

Action Learning to support Organisational Change in Rural Businesses

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Wyn Owen



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Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig:
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Agrisgôp

- Management Development programme for farming businesses in Wales – established 2003
 - Develop Management capabilities resulting in more viable and sustainable businesses
 - Last programme: Sep 2011 – April 2015
 - Over 1000 beneficiaries
 - 121 groups pan Wales
 - Current programme: 2015 – 2022
 - Primary process – Action Learning
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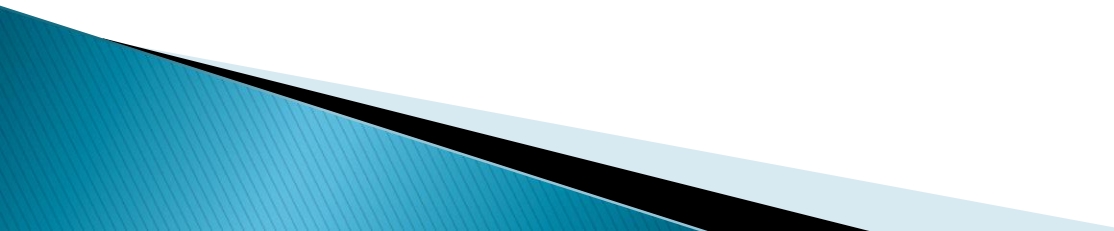
Action Learning

Action learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection, tackling important issues supported by colleagues with the intention of getting things done!

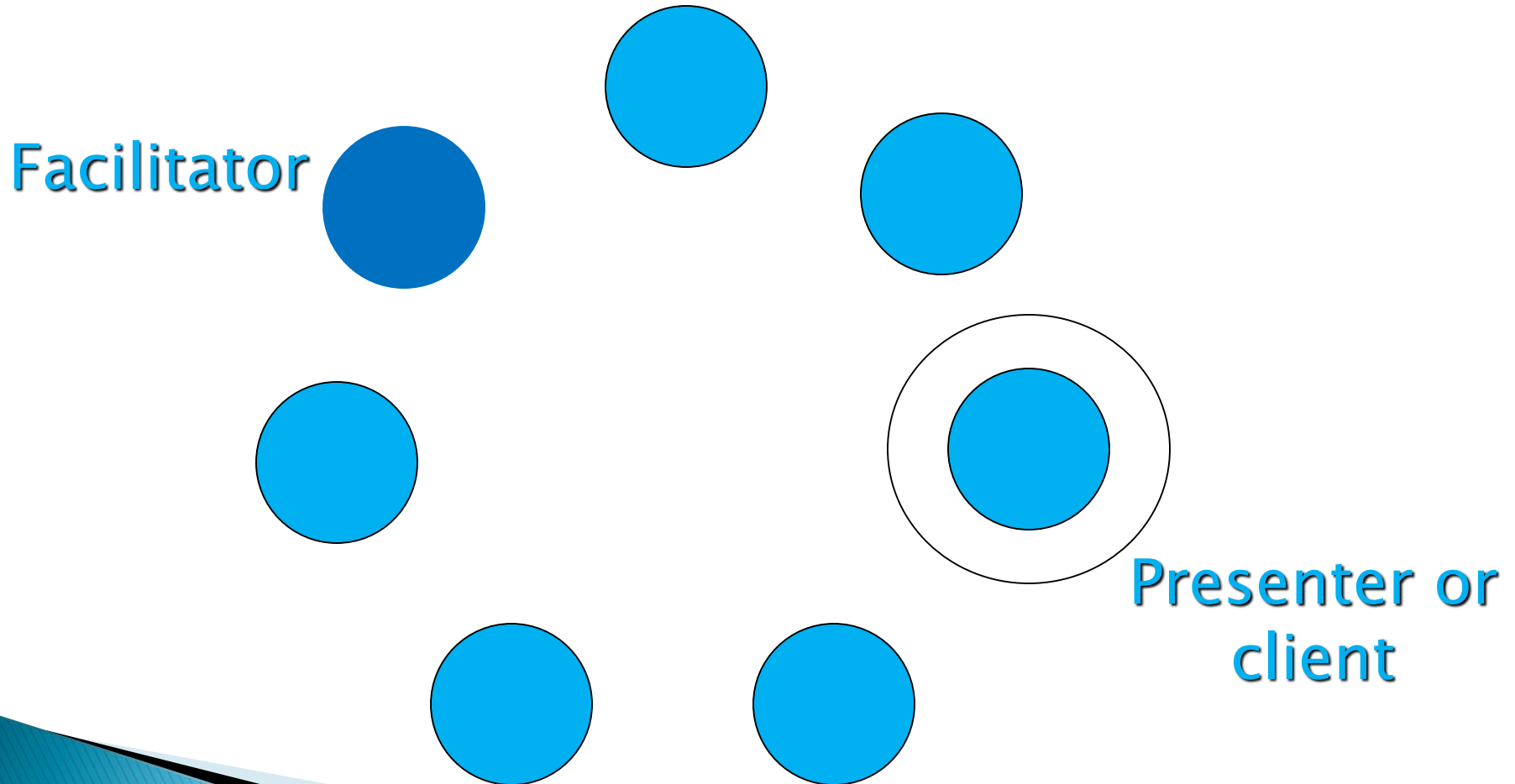
(McGill and Beaty, 2001)



