



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

378.794
G43455
WP-717

Working Paper Series

WORKING PAPER NO. 717

PROCESS MODELS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ISSUE RESOLUTION

by

L. Tim Wallace

WAITE MEMORIAL BOOK COLLECTION
DEPT. OF AG. AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
1994 BUFORD AVE. - 232 COB
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
ST. PAUL, MN 55108 U.S.A.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND
RESOURCE ECONOMICS

BERKELEY

CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

University of California

WHITE MEMORIAL BOOK COLLECTION
DEPT. OF AG. AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
1994 BUNFORD AVE. - 331 COB
UNIVERSITY OF WINNEBAGO
ST. PAUL, MINN 55105 U.S.A.

378.794
G43455
WP-717

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

WORKING PAPER NO. 717

PROCESS MODELS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ISSUE RESOLUTION

by

L. Tim Wallace

California Agricultural Experiment Station
Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics
July, 1994

PROCESS MODELS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ISSUE RESOLUTION

synthesized by

L. Tim Wallace

Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

University of California, Berkeley

Revised Draft: May 1, 1994

[Public issues arise because of value conflicts about a situation or event. Process models evolve because of a need to resolve these conflicts in some way that leads to effective issue resolution. Public issues education can entail education about the issue and/or the model(s) useful in conflict resolution. Be sure you know which you are undertaking. This section deals with a discussion of social action process models that can help groups resolve controversial public issues and problems.]

INTRODUCTION

Typically, social action issue resolution models follow some sequential route beginning with thinking about the topic/issue or problem identification, through analysis of alternative solutions to implementation of one of them. Evaluation and resolution modification come last.

Sequence Steps Are Helpful

Following a sequence does several things for your group: it allows all of you to know where you are in the resolution process and what's coming next; it helps depersonalize the conflict so that interest viewpoints can be

identified rather than simply expressing locked-in positions and personal opinions; it can provide a safe environment for people to disagree/agree face to face and thereby learn the legitimacy of other viewpoints (real learning takes place when people finally understand why other people do not agree with their tightly held "obvious path of truth").

Many Models to Choose From

There are many models that may serve your purpose. Experiment after you read about some of them and select your own or the combination of steps that makes the most sense to you. Which model you choose depends on many factors such as group awareness, extent of the "teachable moment," skill level of the educator, and the issue "heat" itself. Nothing you choose will be irreversible. Don't be afraid to make a mistake. We all have. You are not alone in this endeavor. We all need to learn more about what is effective. You can contribute to that knowledge through sharing your experiences.

Models Simplify

Social action process models simplify complex relationships. They offer a way to allow people of differing values to work together toward the credible resolution of an issue/conflict. They permit a way for people with different perspectives to learn more about the issue including motivation for the different perceptions interest groups hold about it. This understanding can increase tolerance and trust, and lead to constructive compromise paths converging to a positive plan of action. These models have been used in many situations about many issues. While they are not infallible, they can,

with proper facilitation, help a group "muddle" its own way through to an effective conclusion.

What Are the Assumptions on Which Models Are Built?

Some of the assumptions underlying these models are that:

- * the people assembled are seriously committed to the issue being resolved thereby leading to a "situation betterment."
- * the facilitator is sensitive and knowledgeable about group skills.
- * the issue/conflict can be identified.
- * there are data/information enough to permit analysis, including knowing enough to be able to ask for more information.

What is the impact of all this work, of using part or all of these models? What difference might it all make? Mostly it's about education and the fact that informed group action can change the way things currently exist to a preferred state. Using the process will increase your knowledge about issues and about the processes of inserting information into issue resolution. You will be dealing with people who feel empowered, who feel they are willing to tackle risks associated with voluntary participation, accepting the discipline of working through managed conflict situations to arrive at political resolutions about an issue at hand for which action plans can be drawn, put into motion and evaluated.

KINDS OF MODELS

There are many different kinds of social action, problem-solving, conflict resolution models. Undoubtedly there will be more created.

Consider what they do in general, and what each does specifically. Please do not feel they are prescriptive and lock you in. Rather think of them as being suggestive, find out for yourself the reasoning behind the sequence they talk about. Then make a choice.

The models we will refer to are listed below. They are used by many groups in different circumstances.

- Group One:
 - * Issue Intervention or Issue Evolution Model
 - * Alternative/Consequences Model
 - * The Ladder Model
 - * SHAPES Model
 - * Organizational Effectiveness Model
 - * Interest Based Model
 - * Analysis and Discovery Model
- Group Two:
 - * Force Field Analysis
 - * Advocacy Model
 - * Power Cluster Model
 - * Planned Change Process Model
- Group Three:
 - * Consensus Decision Making
 - * Modified Delphi Model
 - * Coming to Public Judgment Model
- Group Four:
 - * National Issues Forum Model
 - * Study Circles
- Group Five:
 - * Mediation Model
 - * Negotiation Model
 - * Arbitration Model

These models illustrate the breadth of effort people have made to encompass the variety of issues groups deal with, the variety of interest

groups represented in the resolution process, and the skill levels of those involved. Be aware that this process is not for everyone. It's no sin not to want to be involved. On the other hand, think of the opportunities you might be missing not to be involved on the cutting edge of decision making that makes a difference.

