

Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural sensitivity as key moderating in transforming organisations

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“All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are movable, and those that move”

Old Arab Saying

The complexity of the external environment and the challenges that leadership faces today can overwhelm any CEO or strategist or organisational development consultant. Companies must cope with multiple dimensions of change involving regulation, technology, new competitors and business models, market pressures and constantly changing customer demands. The future workplace will become increasingly more diverse as globalisation increases and equal employment practices are implemented globally (Nel, 2003). The interface among activities of design, production and distribution requires highly diverse workplaces. Globalisation implies that interactions between professions and skill-sets from different parts of the developed and less developed world will occur (De Vries, 2001). This implies that people from all different backgrounds and cultures will need to interact with one another as they are drawn together by nature of the workplace globalisation. The talents and attributes of people from different backgrounds and heritages therefore would need to be fully valued, utilised and developed.

Tomorrow's world will be different from today's reality, and therefore new organisational and individual strategies and approaches will be required to deal with this accelerated change. The ability of an individual, a team and ultimately an organisation to respond quickly to this changing external reality will be the differentiating factor in sustainable organisational transformation.

It is assumed that organisations are social systems. Therefore, in order to understand how decisions are made and strategies implemented in an organisation, one would need to acknowledge and understand how members employed in the organisation view the system and what their worldviews are. A system of shared meanings, or culture, guides the way in which organisations act and how individuals view and interpret the corporate world. Systems-thinking, which describes the interactional causal impact of organisational culture and climate, focuses on paradox theory, complexity theory, chaos theory and self-organising theory (Senge, 2001). The ability to apply systems-thinking skills in order to deal with the complexity of shared meaning becomes increasingly important for leadership in the new world of work.

The changing demographic characteristics of the workforce present both challenges and opportunities to individuals and the organisation of which they are part. People previously excluded from employment are increasingly given the opportunity to develop their talents and realise their potential. Organisations can benefit from this diversity, since a larger selection pool of talent is available (LeBaron, 2005). Diversity of perspectives and ideas on the one hand may lead to innovation and creativity. On the other hand, diversity may also create negative effects. To not “fit” into the organisational culture can alienate employees, decrease their motivation and negatively affect their overall attitude towards the organisation. The ability of leadership to enhance the benefits of diversity while reducing the negative impacts will depend largely on their understanding of the dynamics of organisational diversity (Viljoen, 2008). World events like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 bring the complexity of diversity to the public eye – where do the beliefs and convictions of one culture outweigh that of another and how do we deal with the challenges that this poses? Organisations, in this respect, are also forced to explore the vast impact that diversity issues have on their ability to sustain performance.

Diversity as a concept is dynamic. It can be discussed in different ways and takes on different meanings in different arenas. In literature study diversity is explored from

societal, organisational, group and individual levels. The impact of leadership style on culture and climate is acknowledged (Schutte, 2003). These topics were addressed in the conceptual framework provided by systems-thinking and the dynamics of the new world of work. Although this argument may seem ambitious, it is important as to create understanding of the complexities in terms of differences as they manifest in organisational life.

It is argued in the presentation that any strategic effort to change the fundamental functioning of an organisation will result in a climate change as people must behave differently or new mental models should be adapted. Managing diversity in organisations is much more than merely training and awareness sessions. It is of strategic importance to ensure that the benefits of diverse viewpoints and stakeholders are leveraged. The review of transformational and diversity literature has led the presenter to the conclusion that it becomes critical to identify the real and actual benefits that will accrue to an organisation by adopting approaches of addressing issues surrounding diversity systemically. Managing diversity offers great potential for organisations in enabling them to utilise their employees effectively. There needs, however, to be a clear vision and strategy underlying the efforts, with a starting point and a re-evaluation point, in order to strategically manage differences in any environment. A climate of inclusivity in which differences are not only allowed, but valued and promoted, becomes critical.

