

FACILITATION ACADEMY'S GENERAL HANDOUT

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NOTE

The following document was created primarily for internal use for participants of the Facilitation Academy program. Please be aware that some of its parts may suggest you other relevant resources of the Academy.

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HANDOUT

There are hundreds of different understandings on what group means, and for us it is essential to somehow put this definition in a context related to Facilitation Academy TC. It is important to know that in this handout there written view is quiet subjective and based on mostly experience. Because of this sometimes we completed it with some theoretical sources. Another thing is good to know that in this paper that everything is written from facilitator's perspective. It means that for a facilitator how he needs to understand group and trainings.

CONTENT:

1. Group, group-process
2. Facilitation, facilitator
3. Aspects of learning
4. Checklist for workshops

1. GROUP, GROUP-PROCESS

For us, there're two main characters in the different meanings of group are important:

- first is the size of the group,
- and the second one is the relation between the members.

Following this two important element of the definition, here we have two relevant definition created by social-psychologists:

To put it simply they are units composed of two or more persons who come into contact for a purpose and who consider the contact meaningful.

Theodore M. Mills (1967: 2)

A group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of it and when its existence is recognized by at least one other.

Rupert Brown (1988: 2-3)

So what it shows us that we are all independently choosing groups of our interest and when we belongs to one group then there's different contact-dynamic in the group between the members. It's important as when we are in a role of facilitator we are often need to observe the group and the relationship/contact between members. It can shows a lot for us about the nature of the group, and for instance if there's an activity when we need subgroups we can play with how to divide the group considering those contacts. There is something always happening within a group life, thus we need to pay attention all the processes which take place. For this reason we should define that group process is a constant incidence, but if we look at from facilitator's perspective group process is the time when the group is together and co-operating or tackling with each other. Group process can be understood as the process which is happening during an activity, so the process of the activity in which we can observe how the group's member solve the activity or co-operate. Group process as its constant need to be taken seriously and as facilitators we always need to follow the current process, if we miss something or not paying enough attention on the group process then perhaps some difficulties or conflicts may occur afterwards.

Group is often mixed with the word *community* or even considered as a synonym of it however it's two really different things. Robert K. Merton were a great social psychologist who gave us an answer for the difference. He had distinguished group and community from each other by this way: *Naturally every community is group at the same time, but communities whose members are not interacting with each other, cannot be regarded as groups.* (Merton 1964)

So it also means that many groups can be found in one community, but groups are smaller entities, than communities. Relationships and contact within groups is closer bond than in communities. As facilitators we often have chance to meet with so called communities, but then we never should forget that they are in this way only a group, unless everyone who belongs to the community is represented.

As we have been talking about a lot of a person, or a role called facilitator it's maybe the time to clarify who is he?

2. FACILITATION, FACILITATOR

It is a role of course, but it's really an important role to be taken in training. In my opinion (Bubu) every trainers are usually facilitating different processes. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'to facilitate' as "make easy or less difficult; make action or result more easily achieved." So when it's a training it does mean a lot if you can keep the role in a good way. During our Training Course you could observe that there are two trainers who were taking care about the group process, gave sort of lectures and provided information for you to foster participant's learning. As facilitators we are co-responsible about the task/content shared with the group. We give inputs but trying to keep it in minimal, depending on the topic of course. For instance as you will provide us workshops about different things, it is expected to have some inputs from you. The key question is how you balancing, how much you influence on process, and what is your aim with the workshop.

Here is a short list from T-Kit 6 Training Essential publication, which you even can find on your USB in the Resources folder.

| <i>Educational roles</i> | Facilitator |
|--------------------------|--|
| Process | important |
| Task/Content | co-responsible |
| Educational methods | methodological mix |
| Communication-style | minimal input |
| Power | shared |
| Example | conflict moderator, peer-to peer learning moderator etc |

We can even mention that facilitation is a less or more softer intervention in groups life, for that we can see that for facilitators they are not holding the power by themselves it shared between the members and the facilitators. You should even remind yourself how your teachers are holding their power within a class, but not taking care of anyone else sometimes.