COMMON ELEMENTS AND STAGES OF ALL MODELS

Common elements and stages taken from the models above include:

Initial organizational work. Organize meetings of stakeholders--all of those who are affected by the issue, and are affected by its resolution.

Groundrules need to be set so the group can function effectively and not waste time or lose focus. These rules, once created, for example, also guide expectations of the participants, aid communication/recording and sharing of information, help the group in deciding how to make decisions, how to set the agenda, and how often to meet.

A description step that includes all the points of view and concerns from the various interest groups represented. It is important to depersonalize these points of view so they are viewed as "its" rather than "hers" or "his." The statements do not always have to be factual. Concerns are often based on emotion, values, beliefs rather than "facts" and draw on experience, history, and personal knowledge of the situation surrounding the issue. This stage can be summed up by saying it represents "what is" or "what is perceived" about the issue. It provides an overview to the situation in which the issue arises. It will never be fully complete so don't spend overly much time on it, yet allow enough for anyone to contribute to it who feels they must do so to set the record straight. Do not allow duplication and iterative statements.

There is a goal or statement of expectations step; this is the "my goal is to..." or "my vision about this issue is..." stage; how the present situation (described above) might be able to be changed to a preferred state. It is in this stage that the issue is clearly defined, the problem phrased, and the group makes itself clear about what it intends to do.

There is an analytical step; this is the "how to" stage where possible solutions to the conflict are identified, and their consequences explored. As the group acquires relevant information and analysis, you will find it acts as a backdrop to the "interest" statements and concerns expressed above; discrepancies will appear and need "reality checks." You and the group will also note where there are gaps in the information needed to make a resolution decision irregardless of the point of view. The purpose of the analysis is to be able to compare the alternatives, to establish priorities, and to discover trade-offs and compromise possibilities.

There is a decision making step in which the group decides which alternative, or combination of alternatives, it wants to implement. This stage is based on the groundrules established at the beginning of the group, and on the criteria it has picked for making the selection. These criteria are not necessarily the kind such as cost, price, who pays, and so on; they can be of a generic variety such as cleaner water, increased employment, more training programs, less pesticide residues, etc. Essentially, the decision will be made on the basis of personally held values, not only scientific analysis. It will be a political decision. This step is critical in that it brings together all the values held by all the interest groups, and tries to select a resolution that satisfies as many of those values as possible.

Implementation plans or plans of action need to be drawn. This requires an iteration of the alternative identification/consequences steps.

There are usually trade-offs in terms of action strategies and tactics just as there were when analyzing which resolution alternative to pick.

Finally there is some type of evaluation of the process used and actions taken which offers a chance for goal and alternative revision. There are many ways to do this; formal structures and informal ones. Perhaps the most readily at hand goes back to the concerns raised by the interests in the initial organizational stage. If their concerns are heightened, you've chosen the wrong alternative; if they are lessened, you've hit the jackpot; and if they are at about the same level, you are right but irrelevant. This is why you give yourself a chance to revise and modify what you learned and did as you worked your way through the resolution process.

When evaluating, keep in mind that evaluation has to be done in terms of the group's goals not your educational goals. Be sure you keep the group's program and your educational program separate. This means you might have four things to evaluate: educating about the issue, educating about the process, how the group is doing vis-a-vis its goals, and your overall education program of which PIE may be only a part.

MORE ABOUT THE MODELS

This section explores each of the above groups of models in greater depth, suggesting where they are most related to a model's common elements and stages. Remember that a model is a tool for programmatic use.

MODEL GROUP 1

The first group of models can be considered as the foundation blocks of public policy education. They contain all the necessary steps and elements. They are non-advocacy models, "interest inclusive" models aimed at community betterment rather than particular interest group betterment. They accentuate education rather than action, yet count on action to underscore the education. They are designed to help each participant in the group become a wiser decision maker, and more aware of the democratic potentials of public issue resolution. All of the models require a large amount of time and energy investment by the educator/facilitator, and by each of the participants.

Issue Evolution Intervention Model: This model describes how public issues evolve, and how education can be introduced into those processes. The policy/issue construction covers eight steps each of which has an educational component. These are shown in Figure I.

The above model grew from the **Alternative/Consequences Model**. The A/C model provides the key concepts of identifying possible alternative solutions to an issue, and then analyzing the consequences (the what ifs) of each alternative (See Figure II).

Those who use the four steps of this model (issue identification, alternative identification, consequence analysis, and decision making) however, have opted for a fairly brief encounter with their group since the issue is usually pre-picked, pre-analyzed, and involves no real commitment by diverse interest groups. Implementation and evaluation are implied or left up to someone else to create and do. Usually, only one meeting in an area is called to present the entire educational package.