Who and what does it involve?

- A small group of people working together for a concentrated period of time
 - Set members willing to consider change positively
 - A commitment from these people to make the set alive and vibrant
- 

Action Learning Format



Action Learning

“Deceptively simple – Surprisingly powerful!”

(Revans, 1982)

Organisational Change

- Speed, magnitude and impact of change greater than ever
- Affects all sectors and all sizes of Organisations
- Increasingly important for Organisations to seek out, adopt, embrace and instigate change
- However seven out of ten change interventions fail

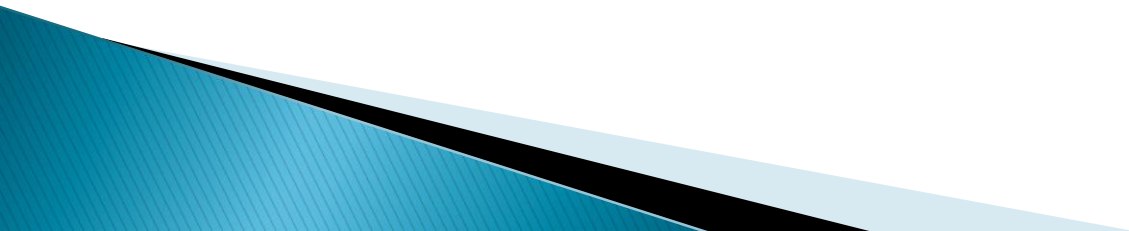
(Burnes, 2004)



