# Problems of Development & Learning

# <u>Qualitative Research</u>

## 4.1  <u>DREAM WORK</u>

The great thing about working with dreams is that we can do it at many different levels and in many different ways. Hence almost any approach to therapy or counseling can gain from working with dreams. There are four main ways of working with dreams.

1) One is to treat them as information about the past. They can be looked at for clues about internal conflicts stemming from childhood traumas or decisions. They can give a great deal of news about the unconscious mind and what is going on there (Freud 1901). And obviously this will be helpful in analyzing one's life and one's problems.

2) The second way is to treat them as information about the present (Barrineau 1992). We can see a dream as an existential message from you to you. The existential approach (Spinelli 1997) takes exactly this point of view. One way of using this approach is to take up the role of each person and each thing in the dream, to find out what it is trying to say. (See entry on Gestalt therapy.) This, too, can be productive and useful.

3) A third way is to treat them as information about the future. Not simply as precognition – though this can certainly happen – but more as information about where you need to go next. This kind of prospective approach, pioneered by Jung (1968), is very popular in the transpersonal approaches.

4) And the fourth way is not to interpret the dream at all, but to let it be a guide to the inner world. This is the approach of James Hillman (1979), a modern Jungian, who says that the dream world is a world of its own, needing to be understood on its own terms, and not needing to be translated. It is also the approach of Alvin Mahrer (1994), in a different way.

All those approaches are possible because dreams are symbolic, and like all symbols can be taken in various ways. For example, a cross is a symbol which, in various contexts, can mean a crossroad, a kiss, a Christian emblem, an addition, a hospital or ambulance, a flag and so on. It is hopeless to say that a pistol always stand for this, or an oven for that, as old-fashioned dream books try to do.

Ken Wilber (1986) tells us that dreams can be interpreted on nine different levels, and that they very seldom have meaning on only one of these. Certainly when I have tried this in training groups, each dream has always had important meanings on at least two levels, and often three.

Most forms of therapy encourage people to remember and work with dreams, and it is worthwhile to keep a dream diary. To remember a dream, write it down in the same bodily position as you dreamed it, preferably without putting on the light. Then change position and see if more details come. Write down the specifics as much as possible, including any unusual words or phrases that seem to be remembered.

It is possible to set up informal dream-sharing groups, and this can be very interesting, even if you are not in any process of therapy or counseling (Ullman & Limmer 1989). There is a saying that an unremembered dream is like an unopened letter. We owe it to ourselves to get access to the whole dream country in our minds.

Big dreams are dreams which have an archetypal meaning or significance. Such dreams, according to Jung (1968), have peculiar numinosity, a sacred quality. Unless they are treated with a proper transpersonal respect, they may well be undervalued and not given due attention. Crittenden Brookes (1996) has a good discussion of how to work with big dreams of this kind, and so does Dina Glouberman (1995). Kelly Bulkeley (1999) shows that people have been interested in big dreams all through history and in many different countries. Barbara Somers (2000) has a good deal to say about various aspects of dreams, including their transpersonal aspects at different stages in the life cycle. It is clear that there is a huge area here which only a transpersonal approach can do justice to.

## 4.2   HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

We think that education can be a disrespectful and alienating experience. It too often asks people to learn things which someone else has decided upon. Too often it does not consult or negotiate with the learners in any meaningful way. We agree with those who say half-jokingly that the four R's are:

1) Reading
2) Writing
3) Arithmetic
4) Respect

The humanistic approach can be applied to the content of courses, the skills taught in courses, and the structure of the school or college itself. As to content, we like to see relevant courses, which have directly to do with the lives of the students or trainees involved, and which they perceive as relevant to them. There might be a course on human sexuality, or a course on substance abuse, or a course about aggression and violence.

As to skills, we think it is important for students to learn about identity (who they are), power (they are entitled to a proper measure of power) and connectedness (with each other and with adults), and these in an experiential way, using well worked out exercises which involve the learner's body and feelings as well as the intellect (Borton 1970). Values clarification, as taught by Simon and others, is one such approach, emphasizing the skills of prizing, choosing and acting (Simon et al 1972). It can be used in a number of different subject areas.

Communication exercises, so useful to adults, are also useful to children (Hammond 1990). Parent Effectiveness Training is a way in which the school can reach out to the parents and enroll them in a programme whereby the aims of the schools and the aims of the parents can be better aligned. Group work can be used in various ways to break down the isolation which some children feel (Garry & Cowan 1986).

Co-counseling can be taught to children from the age of five upwards, so that children can be emotional resources for each other. Assertiveness training is useful to girls and boys alike, teaching the skills of listening, giving and receiving feedback, handling conflict, etc. "Achievement Motivation" emphasizes goal-setting, moderate risk taking and achievement planning, useful in every aspect of life. A transpersonal element can also come in (Hendricks & Fadiman 1976) and extend the work still further.

As to the structure of the learning establishment itself, we emphasize self- choice on the part of the student, and de-emphasize marks and grades. The teacher or lecturer becomes a facilitator rather than just an authority figure or a provider. Students have a voice in the decisions which may affect them. All those places

which have learning contracts, negotiated study or student-led project work are humanistic to that extent. A second way of describing humanistic education looks more closely at what happens in the room. There are five ways in which we can look at this.