The A/C model is a very effective, deceptively simple tool to use. It takes a great deal of time with colleagues and other knowledgeable people to pin-point what the analytical heart of the issue is, and then work it into an educational context rather than a divisive or polemic one. A credible accessible database is needed, and the same kinds of group skills are needed here as with any model.

Some people believe that you have to know more about the issue than anyone else around in order to lead a discussion on it. Others believe that a good facilitator can call in experts and feed them questions to bring out the points needed for group discussion and educated decision making. Take your choice. The model has been used successfully by each viewpoint.

The Ladder Model grew out of a felt need to fill some holes in the preceding two models. It involves a nine-step program to take people through a five-stage problem-solving process. People saw a need to let a group come together to voice its concerns about a matter long enough so that the issue(s) emerged. Once an issue is selected, the next step is to brainstorm where you want to end up, i.e., what the goal is you really want. Nothing complicated about it yet it is one of the most difficult things any person or group can face. Usually people know what they do not want to do; the educational facilitator trick is to turn that negative energy into a positive result. This model is resident demand driven, not moved by what some academic thinks might be the problem.

An alternative to setting a goal (preferred state) first, is to brainstorm possible (not probable) alternatives and their consequences. In either case, the objective is to obtain as complete and wide-ranging a list as possible, drawing from the group's diversity and creativity. Duplication can be eliminated, combinations can be made.

Establishing criteria for choosing and comparing an alternative, and for assessing its consequences is next. It also is difficult. There are many ways to establish some scheme for weighting criteria once they are raised so that all the interests present are satisfied their concerns are considered.

Finally, creating a plan of action after the alternative is chosen and implementing it is often overlooked. As a result, a lot of very good plans and suggestions are left on shelves. Everyone thought the job had been done. The engine was fixed, but the car was left on the mechanics rack.

Evaluation seems to be more effective if it is a written assessment by the group members of what they have done, and what they have accomplished. The questions they might answer include: did we arrive at our goal? if not, why not? could it have been better (did we know that going in)? did our efforts create any new problems? did we record our experiences so that others might learn from them?

The concept of a ladder is also important. It can take you up or down an issue, across an abyss of misunderstanding, or collapse into a few sections, and be made into a variety of steps depending upon the group's capabilities.. In any case, because you know precisely where you are in the discussion, groups can follow their own reactions and interests more closely--it increases active listening.

This model needs someone with experience in educational facilitation. The task here is not to provide answers or be considered the fount of knowledge; the real task is to think of the right question to ask so that the group moves ahead and isn't left stymied about something. One facilitation technique that works well with this model is when things get too hot and heavy, back off and ask the group what they would do if they were you. It has to be a sincere gesture, one that asks for their sincere cooperation.

The thing that this model produces is a free wheeling, well structured meeting in which all participants feel empowered and free to say what they feel. For the facilitator, the empirical results are that it will take the group to a point of resolution, the specifics of which may not be known or predictable at the first meeting or two. The leap of faith for the new facilitator is in believing that this is really so. Remember, most groups are very forgiving if they believe the facilitator is honest, sincere, and isn't playing games they don't know about.

SHARES is a model that developed because a field extension person wanted a more descriptive historical record of what he and his group were doing. The model that developed comprises 15 steps that are choreographed in a group memory of butcher paper tacked to the wall; a visual record of what has happened, what is currently going on, and what might happen. It has a great appeal: it's visual, has a sequence that makes common sense, and is task-oriented so that accomplishments are able to be seen by everyone. This helps in giving credit to deserving people, an extremely desirable characteristic.

SHAPES is a matrix with the 15 rows part of the social action process; the columns are the events that happen over time, who does them, and what the results are. The steps (rows) are: (1) identify the prior situation; (2) clarify the problem; (3) form initiating set; (4) legitimize; (5) diffuse the information; (6) evaluate as you proceed; (7) define need; (8) get commitments to action; (9) determine goals; (10) determine means; (11) make a plan of work; (12) mobilize resources; (13) launch the program; (14) take action; (15) evaluate. SHAPES is easy to communicate, easy to follow, and will take you somewhere. Since a record is provided, the model quickly shows the cyclical ups and downs any group action process has over time, critical incidents in

which key things happen, and identifies key people who might help or hinder the process.

As you look at SHAPES and compare it to the other models, it is quite different in appearance yet has the same elements and stages that all the other models do. The big differences are that it has more steps, and keeps a detailed visual/written record of the process. It is, again, an empowerment tool to help people who feel there is a conflict (issue), legitimize their concerns, and experiment to find a resolution.

At about the same time that the Ladder and SHAPES models were being shaped, a sociologist interested in organizational development blended two models together (Organizational Effectiveness by Hackman, and an Interest Based Problem Solving Process) to form an extremely effective operational, hands on model. The Hackman **Organizational Effectiveness Model** is one which copes with conflict, change and controversy. Its goal is to find a balance between the personal needs of the players involved, the interpersonal relationships while together, and the production of acceptable products to all interests involved. Building trust and credibility through responsive facilitation techniques is a key.

