance to team building.
- Review/application group event. The team is divided by the staff members into groups of between six and ten with one staff member, in the role of consultant. The primary task is to provide opportunities for the team to review their learning during the team building event. Then to work towards the application of the learning to roles in the team's everyday working life.

## METHOD

### Sample

Convenient sampling was used (Kerlinger, 1986). Four existing management teams, who have been working together for at least two years, consisting of between 18 and 23 top and middle managers (total N=83), from four large (N=1,500+) South African organisations, were approached to participate in the research. Attendance was voluntarily. The mean age was 37 years. The gender ration was 6 (male)/4 (female). Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites were included, although this was (understandably) not representative of the present South African demographic scene.

### The team building event

The event was presented as discussed above. The same three staff members were present throughout. They are Psychologists (category Industrial) and have extensive training and experience in the Tavistock stance through attending working conferences at the Tavistock Institute in the UK, the AK Rice Institute in the USA and through presenting such training in South Africa.

### Programme

The team building event is structured over three days of eight hours each (a total of 24 hours). The programme is laid out in Table 1.

Table 1. Team building programme

TIME	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
08:00 – 09:30	Plenary Large group 1	Large group 2	Large group 3
09:30 – 10:00	Tea	Tea	Tea
10:00 – 11:30	Small group 1	Small group 2	Small group 4
11:30 – 13:00	Plenary Inter group 1	Inter group 3 Plenary	Review group 2
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Inter group 2	Small group 3	Application group
15:30 – 16:00	Tea	Tea	Tea
16:00 – 17:00	Discussion 1	Review group 1	Discussion 2 Plenary

### Procedure

The team building event was presented according to the programme, for each of the four teams separately, at a venue away from the workplace. Afterwards, a 30-minute, semi-structured, tape-recorded interview was conducted with each participant by the author (who also acted as a consultant in the team building event), and then transcribed. The aim of the interview was to measure the impact of the team building event. A single question was asked, namely: "What was the impact of the team building event on you and your team?". Hereafter the interviewer only encouraged the interviewee by summarising and reflecting (Egan, 1990) on already given material. The interview was analysed by means of content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and specifically open coding (a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising of data). Thus the main and sub themes and their relationships were determined (Jones, 1996; Kerlinger, 1986). Reliability was ensured by having the results examined by a psychologist, to whom this technique is well known.

## RESULTS

The results are reported in terms of the manifesting main and sub themes, and their frequencies (given in percentages for easier interpretation). The main themes are cognitive, affective, conative, interpersonal and group behaviour.

### Cognitive behaviour

#### 1. A broad knowledge about team behaviour and dynamics

This was reported by all team members (100%), referring to the three basic assumptions of team building as well as "all the" relevant psychodynamic team building concepts. Especially the concept of the here-and-now (which was new to some team members – 55%), helped to focus on having an open mind in learning about "what is happening in the team at the moment?" (29%).

#### 2. Understanding own behaviour and role in the team

This was reported by many team members (88%), referring to a better understanding of their own style (28%) within the team boundary. Some referred to a better understanding of what is projected upon them as individuals (58%), and what they project upon other team members (37%). Some (26%) reported a clearer understanding of why and how this is happening in their workplace (27%).

#### 3. Understanding own symbolic behaviour

Team members (29%) referred to understanding "what I represent for the team and play out on their behalf". Some (18%) referred to the realisation of how and why they symbolically keep the team, the manager or the total organisation in their subconscious minds, which leads to a better understanding of their reaction to authority figures. Reference was made to the manager as symbolic authority figure (6%) – "I hate it when my manager does exactly what my father did to me". Some team members (34%) stated that they have tried during the event, to put boundaries between past experiences and the present learning event, and not to project/"dump that on the poor boss" (4%).

#### 4. Difficulty in understanding some concepts

A few members (14%) struggled in understanding the dynamics of the collective unconscious and the principle of no-coincidence. The concept of group as a whole was mentioned as the strangest concept within this way of team building. It was called "an intriguing phenomena" which they have never been aware of in terms of their own team functioning (9%).

### Affective behaviour

#### 1. Increased awareness of own feelings

Most team members (94%) reported this awareness, referring to a wide variety of feelings – from excitement about the team (56%) and its accomplishments (76%), to pain and sadness about not succeeding in some efforts to influence the team

(41%). There is now less fear of openly expressing these feelings within the team boundary (67%) - "I can now be myself more than ever before". These include "unpopular feelings" such as anxiety (72%), hostility (27%), anger (68%), jealousy (13%) as well as showing aggression (18%).

## 2. Increased awareness of own defences against anxiety and their meaning

Team members (52%) reported this awareness referring to projections onto others (46%), especially the manager (35%) and team members whom they envy (19%). Other defences are rationalising (63%) and intellectualising (37%) about team issues ("hoping they will go away" - 11%) and denial of issues (61%) ("because it is too big to handle" - 28%). In this regard the learning in the team building event was about becoming aware of own defences as they happen and owning them (42%).

## 3. Acceptance

Team members (74%) reported experiencing more acceptance towards their own team behaviour, other members as well as acceptance by others in the team.

## Conative behaviour

### 1. External versus internal locus of control

Most team members (84%) referred to how their team always work from an external locus of control in blaming colleagues, consultants and the manager/leader for not helping them. Some members (20%) named this collective unconscious dependency and its effect, as the most important learning in the team building event.

