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AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING SKILLS LEARNING AND PERSONAL CHANGE

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This study is aimed at identifying personal and contextual factors which impact upon the effectiveness of a particular model of experiential workshop aimed at managerial behaviour change particularly in relation to Employment Relations skills, and so providing a measure of predictability of success both in facilitating change and increasing the success rate of the change. More specifically, the authors explore the factors, which may provide a measure of predictability both for (a) translation of the workshop experience to the workplace (b) using the workshop experience to make significant and lasting subsequent change.

Two questionnaires were distributed to participants – (1) a pre-workshop questionnaire which gathered the necessary personal data on the participant, and (2) a post-workshop questionnaire over six months after the workshop was conducted to determine the long-term workshop outcomes. Results indicate that those participants with (a) high belief in the possibility of self-change (b) high growth-need strength, (c) who had identified specific patterns of behaviour prior to the workshop (d) which they regarded as important to change and (e) reported relatively few barriers or (e) time pressures to achieving their life goals were most likely to use the workshop experience to accomplish significant and lasting post-workshop change.

INTRODUCTION

The wave of changes to organisational and work forms includes flexible work systems, portfolio careers, continual learning, flattened bureaucracies and empowered workers (Smith, 1997). This re-writing of the psychological contract (Millward and Brewerton, 2001) poses questions concerning learning in the new organisation, especially the acquisition of skills needed to lead work teams. In the face of rapid change and uncertainty, the ability to learn from experience is considered to be a critical skill for individuals and organisations (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Kanter, 1989; Krantz and Gilmore, 1990; Vaill, 1989). The need to improve leadership and managerial skills has seen a surge of interest in incorporating managerial skills learning into university courses (Bigelow, 1995: 304).

There are of course a variety of approaches to the teaching of management and employment relations skills which focus on personal, interpersonal, group skills and on communication and leadership styles. Such approaches are based, implicitly on a skill-learning model that traces its origins to the social-learning skill concepts of Bandura (1977) and now include classroom settings, outdoor management skills programs and intensive skills workshops that use a combination of therapy based interventions.

Commonly, skills courses and supporting texts such as Carlopio Andrewartha and Armstrong (2001) suggest that the proper foundation for skill development lies in increasing one's self-awareness usually through self-exploration of some kind. However the literature on skills training does not provide much guidance on personal and contextual factors, which enhance learning in a workshop context.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PERSONAL CHANGE

The Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Gecas (1991) attempts to show that the self-concept can be used as the basis for a theory of motivation. The concept of self-esteem relates directly to the self-concept and is regarded by researchers as playing a central role in motivation, performance and general well-being (Deci and Ryan, 1995; McKay and Fanning, 1987). It has also been related to feelings of self-love, self-acceptance and a sense of competence (Wells and Marwell, 1976).

The self-esteem motive refers to the motivation to view oneself favourably and to act in such a way as to maintain (protect) or increase a favourable evaluation of oneself. The negative condition of self-esteem is feelings of worthlessness, self-contempt and depression.

THE COMPETENCE SYSTEM AS A DETERMINANT OF CHANGE

Competence refers to the "connection between behaviours and outcomes. Skinner (1995: 8) indicates that "all humans come with an inborn desire to interact effectively with the environment and so to experience themselves as competent in producing desired and preventing undesired outcomes. All people need to experience control."

Although "it is easy to be daunted by the thicket of constructs clustered around the general notion of a sense of control." Skinner (1995: 20) explores four major (overlapping and related) theories of perceived control organised around the constructs of (a) locus of control, (b) causal attributions, (c) learned helplessness, and (d) self-efficacy. Because of the relevance of these constructs to our research, we explore them briefly below.

Locus of Control

Internal versus external control, or locus of control has been one of the most heavily investigated personality variables in the history of personality psychology (Lefourt, 1980; 1984; 1992; Rotter, 1966; Phares, 1991). People with an internal locus of control ascribe outcomes to their own behaviour, whereas those with external locus of control ascribe them to external forces like chance or fate (Vecchio, Hearn, and Southey, 1996).

People with a high internal locus of control believe in the possibility of self-change. The belief in human plasticity allows for self-improvement and change, and so becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Seligman, 1994).

CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS

Weiner (1985) developed a theory of causal attributions. He posited that when something negative or unexpected happens, people ask themselves why. The causes to which they attribute events can be arrayed along a number of dimensions, the most important of which are internality (causes seen as internal or external to the individual) stability (seen as temporary or more

permanent over time) and controllability (seen as controllable or not) (Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale, 1978).

