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Active Methods

– A Handbook for Facilitating Learning

Sida

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– A Handbook for Facilitating Learning

By Sanna Ingelstam-Duregård

This handbook was produced as part of the Pedagogical Methods Project that was carried out 2007–2009 at Sida Civil Society Center.

Other results of the project are:

Pedagogical Platform with Comments
Pedagogical Guide for Course Leaders
Course Report – Evaluation and Learning
Pedagogical Guide for Resource Persons
Terms of Reference with Pedagogical Requirements

These documents can be obtained from Sida Partnership Forum/ Härnösand. All of the documents are available in Swedish and most of the documents have been translated into English.

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Foreword

"People who always know best never learn anything new" *H. Tikkanen*

The goal of development cooperation is "to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life". In pedagogy for development cooperation, change itself and development have to be the goals – so that the competence that is developed has consequences and leads to results.

In formulating the goal for poverty alleviation, the road to achieving the goal is also created. If the goal is to support democratic development, the pedagogical activities have to be characterised by a democratic approach. In work towards just and sustainable global development, pedagogy can not be neutral, instead it has to be based on the values of justice and sustainability and promote them.

Learning takes place in processes that include feeling and thinking as well as acting. Learning takes place when we reflect over experiences and fact-based knowledge together with others. From this we formulate theories for how one can act. We all have different ways of learning, and for that reason the most effective learning occurs when we are challenged through a variety of methods.

Dr. William Ogara and the CORAT Africa (Christian Organisations Research and Advisory Team) have contributed inspiration to the handbook's pedagogical approach and methods.

Finally, I would like to thank Sanna Ingelstam-Duregård, Project Leader for the Pedagogical Methods Project, who has compiled this handbook.

We have a lot to learn from each other and *Active Methods – A Handbook for Facilitating Learning* is meant to support that exchange.

Lena Blomstrand, Head of Team, AKTSAM Härnösand, 2009.

Introduction

Active Methods – A Handbook for Facilitating Learning is intended to be of help in planning course sessions and activities that activate participants. The Handbook is based on the pedagogical conviction that effective learning starts with the individual's own questions and experiences and that learning develops best in interaction with others.

The handbook consists of:

- two chapters that take up the learning process and how to plan for learning,
- one chapter, *Methods for Learning*, that introduces a list of methods where exercises along with brief instructions are presented in alphabetical order,
- one chapter on icebreakers and games and a number of examples of such exercises.
- finally, there are two tables of methods with suggestions on how to use the exercises.

This handbook does not claim to be a detailed description of all of the possible methods. Several of the methods might have other names and instructions in other handbooks. The purpose of this guide is to inspire – and its methods can be combined, modified and developed to advantage by those who want to use them.

When one is about to plan a session the most crucial questions are: WHY is the session being planned? WHAT issues should be raised? WHO is the target group? Then, based on the answers to these questions is the question of HOW? This handbook is meant to be support to this process.

Facilitating and Planning for Learning

Who? – About the Participants

It is important to be aware of the participants' motives as well as their expectations and apprehensions. By familiarising oneself with the participants in advance it is easier to adjust the level and the methods to the target group.

The participants may have different reasons for attending the course. The motives may be external or internal. An example of an external motive could be that the participant is obliged to attend a course by an employer when facing new tasks. Internal motives could be a participant's own deep, genuine longing for new competence.

Worries regarding attending the course might be about…

- the level being too high or too low
- the content not being relevant or meaningful to them
- having to challenge their preconceptions and alter their knowledge, values and actions.
- a fear of not feeling comfortable with the methods used.

The participants are the session's most precious resource. There are often participants with important and valuable experiences who can contribute to everyone's learning. It is a good thing to try to make use of these experiences. Using the word *"we"* when speaking about what is planned for the session is an easy way to get the participants to feel involved.

It is usually most successful to make the participants active early in the session, for example, by exploring their expectations and apprehensions and/or their experiences and existing knowledge. In this handbook there is a wide range of suggestions on how to do this.

Creating a Group

Are there any rules for learning? Reflection is often done in discussions. Therefore it can be useful to establish some rules that everyone can agree to at in the beginning of a learning activity, session or course. Here are some examples:

- no one owns the truth
- it is acceptable to admit mistakes and uncertainty
- we listen respectfully and with full attention
- use "I" – not "one" or "we"
- one person at a time speaks and it is not permissible to interrupt
- jokes and laughter are good

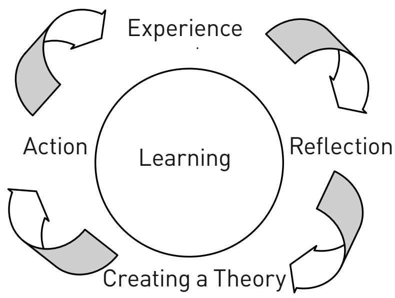
In living up to the ambition of keeping the participants active, it is important to be conscious of giving everybody space regardless of gender, disability or ethnicity. One also has to be observant of encouraging and asking for experiences from "the quiet ones" – and not just the active and talkative.

It is also necessary not to underestimate the participants' need to interact with each other. The facilitator's relationship with the participants is less important. We can quote this well known saying from the classroom: *"The best teacher is the one whose students say: We did it ourselves."*

Working with a group over an extended period of time, one will probably see most of these phases.
- The forming stage: The group is characterised by politeness and awareness.
- The storming stage: There are disputes and arguments.
- The norming stage: Rules and hierarchies are established.
- The performing stage: The group takes action and gets a lot of work done.
- The mourning phase: The group knows it will break up

The Learning Cycle and Learning Styles

Based on the conclusions of several other educational theorists David Kolb has developed the theory of the learning cycle which has been interpreted and simplified by Mumford and Honey. This model is another way of describing how learning takes place.



Experience and conceptualisation (recognising patterns and models and thinking abstractly, one could say building theories) express how we apprehend the world while reflection and the action we take (experimentation) describe how we comprehend or process our impressions. The different combinations tell us about our own learning styles.

We are all different and have different strategies for acquiring new knowledge. There are several theories and models that describe different learning styles and "intelligences". A person can have one learning style that is dominant while having access to several others. A person's preferred learning style can depend on the situation or the purpose of that which is being learned. That means that an individual's learning style can vary depending on the situation.

At the same time this cycle describes learning. We have experiences which we reflect upon and from which we form theories on which we base our actions. We all learn in different ways and therefore "hop onto" the cycle in different places. We usually learn more effectively and efficiently in one of the phases, but we all have to go through every phase of the cycle in our own learning process.

This, of course, has consequences for planning and facilitating the learning of adults in a group. It is most likely that all of the learning styles will be represented and if one wants all of the participants to be involved – one also has to plan learning that stimulates different learning styles.

In preparation for the task of facilitating learning it is important to reflect on one's own experiences of learning:
- Who are the good examples (educators) that I have met? What made them so outstanding?
- When and how do I learn best? What comes easily to me, and what is difficult?
- What knowledge, skills and experiences have been important to me? How did I acquire them?
- Which courses, trainings or meetings have helped my learning? What characterised them?

The Learning Process

Knowing how to learn will be the most important competence in the future. Deep down inside everyone both wants to and is able to learn and develop. That does not contradict the fact that learning has to be systematically planned to be effective. By promoting learning and thereby acknowledging our capacity for growth we are also promoting personal development. Learning should be fun.

By letting these insights into effective learning have consequences in the learning activities one is responsible for; there is a good chance of succeeding. Through meeting the participants with enthusiasm and curiosity while showing the usefulness of the subject and having confidence in the methods used, one creates a solid foundation for learning.

