The Challenge:
Making Multicultural Planning Less Threatening

Written by Ray Jarman and Pamela B. C. Kutara
The Authors

Ray Jarman is an assistant professor and extension specialist in the Department of Human Resources, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Pamela B. C. Kutara is a county agent in Cooperative Extension Service, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
Preliminary Work .................................................................................................................. 1
Creating the Physical Environment ..................................................................................... 2
Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 2
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 4
Resources ........................................................................................................................... 4
Appendix ............................................................................................................................. 5
Introduction

We are exposed daily to a variety of cultures through newspaper, television, novels, movies, and humor. However, for many of us, exposure to cultures different from our own occurs on a more personal basis such as in our classrooms, offices, board rooms, neighborhoods, and families. With these encounters and involvement come new challenges both personal, professional, and social.

Entering into a new group experience can be threatening and our fears may be compounded by the presence of persons whose culture's we are not familiar. It is common to feel comfortable with what we know. But, in today's world, we often find ourselves as members of professional and social groups composed of individuals from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds new to us.

This diversity fosters a richness of living experiences. The insights, creativity, innovative problem solving, and dynamic decision making that occur within these settings and groups are, in part, due to the variety of cultures represented. The authors of this model have drawn upon their experiences in Hawaii, a state rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, to develop unique techniques aimed at enhancing the group processes of brainstorming, categorizing, and small group clustering which lead to the development of action plans.

Just as the colors of the Rainbow blend together to form a unique array of colors, the methods selected for this workshop are designed to allow and enhance the ability of participants from diverse cultures and professional backgrounds to create a distinctive culture of their own. A variety of techniques are utilized to encourage and support participants to emerge from individual deliberations to small discussion groups and large group sessions in a non-threatening manner.

Preliminary Work

When groups form, it often takes awhile before the members feel comfortable in relating to each other. The purposeful slow integration of participants in the "A Rainbow of Ideas" helps people adjust to each other by moving from individual to several small groups to the entire mass. It is suggested that each time a new small group forms, a period is given to developing a level of trust or "bonding" type activity (at the minimum introductions of each member and their occupations) in order to create a supportive environment, i.e., WE are all here to develop...

The primary role of the workshop leader is to help the group achieve its purpose(s). The leader assists the group in clarifying its goals, sharing expectations, and agreeing on process this can be done ahead of time with key representative of the group. The leader enhances the group's ability to function more effectively by encouraging, facilitating, and protecting the full participation of each group member.
Creating the Physical Environment

*Environmental conditions*

A large room is required with at least one large wall or blackboard and several other walls/blackboards to post data onto (easel boards may be used if walls/blackboards are not available). This room also needs to have many areas so that people can form small discussion groups. Chairs for each individual are needed. Round tables are also good to have, but not necessary.

*Equipment and Supplies*

- Easel boards with lots of paper
- Colored, non permanent markers—4-5 different colors; one for each person
- Drafting or masking tape
- 5" x 8" colored unlined index cards—4-5 different colors per person
- 5" x 8" white unlined index cards
- Scissors; one per group
- Name tags

Methodology

Step 1. Identifying the Issues: A Rainbow of Ideas on Colorful Cards

| Purpose: | allow individuals to anonymously express their ideas in their own words; obtain an overview of issues. |

Individuals form small groups around a table or group of chairs. Each group is provided an equal number of 5" x 8" unlined index cards of different colors (e.g., blue, green, pink, yellow, salmon, etc.) and colored marking pens. On these cards each person individually identifies issues he/she think need to be addressed by the group of people meeting. It is important that the participants state their issues in "positive" terms directly on the cards without discussing their concerns or ideas with anyone else (e.g., "Students lack"... would be rephrased to read something like "Provide additional educational programs in...").