A person's *attributional style*, or where they place the locus of causality, is associated with the development of self-efficacy (Gecas, 1991) and plays a significant role in determining the extent to which the person will take responsibility for changing undesirable behaviours. Bandura (1989) states that people's beliefs in their capability to exercise control over events that affect their life is one of the most central and pervasive mechanisms of personal agency.

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

Learned helplessness is a result of the *expectation* of the uncontrollability of outcomes (Abramson et al., 1978). Among the different factors that may make people more prone to learned helplessness and its accompanying deficits are inadequacy of inner resources for dealing with a mismatch of person-environment, and high reactivity to such a mismatch (Mikulincer, 1994).

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy refers to the motivation to perceive oneself as a causal agent in the environment. The negative side of the self-efficacy motive would be helplessness or powerlessness (Seligman, 1991). We acquire our sense of self-efficacy through a series of influences in life. The four main influences according to Bandura (1995) are: (a) mastery experiences when we learn by doing; (b) vicarious experiences provided through social models; (c) social persuasion when others convince us that we are capable of accomplishing something; and (d) physiological and emotional states when judging our capabilities.

The level of our perceived control, that is, the belief that we are capable of accomplishing a particular goal coupled with a generalised confidence in our abilities (Maddux, 1995) influences the extent of our success.

Stress as a Determinant of Change

Lazarus and Folkman (1984: 21) define psychological stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing, or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being".

The parallel physiological, psychological, and social systems that comprise our existence help us in maintaining ourselves and in dealing with the stressors in our lives (Trumbull and Appley, 1986). Those with high levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem are more likely to attempt to overcome or change stressful situations rather than tolerating or adjusting to them (Compas et al., 1991; Bruch, 1997).

The intensity of the source of stress is not necessarily commensurate with the intensity of the stress because of the different coping skills people employ (Pearlin et al., 1981). For example, even positive life events may have a detrimental effect on health and well-being for those people who have low self-esteem and negative self-schemata (Brown and McGill, 1989). In contrast, those with higher levels of self-esteem can utilise external as well as internal resources such as using positive thoughts to reduce the relation between life stress and resultant feelings of dysphoria (Bruch, 1997).

In addition to self-efficacy, social support is also regarded as an ameliorating factor for stress. Social support is not to be confused with social network membership (Aneshensel, 1992), because a person can be in such a network as family for instance, but not have adequate support because of family and/or cultural mores.

The decision to change one's behaviour in order to cope with stress in self-enhancing rather than accommodating ways therefore relates to the extent to which people perceive themselves as able to control their circumstances as well as to the level of social support they receive in implementing and maintaining change.

Growth Need Strength (GNS) and Self-Change

The previous discussions have focused primarily on control. However, psychologists who emphasise human potential argue that everyone has at least a spark of the need to grow and develop personally. Maslow has labelled this a need for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1987). Herzberg (1968: 57) has similarly commented on the set of needs, which relate "to that unique human characteristic, the ability to achieve, and through achievement, to experience psychological growth". According to Herzberg, the stimuli for the growth needs in the industrial setting are tasks that induce growth. The growth or *motivator* factors that are intrinsic to the job are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, growth or advancement.

Hackman et al. (1975) provide a measure of GNS as part of a Job Diagnostic Survey. Essentially, some people have strong needs for personal accomplishment, for learning and developing themselves beyond where they are now, for being stimulated and challenged and so on. These people are high in growth-need strength.

STAGES OF CHANGE

What propels people to change varies with each individual and circumstances. Motivators for change may relate to external or internal pressures, the need to adjust to some new set of circumstances, dissatisfaction with existing behaviours or the desire to achieve some other goal or benefit associated with new behaviours. Prochaska et al. (1992a: 88) describe change as representing "a movement from one rather steady state or pattern of behaviour through a transition to another relatively stable state or pattern. It is not automatic nor is it a simple dichotomous event".

The authors describe a series of stages in the process of change. These stages are:

Pre-contemplation - Preparation - Action - Maintenance - Relapse.