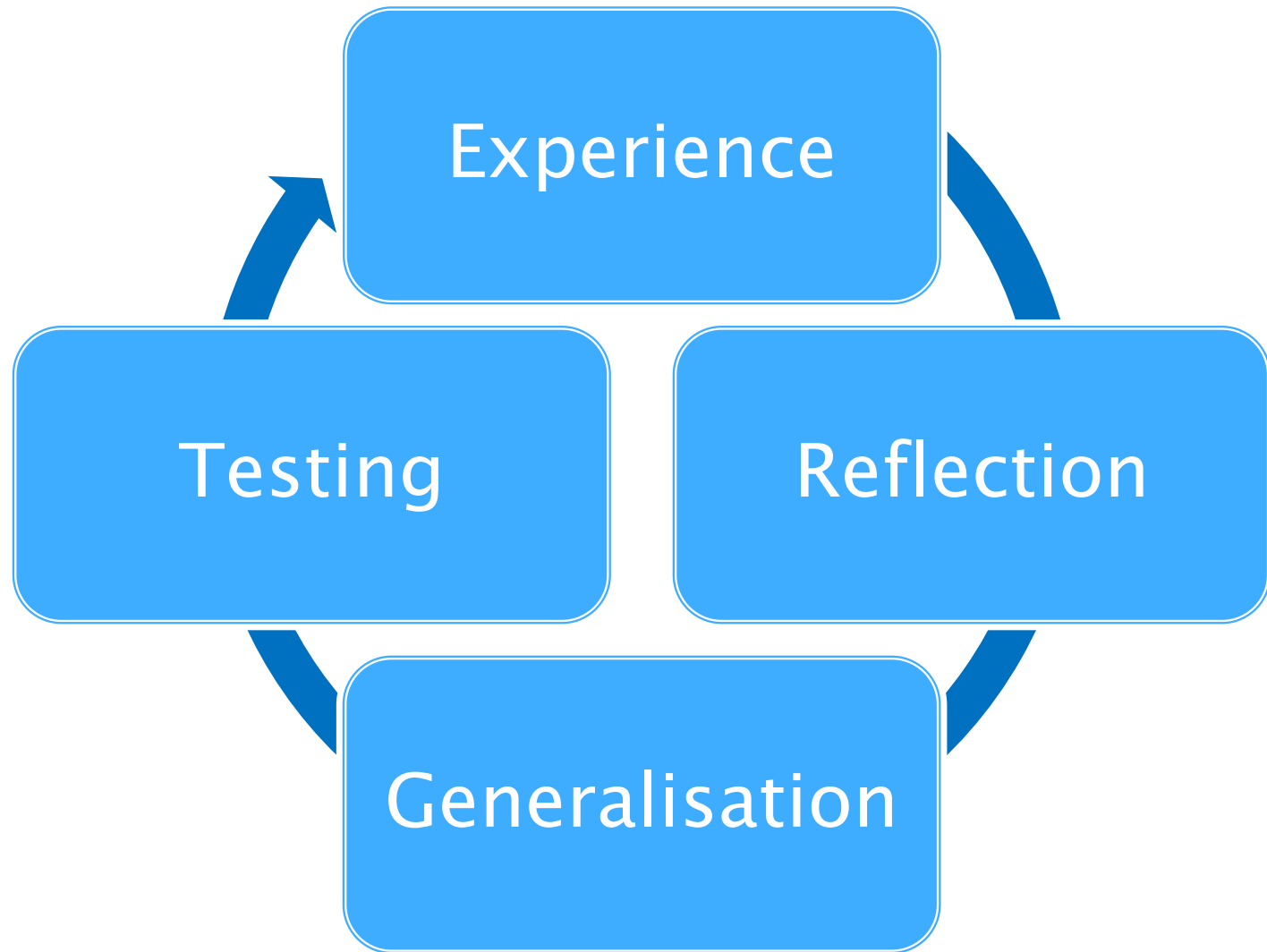
IBM 2010

The most desirable trait for CEOs in the 21st
Century?

CREATIVITY!



Kolb Learning Cycle



Agrisgôp – It drives you crazy & keeps you sane!

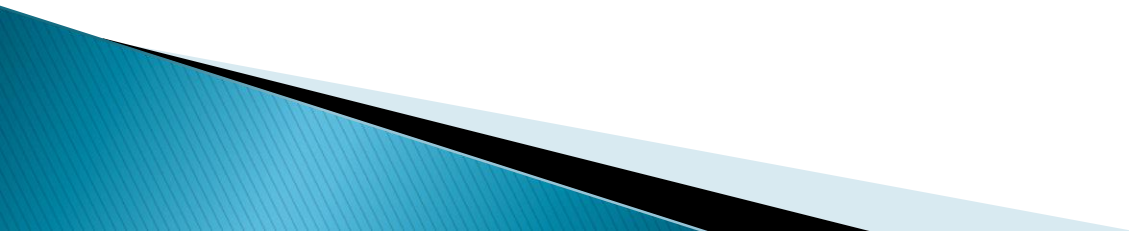
Nigel Bowyer
Agrisgôp Leader
October 2011

Agrisgôp study 1

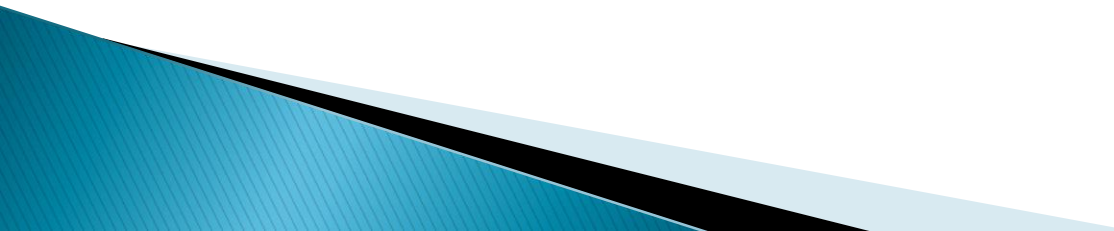
Appreciative Inquiry

v

Creative Problem Solving



AI v CPS Design

- ▶ Team 1: Group members doing AI
 - ▶ Team 2: Group Leaders doing AI
 - ▶ Team 3: Group members doing CPS
 - ▶ Team 4: Group Leaders doing CPS
- 

Appreciative Inquiry

STAGE	PROCESS
Discovery What gives life? – Appreciating	In pairs, participants interview each other, telling positive stories to discover the root cause of success.
Dream What might be? – Envisioning results	Each person reports their partner's responses and the group identify and discuss the key elements.
Design What could be? – Co-constructing	The group review past successes, list the top root causes of success and consider how these could be replicated in the future.
Destiny How to empower, learn, adjust? – Sustaining”.	As a group, a future vision for the organization is created through a medium of the group's choice e.g. story, song or play