Learning is a process of development where individuals, through reflecting upon and interpreting impressions, form their approach to the world around them. By reflection and interaction with others, individuals and groups build new knowledge and develop their skills.
A group's ability to carry on a dialogue and have discussions where participants are free to question and to examine each other's experiences determines how successful the process will be.

The most effective learning happens when we can fulfil these criteria:

we really want and need the knowledge;
we know we will apply it;
we will be rewarded one way or another for having it;
we can draw on our own experience;
we can learn at our own pace and style;
we are encouraged to learn about where to find and then to judge information;
we are stretched and challenged;
we are supported;
we are treated as individuals with unique needs by who ever is helping us to learn.

From Rogers: Adults Learning

Clarifying Goals and Aims

In planning a session the most crucial questions are: WHAT issues should be raised WHY should they be raised? And WHO are the target groups? From the answers to these question comes the question HOW?

One ought to think about and formulate the goals and the aims of the activity. Important questions to ask oneself as facilitator are:

What do I want to achieve?
What questions do I want to arise in the participants?
How do I intend to develop their thinking?
What attitudes do I want to promote?
What are the participants supposed to take with them?

The goals should be formulated based on what the participants are expected to achieve. Examples of how to express goals are:

- *the participants should have received an orientation on….*
- *the participants should have practised a method for…*
- *the participants should have reflected upon…*

Learning and Teaching

How can aims and goals be reached? One important insight is that teaching is not the same as learning. "Learning by doing" implies that learning takes time and that one learns by testing new knowledge and processing it in reflection and discussion. Only then can new knowledge contribute to an increased ability to act. It is important that one identifies the main message of an activity and makes sure to repeat it and to come back to it again and again.

As we all have different learning styles the best way to facilitate learning is through a variety of methods. With the help of the participants' own experiences understanding can become more true to reality and complex. Knowledge and good judgement is developed where facts, values and action meet.

The word 'reflect' comes via German from the Latin word 'reflectere' which means 'bend back, turn thoughts back, consider.' In Medieval Latin it could also mean 'throw back rays of light.'

Different kinds of Activities

In the table below there are examples of the main categories of learning activities. Informing the participants in advance of the character of the activity creates realistic expectations.

Categories of learning activities

Activity	Content
Case study	The participants focus on finding solutions to problems when working analytically with authentic cases.
Discussion/ conversation	The participants are given an opportunity to discuss a particular issue.
Lecture	The participants get to acquaint themselves with a resource person's knowledge and experiences. A long lecture should include presentations and enable the participants to process these by using active methods such as buzz groups or other activities in small groups.
Group work	The participants are given a task to do together in a small group.
Presentation (with questions/ dialogue)	The participants get to acquaint themselves with a resource person's knowledge and experiences and ask the resource person questions.
Seminar	One subject is focused upon. A resource person may give a short introduction after which the participants are invited to be active in a discussion. This often requires preparation, such as having all of the participants read the same document (book, text etc).
Workshop	The participants are given the opportunity to practise and explore what is to be learnt by active participation (and application).

The Session Plan – A Tool for Planning

A session plan is a simple plan of a session's organisation which includes: goal and purpose, the session's different activities, materials needed and time scheduled for each activity. It is much easier to improvise if one is well prepared.

The planning should allow for:

- Values and different perspectives
- Concrete examples
- Theories (facts, research)
- Application and tools/ideas on how to take action
- Reflection and dialogue (including encouraging questions and criticism)
- Participation and interactivity (including exchanging experiences)
- A balance and variety when choosing methods

However well one has planned the session one still has to be aware of the needs of the group and be prepared for the unexpected. The plan may have to be abandoned if the participants so desire it or if it is necessary for some reason during the session. Without abdicating leadership and responsibility for the process one should give the participants an opportunity to influence, to a certain extent, the content and methods.

Example of a Session Plan

Goal and purpose:
– that the participants shall have an orientation on the concepts...
– that the participants shall have practised the method...

Heading	Details/Content	Method	Material, equipment	Time, est.
Introduction	Presentation of me. The issues to be raised. Rules (such as participation) Presentation of the participants		Overhead with content	10
What do we know?	Exchange of experiences	Buzz groups Joint reporting back Discussion	Flip chart (for central concepts)	15
Presentation of current research	Information, facts	Power point	Computer projector Power point – handouts	10

Time Allotment, Introduction and Wind-up

Allocating time:

a) It is good to allocate time for the different elements of a session even if it can be quite tricky to estimate the exact time needed. That usually depends on how knowledgeable and active the participants are.
b) Even if one does not manage to accomplish everything that has been planned in advance, one ought to make sure to allow time for the parts of the session that are the most important.
c) The participants appreciate it if the times for start, pauses and ending are kept.

Introduction

a) Presentation. This can be both professional and personal. One can give a brief summary of one's own background and, depending on the situation and context, choose some relevant experiences. The participants appreciate hearing about how one as course leader or resource person became interested in that particular field.
b) The Session. One should describe what is going to be taken up in the session as well as the use that the participants will have for the subject. It is also a good thing to give clear information on times and possible breaks.
c) If it is a long session, one or two days, it is appropriate to ask the participants about their expectations when one introduce the session. Commenting on the participants' expectations creates a natural starting point for the session.
d) It is good to be informed about the participants' prior knowledge. It is useful to find out about the group with the help of a simple inventory at an early stage of the course.
Suggestions for methods can be found in the List of Methods for Learning

Winding-up

a) One can provide a reading list including books, articles and links, which the participants can use to deepen their understanding. It is a great advantage to be able to show them the recommended books and/or the websites. Keep in mind that "Less is more"; that is, it is better to present a few highly appreciated texts or sites than a long list.
b) Thanking the participants for their attentiveness and contributions is a good way to end; and, if it is appropriate, wishing the participants good luck. One may also provide information on who to contact in case there are any further questions and comments.
c) A picture, a quotation or a short summary can tie everything together.

Documenting Learning

Highlighting lessons learnt by the group in discussions and in exchanging experiences is important as well. How can lessons learnt be saved and applied in the future? This question should be addressed to not only to the participants themselves, but also to other contexts where the knowledge achieved could be of interest and use. It is recommended that the group discusses how this could be done.

Different kinds of learning require different kinds of documentation. If notes have been taken in the group discussions etc they may be written up properly and copied before being distributed by the facilitator or by one of the participants. By giving the activity a continuation you make the activity more meaningful and indicate that the learning has not come to an end – but instead will lead to results and action in the work areas of the participants.

The Time and the Place

The time WHEN learning takes place can also be of importance. When in the week is it? Is it morning, afternoon or evening? What season is it? Is it possible to organize outdoor activities? How can we make use of daylight?

WHERE learning is to take place is another relevant aspect. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to offer an environment that is as suitable as possible. How the room is furnished influences the participants' perception of the learning situation. Obviously, the physical distance between the facilitator and the participants should not be too great. The participants can be seated around tables arranged as islands in order to enable group discussions. If the chairs are arranged in rows, one behind the other, one should try to put them into a semicircle to enable some eye contact between the participants.

Do not underestimate the participants' need for movement. It is an advantage that the chairs can be easily rearranged, if, for example, some activities require group work or chairs in a circle. There are many ways that allow the students to stretch their legs that do not require actually taking a break. Activities such as the values clarification exercises give the participants a chance to move around. One can also have the participants change places before working in buzz groups. Having fruit and water available in the room offers a legitimate reason for moving about.

One should make sure that all of the necessary "props" are in place. It is also important to check to see that all of the equipment works and that there are pens, pencils, note books, post-its, a flip chart, and so on.