One way of dealing with organisational transformation is to construct models of the issues at stake. Another approach is to systematically build the capabilities and competencies in the organisation needed to compete in the world tomorrow (Viljoen, 2008). Corporate governance enforces ethical leadership behaviour by holding leaders accountable for certain actions. In this respect, an awareness of both the internal and external environments becomes critical. Leaders have to act with utmost importance, engaging closely with employees, customers and other key stakeholders and communicate with radical openness and truth, consistently.

All transformational strategies have one thing in common – namely the change management and the impact on behaviour. The human reaction towards change becomes relevant to corporate leaders. Ensuring optimisation during transformational efforts can be a distinguishing factor for competitive organisations. Inclusivity as transformational methodology can ensure sustainable transformation. Inclusivity implies that organisational development models and strategies presented are worked, understood and translated into different spheres of consciousness in the organisation and systemically linked to and supported by organisational processes, procedures and practices.

Culture, climate, leadership and change management are intertwined and cannot be separated. Although the topics are discussed separately in this presentation, the boundaries between the topics are blurred, and it is almost impossible to discuss each topic in isolation.

The ability to deal with environmental demands, otherwise known as emotional intelligence as defined by Bar-On (2005), is critical for any organisation that wants to survive and compete in today's turbulent environment. Development thereof is important not only at an individual level, but also at a collective level, where it becomes an organisational capability that can become a distinctive advantage if optimised and encouraged. Effort is made to identify leadership skills needed in the new world of work.

Society has a growing awareness that spiritual, ethical and ecological dimensions of life are important. It is becoming clear that none of us can go at it alone in this vulnerable and interconnected world. All of us need to find the way to the future, which will enable us to use the dilemmas and diversity in our midst in order to co-create more creative, holistic and wiser responses to the challenges we face.

Different models of leadership that have been developed over the years were found. Concepts such as transformational, servant and authentic leadership were presented. Each theory provided a framework to contribute to understanding of the world and

behaviour of people within it. Most of these models originated from Western thought. Each concept had its own characteristic and identified leadership skills needed. The underlying theme of the most recent models was to be inspirational and authentic. Although similar views, as presented by African leadership thought, were found in academic literature (e.g. cultural intelligence), it is not labelled as such, especially in the international context. The acknowledgement of the contribution of African leadership thought is sadly lacking in the global academic community. The voice of African leadership is thus not acknowledged. We, the leaders of Africa, should not allow that the intangible leadership philosophy be suppressed, manipulated, taken away or be cannibalised. This happened for centuries to tangible resources leaving Africa with poverty, suppression and disillusionment. African leadership should claim its rightful place in global leadership thought and philosophy.

The presenter aimed at identifying common human problems which are shared by all human groups but which are mastered in different ways. Each person has an individual profile of characteristics, abilities and challenges that result from learning and growth.. Stereotypes, mental models and worldviews are all ways of making sense out of non-sense in the external world. Emotional intelligence skill assist leaders to optimise gifts presented from different more stable structures such as personality and world view (Viljoen, 2008). These mechanisms influence the function of integrating perceived and real issues from the external world. However, it happens on different levels of abstraction, preference, intelligence and skill and is highly influenced by for example culture, education, society norms and practices and religion. So for example, female leaders may use the ascribed roles and behaviours placed on them by society, namely to be caring and approachable, in order to be more participative and collaborative.

The concept of **diversity of thought** was introduced. By studying any aspect of the psyche in isolation the dynamic within and with relation to other variables are excluded (thus not an inclusive approach). It is, however, sometimes important to acknowledge all the complex and causal relationships and focus on a specific part as insights into that isolated area can lead to an enhanced understanding of the whole.

