

Managing diversity in teams

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Introduction

Team organising in work life is widespread and the extent of teamwork appears to be growing (Lawler, Mohrman & Ledford, 1995). Typically, the central purpose of teamwork is to promote new thinking and innovation. New ideas, enhancements and solutions are more easily generated when several people exchange different experiences and different types of knowledge through close cooperation (Hargadon, 1999). In order to obtain this synergy effect, the team also depends on a work environment where its members support and encourage ideas, and contribute to a constructive evaluation and further development of meanings, views and understandings (Anderson & West, 1998). In reality, many organisations use teams for generating a stronger and more effective task management, where flexibility and focused contribution from the individual are important and affect the team organisation. However, creative, innovative and efficient processes can often conflict with each other (West, 2002). Thus, the benefits of interdisciplinarity are not just in terms of creativity and critical, challenging thinking. It is just as much about division of labour and efficiency. Failing to recognise this dualism in the team goals can be observed both in the domain of academic research and in practical team work.

In this chapter I present how cross-professional challenges have been identified by participants in seminars and in my consultancy practice over the last twenty years. I then show how these ideas have given us the possibility of mapping cross-pro-

fessional cooperation challenges using a tool that we have called the Cross-professional Checklist (CC). The empirical results generated through implementing this tool lead to exciting knowledge about the management of cross-professional differences and situation-based management of cross-professional teams. In the final section I summarise, using a model called the *Team Pyramid*, what I suggest are the essential components of successful cross-professional collaboration. This model has developed through conversations with participants in seminars in which a tool called the Diversity Icebreaker (DI) plays a central role. This tool and a classic seminar layout are also presented here.

Both DI the CC have become key toolbox components for consultants within and outside Human Factors AS. The repeated and extensive use of these tools has led to a platform of common experiences, which, in turn, has generated many exciting ideas and learning points regarding the *Team Pyramid*. In the final section of this chapter a hypothesis will be formulated on why individuals do not openly share unique academic competence when working in cross-professional environments. By going through this chapter, the reader will be introduced to the central, experience-based competence for understanding and leading cross-professional processes.

Cross-professional cooperation

In our work as consultants in Human Factors AS we have, ever since the early '90s, worked on cross-professional cooperation challenges in various sectors. I commence this discussion by providing examples from two different sectors: industry and the health and social service.

In the industry sector, we have typically worked on cross-professional challenges arising in organisational projects. The setting up of projects is characterised by identifying individuals who, through their competence and availability, are able to perform a profession-specific work task. The project leader has a clear and well-defined guiding role. Competence development among the

participants is not a factor to influence the project leader's decisions, since it is an area of responsibility taken care of by the organisation itself or the line management system. This is in contrast to the experiences we have had in the Norwegian health and social service.

In the Norwegian health and social service, cross-professional work has been a necessity but also a political ideal. It has been a characteristic of all sections and divisions. Treating a client is based upon a cross-professional diagnosis prior to treatment. Some of the employees have experienced cross-professional work as stimulating, while others have been dissatisfied. Negative experiences are often followed by reversing the focus on own specialisms and diminishing the interaction with representatives of other professions. Our impression is that the gap between the ideal and reality is often perceived as demotivating and not very inspiring. We believe that the mixed nature of the experiences and the absence of good models for cross-professional work make it difficult to develop good cross-professional practices. In the health and social service we are also learning, especially within mental health care and social work, that the professions exercise power through value-based discipline-specific paradigms.

In the health and social service, the professionals have also traditionally taken post-graduate education within their own specializations. Experienced health workers tend to become more specialised inside their own field rather than develop as generalists. In the background, the labour unions exercise control through salary and position battles, thus emphasising, on a daily basis, the differences between those who work in cross-professional environments.

Profession-based values underpin the employees' understandings of the patient. When searching for what can be done for the client, one's own professional value system will often be a premise. Client and user orientation is justified by the profession's values or paradigm. When the quality of the client's life and health are at stake, the effort and commitment are high. Strong

value-based conflicts arising from differing values and paradigms can often occur with the client in focus.

Within the health and social sector the starting point is not just a scientific tradition of diagnosis and action. It often is that the diagnosis and the ensuing actions are also psychologically and socially defined. In practice, this is often interwoven with the client's and professional colleagues' interactions, thus leading to establishing a shared understanding of reality which further becomes the basis for action. This social interaction process, as a premise for making the diagnosis, represents a major challenge for the communicative competences of employees across different professional paradigms. For this reason, communication training is often an overriding measure in order to improve cross-professional work. In the health and social service the medical tradition of natural science has had a strong formal power, which has created a legitimacy issue concerning the specialised competence originating from other professions with a closer connection to the social, communicative, and interactive diagnostic culture. These are some of the aspects that make the cross-professional work in the health and social services sector more demanding than standard project work in the industry.