Learning Aids

Learning aids should be used with moderation and only when they are relevant to a particular purpose.

A flip chart is used for lists etc and for things that one might want to get back to later. Sometimes questions are posed that are not suitable at that moment. These can be "posted" on the flip chart and dealt in the proper context or at the end of the activity.

The white board is used for writing down central concepts and so on and for drawing diagrams of structures, processes, and relationships.

The overhead projector is used for presentations as well as showing pictures or short quotations. It can also be used in a creative way: by projecting an overhead slide onto the whiteboard, one can underline and make notations on the projected image by writing on the whiteboard.

A computer projector can be used for showing slide shows, Power Point presentations, computer programs and software, or websites.

DVD/VHS recorders can be used for showing short movie sequences to illustrate a particular subject.

Power Point: If one uses a Power Point presentation or the overhead projector one should avoid facing the screen. For that reason one should have a copy of the slides at hand. This will make it easier to maintain eye contact and relate to the participants. Another important piece of advice is that one should make sure not to overload the slides with information and text. On each slide there should only be a few points written in a readable size. One should also avoid overdoing the layout since this will take the focus away from the content; however photos and pictures are often appreciated.

Paper or Digital Materials

Before: If it is possible, it is a good idea to give the participants some reading or a task to do as preparation in order to give them a common starting point. This can be done digitally. The material can provide an introduction (basic facts) with such things as fundamental concepts, abbreviations. It is extremely important that one then uses and refers to the preparation material. Doing so can make the session more effective and give the participants a chance to prepare their questions.

During: Texts and other materials can be used during the learning activities as support and reference. This could be material (photocopies of articles and handouts, information material, books) that has already been prepared which can be distributed when appropriate. The advantage to distributing overhead or Power Point slides that are used in paper form is that it makes it possible for the participants to focus on their own notes and reflections.

After: In conclusion one can give the participants a list of ideas, for example book or link suggestions on how they can go more deeply into the subject.

Digital solutions: Naturally, printed material and photocopying should be provided when necessary. Supplementary material does not need to be distributed; instead it is recommended that those who are interested download it – if possible. When it is a question of large courses, there is an advantage to providing course material on a memory stick.

Believe in Oneself!

It is not only the participants one should believe in, but also oneself.

Therefore:

Trust your competence and your experiences.

Use your strengths and your personality.

Be credible in your commitment to the subject.

Nourish your curiosity and humility in relation to the participants' knowledge and experience.

Believe in your ability to facilitate learning.

Methods for learning

Lectures and Presentations

Research shows that *lectures alone* do not stimulate thinking or change attitudes, but they do work reasonably well for transferring information. A well prepared presentation or lecture with a clear goal and a good structure can be used to deliver information – however, it is necessary to follow it up with reflection or action for learning to take place. Illustrations, models and pictures may facilitate the participants' understanding.

It is a good thing to…

– be well prepared
– show commitment to the subject and present different perspectives.
– involve participants by asking questions, giving comments and encouraging them to ask questions.
– use previous experience and humour.
– use concrete examples and link them to theories (facts and research)
– show how the new learning can be applied and provide tools for moving forward
– make use of pictures (comic strips, photos etc) in helping the participants to reflect or to add a little humour

Use the "lighthouse method" when addressing a group, which means that one lets one's eyes sweep back and forth across the group. (It is very easy to turn only to those showing the greatest interest or those nodding in agreement.)

Discussions and Conversations

"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts." *Bertrand Russell*

A learning conversation is based on the understanding that the participants both can and want to learn from each other. In order for a conversation to be a learning conversation it is important to keep the dialogue focused and to circle in on the concepts and issues that are being investigated. The role of the facilitator is to keep the conversation focused and to offer support so that different views, perspectives and experiences become visible.

In order to make a discussion or a conversation into a learning session it is crucial to make it clear that…

- it is not a context where the facilitator only acts as the chairperson who simply gives the participants permission to speak.
- it is not a debate where the participants hold unshakeable opinions and try to overcome or win over their opponents.
- it is not a therapy session where one treats and tries to solve difficult personal problems.

It is important to give the participants the opportunity to express their opinions and then to have them questioned, probed and discussed in a safe environment. Staying out of discussions and not expressing their own views is a challenge for facilitators. Questions should be posed to the group, but never of the "guess-what-I-am-thinking" sort. Summing up discussions with a common conclusion is not advisable – instead the variety of viewpoints can be highlighted.

The role of the facilitator is…

- to pose short effective questions such as "How do you see it?", "And..?" and "So that…?"
- to ask questions that can not be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" – but rather ask: "What…?"
- to confirm participants' contributions by encouraging, commenting and connecting.
- to sum up and highlight what has been said.
- to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and to be observant that individuals or groups are not silent because of gender, disability, language problems and so on.

Values Clarification Exercises

The methods used in the *Values Clarification Exercises* were developed in the USA. Clarifying our values is one way of making ourselves aware of our opinions, thoughts and wishes. It is a structured way of introducing discussions on questions without fixed answers such as issues regarding morality, ideology and life style.

In values clarification exercises the participants are given the opportunity…

- to think things through and state an opinion
- to practise expressing their views.
- to motivate their standpoints.
- to practise listening to others.

When there is a gap between our opinions and our actions we can either change our actions so that they become something we can stand for or we can change our opinions so that they are in agreement with and can defend our actions.

The following must be made clear to participants before carrying out a values clarification exercise:

- There is no right and wrong
- Everyone's opinions are respected

– One does not have to participate in the exercise
– One may change one's mind during or after the discussion.

That means that the statements require openness to different solutions. It must be all right to choose all of the solutions that are suggested. No one should be exposed to a situation where the view one expresses first is then proven to be wrong at the end of the exercise. The statements should address values, not facts, – and never personality or things one might have experienced. However, the participants may use their experiences to explain their views, of course.

The facilitator does not take part in the exercise but facilitates and questions the participants' stand points. It is advisable to first ask people at random and then allow those who want to make a comment. One must of course strive to give as many participants as possible the chance to speak including the quiet ones.

After the discussion these follow-up questions should be asked:

Would you have answered in the same way if there had been more time to think things through?

Has your opinion or position been influenced or changed by the discussion?

Would you like to change your standpoint? Would you like to move now?

Examples of values clarification exercises: *Four Corners, Hot Seat, Line-up: Values, Ranking, Red and Green, Unfinished Sentences, Yes-No-Maybe*

Inventory of Experiences

The methods for making an inventory of experiences are intended to activate the participants and give them a chance to highlight and share with others their experiences, knowledge, opinions and ideas on a particular subject. Obviously the inventory that is made should be used as a starting point for developing learning. This kind of exercise may force the facilitator to change the timetable and planning. In that case one must be prepared to do that.

Examples of methods for Inventory of Experiences*: Buzz Groups, Brainstorming, Open Space, Ranking*

Group Work

Unless the subject is mathematics or crossword puzzles, research has shown that groups are more productive than individuals. The power of the group together is greater than that of the individual alone. Creativity increases in groups that function democratically. The greater the opportunity for discussions – the more understanding increases.

A group of 3–6 people is the ideal size to enable everyone to take part. The facilitator should give clear instructions about the task, the estimated time as well as if and how the group shall report their findings. Choosing someone from the group at random to report forces all of the members to be involved. Several short group tasks and discussions are preferable to a few long sessions.

By encouraging the participants to change places when doing group work the leader offers an opportunity for leg stretching and movement. One may facilitate by giving the participants something practical to gather round: exercises may need materials such as flip charts, post-its, pencils and tape.