Diversity of thought has the innate potential to be even more strenuous and complex than other visible diversity factors such as race and gender. Diversity of thought exists because of differences in personality preferences, skills, different levels on different type of intelligences, different defence mechanisms, different complexes, different perceived ways of dealing with issues effectively (as influenced by society, experience, education, exposure and religion) , different perceiving and sensing functions, different ego states,, different values, different cognitive processes, different levels of evolution of thought (memes) and different levels of abstraction (complexity handling ability). Different levels of awareness exist and every person possesses developing complex levels of consciousness. In South Africa major work should happen to normalise the power imbalances and *apartheid* hurts and anger so that the true work, namely that of valuing diversity of thought can happen. Or will the work of normalising differences already be the work of valuing diversity of thought?

An attempt is made to enrich the understanding of leadership theory from a cultural perspective. Intercultural work is simultaneously a complex phenomenon and a profoundly humane exercise. Leadership starts from self-leadership, self-discovery and culminates in the successful leading of others. The essential nature of leadership is that of a catalyst for change. This applies for him or herself, the group or team in which he or she operates, the organisation and ultimately his or society and the society in relation to other worlds. Human beings actively build or make meaning out of their experiences. Everybody therefore actively creates his or her own psychological realities in the context of relationships with others.

Kaufman explained that by *“viewing social change through the lens of individual experience, we are able to move away from infinite generalizations and abstractions and into the realm of individual constructions of meaning. Through the examination of Individual's lives, we gain access both to multi-faceted meanings of the self-within-the culture and to a richer more detailed portrait of the culture which contributes to and is constituted by those meanings”*.

Although the concept of inclusion could be found in fields of study like educational psychology, gender studies and in the context of diversity, the concept of Inclusivity could only be found in a few academic publications and then in the context of diversity or organisational climate. The presenter argues that Inclusivity is much more an approach towards diversity. Inclusivity is *“a radical organisational transformational methodology which aligns the doing and the being side of the organisation around commonly defined principles and values, co-created by all. It is a systemic approach that focuses on underlying beliefs and assumptions and challenges patterns in the individual group and organisational psyche to spend energy and engage in a sustainable, inclusive manner with the purpose to achieve shared consciousness.”*

Diverse perspectives are needed to comprehend the complex dynamics involved in diversity and culture in the workplace. A one-sided approach towards a holistic, multifaceted topic such as the one identified as the research topic, will only succeed to a limited scope. A holistic integration of different views, different schools of thought and different units of analysis is needed. Integration of opposites in the individual psyche, as well as in the external world, is needed - as similar thoughts of integration and wholeness were documented by Jung as early as 1919 (Jung, 1955).

Inclusivity implies the Inclusion of differences. The quest to understand differences asks transition for a movement from the visible realm of behaviour to the unconscious level and the symbolic. In diversity issues, there is much more under the surface than above it. LeBaron (2005) said that much more is being sensed, felt and intuited than what can be verbalised, and therefore the ability to bridge differences will change any ambiguity. The ice-berg metaphor (yet again) comes to mind.

Inclusivity would imply that all the different voices are heard in the organisation – different voices due to different race, gender, personality type, nationality, spirituality, exposure, education, worldview and all the other diversity factors explored in this thesis. People only voice their opinions if the environment is conducive for allowing mistakes

and vulnerability and no blaming or other power games take place (Covey, 2004, Schutte, 2006). If a person feels threatened, defence mechanisms kick into place, infighting, pairing, flight and flight behaviour take place (Cilliers, 1999). One cannot make a mistake out of fear, and therefore someone else is blamed. A person cannot fight the internal and the external world together (Jung, 1953). If energy is focused on self-preservation, it cannot be spent on performance, customer service, safe behaviour and innovation and creativity. Personal dynamics can disable a person to take up authority and claim his/her space (Cilliers, 1999). However, if the climate is conducive and diversity appreciated and valued, the gift of the individual psyche can materialise to the benefit of the individual, team and organisation. The paradoxical nature of Inclusivity becomes clear. In order to enhance the engagement of individuals in organisations, involvement in the doing (strategy – the what) should happen while simultaneously congruency exists around the being (values – the how).