In the Organizational Effectiveness model, there is a significant amount of time and effort put into pre-meeting liaison: confidential phone interviews which bring out the issues, extent of the person's knowledge about the issue, and what that person sees as being possible ways to overcome the conflict. The initial meeting is designed so as to: state the purpose for meeting, establish groundrules and norms of behavior, create agenda expectations and evaluation possibilities. Facilitation is provided to maximize group trust and compatibility even though many different (and often opposing) interests are at the table.

As the meetings progressed, the sociologist felt a need to integrate an interest-based model which focused on problem solving--not arguing over people, position, or solutions. It focused on the issue resolution, believing that all interests would be helped if a solution could be found.

The result was an integration of the two so that the newly redefined **Interest Based Model** incorporates problem solving with significant attention paid to the people in the group, their needs, and the groups needs, as well as a commitment to resolving the conflict issue. His model also has eight steps, and they also contain the same common elements and stages outlined previously. However, there is a significantly different twist applied.

The steps are:

- (1) Pre-Problem Solving: This is where interests are identified, procedural agreements are developed such as group groundrules, agenda creation, facilitation methods, and recording/communication needs explored.
- (2) Definition of Problem or Issue: Different perceptions of the problem are collected (what has been found is that perception often is a function of the size of the stake in the issue), understanding of the core issues is attempted and tested, and motivation for concerns is sought.
- (3) Expected Products of the Process Are Identified: These are outcomes from the process, not solutions the process will use. It gets at the goal of the process, and begins to answer the "so what" question about why participate?
- (4) Analyze the problem from each interest's point of view: identify the problem's cause/effects; identify each interest's perceptions of the issue, their definition of the issue, and their position (if they have one) on the matter. These are then combined and threads of commonality found and labeled.

(5) Criteria for knowing when success is at hand are found and agreed upon. This gets at what each interest will feel is satisfying to its constituents, and thereby open the doors to compromise resolutions.

(6) Generate as many alternative solutions as are feasible within time and energy constraints: All stops are pulled to facilitate creativity within the group. Now is the time to get positive thinking to the forefront.

(7) Reach agreement on an alternative after much comparison: Formally agree that this is, indeed, the "right" solution. Develop an implementation plan. The facilitator may have to suggest coalition building techniques at this point.

(8) Implement the chosen solution and monitor its progress in accordance with the criteria already suggested.

The combination of these models is another step toward creating closer bonds of trust between the people working in the group for a resolution of the issue. It combines both the technical and the personal in a different way than any of the previous models. It has been well tested and there are case studies available to show what can be done by using it.

The Analysis and Discovery Model is a synthesis of many models and facilitation techniques. It has been discussed in recent PIE video programs, and is well written and explained in a manual which accompanies these videos.

The model comprises three stages with two transitions. The first stage is Awareness. It involves the ideas of growing concern about the issue, possible involvement in it, and seeing some organizational structures emerge. The transition to the next stage is getting the commitment of individuals and organizations to resolve the issue.

The second stage is Discovery and Analysis. It involves getting information and sharing understanding about the present situation, the future possibilities of trends, visions and goals, and providing clarification of the issue or problem to be analyzed. The alternatives (choice/action options) involve getting the group to list alternatives and invent ones if they can. This inventory gets at technology transfers and creativity. The list is then followed by an exploration of the consequences of following one or more of the alternatives. It uses impact assessment techniques, consensus testing and decision-making criteria to choose the ultimate alternative.

Choosing that final alternative is the transition between the second section and the third: that of creating an implementation plan, getting it approved, and evaluating its results.

MODEL GROUP 2

The second group of models arose about the same time those in Group 1 came into being. However, these models are much more directed toward achieving a particular goal for a particular entity than the others. An **Advocacy Model** is one which does not try to be objective. Its purpose is to win for those who use it. It assumes the role of an analyst who has been hired to review a situation and come out with a single recommendation. It is the viewpoint of the consulting firm which has been hired to achieve a particular project successfully--and it sets about to do so.

Advocacy models concentrate on issue content and use process content only to achieve their own particular purpose. They do not even think about teaching process to others than their team, and only then so that they can be

more efficient and work together better so as to achieve the team goal in a shorter time, or with less expense than might otherwise be the case.

Power Cluster Models operate daily in our society. Examples of these models are shown when groups with similar interests join hands to do something. Special interest groups, administrative agencies, legislative committees, professional groups, volunteer groups, and charities are all specific examples. Each of these groups use power tactics and strategies to get what they want. They are very much advocacy groups.

These groups are not interested in broad representation, and generally do not want people outside their narrow groups to be involved. The less people know the workings of the inner group, the better. This is not a cynical way to do business. It is very effective, otherwise it would have been discarded long ago.

Conversely, because of increasing awareness of the complexities involved in obtaining the ears and purses of favored constituents, many power cluster groups are not at all averse to forming coalitions with "unlikely bedfellows." For the most part, the coalitions formed are based on a one by one specific issue basis. Longevity in coalitions made up of different interests is rare.