During the pre-contemplation stage, people are not aware that there is a problem, do not wish to change, and can remain in this stage indefinitely. If change is forced upon them, they will not maintain it and will revert back to their old habits at the first opportunity. During the contemplation stage people become aware that there is a problem but are not yet committed to changing. The preparation stage includes intention to change and some behaviour criteria relevant to the change. The commitment to change comes in the action stage in which people modify their behaviour, environment and/or experiences in order to overcome their problems. The change continues in the maintenance stage in which the person consolidates changes and prevents relapse.

Prochaska et al. (1992b: 110) believe that "efficient self-change depends on doing the right things (processes) at the right time (stages)". A mismatch of these often results in failure and

frustration. Often efforts to enlist people into change programs, which are action oriented, do not succeed if the people are not yet in the preparation or action stages. If they do participate in a program they quickly relapse and often return to the pre-contemplation stage (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992, cited in Prochaska et al., 1992a; Prochaska et al., 1992b). Similarly, Bandura (1986: 254) believes that "changes do not automatically generalize nor do they necessarily last". Developing the right interventions to suit a person's stage of change is thus essential for success.

Kiecolt (1994) emphasises intentional self-change as opposed to change that happens routinely or inadvertently. The former incorporates changes in self-conception, roles and/or identities and includes behavioural changes. Kiecolt (1994) also suggests a model of the decision to change that shows a progression through four stages: (a) impetus to change, (b) conditioning factors, (c) critical event, and (d) appraisal.

In the first stage, the impetus to change oneself, stressors and life events lead to unfavourable reflected appraisals, lower self-esteem and perceived competence, and unfavourable social comparisons. This in turn may lead to reduced levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem, causing psychological distress. In the second stage of impetus to change, conditioning factors include identifying the stressor as relevant to one's identity, attributing the responsibility for the stressor to oneself, having access to structural and social supports for self-change, believing that self-change is possible, and assessing the benefits of changing as outweighing costs. The third stage, which is not always necessary, is the critical event or turning point; the fourth and final stage is the appraisal that finally leads to the decision to change.

When comparing Kiecolt's (1994) model of the decision to change with the Prochaska et al. (1992a; 1992b) model of the process of change, we see that the former model relates to two of the stages of the latter model, namely, contemplation and preparation.

The Research Context – Workshop in Advanced Managerial Skills.

The Workshop in Advanced Managerial skills is a unique intensive skills program (Abraham and Connor, 1997) which forms part of the curriculum of a range of postgraduate business courses at UTS. It has also been run with a variety of organisations outside the University. Evaluations of the program and subsequent anecdotal evidence from some students often years after the workshop experience indicated that the workshop had a very significant impact on their behaviour. This suggested a need to carry out an evaluation on factors, which appeared to influence the perceived effectiveness of workshop outcomes.

The workshop aims both to improve participants' awareness regarding any dysfunctional behaviour patterns they may have, and to lead them towards more functional choices. It is designed to provide participants to increase their competence in interpersonal, group and organisational processes and to transfer their learning from the workshop to their daily life.

The workshop is delivered in an intensive mode with two days of lectures/ exercises followed by three days of workshop activity (after a gap of approximately six weeks). In the first two days participants are presented with various psychological and managerial frameworks aimed at identifying patterns and causes of functional and dysfunctional behaviour in personal and organisational contexts. A number of related experiential exercises further help participants to observe their own patterns of behaviour and to relate these to the theoretical material covered.

Following the two days, participants carry out an assignment to seek 360-degree feedback in both work and personal contexts. This helps to identify functional and dysfunctional patterns of behaviour, and to focus on personal aims for the workshop.

During the subsequent three-day workshop, a climate of acceptance and non-judgmental attitude is encouraged throughout and the facilitator/lecturer models compassionate acceptance of any dysfunctional patterns. As a result a group culture of understanding and tolerance is developed and participants are encouraged to observe their patterns of dysfunctional behaviour so as to be able to explore and understand the affective, intellectual and action components of those patterns. More specifically, the workshop affords participants opportunities to really become aware of the nature of the patterns they bring to a particular context (b) to explore the functionality of these patterns; and (c) to explore and experiment with alternative (and more functional) patterns of behaviour.

The beginning of workshop skills learning is the "seeing" of one's current pattern or repertoire with respect to a particular situation. Such "seeing" involves a full awareness of the affective, intellectual and physical aspects of the pattern. During the workshop, the facilitator and group create or simulate situations which evoke the same patterns or which demand similar combinations of affective, intellectual and action competencies of the participant as are experienced in the difficult situation. Through self-observation and feedback both from the facilitator and the group, participants become aware of how they do things. The facilitator explores the components of the current patterns of action and leads the participant toward exploring more functional patterns. An experienced facilitator will work beyond the surface structure and will look for "key features" in participants' patterns, which generalise to dysfunction in a wide range of contexts.