### 2. Disempowerment versus empowerment

Many members (76%) referred to their realisation that they have been acting from a disempowered base for very long, which is seen to be emotionally taxing on management. They would like to use the insights from this event in future, when ever dependency and disempowerment arise, to be aware of their own feelings of anxiety (for example - 30%) in the here-and-now and to act upon them in order to empower the self and the system (71%).

## Interpersonal behaviour

### 1. Learning about own interpersonal style

Team members (65%) report an enhanced insight into their own interpersonal style and dynamics after the event. They refer to the concepts of relatedness (43%) (a new concept for many - 32%) as providing an explanation of fantasies towards others - colleagues as well as managers. Learning about their fantasies, helps the team to understand its own projections (33%).

### 2. Openness towards the self and others

Team members (55%) report being more willing and able to challenge the self and others, as well as organisational systems and boundaries. This manifests in giving others and receiving feedback, in a responsible way (33%). A few team members (8%) referred to the realisation that feedback must sometimes also be understood as a projection of the person who gives it.

## Group behaviour

### 1. Learning about own team dynamics

Team members (86%) mentioned the manifestations of the basic assumptions as the greatest team learning. This way of experiential learning with psychodynamic interpretations by the consultants, facilitated the knowledge and awareness about the real culture (or "personality") of the team. The focus on conscious and unconscious team behaviour, helps to understand the behavioural dynamics of the team (28%) - "its ups and downs".

### 2. Dependency

Team members (72%) referred to how their dependence on

authority figures (their own manager - 44%, as well as top-management - 31%) inhibits their performance. A few (9%) referred to how the manager sometimes (unconsciously) wants to keep them dependent on him like children. They became aware of the team's need to work through their counter dependence and independence, to eventually reach interdependence. They realise that only then the team can really function fully.

### 3. Flight/fight reactions

Team members (68%) referred to how difficult it is for the team to stay working in the here-and-now. In the past they have collectively learned to cope with difficult issues and anxieties, by cleverly steering away from it through intellectualising, denying and talking about anything else but the "real issues". Some (51%) referred to their learning about how the team fights in all kinds of sophisticated ways. Through this team building event they have learned to stay aware in the here-and-now, however difficult it may be, to acknowledge their defences and to be more real in their feelings.

### 4. Pairing/split

Team members report on their awareness (94%) and learning (79%) about how the team continuously splits itself into subsystems, making working together very difficult (57%). The concept of boundaries helps them to become sensitive towards establishing honest and clear relationships with other members and sections in the larger team and the organisation (42%). Especially the splits of gender, race and hierarchy create communication breakdowns (87%). They have learned about their unconscious need to split, in order to cope with the difficulty of diversity (43%). They are now much more aware of manifesting splits, the unconscious reasons for this and how to react upon this phenomenon (70%).

### 5. The symbolic role of authority

Team members (53%) reported their realisation about the symbolic role played by authority figures in the mind. In this event they tried to own their feelings of fear for (25%) and rejection (43%) by these perceived powerful figures.

### 6. Building team identity

Team members (82%) reported on how the event helped in becoming aware of the absence of a clear identity in their team, because of vague boundaries. In this team building event they consciously and unconsciously started working (82%) on the establishment of an own identity in terms of boundaries (67%) and potential (32%), owning of own behaviour (38%) and an experience of empowerment to act collectively in problem solving (62%). Thus the team started working on operationalising its own plans for coping with change (61%), transition (45%) and diversity (63%).

## CONCLUSIONS

The above results indicate that the team building event from the Tavistock stance, impacts on the individual as well as on the team. The individual team member gains knowledge about and understanding of team behaviour and about the self. He/she is more aware of own feelings in the here-and-now, how to recognise defences and what to do about them. External motivation and taking up a disempowered role is replaced by operating from an internal locus of control and acting in an empowered way. Interpersonally the team member is more inclined to risk new behaviour and challenge existing boundaries.

On the team level, there is clear evidence that the team is more aware of the manifestation as well as having an understanding of the basic assumptions and concepts of group dynamics. This includes the symbolic meaning of team behaviour, and being empowered to work with and through it when it occurs. The team is more open and accepting towards its own unconscious behaviour, using the manifestations thereof as learning opportunities. The team strengthened its boundaries towards establishing a strong team identity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of the research design, follow-up team building needs to be conducted to ascertain the long term effect of the event and to ensure the transition of the learning into the workplace. These should be measured with pre, post and post-post interviews and the results should be compared to traditional team building approaches, to ascertain the difference in impact. In this research the interviewer was also involved as a consultant in the team building event. On the one hand this was done in order to have a better understanding of the group member's experience. On the other hand this may have lead to transference and counter-transference, influencing the validity of the results. In future research, the two tasks should be performed by different people.

Industrial/Organisational psychologists and Human Resources practitioners should be exposed to and trained in the psychodynamic approach and the Tavistock stance. This will enable them to understand the complexity of team behaviour and to interpret this in the context of change and diversity as part of the learning and teaching processes in the institution (West et al, 1995:87-104). This represents a challenge because of the needed extensive knowledge about depth psychology and dynamic behaviour. Using the Tavistock stance for organisational analysis and diagnosis should also be pursued, as described by Gabelnick and Carr (1989:59-73), Kets de Vries (1991) and West et al. (1995:138-160; 169-175).

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