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The principle-centered process consultant working in schools today.

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Abstract

The interactive training program reported in this study is a principle-centered program concentrates on developing consultants who engage with clients in principle driven client centered deliberative communicative ways. This study reports the findings of a preliminary investigation involving 13 senior staff who completed 'The art and science of authentic helpfulness; an interactive consultancy. This training was part of their professional development agenda in the primary and secondary schools in Warragul (Diocese of Sale, Victoria). Respondents were asked to complete a 14 question online survey specific to their perceptions and observations of (1) the impact of PCPC when working with clients; (2) the impact on clients when using PCPC.

An independent sample t-test observed that no significant difference between Diocesan consultant (M=3.70, SD =1.16) and School based personnel (M=4.33, SD=.58) when rating their overall effectiveness on PCPC, $t(11)=-.89, p>.05$. A one way ANOVA observed no significant difference when comparing the year participants completed the program and the time they have worked in the field as consultants (2010: M=5.00, SD=.00, 2011: M=3.57, SD=1.13, 2012: M=3.85, SD=.96), $F(2,10)=1.54, p>.05$. Findings were positive with 31% of respondents indicating that PCPC always influences the way they view clients and their practice as consultants when working with clients. 38% indicated that PCPC processes often enables them to be more effective when working with clients; 46% reported PCPC sometimes helps them develop more power in their client-counsellor partnerships. 62% acknowledged that client empowerment is often evident when using PCPC and that there is often evidence of change in perception of clients, and client ownership for the problem of initiative being processed during PCPC.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The principle centered process consultant working in schools today.

People seek helpfulness in their work and in their lives. However, they themselves are not helpless, nor do they come from a base of no knowledge. Many professionals are expected – as whole or part of their roles – to act as consultant partners to individuals, groups and organizations. In this role they give advice, assist with problem solving and develop initiatives. In other words, they are expected to be 'helping people' to others. As a member of the helping profession it is important to be 'authentically helpful' to people. Authentic helpfulness is help that is respectful of clients, honours them and who they are, is virtuous, and principle centered (McArdle & Carter, 2009).

The interactive principled centered process consultancy (PCPC) training program, 'The art and science of authentic helpfulness' is designed to teach senior education staff (Diocesan education consultants) process based, principle centered consultancy that they will use when consulting with clients (colleagues) in the schools. Process consultancy is a set of activities on the part of the consultant that helps the client to perceive, understand and act

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upon the process events that occur in the client's world in order to improve the situation as defined by the client (Schein, 2010).

PCPC is an interactive collaborative form of consultancy assisting clients to perceive, understand and act upon the process events that occur in their world, to their satisfaction (Schein, 1998; McArdle & Carter, 2009). It is about the consultant being authentically helpful to the client, first understanding the client before being understood by the client (Covey, 2004). This guiding principle has priority over techniques. The aim of PCPC is for consultants to be authentically helpful for client in their world to their satisfaction. The method is one of listening first to understand and then to be understood, thus creating a position of influence to help the client perceive, understand and act in their world to their satisfaction (Covey, 2004; Maxwell, 2011). This process places the consultant in position of real influence, to work with clients to create behavior change and facilitate growth. This change and growth is the client's agenda, and its success and effectiveness is defined and evaluated by the client. The PCPC process is most important and begins with the consultant being in right positioning with their client (Maxwell, 2011).

2. Structure of the study

2.1. Research question

This paper reports the findings of 13 senior staff who completed 'The art and science of authentic helpfulness; an interactive consultancy program'. This training was part of their professional development as consultants working in Catholic education schools in Warragul (Diocese of Sale, Victoria). Respondents were asked to complete a 14 question online survey specific to their perceptions and observations of PCPC: (1) what is the impact of PCPC when working with clients; (2) what is the impact on clients when using PCPC.

Findings are intended to fill the gap in the research literature by identifying participants perceptions of the effectiveness of the authentic helpfulness consultancy training program in their professional practice

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Thirteen educational consultants from the Warragul Catholic Education Office (Female = 9, Male = 4) responded to this online survey. All the respondents participated in the professional development training 'The art and science of authentic helpfulness; an interactive consultancy program' at least once in the past three years.

3.2. Measures

A thorough search of the literature was unable to locate a self-report measure that contained all the items of interest examined in the larger study examining PCPC. Therefore, informed by existing literature on process consultancy, an anonymous survey instrument was developed. The item pool included a total of 14 items. Participants responded to each question on a 5 point likert scale from always to never.