The key to effective power cluster groups is communication. Sharing common databases, similar communication networks, and obtaining the newest technical skills to analyze the needed and agreed upon tasks are the ways power cluster groups stay in power and continue to be effective. It makes good sense for them to do so. They are usually not in the education business, but are in profit-making businesses or key policy decision-making roles for which their administrative/legislative/lobby group is an advocate.

Planned Change Process Models are simply ways in which a group can enter an issue evolution cycle, diagnose it, and introduce a managed change of some kind. This change can be for any institution or business firm. Even educational institutions and organizations can use this model for constructive action planning. It can entail plans to better communities, do a better job of teaching/education, or enhance management's profits. There is a follow-up step with modification and evaluation opportunities. We will hear a great deal more about this kind of model in the future.

MODEL GROUP 3

Group three represents two models that have become popular in that they are educational, bring people together to address what is deemed an important public issue, and require each to make a decision about the issue in order to follow its consequences through--yet without the personal commitment of actually having to do it. These two models have been called parallel. They are the National Issues Forum Model and the Study Circle Model. Both are used increasingly across the nation, and both serve a growing educational function to our citizenry.

The National Issues Forum (NIF) takes the form of a town meeting, and engages the public in deliberation about an issue. The issue picked is one of, usually, three analyzed annually by the national organization responsible for the Forum program and materials. An attempt is usually made for the group to be diverse since that brings out essential different viewpoints. However, there is no real attempt from "outside" to make the group all inclusive or representative of the community, except that the process works better if the group is broadly representative. The discussion will provide for

these gaps to show if they exist locally, and the group itself can then do something about it if it wants to.

The discussion starts with an issues overview which is provided from an "external" source, Forum Headquarters. These written materials comprise a phrasing of the issue, some background information about the issue, some analysis of the decision(s) leading up to the issue, and some possible avenues of decision making to reduce or eliminate the issue.

The material does not instruct the group to set its own goals about the issue, yet does allow that to happen if the group is so moved. Often a local steering committee is established to create interest in the meeting, form a list of invitees, arrange for a meeting room, and that sort of thing. However, the materials and the general format of the meeting is fairly well-thought through, and its program agenda already set out. It offers a program of local involvement to listen to and participate in a discussion about an issue--come, enjoy it, participate in it, learn from it, or feel perfectly free to stay at home. It's a great way to bring people out, and get them to learn something.

A facilitator is recommended, and often a list of local contacts is provided the organizers of the group. There is a national network of conveners and moderators which can be provided upon request.

Once the group comes together, it goes through a series of steps similar to those we have outlined before. But there is a different twist to them. The focus is on making a choice since past choices have developed our history, and future choices will describe our future. It tries to get people to move from opinion to judgment. It provides key factual analysis about a limited number of alternatives and their consequences. The process emphasizes that making choices is difficult, and illustrates this by having the group work

though their own conflicting emotions about the trade-offs they will have to make if they really want to resolve the situation at hand.

The public dialogue makes a strong point of creating alternatives based on readily accepted values as a fresh way to consider options. It tries to break the clichés of liberal/conservative, authority/individual, right/left. What participants find themselves doing is struggling with the tradeoffs within a given choice between things they hold dear, and their increased understanding and acceptance of the legitimacy of other's points of view.

The program ends with a shared understanding of the problem, a focus on the competing values that make the issue hard to decide; it forces the group to consider the consequences of making a choice, and points to what is still unresolved. There are considerable educational opportunities which stem from this program.

The downside, if downside it really is, is that the group does not go through the exercise of deciding what its goals are for the community, what criteria it might use to set up for making a final decision, what implementation strategy offers the most opportunity, and what evaluation possibilities might help to make their decision truly effective.

Perhaps the items mentioned above as a possible "downside" are the reason the **Study Circle Program** came into being as a natural follow-up to the NIF program. Study Circles are groups of 5-20 or so people who meet to discuss choice options identified to resolve various social and political issues. The purpose is to empower people/organizations to confront difficult choices, build self-confidence, increase knowledge and personal communication skills. The role of participants is to achieve those benefits and gain a deeper understanding of the interaction among people as they make themselves

vulnerable and take risks associated with making a decision about a public issue.

The participants control the discussion, its content and the groundrules. They agree to respect different viewpoints expressed, and abide by democratic rules of group conduct. There are two central roles: that of the initial organizer, and that of the leader (usually a well-prepared docent kind of person). Both roles can provide a pre-set of questions for the group to discuss, select the materials for the group to use, and draw from the group individual discussion contributions. The mode is one of flexibility, yet focus is urged. Each session usually lasts about two hours. Meetings are generally held weekly with about 3-6 meetings per issue.

Consensus is not necessary, good discussion is. Discussion derives from reading materials handed out prior to the meeting. This method practices small group democracy. It allows people to express themselves freely. While there is no one set model of organization, all participants have generally been in or conducted meetings, and the issue of how to organize turns out not to be an issue after all. This method of group participation and discussion of an issue without being actually responsible for its resolution, is a growing educational force in many communities across the nation.

GROUP TECHNIQUES TO AID PROBLEM SOLVING

This group contains social action or group skill techniques rather than problem-solving models. These techniques have sometimes been referred to as models themselves.