The facilitator should be on hand to answer questions or to clarify during the group work. It is recommended that the facilitator circulate listen and, if needed, support the process. It is also a good idea to remind the groups when there are a few minutes left until reassembling.

One way to get new ideas into the group is to send one or two participants to another group while they are working.

Reporting group work can be done in different ways such as:

- have each group tell one lesson learnt or question
- have the groups work with different questions
- have the groups report verbally using flip charts, or by putting the papers on the walls like an art exhibition where the participants walk around and study the papers.
- have the groups meet in pairs to present their findings
- have the groups report in new groups with representatives for each of the original groups. (See the method *Mixed Groups*)

Examples of methods for Group Work: *Case Study, Group Work with Roles, Action Plan, SWOT Analysis*

Taking Action

Learning that leads to change has to encourage and support readiness for action. The facilitator's responsibility is to continually refer to the consequences learning could have in practice by using concrete examples from real life such as the participants' own experiences.

One way of linking a subject to action is by encouraging the participants to express a plan of action or a way forward at the end of the session.

The ideal situation is, of course, that the learning activities take place in steps on different occasions – and that the participants in that way are given the task of translating the learning into something concrete and acting upon that as part of the learning. This can then bring new experiences to work on to the next learning activity.

Examples of methods for Taking Action: *Letter to Myself, Action Plan, Round the Table, SWOT-Analysis*

See the section on *Evaluation and Lessons Learnt (below)*

Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

Evaluation of a pedagogical activity can be done on different occasions and may therefore result in providing different information. It all depends on what one wants to know. Therefore it is important that the activity, session or course has a clear goal and purpose on which the evaluation is based. The facilitator should allow time for the participants to suggest improvements. Suitable questions could be:

What was good? and

What can be done better? (How?)

Taking a few minutes to consider and reflect on how the session worked is very effective. What went well? What could have been done better or differently?
If thoughts have been written down, they can be used again when a similar exercise is to be done. A useful hint is to never do an activity in exactly the same way twice – that way more can be learned.

Evaluation done within or very close to the end of an activity will give information on how the participants perceive the activity right then and there. These evaluations can sometimes be difficult if someone is openly negative. A good piece of advice is therefore to let written evaluations rest a few days unread. When some time has passed it is *easier to have a more balanced view of your own performance and the opinions of the participants.*

It is good to do on-going evaluations, as well as exercises about learning, during the activity and not necessarily only at the end.

Examples of methods for Evaluation and Lessons Learnt – short activities: *Coloured Judgement, Concentrated Learning, Buzz Groups, Elevator Message, Mini-debate, Plus-Minus-Interesting, Round the Table*

Examples of methods for Evaluation and Lessons Learnt – long activities: *Letter to the Facilitator, Letter to Myself, Debriefing, Five Good and Three Better, Four Quadrants, Coloured Judgement, Fears and Expectations, Dotting, Reflection Book, As If (-I hadn't been there…), Thinking Time*

Forum Theatre, Role Play and Simulations

When it comes to using methods like Forum Theatre, Role Play and Simulations it is important to determine which, and when each method is the right to use. All three are based on the same principle: a course of events is presented to the participants that become the groups' common experience. This can then be the starting point for further work. With the help of the common experience new knowledge can be processed and built. The use of these methods requires training. Therefore is only a short presentation of each method offered here.

The purpose of the Forum Theatre method is to transform participants from passive spectators to active co-creators through acting. It is a way for participants to practice in a safe environment and to prepare themselves for the future. In conflict situations that are dramatised and performed, the participants can explore ways to stop oppression, threats and conflicts. This is done by allowing participants to take on the role of the oppressor and, through that experience, search alternative ways to handle the situation.

Role Play is based on the conviction that knowledge is gained through thinking, feeling and acting. Pedagogic role play is a method where individuals practise expressing their thoughts and feelings in a creative way. The fundamental idea of using Role Play in learning situations is to give each individual the opportunity to acquire knowledge. This is made by taking on different roles in a simple drama and in that way exploring different possibilities and solutions. In role play the participants can process knowledge more deeply in order to get greater understanding and improved judgement. The method also offers the possibility of processing problems from different perspectives.

Simulation is a method where the participants in groups, according to certain rules, are encouraged to solve a problem. The participants in groups can be given different roles or conditions that influence the simulation's outcome. The simulation is expected to give the participants a common experience which can be used as a starting point for further discussions and learning. The most important five steps are the facilitator's preparation, introduction to the simulation, the simulation itself, debriefing (reflection on the common experience) and follow-up (the connection to real situations). The simulation takes the participants through all of the phases of Kolb's learning cycle (see above). An example of a simple simulation is letting the participants divide a chocolate bar where the chocolate bar represents the earth's resources and the group the earth's inhabitants (in that way around 20 % of the participants get around 20 % of the chocolate bar).

List of Methods for Learning

in alphabetical order

Please note that at the end of the Handbook there is a table which gives information and suggestions about how much time each exercise takes, the appropriate group size, its connection to the learning cycle, and at what point in the session the exercise is suitable.

Action Plan

There are many methods for analysing problems the result of which can then be used to decide on a plan of action or solution. LFA (Logical Framework Approach) is one such ambitious instrument. It can also be done in a simplified form based on the following questions:

How does it look just now? Why is it that way? (Present situation, Background)

Who is affected? (Target group)

How is it? How do we want it to be? (Goal)

How can the situation be changed? What needs to be done? Who shall do it? When shall it be done? At what cost? (Action Plan)

After the plan has been carried out, the following questions need to be asked:

How did it turn out? What have we learnt? (Evaluation, Learning)

What makes sense to continue doing? (Follow-up) – and that is where the process begins again….

See the section on *Group Work*

As If (– I hadn't been there)

This is an exercise to be done in pairs where one person pretends that he/she has not participated in a particular session. Showing curiosity and enthusiasm one participant asks the other participant what happened and what was learnt during the session. A variation (a little more daring) is to instruct the person asking the questions to be skeptical and the person answering to be enthusiastic.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Assessment Investigation

The purpose of this method is to highlight positive results and to learn from them. In small groups the participants describe for each other successful projects or a successful solution to a problem that they themselves have participated in (or observed). Together the group tries to identify a number of factors that contributed to the positive result based on the participants' accounts of the strong points. These are then reported to the other groups.

See the section on *Group Work*

Brainstorming

This is a method where the participants are encouraged to use free association when thinking about a certain subject. The participants are asked, based on a given topic, to contribute all of the possible associations, explanations, connections, causes etc. None of the suggestions may be questioned and everything is written up.

The ideas can be written as a list or all over the board with the subject in the centre or as a heading at the top. The facilitator ought to encourage everyone to share their ideas. The facilitator may also inspire associations by introducing aspects or questions related to the topic. The participants should be quoted as exactly as possible in order to avoid the facilitator's own formulations or interpretations. However, participants can be asked for clarification if there is something that is unclear.

Brainstorming can be done in many ways, such as:

- in the entire group where the words are written up on a whiteboard or on flipcharts by the facilitator.
- in small groups using flipcharts.
- as a relay where the participants line up in one or several queues and then take turns writing one word at a time on a flipchart or on a whiteboard. This can go on until the participants run out of ideas.

After brainstorming one can…

- make comments, supplement and build further knowledge around the issues raised.
- put into groups, categorise and analyse the issues raised.
- prioritise and rank the issues mentioned. (See the methods *Ranking* and *Dotting*)
- Let the participants choose one area for further investigation.
- Let the participants choose 4–5 ideas (words) that strengthen their understanding or that they find relevant in some other way.