Step 2. Consolidating Categories: Topics for Tomorrow

| Purpose: | get as many personal issues posted and at the same time protect the anonymity of each individual; categorize the ideas into manageable units for discussion. |

Participants are asked to post their Colorful Cards onto a large blank wall (place the tape onto the back of each card). Everyone is asked to read, discuss the items with each other, then consolidate or classify the ideas by moving the cards into categories of Topics.
Labels for the topics are to be made out of the white 5" x 8" unlined index cards. Through this informal discussion, the participants are to combine or elaborate upon each other's ideas. Extra colored cards are made available for additional input from these interactions.

Once the topic areas are identified and categorized to the groups' satisfaction, the Topic Cards (white) and appropriate Colorful Cards are attached to an easel paper. Participants may assist in distributing and posting the Topics around the room.

Step 3. Addressing the Topic: Looking through the Rays

| Purpose: | create ideas which address how the Topics identified in the previous step can progress; begin blending ideas through rounds of small group discussion |

Participants browse around the room to get an idea of all the Topics and the issues that were raised by the group.

 Helpful Hint: The workshop leader should review and distribute a brief description of the small group guide and recorder roles. See Appendix for specific information.

Round 1: Each participant selects her/his first Topic of choice and joins with others to form a small discussion group. (People are asked to select a second choice in case there are more than eight in one group). These small groups are given easel paper, marker pens, and tape. Members select a guide whose primary role is to keep the group focused on determining how the Topic ideas can be addressed. The group can also choose to select a person to serve as recorder. (See Appendix for brainstorming technique guidelines). This group is given approximately 15-20 minutes for this first round of discussion.

Round 2: Participants now select another Topic. The groups should consist of new and different combinations of people who provide new perspectives on the Topic. These new discussion groups are given the same instructions and tools, but are not allowed to see the previous group's ideas. This way new and unique "rays" can emerge.

 Helpful Hint: The workshop leader needs to move around the room during the rounds to assist the group guides in keeping the participants focused on the task at hand and/or to clarify procedural issues.

Depending on how much time is allotted for the workshop, perhaps 2-3 more rounds can be conducted. This gives people a chance to participate in the formation of even more ideas. If a Topic area is not selected it may mean that the participants were not interested in pursuing that idea or it wasn't important at this particular time. Put the Topic aside, but do record it for the group's follow-up report in case the group wants to recall the information at some point in the future.
Step 4. Creating Plans of Action: Pathways to Paradise

| Purpose: form teams which will develop specific plans of action |

After the participants rotate through at least two rounds of different Topics, a refinement and clarification of the small group lists proceeds. The participants select the Topic which is of greatest interest and to which they are willing to make a commitment. They need not choose a Topic which they had previously selected. These newly formed small groups are to evaluate, prioritize and/or delete "rays" generated from all the previous groups' work.

Concentrating on the ideas rated most important, each group is to develop a Plan of Action which identifies the tasks, who, when, and how the group goal(s) is to accomplished. After about 30 minutes, the groups should bring their discussion to closure and present their results to the entire meeting group.

Conclusion

The plan of action developed utilizing the techniques outlined above has emerged from the blending of participants' ideas based on their own cultural values. Participants who believe they have had an equal opportunity to express their ideas will have a greater commitment and feeling of satisfaction in the final product. This model empowers participants to express themselves in a non-threatening manner and to evolve into effective work groups. By sharing our "Rainbow of Ideas", we can build stronger Pathways to Paradise.

Resources


A Rainbow of Ideas at a Glance

Step 1. Identifying the Issues: Colorful Cards

By yourself identify on colored index cards issues you feel the group needs to address; WRITE ONE ISSUE PER CARD

Step 2. Consolidating Categorizing: Topics for Tomorrow

Post your cards on the wall/blackboard using a piece of drafting/masking tape attached to the back of the card

Review all the posted cards

If you see a theme or common topic element amongst certain cards, cluster them together; do discuss your findings with others

When you and others have agreed upon the theme/topic for a cluster of cards, use a white index card to create a label for it

Step 3. Addressing the Topic: Looking through the Rays

Gather a Topic card with its cluster of ideas and move them to a wall/blackboard separate from the others to form an area of discussion