Force Field Analysis is primarily a technique to help solve issues within a broadly represented decision-making or study group. The analysis is

straightforward. Once the issue has been identified, usually chosen for the group and picked before a group meets, the facilitator gets the group to generate alternatives (or might even come up with a select handful to which he asks the group's response). After discussion and perhaps prioritizing to determine a choice preference, the facilitator will draw a line down the middle of a flip-chart, and the group will be asked to list the things on one side that they see stopping them or holding them back from implementing the alternative they want; and on the other side of the sheet to list the things which are in the group's favor in implementing their choice.

The plan of action that comes from using Force Field Analysis generally comes in two parts: firstly, what can be done to enhance the forces that enhance goal achievement, and, secondly, what can be done to lessen the potency of the forces which are trying to stop us from attaining our goal. Force field analysis is a realistic, up-front way to view problem-solving. Even with a broadly-based community group, it helps focus the group's efforts on what is attainable, do-able, and pertinent. It allows for little theorizing. It concentrates on zeroing in on an issue, dissecting it for positive and negative forces, vis-a-vis a particular interest, and then setting tasks to be done in order to do the best possible to attain the goal of the group or business.

Another group of techniques is almost the opposite of the advocacy models. They entail much time, much talking, much listening, much compromising--and when all that is done, they can become very effective in what they set out to do.

Consensus Modeling has been with us for a long time. For over 300 years the Society of Friends (Quakers) have depended upon it; it produces a sense of community that no other technique does. Prime examples include the tribal aspects of the native American societies and nations that were here

for hundreds of years before being "discovered." It also has a goal of sustainability of a particular culture, a way of action that nurtures a particular way of life deemed favorable by its adherents.

Consensus is a form of decision-making. It has been termed a conservative approach since it takes a long time to create, and a long time to change. In essence, the group involved reacts to a carefully and positively phrased question, the statement of the problem. True consensus is built upon the conviction that everyone holds some part of the "truth" and no one holds all of it. By talking about long enough, listening hard enough, and being open to having your mind changed, eventually the group is moved to make a decision--and that decision becomes self-evident during the course of thought, listening, and discussion. Sometimes meditation and prayer are involved as ways to increase one's sensitivities and listening abilities.

Requirements for consensus are that the group is willing to work together one hundred percent. This does not mean that everyone feels equally about something. Unanimity is not necessary; rather, the willingness to move forward in concerted agreement is required. This means that each person has complete power over the group. The group must also have a problem/issue that requires a group decision, and a belief that a solution to the problem/issue is possible. Finally, it must commit to having the perseverance to find it. Resolution of the issue is found on a basis of trust (everyone is trustworthy), respect, love for your fellow person, personal integrity, self-awareness, and control of personal egos. You can see how very much this method has faith in the goodness of mankind, and that some central positive force is in each of us to come to a constructive conclusion.

The group discussion does not formally require technical analysis as much as it does exploration of the feelings and convictions concerning the

issue. For this reason, it may require considerable groundrules elaboration. Timing and technique become very important tools for the facilitator.

In order for the group to function effectively, it requires a good facilitator to provide a sense of order. This used to be the tribal Chief or Medicine Person. Now it might be called a clerk, chairperson, facilitator, leader, or convener. Some people have referred to this method as "the tyranny of the minority," but that is inaccurate since everyone "at the end of the day" is willing to go along with whatever resolution decision becomes apparent.

There are times when this model simply will not work, when there is a single hold-out. For that reason, an alternative model has been developed which is realistically called **Consensus Minus One**, and signifies that the decision is too important to allow a single entity to hold up everyone forever. Since consensus can take a long time and require much patience, many of us claim we do not have the patience or the inclination to sit in meetings "forever." It's a trade-off, and illustrates the ways different people/groups might choose to operate about decision-making.

Another "takes longer than usual" model is one recently developed by Yankelovich. It is called **Coming to Public Judgment**. It depends on working through an issue, sticking with it long enough to: identify alternative choices, clarify the consequences of those choices, classify them on the basis of different information and analyses, and convey evidence that, after all this effort, the group's decision and efforts will really make a difference, one that will count positively for something that the group holds to be important.

There are seven basic steps. It begins with a group awareness of an issue, and proceeds to a developed sense of urgency about it. Coincident with this feeling of urgency is a start to discover ways to deal with the issue (the

search for alternatives). As more people search for solutions, more time is spent, more effort is made. This produces a resistance to facing the costs of further involvement: the time, effort, and personal value trade-offs. It produces wishful thinking about what might be "after this is all over." At this stage, much group maintenance is needed, and a maximum of group action skills are needed if the group is to stick together. The fifth step is analysis of the options. This leads to people finally taking a stand intellectually and morally. They become convinced that their position is the "right" one and, lastly, a judgment is made about an alternative that becomes either the guide to a vote, or the public policy recommendation itself.

