

RE-INTEGRATIVE SHAPING: PRACTICAL WORKSHOP TECHNIQUES FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE & DEVELOPMENT

Dr Stephen Mugford, Managing Director, QQSR, formerly Reader in Sociology, Faculty of Arts.

This seminar/workshop examines and demonstrates practical techniques for bringing about organisational change and development (OCD). The central argument is that in 'shaping' organisations in an OCD process, the central logic shares much with the practice of re-integrative shaming—hence the wordplay in the title.

It is partly a conventional seminar and partly a workshop, since as far as possible some of the practical techniques that are discussed are also used to involve the 'audience'.

There is a large and growing literature on OCD and how to bring it about, but much of it is written as if the process of change can be encompassed by discourses and practices that are objective, cognitive and 'rational'. Indeed, resistance to change is often seen as an irrational problem to be overcome.

In reality, OCD takes place in contexts of cross cutting interests and allegiances, where co-workers have numerous 'emotional' commitments to existing work practices and strong feelings about one another. Commonly, poor management and the unreflective use of rank and authority to seek compliance ahead of commitment, combined with the inertia of habit, conspire to render most change efforts misdirected and ineffective. As an example of this, the process of planning discussion frequently bogs down in sectoral disputes and *ad hominem* arguments, divergent thinking is stifled and options prematurely converge on sub-optimal choices.

Drawing on a variety of literatures and upon active involvement in change programs with organisations as diverse as a residential drug treatment centre and the RAAF, the seminar discusses core issues about how to create constructive dialogues, produce democratic participation and reduce unnecessary conflict.