The heart of an organisation is its members, who should work effectively together to ensure organisational productivity (Covey, 2004). Chung (1997) explained that ethnicity influences the psychological climate in an organisation, and if members do not perceive their relationships in similar ways, there is potential for mistrust and disrespect between different groups. This, for example, manifests in different social events for different groupings. As there will always be diversity in organisations this challenge will always present itself to leadership. Organisational Change and Development work should be done to minimise this risk. The more the cultural aspects of an organisation are articulated to employees, the more cohesive and stable the collective behaviours of the workers will be (Gershon, Stone, Bakken & Larson, 2004). The opposite also applies, namely if aspects of the culture are ill-defined, shifting, not reinforced, not communicated and/or not supported, both the employees' collective perceptions and their behaviour will be inconsistent. Gershon et al (2004) explained the importance of alignment between individual values and beliefs with that of the organisation.

In recent years, a number of studies emerged from the Social Identification Theory (SIT) literature (Brown , Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams, 1986; Hennessy & West, 1999;

Hinkle, Taylor & Fox-Cardomone, 1989 and van Knippenberg, 2000), as well as the other contemporary organisational literature (Russo, 1998; Testa, 2001), which examine the way in which organisational behavior especially identification, which translates into engagement were published. Grice, Paulson and Jones (2002: 24) described the concept of identification congruence and cited Gallois, Thluchowska and Callan who stated that *“two targets of identification are likely to be compatible when the core values associated with each are similar, and when categorisation of the self in terms of one group does not preclude categorisation of the self in terms of the other group”* Gallois, Thluchowska and Callan (2001) further examined how membership in multiple organisational groups influences individual acceptance of organisational change. The results of the study indicated that employees who exhibited a high degree of compatibility between multiple identification targets that were nested in the organisational hierarchy, were most open to the changes and assessed the change most positively. Kaplan and Norton (2006) and Heroldt, Ungerer & Pretorius (2000) described the importance of translating strategy and ensuring identification with organisational strategy. Van Tonder (2004) stated that creating individual, group and organisational identities are critical in building change resilience in organisations.

The researcher is of the view that through a process of Inclusivity everyone in the organisation can get the opportunity to align their individual values and performance to that of the organisation. Congruence on **“the doing”** in organisations is critical and can be achieved through a process of radical Organisational Change and Development called Inclusivity.

The idea that human beings are defined and constituted by their narratives has come to dominate vast regions of the human sciences – in psychology, sociology, political theory, literary studies, religious studies and psychotherapy (Strawson, 2004). Everybody has a story to tell. Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005) describe it as “an art of possibility”. By implication, everybody can create his/her own outcome. Brown et al (2005) passionately argued for the sharing of and listening to people’s stories and stated that it should not be about being the most powerful. Rather everyone else should

be made more powerful. Brown et al (2005) explained that there is a way to ensure that change in organisations is more effective, efficient and humane. It involves approaching things in a collaborative and non-adversarial (read inclusive) way. They believed so much in this approach that they argued that it works even in the difficulty of downsizing, distrust and competition. The post-modern leader must create an empowering environment of openness and trust in which employees are enabled to achieve organisational goals in a self-directed manner. Less Organisational Change and Development and manipulation of employees and more respect for the potential of spiritual beings are required (Denton & Bower, 2003). Congruence on “**the being**” in organisations is critical and can be achieved through Inclusivity.

Individual behavior is influence by a person’s self-view and appraisals of others with whom they interact (Polzer, Milton and Swann, 2003). Therefore, interaction between individual group members will unfold smoothly as long as there is mutual understanding of differences. This interpersonal understanding has its origin in the need for certainty, coherence and predictability. Polzen, Milton and Swann (2003) stated that in facilitating the harmonious interaction between individuals with substantial differences, congruence will liberate diverse members to contribute fully to their group. As a result, interpersonal congruence becomes a mechanism through which groups can fully leverage on diversity.