Adapted from Vanstone (2004), Peelle (2006)
and Lewis, Passmore & Cantore (2008)

Creative Problem Solving

STAGE	PROCESS
(1) Understanding the Challenge	
Constructing opportunities	Consider future problems and prospects and identify the most appealing concepts for the future
Exploring data	Seek out as much useful information and knowledge as possible, relating to the task
Framing problems	Describe the prospective problems in as many ways as possible
(2) Generating Ideas	
Generating Ideas	Produce as many different and innovative ideas as possible, consider how they could be used and highlight the most useful ones (Isaksen, Dorval & Treffinger, 2000)

(Isaksen, Dorval & Treffinger, 2000)

Creative Problem Solving

STAGE	PROCESS
(3)Preparing for Action	
Developing solutions	Adapt and clarify the most promising possibilities, then analyze and prioritize
Building Acceptance	Consider who and what are likely to resist implementation of your plan and how best to deal with this
(4) Planning the Approach	
Appraising tasks	Consider what must be done and which methods and materials are required to do it
Designing process	Decide what to do, who will do it and which elements from the previous stages to use

(Isaksen, Dorval & Treffinger, 2000)

AI v CPS

1. All four teams at equal potency pre task
2. No significant difference in potency mid task
3. Group potency significantly higher post task in AI teams
4. Team source had no significant effect on potency under either intervention

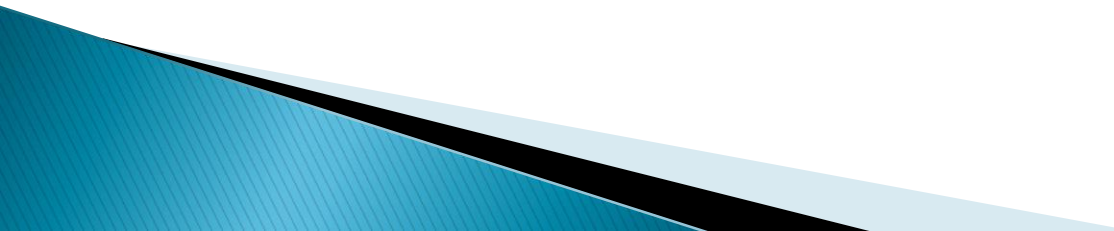
(Owen, 2008)



Agrisgôp study 2

**Personality as a predictor of Effective
Change Agents**

The Agrisgôp Personality study

- ▶ 37 Agrisgôp Leaders completed a BIG 5 questionnaire and the MBTI
 - ▶ Manager scored each participant on the CEQ
 - ▶ The data from all three questionnaires was analysed using Multiple Regression.
- 

Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Extraversion/Introversion (E/I)

Sensing/Intuition (S/N)

Thinking/Feeling (T/F)

Judging/Perceiving (J/P)

position across the four dichotomies
results in a four letter personality type
e.g. ESFJ.

Myers–Briggs, 1982



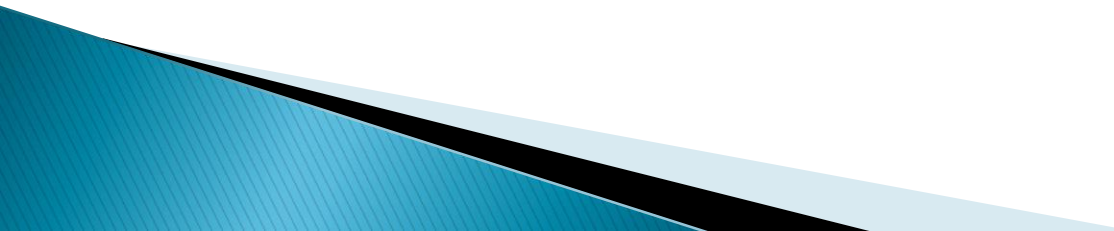
The Big 5 / FFM

- ▶ NEUROTICISM – Worrying, nervous, inadequate
- ▶ EXTRAVERSION – Sociable, active, optimistic
- ▶ OPENNESS – Curious, creative, original
- ▶ AGREEABLENESS – Trusting, helpful, forgiving
- ▶ CONSCIENTIOUSNESS – Organised, reliable, ambitious