Through close collaboration with several post-graduate education institutions within the health and social services operations, we have conducted several cooperation seminars. Frustration related to cross-professional work and ideals of how it should be, has been a recurring topic. During the seminars we created focus groups that articulated both the frustrations and the possible measures to meet them. In 2003, we reviewed the work of these focus groups, and made a list of statements that we chose to use as a basis for further development and consultative work. The list of statements follows below.

Bad experiences related to working in cross-professional teams in the health care system arise due to:

- Making pretences of democracy while, in reality, the decision-making authority is held by the leader or found outside the team.
- Experiencing negatively differing academic understandings across professions within the team.
- Formal power is rarely given to those who have the central expert competence.
- Wasting time in unproductive meetings.
- Possible measures that can be taken:
 - Create more clarity, shared understandings, and common practices regarding the above mentioned issues.
 - Develop communication skills promoting the integration of solutions across academic paradigms.
 - Recognise that the differences between professions can be used for various purposes: enhancing creativity and efficiency as well as strengthening the professional and personal identity of the individual co-worker.
 - Increase the competence to handle the dynamics between unifying and diverging processes (converging and diverging team processes).
 - Emphasise the gains of whole-team performance when compared to what each individual can potentially lose in terms of individually based decisions.
 - Focus on trust, group mastery and positive collective identity.

- Effective meeting structure, preparation and stable agenda, as well as differentiating between meetings focusing on a) reporting, b) solving problems and c) team reflection/development.
- Organisational clarification of the teams' authority.
- Spending resources on building competence about teamwork.
- Spending time on team development in order to create mutual understanding of goals, roles, rules and responsibilities.

This illustrates a rather complex phenomenon. Is it just because it is difficult to be precise about it or is it really that complex? In her PhD study, Stenberg reports an equally high extent of complexity occurring in cross-professional task-groups for children in the municipality of Nacka where participants have been frustrated and dissatisfied (Stenberg, 1999). In 2004 we examined whether the team measuring tools we had used in the work of Human Factors, namely the Team Climate Inventory (TCI) and the Team Performance Inventory (TPI), addressed these issues. We found that they did not cover the cross-professional work challenges we had formulated with sufficient precision. Nor did we find other established academic concepts addressing this. In the light of our international experience with teams, we also asked ourselves whether these challenges are especially prominent in Scandinavia and come about as a result of Scandinavia's anti-authoritarian and participatory work culture coupled with Norwegian scepticism of expert authority (Hofstede, 2001, Smith et al, 2003). Our current assumption is that Scandinavian work culture, strengthened by the democratic and academic freedom to voice one's opinions, presents cross-professional teamwork in the health and social service with a major challenge.

In order to structure our pedagogical work in cross-professional trainings, we developed a checklist in 2004 which we called the Cross-professional Checklist (CC). The experiences mentioned above laid the foundations for developing the tool. In addition, we drew upon ideas from a diversity of sources: organ-

isational structure and leadership areas, experiences with multicultural and strong-personality management teams, research projects and projects within the oil and entrepreneur industry. While working on these issues, we were stimulated by the discussions in our Diversity Icebreaker seminars. I turn to this later on in this chapter.

Cross-professional Checklist (CC)

The Cross-professional Checklist (CC) consists of twelve factors. They are different in character and combine issues from organisational theory, group processes and understanding of teams. The factors invite different kinds of improvement work: sometimes clarification is needed, other times competences need to be developed, and last, but not least, is the need to create processes for establishing a mutual understanding of goals, norms and roles.

Cross-professional collaboration is complex and demanding – and when people fail to succeed, it is common to blame the personal qualities of the other. We believe that focusing on these twelve areas can help produce a more qualified analysis, plan actions and developments that are more relevant than focusing on personal qualities.

The twelve areas that we highlighted for CC were:

Input

1. Goals: clarifying attitudes regarding goals, personal contribution, and goal realisation.
2. Responsibility of the leader: power, legitimacy, and authority.
3. Rules and roles: distribution of roles, clarity, and flexibility.

Processes

4. Team leadership: execution of leadership tasks.
5. Meeting structure: use of time, separating and identifying different phases.
6. Communication: respect, curiosity, constructive tone.
7. Decision processes: involvement, unifying, loyalty.
8. Differences: recognition and understanding.
9. Reflection and learning: time, feedback and confessions.
10. Conflict management: openness, respect, solution orientation.