Alternative: Brainstorm using the *Contrary Method*.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Buzz Groups

In groups of two to three, let the participants discuss a subject or issue what has been presented or what is going to be introduced. Here are some examples of questions*: What do you know about this? What experience* *do you have of this? How do you understand this concept? What do you find most important or interesting in the issues that have been raised so far? How could this be applied?*

When the “buzzing” becomes less intense the facilitator can take the lead again. The groups may then volunteer to present a question or a reflection.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*.

Debriefing

In an activity where the participants have been active and maybe even produced or carried out some phase of the activity together or individually, you can use this simple debriefing method to process to illuminate experiences and learning that has taken place. Work in pairs or groups of three. Focus on one of the participants and ask questions such as*: “What did you do well? What are you less satisfied with? What was your attitude toward the task? How did you use your strengths? What do you need to work on more? What have you learned?”*

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Carousel

The “carousel” is a fast and effective way of making an inventory of participants’ experiences, questions and expectations. The facilitator prepares different papers with at least four different questions at the top: *What are your expectations? What experience do you have from…? What do you know about…?)*

Half of the participants sit in an inner circle (on seats or standing) facing the participants in the outer circle. The people in the inner circle are now “journalists” equipped with a question paper and a pencil. The people who are to be interviewed circulate in the outer ring. The facilitator instructs the group that each interview is to be only *one* minute long.

When one of the people being interviewed gets the same question twice it is time to switch roles and the people being interviewed become the journalists in the inner circle. When everyone has answered almost every question it is time for all of the journalists who had the same question to sum up the answers. Then the summing up is reported to the whole group. If the summary is written on a flip chart, it can be used again at the end of the course.

Variation: Do the exercise at the end of the course with questions such as: *What was good? What could be better? What should be left out?*

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Case Study

The case is a detailed account of a problematical situation. The case ought to be based on an actual situation, somewhat disguised if necessary in order not to reveal the names of the people involved. The account of the case can be about a page long and should contain the relevant facts. Let the participants discuss and analyse the case in groups.

Examples of questions:

What do we know? Why did it happen?

What is the problem?

What conflicts/difficulties are there? What are the possibilities/solutions?

How can the case be solved? What happened afterwards?

Then the facilitator gathers the ideas from the whole group in a discussion. The exercise may be concluded with the facilitator telling the group about what happened in the real case,

See the section on *Group Work*

Coloured Judgement

You can use post-it notes (or other small cards) where different colours represent different aspects of the current subject, for example, "my *thoughts* about that", "my *questions* about that", "my *criticism* of that" or whatever else is suitable. In an evaluation the notes can represent, for example, "that was *good*", "that *could be done better*" or "an aha-experience".

Each participant is given a few different colored notes or cards to write on. The cards are then collected and processed anonymously.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Concentrated Learning

The facilitator can ask the participants in groups (buzz groups) to present three to five lessons, insights or main ideas that they consider to have been important in a part of or in the whole session. Doing so provides a good picture of what they have learnt. The activity can be preceded by having all of the participants reflect individually over the learning that has been important to them – and then having them write down their reflections (which may be collected later).

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

The Contrary Method

The idea of this method is to choose a topic and angle it negatively – for example, an organization that nobody wants to join, a message that nobody understands, a completely unsuccessful HIV/Aids project.

Step 1: How can this negative goal be achieved? First, in groups or all together, make a list of all of the conceivable factors. Try to find out as many as possible.

Step 2: How can it succeed? Take each unsuccessful factor and formulate its opposite. When that is done, the group can think about other things that could be lacking for a successful result.

The exercise can then be followed by the *Ranking* or the *Dotting* methods.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Dilemma

A dilemma is a conflict between different value systems. It could be, for example, a question of a conflict between one's own values or the difficulty of practicing what one preaches when living in a new cultural context. A dilemma asks these questions: How shall I act (or not)?

Below are the steps of a dilemma exercise:

Step 1: Each person formulates a dilemma that they have experienced or that they can imagine experiencing.

Step 2: Each participant shares their dilemma with the group. The other participants ask questions and go more deeply into the dilemma.

Step 3: The group chooses a dilemma that they write down as descriptively as possible. If there is time different plans of action can be suggested, but there should also be an open alternative.

Step 4: The group sends the dilemma in written form, and/or with one of its members, to another group. The emissary presents the dilemma to the new group and can participate in finding a "solution".

Step 5: The new dilemma is discussed – and, if possible, the group presents a common solution.

Step 6: The group meets again briefly to report the groups' dilemmas and possible solutions.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Dotting

This method can be used after brainstorming. "Dotting" involves giving each participant 3–5 dots (use small stickers or a marker), to place on the issues they think are most pressing. The dots represent votes (as in an election). All of the dots can be placed on one issue or be divided as the participant wishes. This gives a good picture of the participants' views on the different subjects and can be used for guidance on what the group should work more with.

When evaluating: A timetable can be posted and the participants can be asked to rank the most important or successful points by dotting.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Elevator Messages

Sometimes there is only the time it takes for an elevator ride to explain something to someone. Let the participants in groups of two or three formulate an "elevator message" on a topic. The pairs may all be given the same topic or different ones. This can be done *before* a presentation to get a picture of the participants' understanding of a subject or *after* as a way to find out how the subject has been understood.

Alternative: This activity can also be done as a summary of a session or an entire course.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Expectations and Apprehensions

At the beginning of the course/day/session have the participants write down their expectations on green cards and their apprehensions on red cards. Read them and tape them up on the board under the headings "Expectations" and "Apprehensions". After the course/day/session ask the participants to look at their cards again considering the following questions. Has my expectation been fulfilled? Take it down. Has my apprehension not been justified? Remove it. The cards that are left are the expectations that have not been met and the apprehensions that were justified. If there is time, let each of them motivate leaving the note or removing it. The remaining cards can be discussed.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Expert Circle

This exercise can be especially useful when there are participants with special expertise on a subject. The experts can in this way get an opportunity to have a discussion at a more advanced level, and the others are given a chance to learn from them. Start by arranging chairs in one smaller inner circle and one bigger outer circle.

1. The participants in the smaller group (the experts) are invited to place themselves in the inner circle facing one another. The others are seated in the outer circle. The group "inside" is given the task of discussing. The group "outside" listens and takes notes (if they want to). Ten minutes of discussion will do.
2. Then the groups change places. The former outsiders are now asked to report the discussion and analyse it. The statements of the participants should start: *"I heard that…" "I understood that…"* The former insiders are now the listeners. Ten minutes of discussion will do.
3. Finally all of the participants form one circle enabling everyone to summarise together.

Alternative: Let half the group start as "the experts" and start the discussion. Then follow the instructions above. The next time the other half can be "the experts".

See the section on *Inventory of experiences*

Five Good and Three Better

This is a method to use in evaluations. In groups, let the participants bring up five areas that were good and ought to be kept in the next course/session and three areas that can be developed. Ask the participants to make suggestions for improvements. These can be given to the facilitator and do not need to be reported to everyone.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Four Corners

The facilitator introduces a question and suggests three possible, but different, answers. It can be a dilemma or deal with probable causes or solutions. These alternatives represent different corners of the room.

The participants are told “Those of you, who agree with this, please place yourselves in this corner…” etc. In addition to the suggested corners the facilitator also offers an “Open Corner” where those who do not agree fully with any of the corners can gather.