Browse around the room to look at all the Topics and issues
Round 1:

- Select a Topic you would like to work on
- In the group, select a group guide/recorder
- List or brainstorm ways in which a team could address the Topic and issues raised
- Label your ideas as "Round 1"
- Cover your ideas with another sheet of paper so that the next group will not see them

Round 2:

- Select another Topic you would like to work on; do not move to a Topic with the same members of the previous group
- Repeat the process for Round 1
- Label your ideas as "Round 2"

Step 4. Creating Plans of Action: Pathways to Paradise

- Review all Topics and select one which you are willing to commit to and get involved with
- Select a group guide/recorder
- Re-examine the information provided by the previous groups
- Discuss, evaluate, combine, delete and prioritize the ideas
- Develop a Plan of Action for at least the top priority
- Identify Who (person or persons) will do What (task), by When (specific dates), and Resources (persons or material goods) available
- Present your Plan to the large group
Appendix

Group Guide and Recorder Roles
Assistants Along the Pathway to Paradise

You may want to consider having a group guide and recorder assist the group through the rounds of small group discussion. Depending on the expertise of the group members, it may be helpful to first review the roles of the group guide and recorder.

The Group Guide:

The group guide helps to keep the adventurers on the path. She/He assists the participants along the pathway though the exploration of ideas (Rainbow of Ideas) to the discovery of a Plan of Action (Pathway to Paradise). This can be a very rewarding experience.

The group guide is responsible for using appropriate procedures to keep the group on task and not to alienate anyone along the way. At the start of each session, it is important that the group begins with an understanding and agreement about where they want to go, what they want to achieve, and how they want to get there.

The Recorder:

The recorder assists the group guide by providing a record or visual map of the participants' ideas and statements. The recorder serves several crucial functions by posting the statements of the participants on easel paper and provides a chronicle of statements and events as they have occurred.

The paper is in a way a map. Referral to the visual record helps the group avoid repetition or from revolving in a circular pattern. If they have wandered, they can refer to the map and correct their steps. This allows the members to stay focused on the pathway and the tasks at hand. The map provided by the recorder is a good visual account of the group's journey from beginning to end.
Appendix

Brainstorming Guidelines

"Brainstorming" is a technique utilized by group leaders to obtain as many suggestions or solutions to an issue or problem within a short period of time. These guidelines can bring about group agreement to the process and assist its members to generate a wide range of ideas for further discussion.

- List ideas as quickly as possible
- Every idea offered is listed
- Every idea is viewed as an interesting perspective
- Ideas can be clarified by the initiator
- Ideas can be expanded upon by the initiator and others
- A period of silence is golden
- No editing of ideas is allowed
- No evaluations of ideas are allowed
- The more ideas listed, the better

 Helpful Hint: To enhance participation from all members, the group leader might initially ask for one idea from each person; then open up the listing to a more free flowing mode.
THE PLAN of ACTION
What Needs To Be Developed To Achieve Your Goals

1. What?
   □ What specific tasks (activities) must be done to accomplish your goal?

2. Who?
   □ Who needs to be involved?
   □ Who will be responsible to carry out these activities?

3. When?
   □ When will these activities happen?
   □ Set a sequence of deadlines for each action.

4. Resources?
   □ What resources (time, energy, and money) will you need for each activity?
   □ How will the resources be allocated?

5. Obstacle(s)?
   □ What might prevent you from achieving these goals?
   □ What alternative plans could you develop?

6. Evaluation?
   □ What method(s) of evaluation will you use to determine if your activities are successful in meeting your goals?
   □ How will you know if your action plan is successful?
Appendix

Sample Plan Of Action Worksheet

Topic: ________________________________________________________

Priority Issue: _________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>By whom</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obstacle(s)? ________________________________________________

Alternative plan(s):

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Evaluation of success: _________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Other comments: _______________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Group members: ________________________________________________

Chair: ________________________________________________________