

Nobel Peace Prize Winners 2013 - The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Associate Programme (The Surrey Phase)

In October 2013, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons won the Nobel Peace prize largely for their work in Syria. David Faraday formerly a Senior Lecturer at the University of Surrey designed the Associate Programme for the OPCW in 1999 and started to include the Thinking Environment in it in 2002. We are very proud to have worked for this organisation who quietly go about getting States to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, which insists Member States are transparent about their manufacture and possession of chemical weapons.

The Associate Programme run by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is an ambitious programme lasting 10 weeks. The programme started with just 12 participants and went to 24 and 28. Owing to its continued success there are now 32 participants on this programme each year. The Participants come from 32 different developing countries. This course needs to meet the challenges of a multi-cultural training as we have had delegates from over 100 different countries so far.

The participants on the programme learn about the OPC, the non-proliferation agreements and chemical weapons inspections in The Hague. They come to Surrey, for three weeks, to learn about the process engineering industry; then the participants attend challenging placements in the chemical industry all over the world. Our company Evolve Leadteam Ltd. runs three weeks of this programme in the Department of Process Engineering at the University of Surrey.

In these three weeks, the associates are taught 'best practice' in process plants, how they are led, how they are measured, how they demonstrate their compliance with the non-proliferation agreement and how to contribute to the peaceful use of chemistry. This is a vibrant, experiential course that culminates in a business simulation exercise where the delegates run a real process plant on the campus. In the process plant the participants make saline solution to a medical standard and have real paperwork, customers, targets, research goals, advertising budgets, financial problems and a visit from their parent company.

In 2002 was given a half a day of the Surrey phase to pilot learning some of the Thinking Environment along with the other training I do on the course. I was very pleased that on that first course, the training team got an uplifting amount of appreciation; the delegates engaged

with the discussion enthusiastically and understood the subtleties of the Thinking Environment. We decided it went well enough to allocate a regular day on future courses.

In 2003, in the newly built School of Management in Surrey, during university holidays, we began a day that often became about world peace. The 12 delegates' chairs were arranged in a horseshoe, and they joked, that it looked like an alcoholics' anonymous group. We had a great day together, even though we had to jump up every 10 minutes to put the lights back on because they were programmed for holiday time. The group learned to listen well, to give everyone a turn, to focus 80-percent on what was working. The participants used the meetings training for two themes; one, to plan how they would deal with stress when they were running the process plant and two, to consider how they could contribute to world peace. They were all surprised how short their meetings were, how many practical ideas were delivered and also, how much fun it was. We all went home that day with a deeper understanding of one another and highly motivated to tackle the challenge of the simulation exercise.

Thinking Environment seeped into many other areas of the course and has continued to do so ever since. When we do our leadership, teamwork, problem solving and communication course we start with listening. After our exercises we debrief with 'go-arounds.' The 'what's going well'; has been dubbed 'the merry go round'. In the technical group-work David encourages participants to stop interrupting, to listen well, to observe turns and ask questions. So, now the participants are absorbing the Thinking Environment because it has become the course culture, as well as having a day to contemplate the theory.

The course takes over the participants lives for 10 weeks and they bond with each other in a deep way which we find very moving in each year's debrief. The representative of the Department of Trade and Industry, who has been present at every debriefing session from the year 2000, said; 'It is my view, and the view of Her Majesty's Government, that this course started off excellent, and is now approaching something like perfection.' I feel confident that weaving the components of the Thinking Environment thorough the fabric of the course, and the way we manage our team, has helped to move excellence to near perfection. We were never aiming for perfection. We just wanted the delegates to learn as much as they could, to feel it was useful to them and to have a really great time. We feel that the Thinking Environment has made achieving our goals more dependable in a multi cultural group.