

**Ekelund, Bjørn Z.**

## **Social construction of interpersonal categories**

**- Workshop 45 mins -**

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### **Abstract**

Diversity Icebreaker (DI) is a psychological test of personality and preferences for communication and thinking styles (Ekelund & Langvik, 2008). DI was developed in 1998 following the author's extensive experience in using TMS between 1992 and 1997. The use of the DI in team role's analysis and training represents a stronger focus on involvement, language and collective reflection than is possible when using the TMS. This has both theoretical and practical implications. Practically, DI, when used in seminars, has multiple functions including: increased self-understanding, communication training, creating a psychological safe climate for dialogue and learning, demonstrating social dynamics, managing diversity and collective reflection. Moreover, cultural differences in responses have been documented in different countries, especially in relation to concepts of cultural dimensions, which also suggests important implications for international teams' work and performance. Theoretically, I point at how this constitutes a radical and post post-modern alternative concept to instruments like TMS and MBTI. When using DI open and safe communication on diverse perspectives in a collective reflection mode is more important than precise understanding of individual psychological values or traits. Therefore, when used in seminars, the accompanying process promotes collective learning and empowerment. Finally, from a political and language power perspective, participants are trained and encouraged to take control of the power to define their world. This position combines meta-cognitive practice of Cultural Intelligence at the same time as it promotes ethically responsible behaviour where modern descriptions or post-modern language games otherwise might rule.

### **Learning outcomes for participants**

- Experience Diversity Icebreaker as a post post-modern alternative to TMS that is easy to easy to use, easy to understand and scientifically well documented.
- See how processes can be set up to socially construct diversity concepts.
- Get ideas on how such a concept can be applied in international teams and culturally diverse organizations.

### **Profile**

Norwegian business consultant. Psychologist (1983), Univ. of Oslo, Norway, MBA (1997), Henley Management College, London, UK. Last year he started preparing PhD/Dr Philos in International Management based upon consultation work with clients. He has been managing director of small consultant organisations since 1987, at the same time doing extensively consultative work around team analysis, OD, cultural change and strategic coaching. Since 1993 he has been prime owner and managing director of Human Factors AS in Norway. He has in all years worked close with academic and professional institutions in order to leverage quality of own consultancy and increase practical relevance of academic knowledge. In his consultation business he has used lots of academic measurements/concepts and in that way created a shared platform for academics and practitioners to create knowledge. At the same time he has been lecturing at management schools in international management and knowledge management. He has been leading professional bodies in organisational psychology in Scandinavian, and for this reason has an extensive network among consultants in these countries. He has published articles, books and presented his work and views of the field in different international conferences, worked with cross-cultural issues since early 90-ies and certified more than 700 consultants in use of different psychological tests used for analysis and development. He has been member of Academy of Management since early 90-ies, and regularly follows the work of Management Consultation Division. He has presented and taken part in different MC programs both in US and Europe. Among customers he is known as a dedicated professional with a passion for working with customer's challenges from their perspective. His publications include "Diversity Icebreaker. How to manage diversity processes", "Diversity Icebreaker in cross-cultural training", "Team development for teachers in school Socialdemocratic leadership; team, leadership and projects".