Output

11. Trust: mutuality, living by the norms, confidentiality.
12. Collective identity: sense of community, pride, external recognition.

In this model, there is a theoretical distinction between the first three factors, grouped under the label *Input* and the next seven areas, grouped in *Processes*. The former are inspired more by organisational theory, and indicate structural premises for team work. The latter are about team processes. The last two factors, grouped in *Output*, deal with emergent states that result from good cross-professional processes.

CC is a questionnaire of sixty questions, i.e. five questions for each of the twelve categories. Each question is formulated positively and communicates clearly what we believe is the good practice. Within each category, different questions cover different aspects or phases of successful work in cross-professional interaction.

Experiences and empirical results from using CC

In our pedagogical programmes, the CC has been primarily used as a tool for raising awareness and self-reflection where cross-professional work has been central. In our understanding, the breadth of the tool has provided a better grasp of how varied the challenge of cross-professional work can be and that success requires fulfilment in almost all the areas. The absence of even one single component could affect the work negatively and impede potential success.

Prior to our training seminars within the health and social services sector, the participants evaluated their own teams, using the CC. Some of the participants gathered evaluations from all the team-members in their own team, too. During these seminars we collected the data and used the seminar results as reference points, thus making it possible to calibrate the personal evaluations in relation to a seminar specific norm. We collected data from 283 individuals and their evaluation of their teams in the period of 2005 until the summer of 2007. Lise Vivoll Straume used the CC as one of the questionnaires for mapping business health services in Norway. The individuals involved evaluated their teams without participating in a pedagogical follow-up. From this sample we were able to draw out another set of 448 individual evaluations. We thus have a total of 731 individual evaluations in two highly cross-professional sectors. This material was used for creating norms, testing the reliability of the factors, as well as looking into the different relations between the factors. The results have been used to answer the question “What creates good cross-professional outcomes?”

In the CC questionnaire two performance measures are integrated and both of them come from theoretical work on cross-professional teams where *Trust* and *Collective identity* were defined as desired and positive conditions in teams experiencing large cultural differences in their practice (Canney-Davison & Ekelund, 2004). The two factors were called *Emergent states* i.e. psychological experiences that surface in successful cross-cultural teams. The reasoning for including outcome variables from

cross-cultural teams into the CC mapping is based upon the similarity that we find in teams the members of which have either different personalities, or come from different cultural backgrounds, or hold different academic perspectives. What the three areas of diversity have in common is that the basic premise for their individual uniqueness is related to partially subconscious value differences, leading to different ways of thinking and acting. In the scientific context, Kuhn is best known for giving the phenomenon an appropriate label. He calls it paradigmatic differences (Kuhn, 1970). Our experience with these three areas of difference shows that the communication challenges and the subsequent solutions are the same (DiStefano & Ekelund, 2002).

Before we look at which factors constitute *Trust* and *Collective identity* it is important to look at the questions integrated into these factors:

In the *Trust* factor, the first question is about reporting experiences of trust. Next, there are two questions about two aspects of trust building – predictability and confidentiality. Following these is a question that starts with a familiar definition of trust, i.e. being treated well by others when one is vulnerable.

The factors in the CC that have the largest impact on predicting variance in (regression analysis is used) *Trust* are *Communication* and *Conflict management*. It often is the case that team members are preoccupied with *Trust* when it is either high or low. When we studied the teams that scored low on *Trust*, we did not find any significant relations. This may indicate that teams with low trust have not developed a permanent pattern of interaction or a mutual view among the participants about such relations. In teams with a high degree of trust (193 of 684 teams = 28%), the following factors had an impact on *Collective identity* (in a prioritised order, all of them with significant relations, $p < 0.001$): *Managing diversity*, *Reflection and learning*, and *Rules and roles*.

In the *Collective identity* factor the initial question concerns the sense of community and pride in the team. Next is a question about everyone contributing through giving all the team

members a feeling of being integrated. After this, a question is asked whether one can see that the team is producing more as a result of collaboration. The final question is about recognition received from external sources.