In order to promote Inclusion, leadership often has to help employees overcome their natural inclinations. Faqua and Newman (2002) warned against the perception of exclusion in dysfunctional organisations where Inclusion can be interpreted by the organisation and exclusion can be viewed as a safety or controlling strategy. The view is raised that these strategies will only serve to maintain existing dysfunctional behaviour. Katz and Miller (2003) prompted managers to undertake an organisational assessment and to provide data feedback.

Feedback from a climate study, for example the Benchmark of Engagement Quotient, can be translated to all the people in the organisation by means of appreciative inquiry

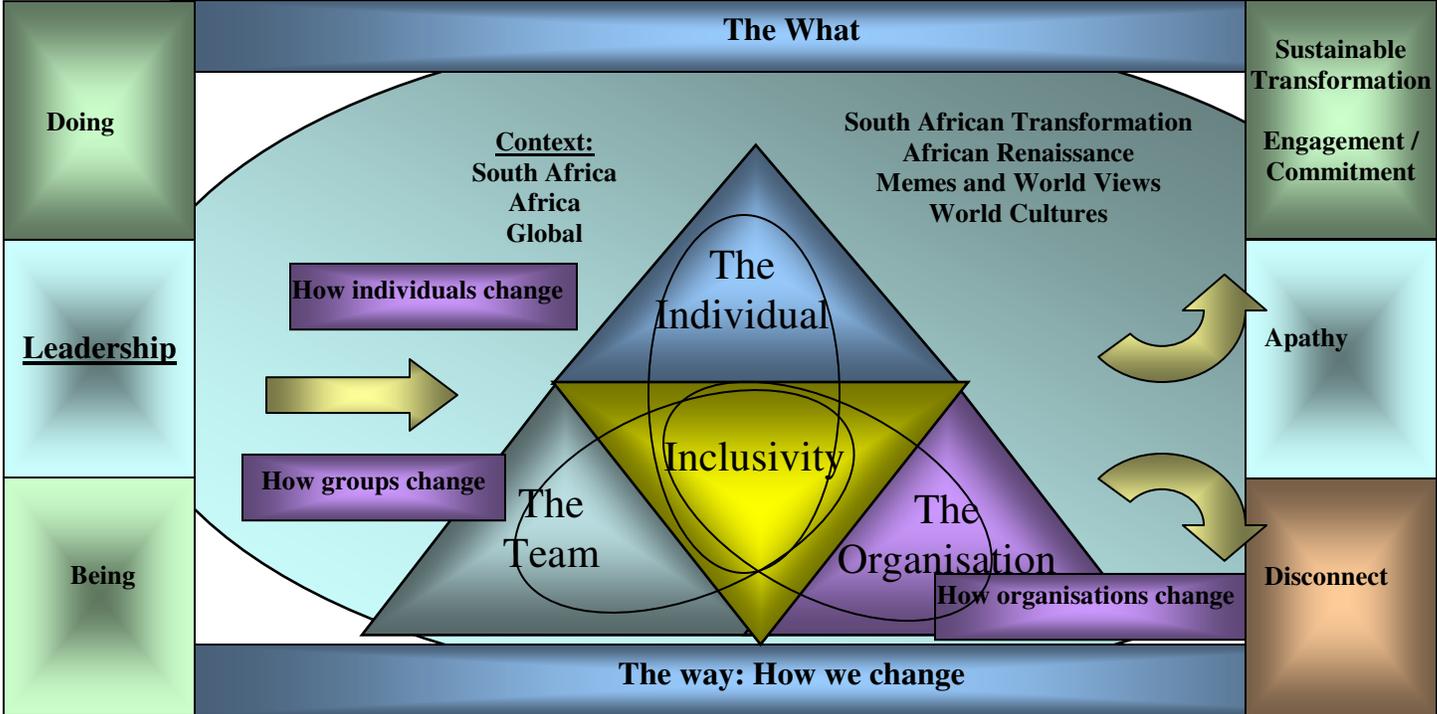