Costa & McCrae, 1992

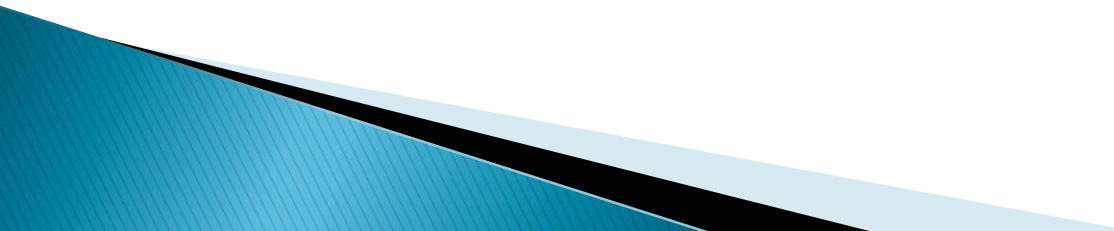


The Big 5 / FFM

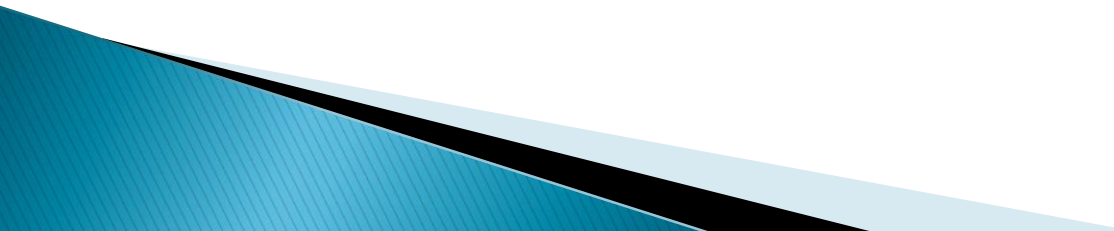
- ▶ FFM consistently proven to be the most valid model of personality
 - ▶ Studies also indicated that it is valid across different languages (Saucier & Goldberg, 2001) and stable across lifespan (Mathews, Dreary & Whiteman, 2003)
 - ▶ Discussions continue regarding the possibility of a 6th factor – Honesty/Humility (Ashton & Lee, 2005)
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Consultant Effectiveness Questionnaire (CEQ)

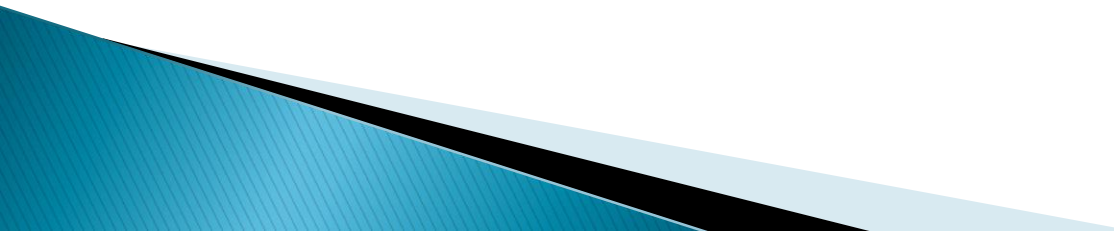
Developed by Hamilton (1988)

- ▶ Based on the requisite competency clusters deemed necessary for O/D consultants.
 - ▶ CEQ employs five point likert scales
 - ▶ Completed by a Manager who scores each participant on each of nine questions relating to organisational effectiveness.
- 

Findings

- ▶ Agreeableness and Extroversion (of the Big 5) predicted competence in organisational change facilitation
 - ▶ No relationship found between the MBTI and competence in organisational change facilitation
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Implications

- ▶ How does personality relate to change agency?
 - ▶ Of the Big 5 what about O N & C?
 - ▶ What about other measures?
 - ▶ Are individuals who are personally proactive in engaging change more effective as change agents?
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Agrisgôp study 3

**Assessing the Impact of Group
Interventions on Organisational Change**



Measuring Impact

Although the benefits of being in an Agrisgôp group are substantial and often life changing, the outcomes are extremely difficult to measure or quantify because:

- Individuals may not realise/acknowledge the attitude change
 - The process develops existing ideas which would not have come to fruition without Agrisgôp
 - Outcomes are typically softer and qualitative
- 

Not everything that can be counted
counts, and not everything that
counts can be counted.