The factors that have the strongest impact on *Collective identity* (in order of priority, all of them with significant correlations, $p < 0.001$) are: *Reflection and learning*, *Managing diversity*, and *Team leadership*

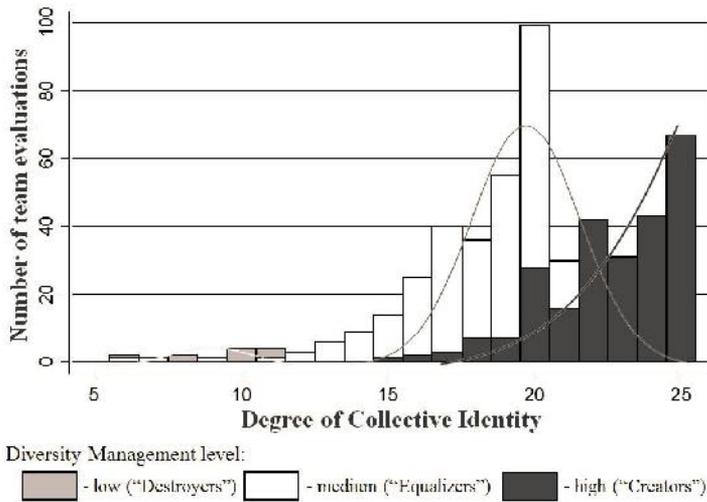
Reflection and learning is the factor that has the highest predictive validity. But, *Managing diversity* also appears as a central factor that statistically explains the variation of *Collective identity* in cross-professional teams. *Managing diversity* is the process factor that we believe is especially challenging for teams consisting of people whose way of thinking is paradigmatically very different (either as a result of personality, professional or cultural differences). If this is a central factor, it should be interesting to observe how teams that are low, medium or high on managing diversity, appear in the analysis of our CC-material. The tripartite division of the teams was done by theorists of cross-cultural teams (Adler, 1997; DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000), and the groups have been given the term *Destroyers* (where the differences make it problematic), *Equalisers* (where the differences are suppressed and the team works solely on what they can agree about) and *Creators* (where the differences in effect contribute to producing better results). Central in the *Creators* teams is good communication, whereby essential components in the participants' unique contributions are integrated into a new solution (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000). The tripartite division has been accompanied by a discussion about the good sides of homogeneous and heterogeneous teams. References pointing to heterogeneous teams performing better are scarce. Most studies show that increased diversity does not lead to positive effects and reduces the members' sense of team unity.

In the analysis of the CC material we have used the same tripartite division to put teams into specific categories. We have, however, used the process factor, *Managing diversity*, as the

starting point for the categorisation of the teams as either *Destroyers*, *Equalisers* or *Creators*. When we apply such a tripartite division, and relate this to *Collective identity* as a performance measure, it is possible to show that the *Destroyers* and the *Equalisers* have an approximating Gaussian curve around two distinctly different averages. This is in contrast to the *Creators* group which, besides having a high average, has an exponential curve increasing towards a maximum score for *Collective identity*.

Figure 1

Degree of Collective Identity in the three types of teams



This might indicate a different type of dynamics in the *Creators* type teams – perhaps a positive, self-reinforcing circle between resources, commitment and self-efficacy that results in experiences of success for the participants. It is worth searching for explanation models here in order to understand what processes occur in such teams. If it is correct that there are three different processes in the teams, it should be possible to show that there are different factors that affect *Collective identity* depending on whether the group belongs to the *Destroyers*, *Equalisers* or *Creators*. Using *Collective identity* as a dependent variable,

we conducted analyses equivalent to those we did for the *Trust* factor. We discovered the following significant results in the three different categories:

Table 1

Factors that in regression analysis had significant predictive power in relation to Collective Identity in the three team-types

| Destroyers N=40 | Equalisers N=515 | Creators N=88 |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Conflict Handling | Goals | Team Leadership |
| | Roles and Rules | |
| | Decision Making Processes | |
| | Reflection and Learning | |
| | Conflict Management | |

This indicates that, in practice, one should focus on different factors depending on the level of maturity of *Managing diversity* in the team. In the case of low scores in *Managing diversity*, handling conflicts is the area that drives the group to improvement. If the group shows medium scores related to *Managing diversity*, further structuring of the team in terms of clear goals, roles and rules, decision making, reflection and learning, communication and handling conflicts is central. If the team, on the other hand, is among the 10-15% best on *Managing diversity*, supportive team leadership is central for further improvement. In practice, this means that we have established guidelines for situational leadership in cross-professional teams.