This method takes time although it can be hastened considerably if the group can be persuaded that the urgency is here and now. Intensity of effort can breed the "resistance and wishful thinking" step. It provides a reality check to see if your group has evolved into this mode of action and reaction. If so, then you can become aware of where it is in the group decision-making process, no matter what model you started with--here is where you might be--and act accordingly: either go with the flow of it under more aware terms, change it if you want to and can, or let the group know that they have now shifted gears, and that here is where they are. At that point, the group may decide to do something else, and you, as educational facilitator have an opportunity to lead or follow them as Gandhi did.

The third model in this third group is called the **Modified Delphi Approach**. It is used once the issue has been identified. Its use can result in a decision being made in one meeting, or the process can be stretched out over several months. There are six basic steps in it that can be iterated over and over again until the group is satisfied with the results.

The six steps include: (1) participants list anything that comes to mind about the issue. This part is different from any of the foregoing in that it requires each participant to write their "answers" to a question, not just talk about them. Again, however, these thoughts should not be limited to notions of fact, should not be justified, and can involve ideas, concerns, opinions, beliefs, and values about the issue. (2) Once written, they are all listed for the whole group to see. (3) The group then divides the list into categories which the group picks as being reasonable. (4) The results are then combined and ranked so that there has been a massive shuffling and reshuffling of the original listing. (5) Discussion about the rankings and individual notions is then done with possible additional reshuffling and re categorization. (6) A final decision is made regarding the final listing with the decisions usually made by consensus at that point.

The above process can be repeated after a time lapse of some agreed upon period. It can also take place immediately since people may feel they are well enough informed about the issue now to have some new ideas they want to insert into the original listing. New knowledge is a powerful force, and brings a different sense of urgency, capability, and desire to do something with it.

Mediation has long been used as a practical problem-solving method. Essentially, this is where disputing parties come together voluntarily in a neutral or non-judicial setting and attempt to reconcile their differences. A trained facilitator (mediator) is used. The mediator him/herself has no decision-making power. The conflicting parties are entirely responsible for any resolution which occurs.

The focus is on the future, and on the participant's behavior to make it better. Admitting that the past is past, the effort is spent on what will happen

rather than playing detective about perceived past rights and wrongs. They really are irrelevant if they can be hurdled, and a new future really sought. This is up to the participants to decide aided by the skills of the mediator.

There are two phases to the process: (1) Differentiation, in which the parties describe the issues that divide them, vent feelings, and agree that these are, indeed, the obstacles to agreement; (2) Integration, where the parties acknowledge commonalities, set goals to achieve and/or some other kind of interdependence, and voice positive feelings about what might happen. Both phases have to be experienced for resolution and for control (reduction) of the problem source.

The content side of mediation has to do with things, tools, bargaining, and problem-solving. The process side of mediation has to do with feelings, restructuring perceptions, and increasing effective communication. Subjects that cannot be mediated include: unmanageable behavior, unrestrained violence, beliefs, values, substance abuse issues, and power issues. You can see why: mostly the people involved really do not want interference with what it is they are set to do, thanks very much. Forget it, and you, and the process! Time to move on.

Mediation has many techniques that can be applied to many situations. These are not donned easily like a hat or some shoes. They take time and effort to learn. And many of them are really worth learning. What do they include? Here are some: really active listening, asking core questions, communication skills when people want to cooperate but can't find the right words, increasing understanding, re-stating what you heard to provide a credible source of feedback, maintaining eye contact (I am here, where are you?), paraphrasing a relatively long discussion, clarifying statements without judgment, keeping neutral no matter how you feel as a person,

acting as an "agent of reality," being able to be spontaneous, being able to use separate caucus sessions while maintaining neutrality and credibility. Easy? Try it sometime.

There are usually six steps in a mediation process: (1) Introduction--this is where the mediator, or team, makes an opening statement, explains procedures, groundrules and time constraints; (2) Uninterrupted time--where each party states how they see the situation, where issues are assessed, venting is allowed, and an effort made to find commonalities; (3) The Exchange: develop an understanding--this is where the mediator tries to put each party in the other party's shoes, issue by issue. The purpose here is to get each party to see and feel the legitimacy of the other party's point of view; (4) Building the agreement--the moderator will get each party to commit to sharing responsibility for the mutual agreement. Blame is minimized, no one is ridiculed, both are equally responsible for success. Simply put, "it takes two to tango;" (5) Putting the agreement into writing--both sides have tasks to do, when, who, where, how? (6) Time for a closing statement--the mediator discusses the progress made, the issues, the resolution, and any possible need for follow-up. It is a positive experience.

Note that the mediator has brought the two (or more) parties together to get them to make a decision about how to resolve the issue. S/he has not done anything except to facilitate the others into making a decision. The next two models: **Negotiation** and **Arbitration** put the negotiator and the arbitrator into the position of making the actual decision. In effect, control is taken away from the group that wants resolution, and sole reliance for the outcome is given to the person brought in to reconcile the apparent unresolvable differences. This also happens when a lawsuit is brought. Both sides give control away to an unknown judge and jury. Even with a clear

appeals system, control is still lost. Yet many people do not understand this about negotiation, arbitration, and resort to the "law:" the group(s) resorting to these models of problem resolution lose any control they might have over the outcome, and rely entirely upon unknown forces for which they usually have to pay a great deal of money.