The use of various theoretical frames, such as TA, RET Gestalt, and somatic therapies are used to analyse the dysfunctional patterns help participants become more aware of the deeper reasons underlying their dysfunctional behaviour.

After the workshop, students complete a second assignment in which they reflect on the learning experiences in the workshop. Through this assignment, they are also required to design, implement, practice and report on a specific program of action for achieving the learning goals they selected for the workshop.

AIMS AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study was aimed at testing the following general hypotheses: - namely that participants (a) with a high internal locus of control, high self esteem, high GNS and (b) the presence of post-workshop external conditions with minimum barriers to change, support for change and time available to institute change, would experience most lasting change from the workshop. More specifically, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypotheses Relating to Competency Factors: (Locus of Control, Attribution, Learned Helplessness, and Self-Esteem).

Participants who report high feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy would be more likely to report significant post-workshop personal and professional life changes as a result of participation in the workshop.

1. Those participants, who attributed the responsibility of life events to themselves (locus of control, attribution theory) rather than outside forces, and a strong belief in the possibility of self-change would be more likely to report significant post-workshop personal and professional life changes as a result of participation in the workshop.

Hypotheses related to Growth need Strength

2. The higher the GNS, the more likely that a clear direction for change would emerge for the participant.

3. The higher the GNS of the participant, the more likely that he/she would report having made significant changes in his or her personal/professional life following the workshop.

Hypothesis related to Models of Change

4. The more clearly a participant identified important dysfunctional patterns, or change goals prior to the workshop, (contemplation phase) the more likely that he/she would make subsequent changes that were stable and lasting. Conversely, the more the participant entered the workshop with no clear change goals, (pre-contemplation) the less likely that post workshop change would occur.

5. The greater the importance allocated to the changing of the identified behaviour patterns prior to the workshop, the greater the motivation and direction for change.

Hypotheses related to Stress and Support Factors

6. The higher the reported barriers to achieving one's life goals and/or the greater the competing demands (time pressures) reported in the participant's life, the lower the motivation to translate workshop skills to outside practice. Alternatively, the less the environmental demands, upon the participant, the greater the motivation to transfer learning.

7. Participants who reported higher levels of structural and social support would be more motivated to continue making efforts at self-change following the workshop.

RESEARCH METHOD

Prior to the workshop (three day) segment of the course, all participants were provided with a "pre-workshop" questionnaire in two parts.

Part 1 of the questionnaire tested for stressors, locus of control, causal attribution, self-esteem primarily related to Kiecolt's (1994) model. The items in part one and their relationship to relevant theory discussed in this paper are shown in Table 1 in the results section of the paper.

Part 2 of the questionnaire tested the participant's GNS. This part of the questionnaire was derived from the GNS section of the Job Diagnostic Questionnaire (Hackman et al., 1975), and consists of two sections.

In Section 1 of this questionnaire, respondents rated the desirability of 11 items on a Likert scale. Six of these items (embedded in the 11) were related to GNS and included - stimulating and challenging work; chances to exercise independent thought and action in the job; opportunities to learn new things; opportunities to be creative and imaginative, opportunities for personal growth and development in the job, and a sense of accomplishment in one's work.

Section 2, included 12 items, and respondents were asked to indicate which of two jobs listed at either end of a Likert scale (1-5) they would personally prefer. At opposite ends of the scale were job characteristics such as good pay versus opportunity to be creative and innovative; making important decisions versus working with pleasant people; a job giving greater

responsibility to those who do the best work versus giving responsibility to loyal and senior employees; and so on. Completion of the questionnaire resulted in the calculation of a GNS Score (See Table 1).

Post workshop () Questionnaire

Approximately *6 months after the completion of the workshop*, participants responded to the post-workshop questionnaire. This included demographic items (items 1-11), and post-workshop outcomes (items 12-18 shown in Table 2 in the results section). Respondents were asked to rate the items on a 5 point Likert scale (1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 Strongly Agree).