We think that these results confirm the value of such tripartite division by showing significantly different results in the groups, as well as showing that the tripartite division has consequences for practical applicability. We also think that *Managing diversity*, as a process factor, is a key for cross-professional work. *Managing diversity* is about differences related to professional values and

ways of thinking. This is in contrast to surface level differences between team members, such as race, gender and ethnicity. These latter differences are objective and have commonly been studied in homogeneous and heterogeneous teams. We believe that our results show that the capability of *Managing diversity* as a process factor is important beyond the structural qualities of the team composition concerning surface level diversity. Taking this knowledge into consideration, it becomes important to focus on the processes that employees and leaders become involved in when they react to a difference related to ways of thinking, i.e. what we call deep level differences. In the discussion of the next concept, the Diversity Icebreaker (DI), I explore further the understanding of how diversity can and should be managed. Experiences with CC as well as with DI have given us a starting point for formulating some key elements to be developed for cross-professional interaction to contribute positively.

Managing diversity using the Diversity Icebreaker as a starting point

When we work with cross-professional teams, the main question is how we can better utilise the differences between participants. What is needed for diversity to become an asset? How can a team or an organisation reach positive management of diversity and become a *Creators* team? Many of those who have had difficult experiences have formulated the challenge to lie in the interpersonal relationships, “chemistry”, or problematic interactions between people with different personalities. A classic psychological way of approaching this has been to identify personal qualities through the use of questionnaires. In Human Factors AS, we have developed such a questionnaire, which is easy to use and easy to understand. The dimensions of this concept are preferences in communication and interaction styles. In collaboration with Eva Langvik, NTNU, the concept was subjected to extensive scientific documentation in 2004-2005. It is now globally used as a tool to promote collaboration across diversity, i.e. a tool that breaks down the complications that diversity creates: the Diversity Icebreaker.

The Diversity Icebreaker has previously been used under the names *HF's team roles*, *Red, Blue and Green* and *Personal collaboration preferences*. The test concept has three different preferences, which were developed within a successful marketing campaign in the energy sector in 1995 (Ekelund, 1997). In 1998, the first test tool was developed and published. At the time it was launched as a simpler alternative to the more established team role tools. Most of the team role tools describe persons in terms of a broader understanding of personality. Our test has justified its choice of only three main dimensions that are easy to recognise when people work together in teams. The dimensions become clarified through processes involving the participants themselves. The tool ensures that learning happens through communication, social processes, reducing the effects of prejudice and stressing the importance of mutually understanding how to work together. The seminars also focus on the value of collective reflection and the ability to take control of the power to define the interaction. We call this tool a third-generation team role tool that not only leaves behind personality testing in its full scope (first generation) and work-related team role tools with a positivistic scientific view (second generation), but is based on an integrative and modern social science tradition (experience-based social constructivism, “embodied metaphors”, see Heracleous and Jacob, 2008).

The Diversity Icebreaker in training and seminars

The Diversity Icebreaker questionnaire maps people's preferences in three different dimensions called Red, Blue and Green. During the seminars, the participants are grouped according to their dominant preference. They are then asked to answer key questions, such as: “What is the strength of our colour in interaction with the other colours? What are our weaknesses? How can the other colours create problems for us? How should they communicate so that we listen? What could be the challenges that we present to them?” The groups present their results to each other. A presentation of this kind is always associated with curiosity, surprises and laughter. The following educational question is then put forward: “What did we learn from this?” This question is

posed, over and over again, until the participants have shared and discussed their own experiences, relating them to the seminar purpose.

Diversity is important: we need each other!

It is always the case that some of the participants construct sentences such as “If we look at Red, Blue and Green, we quickly discover that in many settings we can enjoy each other’s company and complement each other. In teams we often need people who tend to generate many ideas (the ‘Green abilities’), as well as people who create social settings characterised by trust and openness (the ‘Red qualities’). Furthermore, we need people who bring structure and focus on the tasks at hand (the ‘Blue processes’). We all need each other.” Red, Blue and Green tend to naturally appear as complementary. By having a distinct role preference one will usually see the need for the other two. In the Diversity Icebreaker process all the abilities appear to be necessary. When applied to cross-professional environments one can easily discover that any professional perspective can play along with the others in a unique way. The variety of professional skills becomes an important asset to the big picture, the Gestalt.

