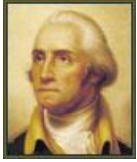


Applying the Technology of Participation (ToP®) in an Authoritarian Culture

Location:
The George Washington University
Mt. Vernon Campus
2100 Foxhall Road
Washington, DC



Wenjun Du, M.S.
Jason Jixuan Hu, Ph.D.
WINTOP Consulting Group
Washington, DC, USA
Shanghai, China
www.wintopgroup.com

General consensus, group leadership, and cross-functional teamwork are all widely accepted concepts and practices in Western societies but do not necessarily exist in other cultures, such as China. There are a number of practical tools being used in the U.S. to enable groups to have a greater capacity for sharing the knowledge and wisdom of every member and to foster team wisdom. ToP® (Technology of Participation) developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs is one of these tools. We believe the time is ripe in China to promote a participatory working environment and a facilitative leadership style in the current hierarchical leadership dominated culture, i.e., in an authoritarian culture, in order to generate real collective wisdom rather than collective stupidity. For this purpose, we have developed a group facilitation methods training course named “Roundtable Leadership” based on ToP® for the China market. In the last two years, we have been offering this training product to various business entities in China, from the private sector to state-owned companies. From the training evaluation and a follow-up survey, we have gathered feedback from people living and working under the top-down system about the new participatory culture they experienced in the training. This paper describes the initial feeling that people experience during the training, shares stories about how people apply the methods in their work and lives, and discusses how this new decision-making procedure changes the work place culture to a more participatory environment, thus encouraging each individual to think, to create, to share, to take responsibility and to be accountable.

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