3. ASPECTS OF LEARNING

If we would not write about learning, and the different ways of learning then this paper would not be that useful for you. First of all I would start with an impression which may inspire you to decide yourself to save up some time for your learning forever. When I attended my first youth exchange in 2008 I was absolutely shy and afraid of anything. Not even about the new culture and flight but about myself as well, however I haven't recognized it that time. I've spent 9 days together with many peers from all over Europe and started to look myself differently, at the end I became pretty open-minded and I wasn't shy at all. It was all brand new feeling for me, as I used to the formal education system, with benches in tight lines in the classroom. For me learning was mostly memorizing texts, information which I had to refer back at tests or oral exams. I never really cared about it, until I realized its much more fun than that. Non-formal learning has just opened a door for me to a World where I can enjoy learning as it's all about my personal development to rich the best quality of my life I can.

Here in this part we will talk about the ways of learning (formal/informal/non-formal) and also about the concept of competences. For this one we are going to recall the workshop about Learning, so this part is mainly as a reminder for you.

So as we know *formal learning* is well known by almost everyone. That happens in schools so it's often called as frontal education as the teacher who took an absolute power in his/her hands. Thus formal is when information and inputs are provided by someone. *Informal* way of learning are more about that we are learning from our friends and family, we learn what are the habits, what are the roles in family (so then in society) and so. After this

it's almost evident that *non-formal* is a way of learning when you learn from each other's interaction, and feedbacks. You are learning even by doing something, and while you reflecting on that.

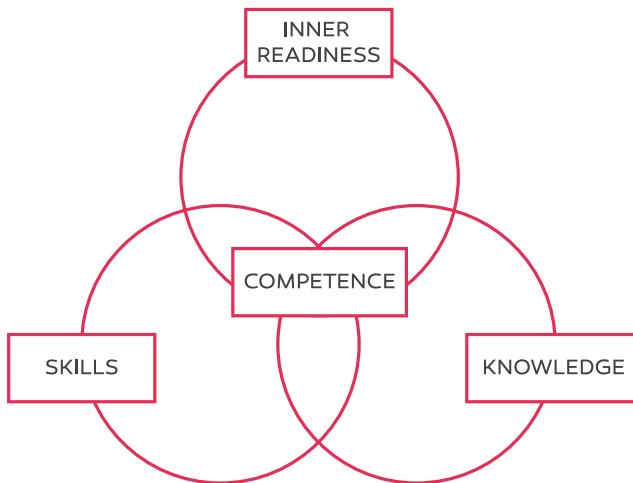
General concept of Competence:

Generally we can say that competence has three components: knowledge, skills and attitude. This makes it easier if we look behind these words: Understand knowledge as the information you know about something, you have it in my mind; skills as like the ability, that you feel you are able to do something; and attitude as a completing emotion towards something. So to have and hold a competence a knowledge or information is not enough for you to apply for that, to use that competence.

Concept of competences provided by Kitokie project ¹:

How do we understand “competence”?

We understand competence as a person’s ability to act in a specific field and a specific situation. Competence consists of three constituent elements: knowledge, skills and what we call “inner readiness”.



¹ Over the past decade we have become used to the English definition of competence as comprising three main components: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes. The Lithuanian organization Kitokie projektai has been examining this idea, especially as it always seemed difficult to really explain what was meant by the third component - “Attitudes” - and how to work with them. So colleagues there set out to rethink how to describe this third component AND to show how it is important when working on the development of competences. As Kitokie is a member of several international networks (including Via Experientia and UNIQUE), they have been sharing their reflections with lots of other practitioners who find their ideas to be really exciting and open to adaptation in many contexts. So we decided to share them with you!

The fundamental role and purpose of competence development is to encourage personal action in life, work or other areas. Therefore competences are expressed and assessed primarily through the behaviour of the person. It is our opinion that when development of competences is discussed, little attention has so far been devoted to inner readiness. Whereas, without proper inner readiness knowledge and skills cannot be fully integrated into an individual's state of being and therefore often do not lead to action. Inner readiness includes personal motives, desires and passions, experiences, emotional states, beliefs and values, physical and mental conditions, feelings etc. Inner readiness can be considered as long and short-term cognitive, emotional and visceral habits to respond to a particular situation. Short-term habits are those based on the most recent experience. Long-term habits have been formed a while ago, maybe even in childhood, and may have been refreshed during the course of life. Inner readiness can be described as the learner's habitual way of relating to a situation by mobilising or withholding her capabilities to choose and act.