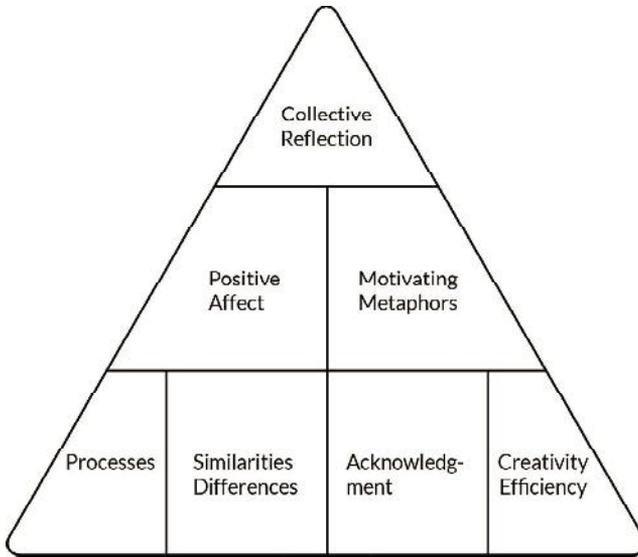
The Team Pyramid: Ekelund’s managing diversity model

Emerging from hundreds of seminars on these issues a model has been arrived at – the *Team Pyramid (Ekelund’s Managing Diversity Model)*. It is based both on participants’ suggestions and on my own theoretical framing. In line with this model, I have formulated a hypothesis about the relationship between the teams’ management of diversity and the participants’ willingness to present their unique assets.

We believe that this can explain how heterogeneous teams become homogeneous through an “equaliser” process. Firstly, I present the model, and then I put forward and discuss our hypothesis. The model is illustrated by a pyramid shape (next page):

Figure 2

The Team Pyramid



We postulate that the bottom layer with its four components is necessary and sufficient in a cross-professional context to create synergy out of diversified competence. The second layer consists of two components that facilitate positive development. The top layer constitutes the team's reflection process, and thus points to the freedom the participants collectively may take in articulating, expressing and acting (empowerment/enactment/autonomy).

Absolutely necessary

1. **Acknowledgement:** Who am I?

Here we use the concept of acknowledgement from the Rogerian therapeutic tradition (Rogers 1951). The therapist's unconditional acknowledgement provides a basis for safety, openness, self-reflection and movement. We often witness participants in cross-professional teams feeling dissatisfied that they are not sufficiently understood in their own terms. When other

team members do not appreciate the positive and unique qualities one possesses and, instead, show disrespect, over-emphasising personal values, conflicts and unwillingness to participate in the team occurs. This has been a major challenge for cross-professional teams, where some of the academic groups have strong appreciation of their own profession, and sometimes tend to display prejudiced and limited perceptions of the qualities of other professions. We believe that one has to positively recognise the individual, seen from the individual's own perspective, in order to establish a positive and flexible interaction between different participants.

Acknowledgement of the other is often about identity. In the Norwegian health and social services we see that an individual's identity is closely connected with their professional identity. Ignoring or insulting the individual's professional identity is often perceived as a threat to the individual's personal identity. This often leads to strong and only partially concealed soreness and a sense of not being appreciated. Meetings and communication between peers of similar professional background stand out as a much more rewarding context for interaction. However, it is possible that conflicts of identification may occur, more related to the profession itself than to identification with organisational goals.

2. Similarities and differences clarified by the *Team Flower*

In our consultancy practice we use an illustration and an exercise that we have called the *Team Flower*. It helps to establish mutual understanding of who we are as individuals and as a team. Each participant is given a petal for presenting his or her own personal competence, values and preferences. It is the individual participant's responsibility to present those individual competences and attributes that are relevant for the future values creation of the team. The centre of the flower is cooperatively created and reflects the team's agreement on what the shared qualities between the members are. The petals show the team's heterogeneity while the centre reflects what is shared – the homogeneity. As a graphical image, the *Team Flower* gives the team

members the possibility to fill it in with expressions which have emerged in the construction of the Red, Blue, and Green competence categories, experience, networks and other aspects relevant for the success of the team. Diversity creates dynamics, diverging and converging processes, while similarity creates a sense of community, convergence and solidarity. This is a dynamic process between heterogenization and homogenisation – a movement that team leaders, participants or consultants can influence, depending on what they focus on in the different phases of the processes (Langvik & Ekelund, 2006).

Teams tend to keep this flower. When team members quit, a petal is removed and the new team members fill in new petals. The *Team Flower* has the fine quality of being an image of the whole team, created and understood through collaboration and its collective identity, while at the same time emphasising the unique qualities of the individual. In some sectors other metaphors have been chosen – a gas turbine and an oil platform are sample illustrations that can be used in the same fashion and for the same purpose.

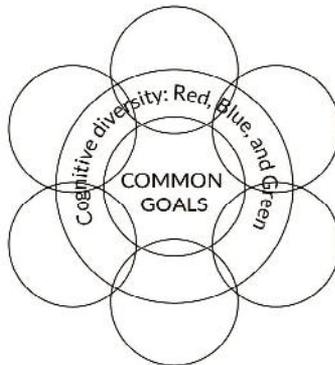
The *Team Flower* creates a mutual understanding of the individual: “Who am I? And how am I different from you?”