When the facilitator has presented all the different corners, the participants are encouraged to choose the corner that agrees most closely with their own opinion. Those in the same corner may then discuss their choice in pairs or small groups for a few minutes. If someone is standing alone in a corner, the facilitator walks to the corner, discusses the participant’s choice with him/her and stays there for the rest of the exercise. Then the participants in the different corners are asked to share their reflections. The exercise ends with follow-up questions.

See the section on *Values Clarification Exercises*

Four Quadrants

Each participant is given a pad of post-it notes. The participants are asked, for example, to comment on a project or a course and told to write down one opinion per note. The facilitator then draws four quadrants on a flip chart or whiteboard with the headings: Continue! Develop! Stop! Miscellaneous! Let each of the participants take turns presenting their post-it notes and putting them under the heading that is most suitable. One way of concluding is by discussing the general picture.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Graffiti

The participants are asked to write down their associations, ideas or thoughts, any which way, on the whiteboard or on a common flip chart. Felt tipped pens in different colours work well in this exercise. Afterwards the group can comment on the graffiti board together.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Group Work with Roles

Group discussions often need to be structured in order to be effective and focused. One way of doing this is to assign each participant a different role to be responsible for in addition to participating in the discussion.

Examples of the roles are:

– *Moderator* = makes sure that everyone has a chance to speak, gives the speakers the floor.
– *Secretary* = writes down the main points and possible conclusions, finds key words and reports back.
– *Timekeeper* = keeps track of time, for example, that all of the participants get a certain amount of time, there is enough time for all of the issues that are to be discussed and when it is time to round off the discussion.
– *Critical Friend* = provides supplementary information and asks questions in a friendly and creative way.

– *Goalkeeper* = prepares for the task – makes sure that the conversation is focused and gives results.

Before the exercise the facilitator can make small signs to be placed on the table in front of the participants (possibly with instructions about the role). The participants should be given new roles the next time they do group work with roles.

Hot Seat

The participants sit on chairs in a circle. It is important that everyone can see each other and that there are no tables or other such things in the way. The facilitator is also part of the circle. A chair becomes "hot" when a person agrees with a statement and then gets up and takes another empty seat. If a person does not agree (or feels uncertain) – he or she remains seated. If only one participant gets up, the facilitator exchanges places with him or her. The facilitator then asks the participants to clarify their point of view. Afterwards follow-up questions are asked.

Alternative for a large group: The participants are asked to stand up if they agree with a statement.

See the section on *Values clarifications*

Letter to the Facilitator

Ask the participants to write a letter to the facilitator of the session. Urge them to formulate three insights or lessons, three "I shall" sentences about things they intend to do as a result of what they have learned and three pieces of advice to you about how you could improve and develop the session or course.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Letter to Myself

Ask the participants to write themselves a letter. If it is possible the facilitator can offer to post it within a reasonable amount of time (maybe after two to three months). Have them formulate three insights or lessons that they have learned, three "I shall" sentences about the sort of thing that they intend to do as a result of the course. If the letter is sent later, the facilitator can provide information on how he or she can be contacted. He/she can also ask the participants to give feedback on how, after some time has elapsed, they view the session/course

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Line-up: Values

The facilitator marks a line in the room (from one wall to the other) where one end represents "I fully agree" and the other end "I fully disagree". The facilitator then presents a statement and the participants "line up" according to where on the line they think they belong. The participants then discuss their reasoning for a few minutes in pairs or small groups. If someone is standing alone, the facilitator joins him/her. The facilitator then asks the participants to clarify their positions. Afterwards follow-up questions can be asked.

A variation is to put the figures from 1 to 6 on the floor and ask the participants to choose a number. The point of choosing a scale of 1–6 is that no one can simply choose the middle and is therefore forced to take a stand.

See the section on *Values Clarification Exercises*

Mixed Groups

An alternative to gathering together in one large group after group work is to form mixed groups. This method is especially useful if the groups have discussed different things. Each person in the smaller groups is given a number (for example from 1–5 if there are five participants). After that all of the ones, twos, and so on meet together and form new groups. In the new mixed groups each person reports the work of their own group. A good suggestion is to put a time limit on each report.

See the section on *Group Work*

Mini-debate

The participants divide into pairs or small groups where they take the role of representing a standpoint for or against an issue. Then they are given a few minutes to prepare their arguments before the debate can take place while still in pairs or small groups.

See the section on *Inventory of experiences*

Open Space

The participants choose a topic or an issue they want to discuss (for example after brainstorming). They write their subject on a paper in big letters. Then they meet in a large open area, a town square, where they sell their ideas. They are asked to carry the paper as a sign in front of them and to go searching for others with similar interests. When groups are formed (often after some compromising) the discussion or group work can start.

See the section on *Inventory of experiences*

PMI Plus Minus Interesting + –!

Choose an area or a question and analyse it from the following:

- What is positive about this? = + (plus sign)
- What is negative about this? = – (minus sign)
- What is interesting about this? =! (Exclamation point)

This can be done individually or as brainstorming in a group.

Alternative: Suitable for evaluating short activities.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Post-it Inventory

The participants are given a number of post-it notes where they are asked, depending on the subject, to write down….

– Associations, what one knows about the subject
– Questions for the resource person or the group

This can be done anonymously. The post-it notes can then be read out loud by the facilitator and sorted into common areas to be treated during the session.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Ranking

First brainstorm causes, actions, aspects or solutions.

1. These should be written on cards or post-its notes. The task for the group is to prioritise and rank the cards in their order of priority.

2. One can also evaluate the suggestions based on the following questions: Which is the *easiest*? Which is the most *effective*? Which is the most *likely* – or *least likely* to be carried out?

Alternative: The facilitator prepares the different solutions on cards or post-it notes in advance.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Red and Green

This is a method for examining the possibilities/strengths and the risks/weaknesses of something. First the idea or suggestion that is hoped to be achieved is formulated. The goal can be personal, specific to the organization or apply to a particular subject area.

All of the arguments that speak for success are listed on one paper (green) and all of the arguments that speak for failure are listed on another paper (red). After that two people or two groups represent the two respective papers and meet in a discussion.

If the groups are allowed to meet they can have a few minutes to discuss their arguments. In the discussion it is permissible to present new arguments and develop the arguments.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Reflection Book

A reflection book is a book where you can collect and write down thoughts and reflections. It could be lessons learnt, insights, objections and questions. A reflection book is not the same as a notebook; instead it has the quality of being personal – and follows one's own development. A reflection book is entirely for the participant's private use; and it is the participant who decides what, if anything is to be shared with others. The purpose of a reflection book is to make the participants aware of their own learning.

Examples of how to begin reflection:

– *Today was about ..., Today ... was is in focus ....*
– *It reminded me of ..., I began thinking about ....*
– *I found ... interesting, I don't agree with ... I question ...,*
– *One lesson was .... I learned that ....*
– *I would like to learn more about ..., I wonder ....*

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Reflection Ladder

Step 1. The facilitator asks the participants to reflect upon an issue or something they would like to ask or know more about. They are given few minutes to reflect on individually and perhaps write down their thoughts.

Step 2. The participants then share their reflections in pairs for a few minutes.

Step 3. Two pairs join to make a group of four. The group's task is to put forth one issue or question.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Repetition

The facilitator can put on some music and show slides (for example a Power Point presentation) or flip chart papers again without comments. One can also put things that have been produced during the session on the walls and let the participants wander around, in silence or while talking, as a way of digesting things that have been taken up.

See the section on *Evaluations and Learning*

Round the Table

This is a way to give all of the participants an opportunity to share associations or experiences in a given subject area. Everyone is given a chance to speak. This can be made visible by using a ball or a "talking stick" in the hand of the person who is speaking for the moment. After finished talking, he or she throws or passes it to the next person. One can also use a microphone to playfully emphasize that everyone's thoughts and experiences are worth listening to.