You can have some skills, you can have some knowledge – but inner readiness is what guides you in how and why you act. It also provides the motivation you need to increase your knowledge and skills

We understand competence as a dynamic phenomenon. Each constituent element of a particular competence is under constant change. Even if the elements change differently, inner readiness is the least stable part of competence. Inner readiness changes most rapidly. At the same time inner readiness is very influential part of competence - even a small change in a person's inner readiness has a big impact on the ability to act in general. Metaphorically speaking we can imagine knowledge and skills as the con-

tents of a treasure box, with inner readiness as the key to open the treasure box and to let them out. (Or, indeed, to stay in the box and get rotten if the key is not there or not functioning!).

3 Inner readiness in training and consulting practice: how we understand it in Kitokie projektai

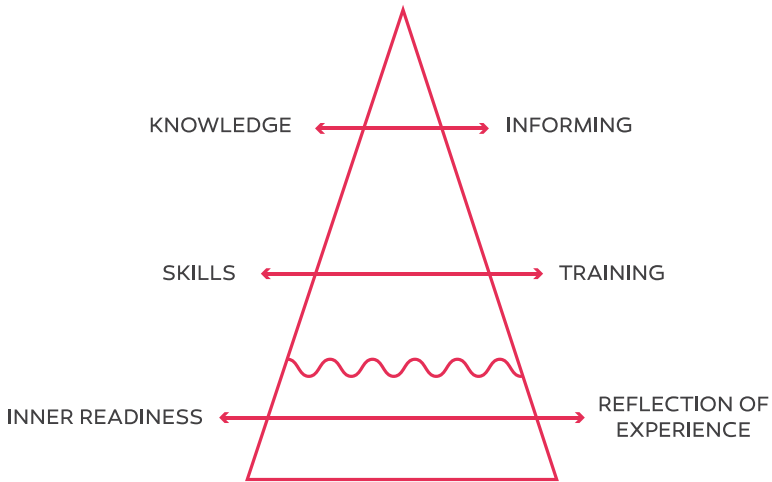
While working with a variety of professional and general competences, our specific expertise is in the development of inner readiness of any given competence. For instance, within the topic of sales we rather invite people to reflect and analyse about themselves in sales situations instead of training them to use different selling strategies. We reflect on their inner readiness to sell. Another example - in conflict resolution training courses we work on a person's inner readiness to take part and solve conflicts instead of training him/her in using different techniques.

Our exceptional field of expertise is this: social, emotional, self-management, training and learning to learn competences. Developing these competences we can provide knowledge, train the skills and work with a person's inner readiness.

We understand social competences as those needed in interpersonal communication. Social competences include such vital ones as communication, cooperation, decision making in a group, teamwork, conflict management, leadership and cultural sensitivity.

Emotional and self-management competences are crucial for self-awareness and interpersonal sensitivity. They include self-consciousness, reflection

skills, adequate self-perception, critical thinking, values, stress management and self-respect (dignity, self-esteem, self-confidence).



How does this work at a practical level?

While knowledge and skills are more objective, inner readiness is subjective; therefore it requires specific approaches for development. In order to develop knowledge and skills, you inform and train the learner. The change in inner readiness happens through the building of a person's awareness by reflecting about personal experience in an equal and respectful educational relationship.

Building awareness by reflecting means learning how to independently analyse (notice, rethink, understand, evaluate) internal and external circumstances and aspects of life.

Consequently, inner readiness changes when a person clearly perceives his/her experience being in an open and respectful relationship with other people. We emphasize, that

an open and respectful relationship is a prerequisite for building a person's awareness, as well as inner readiness.

There are also other factors that strengthen inner readiness - following holistic principles (body, mind and emotions); encouraging the learner not to come to fast (or hasty) conclusions; discovering and accepting the human condition, as such, in others and yourself. Inner readiness can be developed by

- Intra-personal practices, such as reflection, introspection, meditation etc.
- Inter-personal practice in groups by involving ourselves in the group process, giving and receiving feedback etc.
- an open and encouraging organisational culture with a balanced level of safety and challenge.

4. CHECKLIST FOR WORKSHOPS

So the aim of this list is to give yourself few minutes to think the whole workshop you've planned together. You always need to go through on some specific points and to help for you we provide this list with many key elements. It can also help you when planning the workshop, as some questions just raise your attention that you need to know information from the group before you start work out a topic of your workshop.

- Clear aims and content
- Group's need have been checked
- Content – target – format triangle checked
- Safety regulations checked
- Room-venue is checked
- Time frame is realistic
- Rules and steps of the exercise are clear
- Facilitators roles are agreed within the team
- Tools are prepared
- Questions of reflection have been prepared
- Criteria of successes are collected

Stay calm, be flexible, but be distinct! good luck 😊