The subjects were forty-nine male and female students (twenty-four males and twenty-five females) in the Graduate School of Business at UTS who enrolled in the workshop in the first and second semester during 1999. Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to mid-forties; there were a mixture of local and international students. The participants came from five groups each with different facilitators. Sixty-five per cent of the participants were born overseas, and 65 per cent were permanent residents in Australia.

The pre-workshop questionnaire was distributed to students and collected during the first two introductory days of the program. The Post Workshop Questionnaire was sent to students some three months after the completion of the workshop.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for the pre and post-workshop questionnaires are shown in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Pre-Worshop Questionnaire– Means, SD's and Relationship to Theoretical Discussion

Item	Item description	Relation to theory	Mean	SD	N
	STRESSORS				
1	Barriers to achieving life goals	Possible stressors	4.27	1.29	49
2	Inequitable rewards		4.33	1.37	48
3	Excessive demands		3.51	1.53	49
4	Insufficient demands		4.80	1.32	49
5	Frustration of role expectation		4.84	1.42	49
6	Experience of acute life events		3.96	1.71	49
7	Structural support for dealing with stress	(Kiecott 1994),	4.47	1.67	49
8	Social support for dealing with stress	(Aneshensel 1992.)	4.73	1.69	49
9	Psychological distress	Critical incident (Kiecott 1994), Psychological stress (Lazarus and Folkman 1984)	4.00	1.53	49
10	Feelings of self-worth	Self esteem (Deci and Ryan 1995, McKay and Fanning 1987, Wells and Marswell 1976).	5.00	1.21	49
11	Feeling that one is fulfilling	General competence system	4.84	1.36	49

	important and central commitments in one's life.	Skinner (1995).			
12	Feeling of control over one's own outcomes.	Locus of control (Rotter 1966, Seligman 1994).	5.16	1.07	49
13	Feedback before the workshop leading to feelings of lower perceived self-competence in particular areas.	(Kiecott 1994) - "impetus to change". Stages of change: (Prochaska et al. 1992a; Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992b) - Contemplation stage	3.49	1.46	49
14	Feedback before the workshop leading to unfavourable self comparisons with others.	(Kiecott 1994) "Impetus to change" Reflected appraisals and social comparisons (Gecas 1991)	3.49	1.46	49
15	Perceived importance of acting on the feedback received prior to the workshop and to learn new ways of doing things.	(Kiecott 1994) – "decision to change". Stages of change (Prochaska et al. 1992a; Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992b) - Preparation stage.	5.41	1.24	32
16	Belief that one is personally responsible for the feedback received.	Causal attribution (Weiner 1985).	4.80	1.43	49
17	Belief that one can control those aspects of behaviour which have resulted in the feedback	Locus of control (Rotter 1966, Seligman 1994).	5.22	1.37	49
18	Belief that self change is possible	Self-efficacy (Bandura 1986, Maddux 1995).	5.88	1.25	49
19	Clear identification of behaviour patterns to change prior to the workshop.	Stages of change: Prochaska et al. (1992a; Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992b). Contemplation stage; Kiecott - "impetus to change"	4.90	1.69	49
20	Perceived importance of changing patterns of behaviour identified in 19	Stages of change: Prochaska et al. (1992a; Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992b). Preparation stage; Kiecott – "impetus to change"	6.17	.81	40
21	Belief that benefits of self-change outweigh the costs	Stages of change (Prochaska et al. 1992a; Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992b) - Preparation stage.	6.06	1.23	49
	COMBINED GROWTH NEED STRENGTH		5.11	.70	49

Table 2: Post Workshop Items – Means and SD's

Item	Item description	Mean	SD	N
	The workshop provided:			
12	Clear direction for improvement	3.96	.82	49
13	Transferable skills	4.00	.64	49
14	Motivation to use skills	3.98	.80	49
15	Significant changes in life	3.71	.71	49
16	Changes that were stable and lasting	3.51	.68	49
17	Others commented on behavioural changes	3.09	.95	49
18	I wanted to make changes but did not	2.45	.98	49

A comparison of post-workshop item scores with the pre-workshop item scores yielded the statistically significant correlations shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Significant Correlations Between Pre and Post-Workshop (Outcome) Items