(William Bruce Cameron, 1963)





Mixed methods

"Research methodology continues to evolve and develop, and mixed methods is another step forward, utilizing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. There is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research than from either form by itself.....their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems"

(Creswell, 2009)



Name :
Group reference :
Date :

Please circle a number from **1** to **9** to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement:

- I. I am confident in unfamiliar circumstances
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- II. I consider myself to be a good communicator
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- III. I can evaluate new information and apply it to my business
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- IV. I have a positive attitude to change
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- V. I have a long term strategy for my business
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

Please give your 3 most important expectations for this group

- a) _____

- b) _____

- c) _____

Name :
Group reference :
Date :

Please circle a number from **1** to **9** to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement:

- I. I am confident in unfamiliar circumstances
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- II. I consider myself to be a good communicator
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- IV. I have a positive attitude to change
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree
- V. I have a long term strategy for my business
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

Please outline the 3 most important developments for this group to date

- a) _____

- b) _____

- c) _____

AGRISGÔP POST-GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE



Name :
Group reference :
Date :

Please circle a number from **1** to **9** to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement:

- I. I am confident in unfamiliar circumstances
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

- II. I consider myself to be a good communicator
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

- III. I can evaluate new information and apply it to my business
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

- IV. I have a positive attitude to change
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

- V. I have a long term strategy for my business
Strongly agree **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9** Strongly disagree

Please give the 3 most valuable outcomes for this group

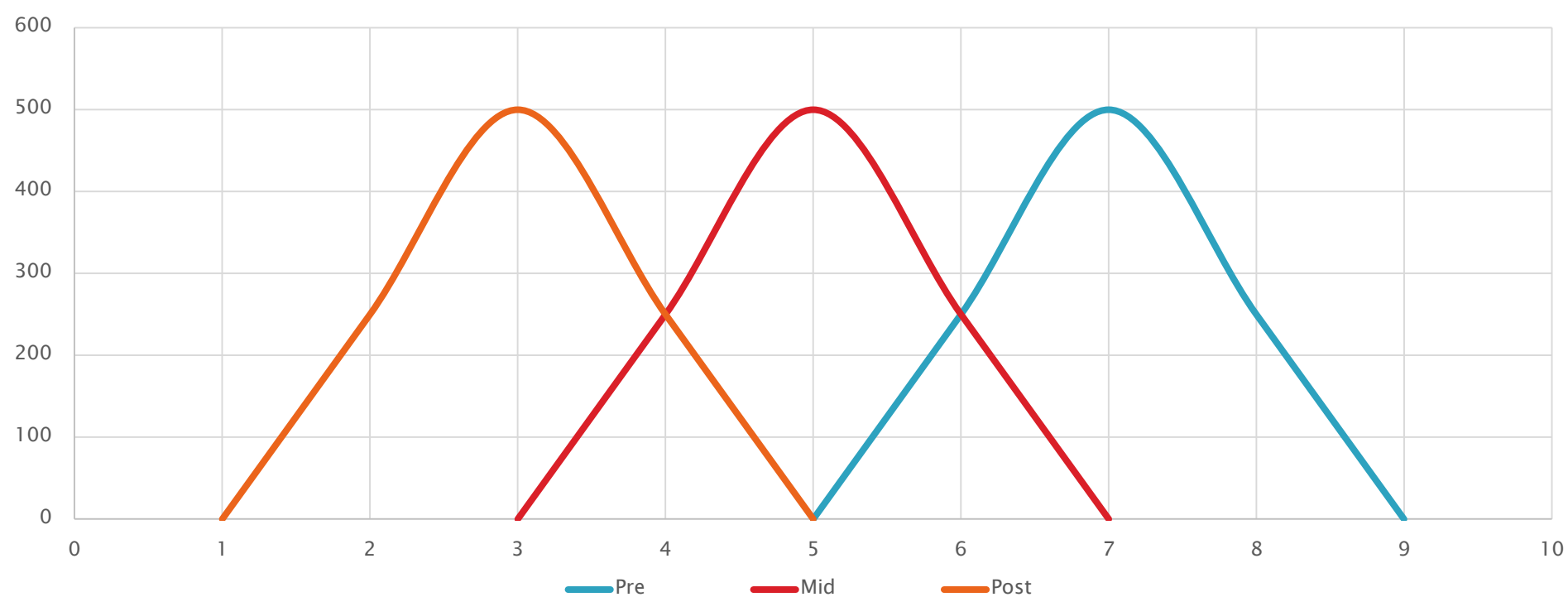
- a) _____

- b) _____

- c) _____

What are we measuring?

Agrisgôp longitudinal mixed measures

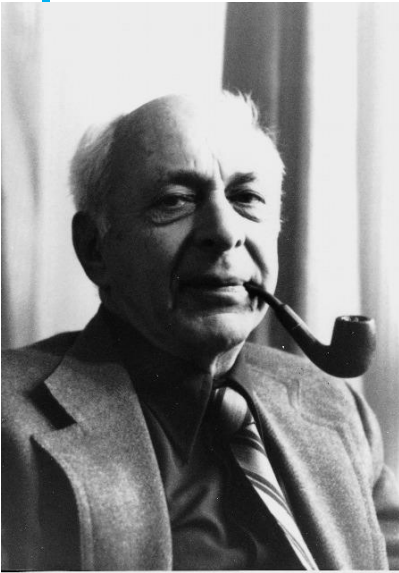


Questionnaire rationale...