Alternative: The facilitator throws a ball of thread to the group while holding onto one end. The next participant takes hold of the thread before passing it along to the next person. It is easy to see who has been speaking or not, and the result is: a network!

In evaluations/at the end of a course:"*What are you taking with you from here?*"

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

SWOT Analysis

A slightly more ambitious way of exploring an area is to do something called a SWOT analysis, a kind of future scenario. Which factors influence whether or not a project or an activity is going to succeed? This is usually made clear by using four squares on a paper (or a whiteboard).

One variation is that the group together makes comments on one square at a time. Another variation is that different groups are responsible for different squares on which they then report to the group. This analysis is a good starting point for further discussions.

Strengths	Opportunities
Weaknesses	Threats

See the section on *Group Work*

Thinking Time

By simply taking a break the participants are given a chance to pause and reflect on what they have learned up to this point. Let them leaf through their notes, individually or in pairs, and possibly write down their reflections on something that has caught their attention.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Unfinished Sentences

The group sits on chairs in a circle. The facilitator starts a sentence and then invites the participants to end it. It is of course permissible to say "pass" if one does not want to speak.

Examples: *"If I was in power I would..." The word X makes me think of…" "One solution to this problem could be …"*

See the section on *Values Clarification Exercises*

Walk and Talk (especially in good weather)

The facilitator encourages the participants to take a short walk in pairs to discuss a certain subject.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Water Stairs

Divide the participants into small groups of three to five participants. Let the first group begin discussing an issue for a few minutes while the others listen. Then allow the next group to do the same thing linking onto the first group. After that the next group does the same. This method makes it possible for all of the participants to truly listen to everyone else's thoughts.

See the section on *Inventory of Experiences*

Yes-No-Maybe

Papers with the words "Yes", "No" and "Maybe" are placed on the floor or on the wall. The facilitator then asks questions where the participants show their standpoints by physically placing themselves close to their answer. The participants then discuss the question for a few minutes with the people standing closest to them. The facilitator then asks the participants to clarify their points of view. Afterwards follow-up questions can be asked.

See the section on *Values Clarification Exercises*

Icebreakers and Games

Icebreakers can get the participants to relax or to bring energy into the group. Games make a change of pace and create relationships. Sometimes it is good to do something together that includes movement and laughter. Simple songs with gestures are one way (*Head – shoulders – knees-and-toes* among others). Below you will find a few other suggestions for icebreakers and games. Some of them work best during the introduction when the participants are getting to know each other. Others require a group that is used to working together.

Several of the active methods that have been described previously can also work as icebreakers in that the participants are given a chance to change positions or to move. The facilitator ought to serve as a good example by participating in the exercises when possible.

Icebreakers are sometimes called "energizers".

Back Message

Ask the participants to stand two by two. Give them the task of "drawing" with their hand or finger on the back of the other person. They can draw or write, for example, a name, a place, an important year or something similar. The other participant has to then guess what the message is. Most people do not mind being touched, but one ought to be aware that it might be uncomfortable or unsuitable depending on a participant's background.

Bingo (exercise bingo)

The facilitator prepares a bingo card with, for example, four by four squares. In each square a characteristic, skill or experience is written. The participants are given a card and a pen. The idea is to find, as quickly as possible, who matches each of the squares. You may only use each name (another participant) once. The first person to fill a row, or to fill the whole card, shouts "BINGO!" and wins. However, part of the point of doing this exercise is to first check to see that everything is correct – the persons named have to verify the information. In the squares you can put such things as…."was not born in Sweden", "speaks French", "loves tacos" and so on.

Birthday Hop

Have the participants form groups of 4–6 people. Add together everyone's birthday (day in the month) and divide it by the number of participants. The group then jumps that number of times.

Building Islands

The facilitator asks the group to build "islands" according to instructions, that is, stand together with others who have the same identity or experience. One such area is called out and the participants are permitted to group themselves freely. The participants then introduce themselves. Suggestions for areas that can be used for building islands are: number of siblings, native province/continent, type of housing (flat, condo, terraced house), field of work (professional area), taste in music and other areas that might have some connection to the content of the course.

Here I am!

As a way of getting to know each other the participants can be asked to take a paper and fold it so it forms four squares. In square 1 they write three things they like doing, in square 2 they write the name of a person they appreciate, in square 3 they write three places they like being in and in square 4 they write something they want to learn. After that the participants present their papers in pairs, in groups or to everyone.

I'm really good at…!

Have the participants tell each other three things that they are good at doing. This can be done as a simple pair exercise, for example, for getting to know each other. One variation is for the participants to go around the room and introduce themselves with the help of the skills they have identified. This can also be made with a group that knows each other by writing their talents on a card with the heading "I am really good at….!" The cards are collected and shuffled and then randomly handed out. The participants take turns reading the card they have been dealt while the others try to guess: "who?" (This exercise can also be made with other themes in order to get to know or to get a deeper knowledge of each other in the group.)

The Knot

The participants stand in a circle (about 10–15 participants a circle). They close their eyes, cross their hands in front of themselves and, when the facilitator asks them to, take three small steps into the ring. With their eyes still closed they will try to find two hands to hold on to. When everyone has found two hands (the leader might have to help the participants make contact) everyone is asked to open their eyes. The group is then asked to untie the knot and make a new ring without letting go of each others' hands. This is a very concrete example of problem solving.

Like and Unlike

When the participants in the group are getting to know each other it is common that you have them talk in pairs and introduce themselves. This is usually a simple way of making sure that everyone is seen. In addition, giving the pairs the task of finding two to three things they have in common can provide unexpected information.

Alternative: You can also do a similar exercise in groups of three, where they present three things they have in common and one to three areas where they are different. However, there should be some sort of link between the differences, for example, we play *different* instruments, have visited *different* countries in Africa and so on.

Name Solitaire

This is suitable for a group of 10–30 participants. All of the participants are standing in a circle. They then play solitaire where the goal – if everyone makes it correctly – is to go out. The participants are asked to mingle and greet each other. You begin by greeting (shaking hands) and introducing yourself by name. The person swap names and uses the other persons name when greeting the next person. Every time you greet a person you swap names. When you have received back your own name, you are finished and go to the outer circle, while the remaining participants try to get back their names.

Name Circle

This is a classic way to learn everyone's name and should be done at the very beginning of a course with a maximum of 30 participants. It often promotes concentration and focusing in a group. In addition to that everyone is seen and several get to hear their names many times. The exercise goes like this: all of the participants sit in a circle. The facilitator is starting by saying his or her name. The next person says the facilitator's name and his or her name. The third person says the two names and then his or her own. This continues until the last person in the circle is reached. The leader should repeat everyone's name in one last round.

Gingerbread Tag

This is a game that requires a certain amount of room for running. The participants make pairs by locking arms with each other (like gingerbread men). One participant is "it" and chases another participant. The person being chased can save himself by locking arms with another person, then that person's partner becomes the person being chased. If the person who is" it" succeeds in tagging a person (touching them lightly), the person who is tagged is "it" and has to chase the others.

Line-up: Order

The facilitator asks the participants to stand in a long line according to different instructions, for example, in the alphabetical order of their first names. Then may all of the participants say their names from A to Z. Other instructions can be to line-up according to: birthdays – from January to December, place of birth – from north to south, from their organizations – alphabetically. You can also introduce an element of competition where the groups compete on being the first to complete the line-up. Then you can add several categories such as height, profession, age and things that are related to the subject.