Post-Workshop Item Description (Item No)	Pre-Workshop Item Description, (Item No) And Relevant Hypothesis	r =	p =
The workshop provided me with motivation to use the skills I learned (14)	Perceived level of barriers to achieving life goals. (1) **Hypothesis 7**	-.30	.038
workshop provided me with a clear direction for change that I might make to improve my personal effectiveness (4)	Insufficient demand from work or other environmental sources (4) **Hypothesis 7**	.40	.005
The workshop provided me with motivation to use the skills I learned (14)	Insufficient demand from work or other environmental sources (4) **Hypothesis 7**	.45	.001
As a result of participating in the workshop, I made significant changes in my personal /professional life. (15)	Insufficient demand from work or other environmental sources (4) **Hypothesis 7**	.29	.041
As a result of participating in the workshop, the changes I made were stable and lasting - not just transient (16)	To what extent did feedback before the workshop lead you to experience lower perceived competence in a particular area? (13) **Hypothesis 5**	-.36	.011
As a result of participating in the workshop, I made significant changes in my personal /professional life (15)	To what extent do you believe that self-change is possible? (18) **Hypothesis 2**	.31	.029
I wanted to make changes but did not do so (18)	To what extent do you believe that self-change is possible? (18) **Hypothesis 2**	-.29	041
I wanted to make changes but did not do so (18)	Before the workshop, to what extent have you clearly identified any specific patterns of behaviour that you would like to change (19) **Hypothesis 5**	-.39	.006
The workshop provided me with a	How important is it for you to	.43	.005

clear direction for change that I might make to improve my personal effectiveness (4)	change the specific patterns of behaviour identified in item 19? (20) **Hypothesis 6**		
The workshop provided me with the motivation to use the skills I learned (14)	How important is it for you to change the specific patterns of behaviour identified in item 19? (20) **Hypothesis 6**	.37	.018

Lastly, correlations of GNS scores with particular item scores in the post-workshop Questionnaire are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Significant Correlations of GNS with Post-Workshop Items and Relevant Hypotheses

Outcome Item Description (Item No) and Related Hypothesis	**(r =)**	**(p =)**
The workshop provided me with a clear direction for change that I might make to improve my personal effectiveness (4) **Hypothesis 3**	.37	.009
As a result of participating in the workshop, I made significant changes in my personal /professional life. (15) **Hypothesis 4**	.30	.037
I wanted to make changes but did not do so (18) **Hypothesis 4**	-.30	.036

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses relating to competency factors

Hypothesis 1

There appeared to be little direct support for Hypothesis 1. Neither the motivation to change nor the making of significant post-workshop changes appears to be related to participants' general feeling of self-esteem or self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2

There appeared to be support for Hypothesis 2. Those participants who attribute responsibility of life events to themselves (locus of control, internal attribution) will usually have a strong belief in the possibility of self-change. Participants' beliefs in the possibility of self-change were negatively correlated with wanting to make post-workshop changes, but not doing so.

The correlation between feedback prior to the workshop leading to an experience of lower perceived competence, and belief that changes are not stable and lasting was negative (-.36, p =. 011). One of the main influences in life that help us acquire our sense of self-efficacy is social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Feedback from others forms part of this social persuasion. Such feedback can reduce perceived self-efficacy and can therefore be said to have acted as a negative factor in the case of the participants who did not see any changes from the workshop as stable and lasting. In addition, research has shown that reflected appraisals and social comparisons influence self-esteem levels (Gecas, 1991) and the decision to change.

One the other hand, the correlation between making significant changes and belief in the possibility of change (.31, p =. 029) may indicate that participants who believed that self-change

is possible also made significant changes in their personal and/or professional life as a result of the workshop. This is consistent with the correlation between the importance of changing identified patterns prior to the workshop and having a clear direction for change as a workshop outcome (.43, p = .005), as well as having the motivation to change (.37,p =. 018).

The negative correlations between wanting to make changes but not doing so and other variables such as believing that change is possible (-.29, p=. 041); identifying patterns of behaviour for change prior to the workshop (.39, p = .006); and the Combined GNS score (.30, p =. 036) indicate that high scores on wanting to make changes but not doing so, may relate to participants' beliefs in their competency and their inability to control the outcomes of their actions. In this case, the workshop experience was not enough to lead some participants to see change as an option or possibility.

Hypotheses relating to growth-need strength

Hypothesis 3 and 4

The above hypotheses are clearly supported by the research. Significant correlations of GNS are obtained with Items 4,15 and 18 of the pre-workshop questionnaire as shown in Table 4.