Figure 3

The Team Flower

Diversities in:

- Culture
- Profession
- Identity
- Experience
- Information
- Others



3. **Processes:** When is my competence relevant and in what way I can contribute?

During the seminars many participants have mentioned that different individuals, with their different colour preferences, have different ways of contributing, depending on the respective phases in the decision making and execution processes. This way of thinking can be demonstrated in several settings. In one of the mapping models we use, the TCI-model (Team Climate Inventory, Anderson & West, 1994, 1998), innovation can be identified as a circular process – from collecting information and defining problems, through brainstorming and, finally, onto execution and evaluation. Transferred to our colour model, we have formulated a four-point process:

1. Problem-solving starts by understanding detailed information as well as by forming a conceptual grasp of the issue. Individual comments are put together into a larger whole (Green).
2. Social collaboration is then used to develop good ideas for solutions (Red).
3. The work is structured and executed in a systematic and focused manner (Blue).
4. Finally, learning from experience occurs, where the different perspectives from Red, Blue and Green as well as their different role experiences become essential.

We have given the four phases different names:

- a. Gestalt: bringing different pieces of information together and creating a larger whole.
- b. Synergy: finding new solutions from the parts and the whole created in the first phase, as well as in relation to what might be potentially realised.

- c. Polyphony: there are many unique voices/contributions that need to play along with the conductor, the score, and one's own voice in interaction with other voices. Singing in a choir is an exemplary illustration of a precise execution of a project. For instance, when singing second bass it is not possible to boast about reaching the end of the score first or singing loudly when the rest sing quietly.
- d. Gestalt: Learning from experience means bringing people with different perspectives, experiences and competences together in order to evaluate the product. In such a process, one develops competence relevant to the work of the organisation and the other professional disciplines.

We can also see that there is a need in organisations for the participants and their teams to respect the change of pace between the different phases. If there is disagreement about this, even good ideas end up as inadequate. Just as important as the mutual understanding of goals, roles, rules and responsibilities, is the ability to judge when to go to the next phase, so that personal contributions are timed appropriately. Nothing is more annoying for a “Blue project leader” in the execution phase (polyphony) than “Green people” starting out every morning with new ideas about how things can be done.

4. Creativity vs. efficiency: to what purpose?

It is commonly acknowledged that diverse teams are more creative. First, this is because diversity makes it possible to build on each other's ideas in order to create something new (Anderson & West, 1994). Second, difference promotes critical thinking and suppresses the “group think” phenomenon (Janis, 1972), and finally, the voicing of different perspectives in a constructive dialogue clarifies tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). In order to generate creativity from the differences between people, these need to be identified, recognised and actively used through good communication skills and creative processes in the team (DiStefano & Ekelund, 2002).

As mentioned above, the purpose of teams is not only to promote creativity and innovation, but also to execute the work more efficiently (West, 2002). Norwegian sport teams have focused on using the individual players' superb skills in areas where they are most likely to succeed. "The good foot" (a Norwegian soccer term used for positioning players in the right role due to their personal qualities) needs to be identified and used correctly in interactions of a team. Efficient teams have identified their individual team members' strengths and weaknesses, and increased the efficiency by distributing responsibilities and duties accordingly. In the wake of placing "the right man in the right place", communication and creativity between the participants are not regarded as useful, rather the opposite. There seems to be a contradiction between leading a team towards creativity versus leading it towards efficiency. Through qualified management of processes, it is possible to train the team to act differently in different phases (see the earlier phase model). The absence of clarity in terms of what purpose the team focuses on creates conflicts and misunderstandings.

Promoting motivation

5. Positive emotional experiences

We have learned that having good experiences together promotes participation, creates a positive sense of belonging, and allows for creativity and flexibility. In the theories of positive emotions in organisations these are formulated as reinforcing factors for interaction and creativity. Several of these aspects are elaborated in other chapters of this book.

In the Diversity Icebreaker workshop, the participants first go through the positive experience of working with the likeminded. Later, they experience the discomfort of characterising the others as they understand them. When the groups exchange their results negative prejudices are often exposed through self-irony and humour. A similar approach is mutually expected from the others. Having voiced that all the colours are needed and necessary, it becomes less dangerous to be oneself. The effect of

humour increases energy and self-reflection. This positive and somewhat challenging situation stimulates openness and reflection, and supports the final phase by focusing on collective reflection over the defining power of language. Through collective reflection and dialogue the participants make it possible to change and extend the use of language, thus starting to control the power of definition that lies in the use of language categories, such as Red, Blue and Green.