Pepping

This can be done in a group where the participants know each other fairly well. It is the Dakota tribe's way of building up strength before a buffalo hunt. The participants stand in pairs face to face as near to each other as possible. Then one participant, for a minute while the leader keeps time, gives the other participant positive feedback by talking about the other person's positive characteristics, talking about how appreciated he or she is, and expressing a strong belief in what he or she can achieve. Then it is the other person's turn to do the same.

Personal Timeline

The participants are asked to draw their own timelines, and note events (three to five examples) that influenced them to come to where they are today. The timeline can then be presented in a smaller group.

The River of Life is a variation of this exercise. The participants see their lives as a river winding forward. The participants mark a few important events or choices where the river changes direction.

Quiet Eyes

The participants stand in a circle. The task is to greet everyone in the circle without using words. Instead they are to use eye contact, nodding and changing places. When everyone has greeted each other the exercise is over.

Remember My Name

At the beginning of a course you can let the participants introduce themselves by mingling around the room and greeting each other with the words "My name is XXX and you can remember my name by ……" (Have the participants use their imaginations.)

Simon Says

This is a classic game that is good for a laugh. Have all the participants stand in a circle. The leader or one of the participants gives instructions and decides what is to be done. All of the orders that begin with "Simon says…." are to be carried out. Some examples are: "*Simon says jump". "Simon says clap your hands!"* But if the leader says "Clap your hands!" the participants are not supposed to do anything. The people who "fail" have to leave the circle – or take over as the leader of the game. The tempo should be fast.

In Conclusion

There are many people who have contributed ideas and content to this handbook. However, I would like to give special thanks to my colleagues at Sida, Stellan Arvidsson, Ewa Wärmegård and Toomas Mast for their good ideas and clear guidance. I would also like to thank Susan Haglund and Rose Eriksson for their help in translating the handbook.

Much of the inspiration for this handbook has come from the following publications and books where those who are interested can find more to read:

Sida's Learning, 2005, can be found at www.sida.se in English under Publications

Chambers, Robert, *Participatory Workshops*, Earthscan 2002

Rogers, Jenny, *Adults Learning*, Open University Press 2007

Steinberg, John, *Pedagogdoktorns handbook,* Brain books 2006

Good luck to the users of this handbook with their own learning – and with the learning of others.

Pedagogical Platform – Learning for Change

Task

Our task is to support Swedish actors and their partners working in international development cooperation by organizing, in collaboration, activities whose content and methods promote the goal of development cooperation: just and sustainable global development.

Pedagogical goals

- To offer effective learning activities and organizational development within development cooperation.
- To provide meeting places where different actors, through dialogue and by exchanging experiences, can both challenge and be challenged.

Pedagogical approach

The forum offers a pedagogically secure environment where learning can occur in the meeting between people's different knowledge, experiences, perspectives and questions – a learning that is characterized by commitment, challenge, and respect. The forum's activities are to support the learning process where experiences are refined, time is given for reflection, theories are discussed and the ability to act is developed.

Sida Partnership Forum/Härnösands Pedagogical Platform,
produced in the Pedagogical Methods Project, Sida, Södra vägen 3D,
871 40 Härnösand

Table

Active Methods

This table of methods is intended to be of help in the search for suitable methods and to give suggestions on how and when they can best be used. An attempt has been made to arrange the methods into where they belong according to the learning cycle model depending on whether the intention is to work with experience, reflection, conceptualisation or experimentation. However, the methods can also be used and adapted for group sizes and other purposes than the ones suggested below.

x = recommended o=can be adapted

Method	Approximate Time Needed			Approximate Group Size			Type of Exercise					Placement	
	10 min	20 min	30 min+	10	20–25	30+	Experi-ence	Reflec-tion	Concep-tualisa-tion	Experi-menta-tion	Evalua-tion Learning	Start	End
Action Plan			x	x	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
As If (-I hadn't been there)	x			x	x			x			x		x
Brainstorming				x		o	x	o				x	
Buzz Groups	x			x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
Debriefing		x		x	x			x		o	x		x
Carousel		x		x	x		x					x	
Case Study			x	x	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Coloured Judgement	o	x		x	x		x	x			x	x	x
Concentrated Learning	x	x		x	x	o	x	x				x	x
The Contrary Method		o	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
Dilemma		x		x	x			x		o	x		x
Dotting	x			x	x	o		x		x	x	x	x
Elevator Messages		x		x	x	x	o		x	x	x	x	x
Expectations and Apprehensions	x			x	x	o	o	x			x	x	
Expert Circle			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Five Good and Three Better		x		x	x	x					x		x

Method	Approximate Time Needed			Approximate Group Size			Type of Exercise					Placement	
	10 min	20 min	30 min+	10	20–25	30+	Experi-ence	Reflec-tion	Concep-tualisa-tion	Experi-menta-tion	Evalua-tion Learning	Start	End
Four Corners		x	o	x	x	x	x	o		x		x	
Four Quadrants		x						x		o	x	o	x
Graffiti	x			x	x		x					x	
Group Work with Roles		o	x	x	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hot Seat		x		x	x	x	o		x	x	x	x	x
Letter to the Facilitator		x		x	x			x		x	x		x
Line-up: Values	x	x		x	x	x	x	o		x			
Letter to Myself		x		x	x	x		x		x	x		x
Mini-debate		x		x	x	o	x	x				x	x
Mixed Groups		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Open Space		o	x				x	x	x	x		x	x
PMI	x			x	x	x		x			x	o	x
Post-it Inventory		x		x	x		x					x	
Ranking		x		x	x	o	x	x	o	x		x	x
Reflection Book	x	o		x	x	x		x			x	x	x
Reflection Ladder		x		x	x		x	x	o			x	x
Red and Green		x		x	x	o	x	x	x	x		x	x
Repetition	o	x		x	x	x		x			x		x
Round the Table		x		x	x		x	x			x	x	x
SWOT			x	x	x	o	x	x		x		x	x
Thinking Time	x			x	x	x		x			x	x	x
Unfinished Sentences	o	x		x	x		x			x	o	x	x
Walk and Talk		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Water Stairs			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
Yes-No-Maybe	x	x		x	x	x	x			x		x	x
Walk and talk		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table

Icebreakers and Games

Method	Approximate Time Needed		Approximate Number of Participants			Placement	
	10 minutes	20 minutes	10	20	30	Suitable at Introduction	Any Time
Back Message	x		x	x		x	x
Bingo		x		x	x	x	x
Birthday Hop	x		x	x	x		x
Building Islands		x		x	x	x	x
Here I Am!		x	x	x	o	x	x
I Am Really Good At...	o	x	x	x		x	x
The Knot	x		x	x			x
Like and Unlike		x	x	x		x	
Name Solitaire	x		x	x			x
Name Ring		x	x	x		x	
Gingerbread Tag	x		x	x	o		x
Line-up: Order		x	x	x	o	x	x
Pepping	x		x	x	o		x
Personal Timeline		x				x	x
Quiet Eyes	x		x	x		x	x
Remember My Name	x		x	x		x	
Tysta ögon	x		x	x		x	x

Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.

Active Methods – A Handbook for Facilitating Learning

The goal of development cooperation is "to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life". In formulating the goal for poverty alleviation, the road to achieving the goal is also created.

"Active Methods – A Handbook for Facilitating Learning" is intended to be a help in planning course sessions and activities that activate participants. The Handbook is based on the pedagogical conviction that effective learning starts with the individual's own questions and experiences and that learning develops best in interaction with others.

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