

Action Inquiry: Closing the Gap between Intention and Action

Have you ever been planning something with clients or colleagues, thinking you were on the same page, then later realized there was a gap in interpretation? Have you experienced a gap between what others are saying they believe in and how they are acting, and you don't know how to resolve this? Have you sometimes noticed a gap between what you believe in and what you are saying? Have you ever left a meeting feeling that there has been a lot of talking but you don't see how this will create the steps to effective action?

The practice of *action inquiry* deals with gaps such as these by offering a framework for simultaneous attention to one's inner process, to communication with others, and to designing a climate for clear organizational decision-making. Action inquiry promotes a continuous cycle of planning, action, deliberation and learning, leading to revisions and improvements of planning and action. Often, we can find ourselves talking only about the tip of the iceberg and not really surfacing the underlying assumptions and beliefs that are driving our expression and plans. It can be difficult to probe beneath the usual comfortable layers of public discourse if there is no "container" to hold the exploration of what lies under the surface. *Action inquiry* provides such a container.

The workshop includes some theory, but the primary intent is to create an experiential awareness of action inquiry by practicing "4 parts of speech", i.e. framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring. The work of William Torbert and the book *Action Inquiry: The Secret to Timely and Transforming Leadership* will be used as reference material.

The learning objective is fourfold: (1) to introduce participants to the powerful process of *action inquiry*; (2) to increase their awareness of gaps between intent and action; (3) to see the erosive impact of these gaps if not named; and (4) to understand and practice the 4 parts of speech;

Who should attend?

This workshop would be of interest to directors, administrators and co-workers, as well as the general public, e.g. parents, couples, i.e. anyone creating situations where mutual decisions are required. One description of *action inquiry* is that it is a process of "conscious living". As such, it is valuable for a wide range of participants.