1) **CHOICE OR CONTROL:** We encourage students, as time goes on, to exercise more and more control and choices concerning the course of their education – both their education goals and their day-to-day activities.
2) **FELT CONCERN:** As education becomes more humanistic, the curriculum tends to focus more and more on the felt concerns and interests of the students
3) **THE WHOLE PERSON:** We pay attention to feeling, choosing, communicating and acting, and ask students about their dreams as well as their thoughts and actions. We may use guided fantasy to illuminate physics, or drama to illuminate history or geography, for example.
4) **SELF EVALUATION:** Learners more and more are encouraged to evaluate their own learning progress, occasionally choosing to take tests, or asking for others' feedback, or gathering data about themselves.
5) **TEACHER AS FACILITATOR:** The tutor or lecturer tends to be more supportive than critical, more understanding than judgemental, more genuine than playing a role.

Labels such as "confluent education" or "the open classroom" (Brown et al 1975) are sometimes used to describe humanistic education. The concept of a learning community also came out of the humanistic viewpoint. Today's educational psychologists are calling for a psychology of self-discovery and awareness, and this is what humanistic psychology has to offer.

## 4.3   HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT
Most of what is valuable in management theory today comes from humanistic psychology (Crainer 1998). It is a field in which we have been particularly active (Kennedy 1991). This activity has concentrated mainly on two areas; how do you set up an organization to function well, and how do you cure an organization which is not functioning well? When it comes to setting up an organization, we have found that a hierarchical organization (often called a bureaucracy) tends to be destructive of the people in it, and also tends to be much too rigid in a fast-changing society (French & Bell 1984).

So we have been much concerned with the alternatives to hierarchy such as a matrix organization, network organization or semiautonomous work groups

(Kanter 1985). Where for some reason a hierarchy has to be retained, we prefer a flat hierarchy to a tall hierarchy – in other words, three levels rather than fifteen levels (Handy 1985).

An organization of less than 200 people hardly ever needs to be hierarchical, and the vast majority of organizations in this country have less than 25 people in them, in terms of permanent employees. In a non-hierarchical organization it is much easier to get relationships of openness and trust (Herbst 1976). With such relationships, communication becomes easier. With good communications, rumours, misperception and paranoia can less easily blossom (Boydell & Pedler 1981). This in turn leads to more openness and trust. This sort of virtuous circle brings about what we call a high-synergy organization. Synergy is the two plus two equals five principle, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

*In such an atmosphere, conflict resolution is relatively easy rather than extremely difficult, and we think it is important to teach the skills of conflict resolution to all those who may need it (Fisher & Ury 1986). Good conflict resolution helps people to change and develop. When it comes to healing a sick organization, a humanistic consultant may be called in (Allen 1980). The approach we take is called organization development (Argyris 1986).* We treat the organization as if it were a client in therapy, and ask the question – "where does it hurt most?"

Usually we start at the top and work down, because the people at the top have the most power to obstruct any solutions they don't agree with, and also because if they change the others are more likely to take the change process seriously (Kanter 1985). We interview each member of the ruling group (not usually more than 12 people) separately (Massarik 1990). We report back at a general meeting (which often continues for one or two days) at which some of the issues are resolved, and action plans set up to deal with the outcome of those decisions.

Then the process is repeated with the next layer, and the next, until everyone has been involved. This is a very successful approach which has been well researched, and can also be applied in education (Owens 1987). It is sometimes said, by people who have not really been into the matter, that the humanistic approach is too soft and too people-oriented, but in fact humanistic consultants always emphasize the importance of doing justice to the task as well as to the people involved (Graham 1995). It is important not to confuse the humanistic approach with the "human relations" school of management theory which flourished in the 1930s.

## 4.4    TRANSPERSONAL MANAGEMENT

Instead of Organization Development, this approach is concerned with Organizational Transformation (Adams 1986). This change from OD to OT began in the 1980s, but is still not well known or widely practiced. This approach says that we are essentially spiritual beings in a spiritual universe, that humans ultimately seek meaning within work, and that creative work is necessary for both psychological and spiritual growth (Kegan 1994). It represents an ecological approach to radical, second-order change in the entire organization (Tichy & Devanna 1986).

This involves transformative changes in the fundamental nature of the organization: it is about giving the organization a new kind of vision and mission (Harrison 1984). This means balancing the active with the receptive, the intellectual with the emotional, the body with the soul, the tough with the tender, and doing justice both to the male and the female (Ray & Rinzler 1993).

One of the typical concepts is *"alignment".* A clear and timely vision catalyzes alignment. Alignment is a condition in which people operate as if they were part of an integrated whole. A Jungian slant on this is to be found in Stein & Hollwitz (1992). It is exemplified in that level of teamwork which characterizes exceptional sports teams, theatre ensembles and chamber orchestras.