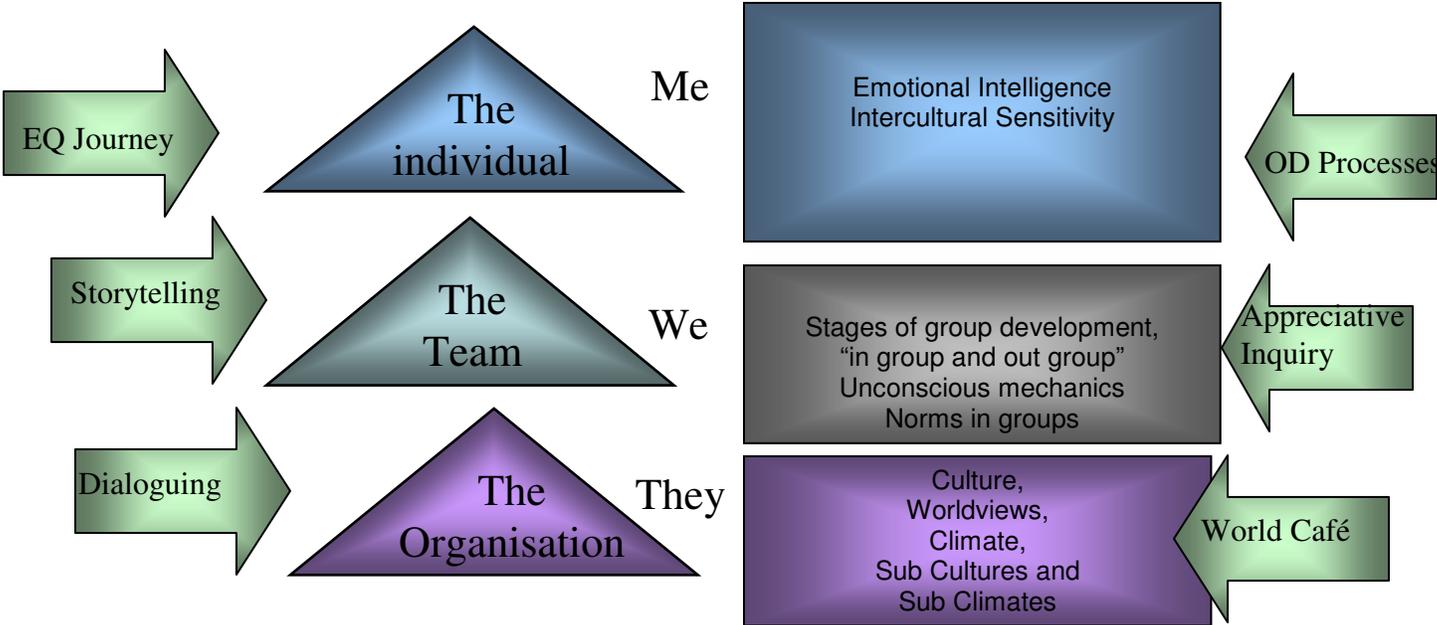
or industrial theatre, to ensure that people in the organisation feel included – that their voices are being heard. A pre-measure before a transformational intervention and a post-measure a few months later can provide solid business evidence for the degree to which a climate of Inclusivity has emerged. Through the implementation of various diversity programmes, Organisational Change and Development interventions and strategies, individual and group awareness can be enhanced and organisational assumptions and common beliefs reprogrammed. By linking and aligning the initiative to the strategic work of the organisation, diversity and Inclusion can become a way of doing business (Katz & Miller, 2003).