Negotiation occurs when a negotiator is brought into the fray and helps with value judgments to bring parties together for an agreement. The negotiator can help clarify both content and process perceptions. The negotiator confers with each person (party) in order to reach a resolution. The meetings can be held together or in separate rooms or places.

The negotiator generally goes through five steps: (1) S/he tries to separate the people from the problem. (2) S/he tries to focus on interests not positions; and tries to get the participants to talk through their feelings and emotions about the issue. (3) S/he gets the groups, and her/himself, to invent alternatives for a win-win work together resolution situation. (4) A significant attempt is made to be objective and seek objective criteria from each participant to decide the "best" path for resolution. (5) The negotiator makes a decision based on the final position of the participants. S/he has tried to discard the set positions of each, moving them from polar positions to a central place of resolution. In any case, the negotiator determines for her/himself what seems best and tries to move the people toward that position--at the same time trying to be neutral and objective in her/his manner and style.

In Arbitration there are no holds barred. The arbitrator is brought in to observe the situation, absorb relevant written materials, hear the issue from each participant, and render a judgment about the resolution of the issue within a given period of time. There is no fuss or muss. The arbitrator is

brought in because the parties have previously agreed that this will happen in the case of seemingly unresolvable issues, or the law specifies that this be done (National Labor Relations Board protocol), and the matter is to be settled by definition.

In the spectrum of what we have offered here, arbitration seems a last resort. Personal/organizational control is lost. However, the issue is at least specified, clarified, and the polar positions about it are defined. The cost is great. One side will "lose." Is it worth it to engage in, or is there a cheaper more constructive way to conduct one's business? Again, you be the judge--and jury if you will.

MISCELLANEOUS MODELS

There are many models that perhaps can't be placed neatly into any of the foregoing camps. Don't worry about it. Use your own head, common sense and knowledge and put them anywhere you'd like. Placing them somewhere, anywhere, will make you think about them, dissect them, and make yourself work through the educational aspects of each one.

Two examples are offered here. One is the **Citizen Politics** (which comes from the University of Minnesota's Project Public Life), and the other is **Public Dispute Resolution** (an alternative to courtroom action). **Citizen Politics** is a blend of the stakeholder/citizen's forum model. Its goal is to bring the public back into politics, to increase the operational concepts of Jeffersonian democracy.

The steps in the **Citizen Politics** model are: (1) to bring the public together in a group. The public is interpreted as self-interested. This can be public or private groups. It does not connote being selfish as much as being

interested from a particular point of view. (2) Diversity is acknowledged and different needs are expressed, different wants, and different values emerge. Legitimacy of these differences is declared and legitimized. (3) A rationale for becoming involved is offered to the individual or a group. (4) Power to do something is discussed, building coalitions and other relationships is brought to the fore. Empowerment is critical to accept. (5) Now the group is ready to take on an issue exploration if they so choose.

The other example is Public Dispute Resolution. This model represents one step short of going to court and losing complete control of whatever outcome may result. It has three main phases: (1) A pre-negotiation phase: the person brought in to negotiate the issue resolution gets agreement on terms for participation by the parties involved, identifies the issues to be discussed, gets agreement on the data/information needed and desired, and gets the participants to agree that they have authority to make a binding decision (i.e., no one is sitting in for anyone else and therefore has to run out of the room, check with a higher power, and then tip-toe back into the meeting prepared to decide or delay). (2) The negotiation phase: where interest-based declarations, not position statements, are used. The aim is to satisfy the interests, and combine all the interests so that they are all included in the resolution. (3) The post-negotiation phase: In this phase the resolution is implemented, monitored, and re negotiations are entered into if something necessitates it.

COMMENTS

There is no magic in any of the above models or techniques. All represent ways to tackle problems and get to a some point of resolution. They

range the authority spectrum, and the democratic spectrum. They go from giving power to a single person in a group (as in consensus: to hold or withhold sanction) to being both the judge and jury (arbitration). They represent a cafeteria of opportunity. And never believe that one model is inherently better than another. It all depends upon the situation or issue, the people who are or might become involved, and you who have to make up your mind about becoming involved as an educator.

PIE is here to stay. It will become a larger entity as time moves on, as successes using some of these models are heard about, and as you watch your colleagues reach for the brass ring of opportunity. However, you will also hear of people getting burned by the process. Before you believe it entirely, check it out for yourself. Were they well trained? Did they violate some of the cardinal neutrality signals? Were they given sincere cooperation, or did someone hold back a handful of aces to play at the last minute to undermine the whole process? There are a host of reality checks you or anyone else getting into this educational arena have to make. It's only a matter of learning, keeping your ears and eyes open--and being open minded yourself.

As a field of educational endeavor, it is intellectually challenging to say the least. It will teach you more about people and how they operate than anything else you might imagine. It is not for everyone, yet for those who do want to try it, it will be well worth the experience.