- Spector's Locus of Control scale
 - Bandura's Self Efficacy scales
 - Oreg's resistance to change scale
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Locus of Control

Refers to whether we believe that our fate is controlled by internal, person variables or by external, environmental variables.



People having internal locus of control orientations will work harder to obtain a goal believing that they can control the outcome in a specific situation

Julian Rotter

Spector's Locus of Control scale

- Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS)
- Specific to workplace setting
- 16 item measure of generalised control beliefs
- Items include Commitment, Autonomy, Influence & Role stress.

(Spector, 1988)



Bandura's Self Efficacy scales

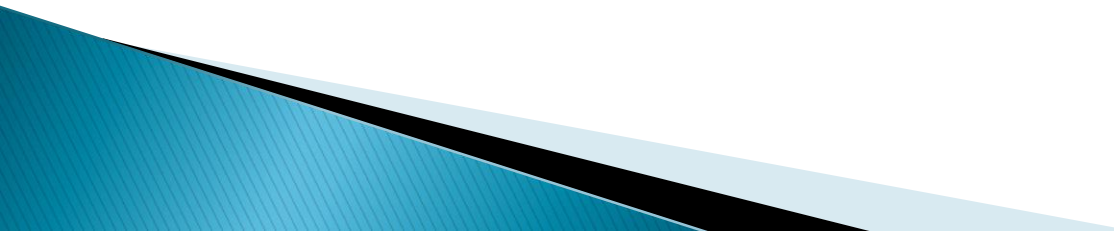
- Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments
- People differ in the areas and levels to which they cultivate their efficacy
- Scales cover a broad range of self-efficacy measures from regulating exercise, to problem solving to pain management.

(Bandura, 2006)




Oreg's resistance to change scale

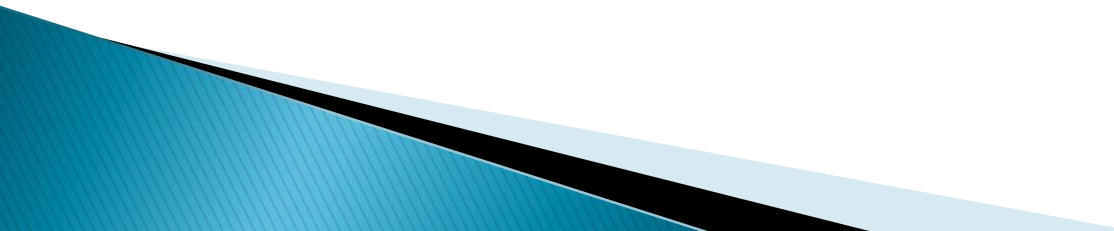
Oreg (2003) found that four specific factors indicated a person's tendency to be resistant to change namely:

- Routine seeking
 - Emotional reaction to change
 - Cognitive rigidity
 - Short term focus
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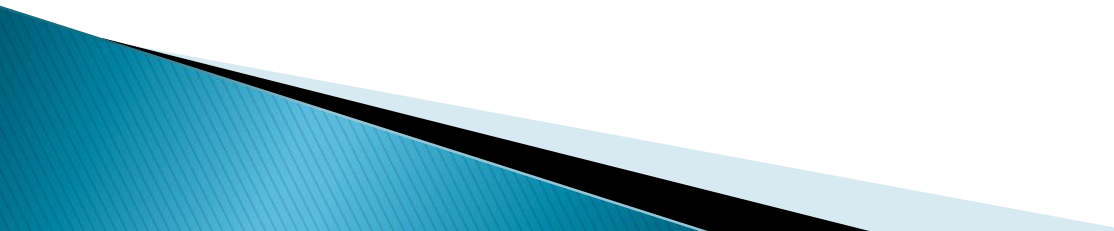
Research Aims / Questions

- What is the longer term impact of interventions such as Agrisgôp?
 - What is the effect of Action Learning based programmes?
 - How can this best be measured?
 - How could they be more effective in future?
 - What is the link between personal and business development?
 - Can changing perceptions result in reduced self efficacy/locus of control?
- 