When a high degree of it develops among members of a team committed to a shared vision, the individuals' sense of relationship and even their concept of self may shift. It channels high energy and creates excitement and drive. Another idea is "attunement", defined as a resonance or harmony among the parts of the system, and between the parts and the whole. As the concept of alignment speaks to us of *will,* so that of attunement calls up the mysterious operations of *love* in organizations: the sense of empathy, understanding, caring, nurturance and mutual support. Attunement is quiet and soft, receptive to the subtle energies which bind us to one another and to nature (Fletcher 1990).

Another concept is *"empowerment"*. This word had been used before, mainly by humanistic people in the sense of self-actualization – that is, self- empowerment. But the new twist here is the emphasis on mutual empowerment. This has particular implications for women in eroding the invisible barriers that tend to keep them in mundane organizational roles. With mutual empowerment people support each other rather than trying to put each other down (Culbert & McDonough 1990). We say *"intuitive leadership"* and encourage the development of intuition quite consciously and deliberately. Such leaders give inspiration and not just good

ideas. They are often able to sum up the organizational vision in a memorable phrase. The structure of the organization shifts in order to enable all these changes to take place, and to give them full scope. When this happens, excellence appears (Senge 1990).

A final thought is summed up in the phrase *"planetary consciousness"*. Everything done in the organization is related to this higher (or deeper) purpose (Renesh 1991). If we find on reflection that there is no longer joy in the struggle, that we are burning ourselves out in the effort, that we are no longer energized by what we do, then that may be a signal that it is time to move on to a new vision of what we are doing. Perhaps we have lost touch with our purpose on this planet. And perhaps the organization needs to change to reflect what is happening. Some inspiring approaches are outlined in the 28th issue of the magazine *What is Enlightenment?* Not only that: the research which is done in organizations needs to change, too along the lines laid down in Sherman & Torbert (2000).

## 4.5    HUMAN SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT
One of the most exciting developments of recent years is that the whole question of what is human science has been opened up and taken a stage further forward. It had been clear for a long time – at least since the early seventies – that there was something wrong with social science. Its early promise had never been fulfilled.

Psychology and sociology were labels, as it were, but the bottles had never been filled – they were still empty and sterile. This was fairly obviously because, particularly in psychology, which had very strong aims to be accepted as scientific (and in the 80's was actually admitted to the international body representing all the sciences) there was a strong emphasis on being objective.

This means treating a human being like an object, or thing (Wilber 1983). You had to work on a human being from the outside, not even allowing that anything more complicated than a computer program might be going on inside, and measure the variables – the independent variable and the dependent variable – in an accurate way. In this way explanations could be built up, and theories arrived at (Mitroff & Kilmann 1978).

But when, after one hundred years of this, no usable or generally accepted theory ever had been arrived at, there was obviously something wrong. So much was clear. The old paradigm (pattern or style of accepted research method) was not working. Only recently, however, has a new paradigm emerged (Reason & Rowan 1981). And it has emerged out of the humanistic approach. It turns out that the only

way you can get valid and useful results out of research is by treating people like human beings, rather than as things (Berg & Smith 1988). To say "I will only study the human mind by observing the human body" is so obviously crazy that it is almost impossible to see how it held sway for so long. There is a good discussion of all this in Donna Mertens (1998).

So what we do now is variously called *"cooperative inquiry", "participatory research", "interpretative studies", "naturalistic inquiry"* and so on (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Sometimes we speak of action research (Reason & Bradbury 2001). It is all new paradigm research, in its various forms. And what happens is that the outcomes of such research are directly valuable and useful to all those who took part. This is particularly true in psychotherapy research (Mahrer 1985). They feel enlivened and helped by participating in such a project, and almost always there is some social effect.

In this way humanistic research is very close to feminist research (Burman 1990). Orthodox researchers tend to ask – "But are the results generalizable?" Quite often the answer is no, but this is also true of old paradigm research itself. The typical study in old-style psychology is based on ten or twenty people, usually second-year students at a small American university. New paradigm research has been with prisoners in jail, villages in developing countries, bank employees, co-counselors, youth camp managers and a host of other groups (Reason 1988).

The point is that you can't have laws as in physics or chemistry – human beings are not objects and not things, they are and always have to be treated as conscious, intentional human beings. We have to talk about action rather than about behaviour.

## 4.6    TRANSFORMATIONAL RESEARCH
After humanistic research, but very much connected with it, came transpersonal research, sometimes called transformational research (Rowan 1997). It pointed out that if we are all spiritual beings, we need to pay attention to that in all the research we do with people. Of course one of the pioneers in this was Stanislav Grof (see his chapter in Boorstein 1996).

But possibly the most important contribution came from William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson (1998), who gave details of a number of approaches to research, together with copious examples of the work in action. This was indeed a groundbreaking effort, which made a huge impact.

At about the same time, a specifically Buddhist approach came from Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro (1998), which again was inspiring in its freshness and commitment. It also contained material about critical theory, phenomenology and hermeneutics, and had some political references too. The mention of phenomenology points to the relevance of another excellent text from Ron Valle (1998), which again shows how wide-ranging this approach can be.

All this work goes to show that the transpersonal is a field which is very researchable, and which also contributes many new ideas as to what can be dome in such a delicate area.