For the purpose of this paper and experiential workshop, the **operational definition of Inclusivity** is:

“A radical organisational transformational methodology which aligns the doing and the being side of the organisation around commonly defined principles and values, co-created by all. It is a systemic approach that focuses on underlying beliefs and assumptions and challenges patterns in the individual, group and organisational psyche to spend energy and engage in a sustainable, inclusive manner with the purpose to achieve shared consciousness.”

The process can be systemically explained by the following framework:

Sustainability through Inclusivity and OD interventions on all dimensions



Inclusivity unleashes **energy in a system** to perform. Energy according to science laws can be classified as positive, neutral or negative. Einstein taught us that energy cannot be destroyed, however, through friction it can become less – the principle of entropy. Energy can however be transformed from one form to another (Oxtoby & Nachtrieb, 1996). Emotions can be described as forms of energy (Middelton-Moz, 2000). All the emotions that characterize human reactions to change, are also forms of energy in the individual psyche. These emotions should not be suppressed but made conscious in order to deal with them. Collectively speaking, emotions within the unconscious of the organisational psyche should be acknowledged and dealt with, as it cannot be destroyed and will manifest in destructive, dysfunctional behaviours if being suppressed and not addressed.

In a climate of inclusivity, the energy in the system can be perceived as positive. Everybody is involved and shares their different viewpoints, nonperformance is not tolerated and everyone takes up personal authority. High levels of support, trust and respect are experienced. Leadership can be humane and vulnerable as mistakes can be shared and dealt with quickly. The energy in the system is in a virtuous cycle and all the emotions mentioned here reinforce again the climate of inclusivity.

In a system where the energy to perform is negative, a vicious cycle exists. People do not feel trusted, supported and respected. Therefore individual defense mechanisms are in place and group dynamics become destructive. In fighting happens, people withdraw and power plays and political gamesmanship is at the order of the day. Personal emotions can not be shared without penalty and nobody will admit to mistakes as everyone covers their own back. The blaming game will be alive and well. Jung (1953) said that a person fights either the internal or the external world at a time – not both worlds together. If a person thus focuses internally in order to cope, the external work is being neglected. This will manifest in lower levels of customer service and deterioration in the quality of work. Leaders should do everything in their power to shorten the period of time that an individual spends energy to self-preserve or adapt. This individual change process can be accelerated by building emotional resilience,

improving reality testing and influence current mental models. Methodologies that can be applied to build change resilience include storytelling, dialoguing and world café techniques.

If a system is neutral, it is indifferent – either does not care anymore, could not care less or have tried to often without any reaction to implement change. Voices are not brought to the organisational table and people just do enough to survive.