3.3. Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained by the relevant authorities before the project commenced. Prospective participants were emailed by the Diocesan representative and invited to volunteer to complete an online survey. Once participants consented to participate in the study, they anonymously completed the online measure. This measure remained live for one week and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The measure was pilot tested for format, clarity, length, and ease of administration..

3.4. Data analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS program to discern response patterns, validity and reliability of the data. This, alongside a comprehensive literature review based on the themes, forms the basis of these findings.

4. Results

31% of respondents indicated the PCPC always influences the way they view clients, and it often influences their practices when consulting clients. 38% indicated the PCPC processes often enables them to be more effective when working with clients, compared with 31% reporting it always enables them to be more effective with clients. 46% of respondents reported PCPC sometimes helps them develop more power in their client-counsellor partnerships, compared with 31% who reported it often helps them. 31% of respondents indicated that PCPC always impacts their effectiveness of knowing what to do and when to do it with clients. This figure was identical to participants reporting that PCPC often impacts their effectiveness of knowing what to do and when to do it in a connected way with clients. 54% of respondents reported that PCPC often empowers them to be a purposeful interventionist with clients, compared with 23% reporting it always empowers them and 15% it sometimes empowers them. 54% of respondents identified that PCPC often guides them to be principle driven and client driven, compared with 31% reporting it always guides them. 54% of respondents indicated that PCPC often enables them to engage in deliberative communicative action with clients, compared with 8% reporting it had very little impact on their deliberative communicative action with clients.

62% of respondents acknowledged that client empowerment is often evident when using PCPC, with 15% indicating there is always evidence of client empowerment. 62% indicated there is evidence of change in perception of clients, compared with 31% reporting that sometimes there is evidence of change in clients' perceptions. 69% of respondents reported that often there is evidence of positive energy in clients when PCPC is used. 62% reported there is often evidence of client ownership for the problem of initiative being processed during PCPC. 54% reported there is often evidence of authentic helpfulness between client and counsellor when PCPC is used, compared with 15% reporting there is always evidence. Finally 38 % of respondents stated the PCPC has always been effective; 15% often; 38% sometimes; and 8% very little.

A independent sample t-test observed is no significant difference between Diocesan consultant (M=3.70, SD =1.16) and School based personnel (M=4.33, SD=.58) when rating their overall effectiveness on PCPC, $t(11)=-.89$, $p>.05$. A one way ANOVA similarly observed no significant difference when comparing the year participants completed the consultancy program (2010: M=5.00, SD=.00, 2011: M=3.57, SD=1.13, 2012: M=3.85, SD=.96), $F(2,10)=1.54$, $p>.05$.

A comparison by gender using an independent sample t-test was performed for individual items and the means are summarized In Table 1. Whilst males have a higher mean than females, these results show that when calculating the t test there are no significant differences by gender.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and summary of t-test for Individual Items in Comparison by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
1. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy influence the way I view clients?	Female	3.67	1.225	-0.49	11.00	0.63
	Male	4.00	0.816			
2. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy enable me to have more effective processes when working with clients?	Female	3.89	1.11. 1.0	1.12. -0.19	11.00	1.14. 0.86
	Male	4.00	1.15. 0.8			
3. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy help me to develop more power in	Female	3.44	1.014	-0.56	11.00	0.59

my partnerships with clients?	Male	3.75	0.5			
	Female	3.67	1.11803			
4. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy impact my effectiveness of knowing what to do and when to do it in a connected way with clients?	Male	4.25	0.5	-1.30	10.92	0.22
	Female	3.67	1.225	-0.90	11.00	0.39
5. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy empower me to be a purposeful interventionist with clients?	Male	4.25	0.5			
	Female	4.00	1	-0.47	11.00	0.65
6. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy guide me to be client centered and principle driven?	Male	4.25	0.5			
	Female	3.67	1	-1.00	8.00	0.35
7. Does Principle Centered Process Consultancy enable me to have deliberative communicative action with clients?	Male	4.00	0			
	Female	3.67	0.707	-1.24	11.00	0.24
8. There is evidence of client empowerment?	Male	4.25	0.957			
	Female	3.67	1.118			
9. There is evidence of change in mindset by clients?	Male	3.00	0	1.1.9. 1.84	1.1.10. 8.00	1.1.11. 0.10
	Female	3.56	0.726			
10. There is evidence of change in perception of clients?	Male	3.50	0.577	0.13	11.00	0.90
	Female	3.56	0.726			
11. There is evidence of positive energy in client?	Male	3.75	0.5	-0.48	11.00	0.64
	Female	3.78	0.833	0.60	11.00	0.56
12. There is evidence of responsibility or ownership by the client for the problem or initiative?	Male	3.50	0.577			
	Female	3.67	1			
13. There is evidence of authentic helpfulness between consultant and client?	Male	4.00	0	1.1.12. - 1.00	1.1.13. 8.00	1.1.14. 0.35
	Female	3.67	1.118			
14. Has the overall program Principle Centered Process Consultancy been effective for you?	Male	4.25	1.1.15. 0.957	-0.90	11.00	0.39