6. Motivating metaphors

Many are inspired by metaphors, stories and images. As illustrated earlier by the “good foot”. In Norwegian team work, football is often used as a metaphor. Another sports metaphor picks up on something that is seldom referred to in group psychology and known as being “the best without the ball”. This means acting in such a way that the one who is in focus, she/he who has the responsibility and risk, is more likely to succeed in being helpful without claiming the ball. This metaphor promotes supportive behaviour in teams.

One of the metaphors we often use is creating French fish soup, bouillabaisse, based on the principles of Dugnad (a culturally specific Norwegian practice in line with barn-raising in some American communities). Everyone brings the ingredients they have access to and all the ingredients are appreciated. At the end, the pleasure of seeing how each individual’s contribution to the soup is clearly and positively acknowledged is shared. A meal celebrated together promotes participation. Celebrations, both metaphorical and real, provide positive experiences of cohesion and vitality to the team.

Different business sectors use different metaphors for giving meaning to diversity and the community. It is important for the organisation to use metaphors that drive the business forward, overcoming the challenge of having individuals pursuing their own goals.

Identity, respect and appreciation of diversity are some of the central challenges for cross-professional teams, and for this reason we regard the Dugnad-made bouillabaisse an appealing metaphor.

Team Self-definition, Empowerment and Autonomy

7. Collective reflection

In recent years, we have increasingly used the Diversity Icebreaker to create psychological safety for talking openly about the diversity. In the Diversity Icebreaker, humour and even irony are essential for personal openness. We have also seen that such a process provides both individuals and groups with an opportunity to reflect upon language models, prejudices, meeting structures and interaction cultures. This has created more openness for reflection and learning through good dialogue among the participants. We see that this way of starting up the seminars creates a safe climate for beginning to discuss more the emotionally charged and potentially conflicting differences than Red, Blue and Green might bring to the surface. We think that any organisation or team can increase the potential value of their diversity by asking questions such as “What diversity-related expressions are relevant to us? How can differences be used appropriately?” Collective self-reflection enables groups to understand and think about themselves. In this way, the group challenges the power of established definitions. This corresponds with the value-based conditions that we find in critical psychology and pedagogy (Fambrough, 2007). With the Diversity Icebreaker applied for this purpose, the team and the organisation develop in the direction of taking responsibility for the power of definition through collective dialogue. Both the power of expertise (which we, as psychologists and consultants, use) and formal power (which leaders use) can potentially hinder such a development process.

What is needed for cross professional activity to bloom?

When we run seminars in the child and youth sector in Norway, we get the impression that many of the institutions involved do not differentiate between clients on the basis of the professional training of their employees. Earlier in this chapter, I have mentioned *Equalisers* as a type of group which suppresses diversity. Why is it that we do not bring individual competences to the table more often and more easily? A lot of team studies have focused on psychological safety as an important condition for openness and learning (Edmondson et al., 2001, Anderson & West, 1996). In our model (the *Team Pyramid* discussed previously) this is featured as *Acknowledgement* and is an important and necessary condition. Given the challenge of integration of different professional perspectives, a focus is recommended on training in communication skills, where accepting and integrating dialogue is central (DiStefano & Ekelund, 2002). For managing diversity it is important to prevent the dominating mind-set in the organisation from ruling blindly, highlight non-dominant perspectives instead and have these perspectives contribute to critical change and innovation. We do, however, believe that recognition and good communication skills alone are insufficient. We believe that further clarification is necessary on how the non-dominant professional perspectives are positively accepted and applied in the team. We believe that the ideal way of creating this clarity is through shared practical experiences, where the use of non-dominant perspectives results in positive outcomes. We believe that the components of the *Team Pyramid* create a wider scope for what is necessary and sufficient. It is important to create a common understanding within a team regarding how diversity should be utilised. Our hypothesis is that the lack of positive common understanding of how non-dominant perspectives are utilised, causes the unique individual contributions from co-workers in the team/organisation to be held back or rejected. This is a hypothesis about the interaction between a team phenomenon and its consequences in terms of defence mechanisms on an individual level. By contrast, it is possible to work one's way towards mutual understanding through ad-

addressing the questions pertaining to the foundation of the four necessary and sufficient factors in the *Team Pyramid*. In short it is about clarifying for the team the “who, what, when, how and for what purpose”. We hope that this model and hypothesis can inspire interventions and research in all teams and organisations that have diversity as their potential.

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