Expected Outcomes / Results

- An insight into the impact of Agrisgôp over time
 - A greater understanding of how best to measure the impact
 - Increased knowledge regarding future delivery
 - Greater understanding re the implications of and the barriers to personal and organisational change.
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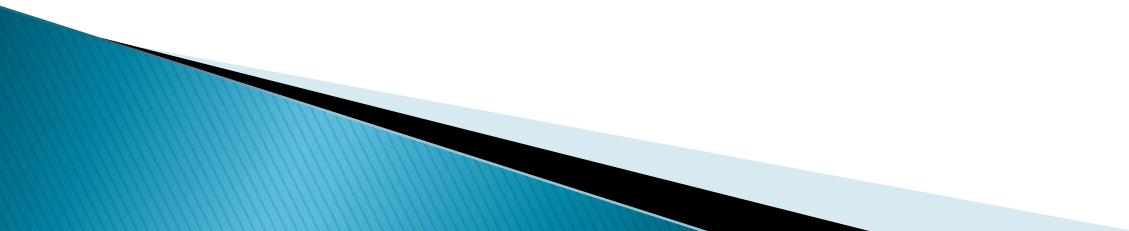
Agrisgôp – Longitudinal Mixed measures

- ▶ Due to the difficulties of assessing softer qualitative outcomes and delivering evidence of tangible developments and benefits Menter a Busnes introduced a mixed measures questionnaire
 - ▶ This has been completed by each group member pre, mid and post group since September 2011.
 - ▶ Analysis conducted on the 945 beneficiaries that had completed the programme by Spring 2014 and therefore completed all three questionnaires
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Agrisgôp – Longitudinal Mixed measures

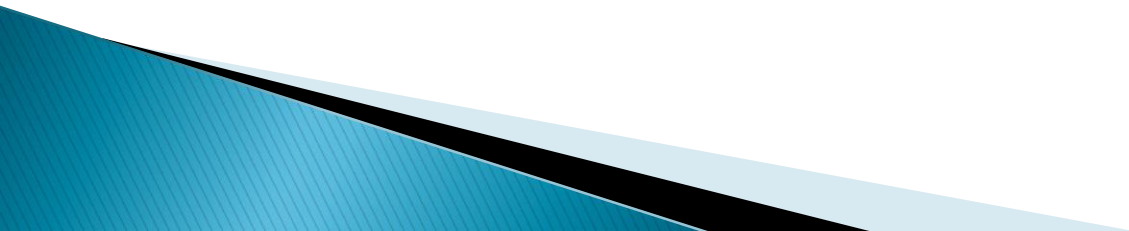
- ▶ The quantitative data analysed to date (using a one way repeated measures ANOVA) indicates that Agrisgôp participants ($n = 445$) have since joining their groups:
- ▶ Increased confidence (49%)
- ▶ Improved communication skills (51%)
- ▶ Are more able to apply new information to their business (52%)
- ▶ Have a more positive attitude to change (52%)
- ▶ Are more likely to have a long term business strategy (13%)

Qualitative Data – Mid Group



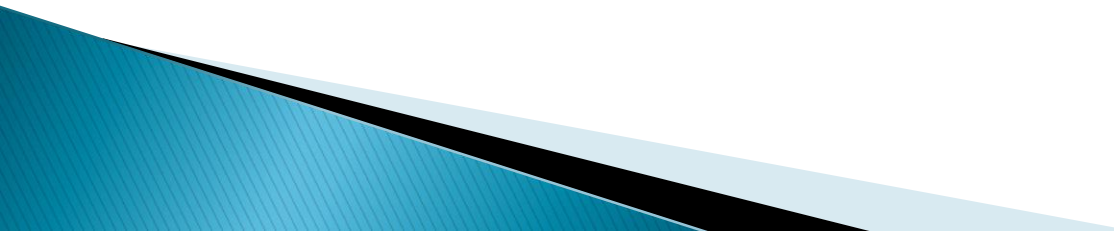


Qualitative Data – Post Group



diversification
confidence
understand
others available
initiatives
business
greater confirmation website
meet
talk apply social consider
homeopathy
pittfalls events
renewable interesting funding
discuss current running
people
change experienced
different
know forward
getting
problems
group
improved
go
move
places
ability feather connect ways forming
sheep
severn
order
team
future
energy
adding great rapid
visit
similar company trailer
farm
good
information
planning things
dealing
learnt
members
opportunity
individual
organise positive
farmers
technology
decisions
industry
keeping

Limitations & future Research

- Are the correct factors being measured?
 - Are the measures appropriate, valid and reliable?
 - Is the study period long enough to show the true impact?
 - Only considering one sector
 - So much data!
- 

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Thank You!

Any Questions?