The insignificance of the differences is also shown when items are translated into a feedback score. There is no significant difference between male ($M= 3.9$, $SD= 0.37$) and female ($M= 3.67$, $SD= 0.87$) when compared in an independent sample t-test, $t(11) = -0.53$, $p>.05$.

A further test of respondents' satisfaction and experience when using PCPC is observed. There are no significant difference between males ($M=4.07$, $SD=.34$) and females ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.03$) in comparing of satisfaction scores, $t(11) = -.67$, $p>.05$. Similarly, there is no significant difference between male ($M=3.75$, $SD=.43$) and female ($M=3.61$, $SD=.75$) in their reporting of their experience in using PCPC, $t(11)=-.32$, $p>.05$.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and summary of t-test for Satisfaction and Experience in Comparison By Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Satisfaction Question 1-7	Female	3.71	1.03	-.67	11	.52
	Male	4.07	.34			
Experience Question 8-13	Female	3.61	.75	-.32	11	.75
	Male	3.75	.43			

Reliability analysis of the 14 items revealed a Cronbach's Alpha of .97. This alpha value is strong, indicating that this survey method is reliable.

5. Discussion

This study, conducted online, examined the perception of 13 senior staff educators as principled centered process consultants. All respondents have consultancy as a significant part of their role and all participated in 'The art and science of authentic helpfulness'. The training was facilitated face-to-face by William McArdle in the Warragul Diocese of Sale, Victoria, over the past three years. The starting point for PCPC is the client – counsellor positioning; the growth and development component is the principle centred processes they enact credibly and productively with their clients.

The art of authentic helpfulness is the unique way consultants apply the science of consultancy, a blending of intuitiveness and intentionality, the outreach of the genuine self to be really working for clients to help them "perceive, understand and act with the process events that occurred in the world to their satisfaction. There is a science that needs to be learnt that will allow consultants to be authentically helpful; a science that allows consultants to be deliberately communicative in what they do as an authentic helper; a science that gathers in intuition (that is what the intuitively do as a helper) and combines it with scientific learning's about how to act as a helping person in the consultancy role (Maxwell, 2011).

The science starts by getting into the right position. Findings from this study validate the importance for the consultant being in right relationship with the client. This relationship is a side-by-side relationship, a power partnership with the client based around what the client wants. In right relationship, the client becomes more powerful as does the consultant and the more effective they work together the more powerful they both become. Once in the right position, consultants follow the right process of PCPC so that they can be client centered and principle driven. Learning this process enables the consultant to act intentionally and monitor their processes and practices when working with their client. This involves consultants engaging with their clients' in deliberative communicative ways (Maxwell, 2010). The guiding principle of strategic conversation with consultative listening has priority over consultancy techniques.

Findings further indicate that respondents observed and perceived clients benefitting from PCPC processes. Clients were reported as being empowered to take ownership for the problem or initiative as counselors listened with the intent to hear, build influence, and assist the client. Based on the means for each question, the PCPC training is perceived by respondents as effective, satisfaction is high, and the experience of authentic helpfulness is good for both the client and consultant.

6. Limitations and future work

The limited number of respondents affected the analysis. With a greater number of respondents, more comparisons can be conducted, including professional role designation, Diocesan location and number of times training was attended. The increase in participants may change the results of the t-test. Comparing facilitators of the training program may also add depth to these findings. Comparing responses according to roles and time since participants completed the consultancy training may add further depth to these findings. Including open ended questions to the online survey may add more credibility to these findings.

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