HYPOTHESES RELATING TO MODELS OF CHANGE

Hypothesis 5

From Table 3 it can be seen that there is positive support for hypothesis 5. The identification of specific patterns of behaviour for change prior to the workshop is negatively correlated with "wanting to make changes but not doing so." This clearly supports the contemplation and preparation phases of change (Prochaska et al., 1992a; Prochaska et al., 1992b). As previously discussed, during this contemplation stage people become aware that there is a problem, but are not yet committed to changing. The preparation stage includes intention to change and some behaviour criteria relevant to the problem.

The results also lend support to Kiecott's (1994) model of change. In the first stage of this model, the stressors and life events lead to unfavourable reflected appraisals, lower self-esteem, perceived competence, and unfavourable social comparisons (Questionnaire items 13,14). This in turn may lead to reduced levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem and authenticity, leading to an impetus to change (stage 2 of the model).

One of the main influences in life that help us acquire our sense of self-efficacy is social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Feedback from others can reduce perceived self-efficacy and can therefore be said to have acted as a factor in the case of the participants who did not see any changes from the workshop as stable and lasting. The correlation between feedback prior to the workshop and belief that changes are not stable and lasting was negative (-.36, p =.011). In addition, research has shown that reflected appraisals and social comparisons influence self-esteem levels (Gecas, 1991) and the decision to change.

Hypothesis 6

There was reasonable support for Hypothesis 6 regarding the importance allocated by the participant to changing patterns identified before the workshop. The importance allocated to changing patterns correlates with the direction and motivation for change within the workshop. Again this relates the models of change discussed under hypothesis 5. Note that the importance

of identifying specific patterns for behaviour prior to the workshop significantly correlated with the direction and motivation for change, but with participants actually making significant personal/professional change following the workshop.

Hypotheses relating to Stress and Support Factors

Hypothesis 7

Perceived barriers to achieving life goals were negatively correlated with the motivation to use the skills learned in the workshop. Insufficient demand from work or other environmental sources was positively correlated with clear direction for change, motivation for change and achievement of significant post-workshop changes. This clearly lends support to Hypothesis 7 that "the higher the reported barriers to achieving one's life goals and/or the greater the competing demands (time pressures) reported in the participant's life, the lower the motivation to translate workshop skills to outside practice.

The negative correlation between perceived frustration of goal achievement due to barriers and motivation to use the skills learned from the workshop can be related to conceptual issues of self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophesies. Seligman's (1994) that belief in human plasticity can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. On the other hand, seeing oneself as "frustrated at every turn" may reduce the belief in one's own ability to achieve goals, thus reducing self-efficacy levels.

The positive correlations between insufficient demand from work or other environmental sources, with outcome variables such as the provision of a clear direction in the workshop, having the motivation to use the skills learned; and making significant changes in life as a result of attending the workshop, may also be related to an increased belief in self-efficacy. There was also a negative correlation between insufficient demands from work and wanting to make changes but not doing so, though this correlation is not statistically significant (.25, p = .084).

This may indicate people with higher levels of self-efficacy, need to be challenged more and that the most functional self-efficacy judgements are those that slightly exceed a person's capabilities, because they lead people to set challenging goals for self-development (Bandura, 1986). This may also be supported by the correlation of the Combined GNS scose with having clear direction for change from the workshop (.37, p=. 009) and also with having made significant changes after the workshop (.30, p. =. 037). Those who set the goal of self-change may have therefore been more receptive to the information/experiences of the workshop.

Hypothesis 8

There was no support for the hypothesis that participants who reported higher levels of structural and social support would be more motivated to continue making efforts at self-change following the workshop. It appears that the prevalence of social and/or structural support is less important for motivating change than other factors such as (a) the clear identification of dysfunctional patterns prior to the workshop (b) the belief that it was important to change these patterns (c) a strong internal locus of control and a clear associated belief in the possibility of self-change and (d) high GNS.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings from our research show that positive and lasting self-change from such experiential workshops as described in this paper are most likely in those participants who:

1. Believe in the possibility of self-change
2. Have a high growth-need strength
3. Clearly identified dysfunctional patterns of behaviour that they wanted to change prior to the workshop
4. Are clearly committed to changing these patterns of behaviour and see the workshop as an opportunity to do so.
5. Have lower reported barriers to achieving one's life goals and the prevalence of a less stressful environment where participants could attempt to translate workshop learning to their lives.

The implications from this research are that any conditions or strategies, which enhance the above factors, are likely to optimise participant learning both within the workshop and in the workplace. Further research could focus strategies which could influence these factors.

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