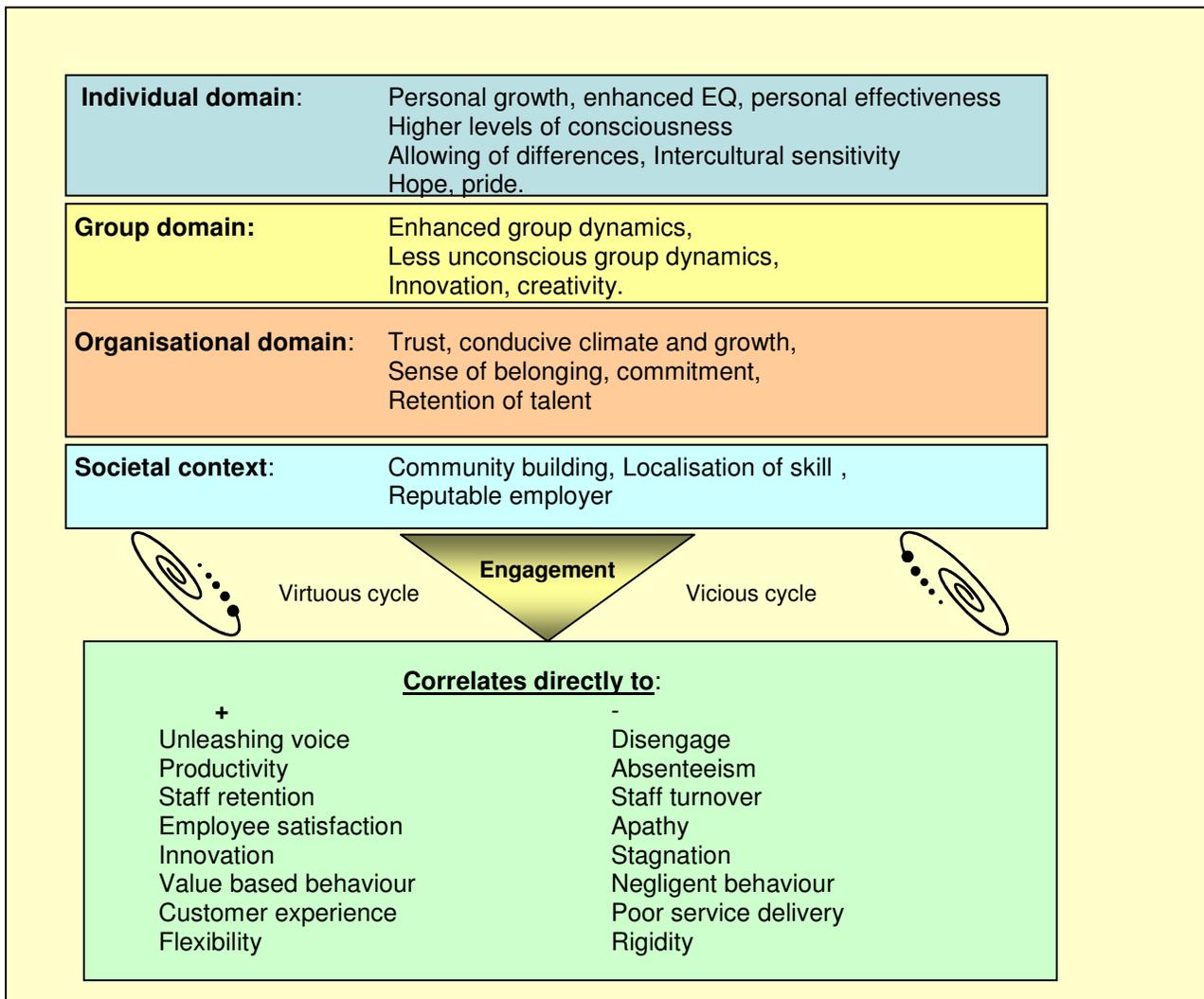
A study on sustainable organisational transformation through inclusivity made it clear that the following may be classified as prerequisites for Inclusivity (Viljoen, 2008):

- Strong, committed leadership from the top;
- Co-creation of strategies and action plans;
- Translation of both the Doing and the Being;
- Individual accountability through clearly contracted performance measures linked to strategy and rigorous performance management;
- Building the Emotional Intelligence of leadership (leadership development);
- Allowing and encouraging of diversity of thought;
- Intercultural sensitivity and
- The realisation that Inclusivity is a radical organisational transformational process.

It is clear that emotional intelligence development and intercultural sensitivity are critical in the creation of a culture of Inclusivity.

As was seen in the case organisation there are benefits to Inclusivity in respect of all the different domains. All these benefits lead systemically either to engagement or to the unleashing of voice. Figure 2 lists the different benefits per domain.

Figure 2 Benefits of Inclusivity



There are direct correlations between engagement and various financial and other variables. The level of engagement may either grow or decline, and either a virtuous or a vicious cycle will emerge accordingly. It is the task of leadership in the new world of work to **rewire or reengineer the systemic organisational dynamics into a virtuous, reinforcing causal loop/cycle in order to unleash the gifts/benefits on the individual, the group and the organisational level.** It thus makes sense to create Inclusivity within an organisation as it results in the creation of a change resilient sustainable business.

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