

# CHAPTER 4

## GROUP WORK

*It takes time for a group to learn to work  
and take decisions in a democratic way.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Groups include families, classrooms, workplaces, back-fence get-togethers, bar scenes, gamers, net-chatters, legislatures, sports, etc., they are everywhere. We spend much of our lives in groups. There are many useful perspectives on the psychology and sociology of groups, and many experiences that an individual or group can go through something about groups, but usually it is on a level we do not think about, and sometimes we are just repeating habitual patterns (withdrawal from conflict, no participate in meetings, assigning blame to a scapegoat, etc.). We can learn from having some conscious experience with groups. Anyone can learn to pay attention to the dynamics in a group to help us understand how we behave in the group and possibly what we can do to help ourselves and the group itself work better, and to help us understand other groups. The first skills involved are usually listening and reflecting.

This chapter looks at the basics of group work, tries to understand it, and suggests ways to achieve rewarding group work in connection with problem solving in workshops and conferences. This chapter also examines the group process and how it can best be facilitated. The key is that the group should be viewed as an important resource whose maintenance must be managed just like any other resource and the final objective is that this management should be undertaken by the group itself so that it forms a normal part of the group's activities.

In Section 2, a first introduction to group work and an outline of a theory on individual's personality will be outlined. Then, in Section 3 a real-life case study of creative group work will be presented. This was a workshop facilitated by the author for eight persons creating international projects within the theme: young entrepreneurship.

A classical five stage model for group development and the concept of communities of practice will be presented in Section 4. Dealing with conflicts in group work is the theme of Section 5. An essential tool in group work is dialogue as a fundamental communication process. The facilitation of group work enhancing dialogue processes is the topic of Section 6.

The facilitation of focus group work is discussed in Section 7. This kind of group work involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals with the purpose of obtaining perspectives about the same topic. Finally, the last section presents the final remarks.

## **2. Groups**

A group of people working in the same room, or even on a common project, does not necessarily invoke the group process. If the group is facilitated in a totally autocratic manner, there may be little opportunity for interaction relating to the work; if there is fractioning within the group, the process may never evolve. In simple terms, the group process leads to a spirit of communication, cooperation, coordination and commonly understood procedures. If this is present within a group of people, then their performance will be enhanced by their mutual support (both practical and social).

Groups are particularly good at combining talents and providing innovative solutions to possible unfamiliar problems; in cases where there is no well established approach/procedure, the wider skill and knowledge set of the group has a distinct advantage over that of the individual. An ideal group can be seen as a self managing unit. The range of skills provided by its members and the self monitoring which each group performs makes it a reasonably safe recipient for delegated responsibility. Even if a problem could be decided by a single person, there are two main benefits in involving the people who will carry out the decision:

- Firstly, the motivational aspect of participating in the decision will clearly enhance its implementation, and
- Secondly, there may well be factors which the implementer understands better than the single person who could supposedly have decided alone.

From the individual's point of view, there is the added incentive that through belonging to a group each can participate in achievements well beyond his/her own individual potential. Less idealistically, the group provides an environment where the individual's self-perceived level of responsibility and authority is enhanced, in an environment where accountability is shared: thus providing a perfect motivator through enhanced self-esteem coupled with low stress.

When people work in groups, there are two quite separate issues involved:

- The first is the *task* and the problems involved in getting the job done. Frequently this is the only issue which the group considers, and
- The second is the *process* of the group work itself: the mechanisms by which the group acts as a unit.

However, without due attention to this process the value of the group work can be diminished or even destroyed. With an explicit facilitation of the process, it can enhance the worth of the group to be many times the sum of the worth of its individuals. It is this *synergy* which makes group work attractive in organisations and communities despite the possible problems (and time spent) in group formation.

Working with a group on a problem-solving project can be a pleasure and a rewarding experience, especially if synergetic effects have been created. Working with a group can also be a frustrating and a time wasting experience. Experience shows that the product of a well functioning group work has better odds for success than does the product of single individuals. In modern life most individuals spent time working in cooperation and collaboration with others. Group work has demonstrated to be generally superior to individual work due to five main reasons shown in Box 1.

1. Members can offer complementary and supplementary information, experiences, perspectives, and opinions, making the pooled knowledge greater than the sum of its parts.
2. For many persons, the simple presence of others even without interaction motivates them on to think harder and more creatively.
3. Within groups, the most confident, conscientious, and creative members tend to prevail.
4. Errors made by the group are more likely to be detected by a member than individual errors are to be detected by an individual.
5. Several individuals involved with the problem are better than just one, in case of a person leaving the community.
6. Group dynamics and synergy effects can be achieved.

#### Box 1. Advantages of group work

Good group work demands a balance between building a sense of solidarity and responsibility among members during the problem solving process, and getting the task accomplished. This demands from the members of the group not only intelligence and creativity but also social skills. *People are not born with social skills; they have to learn them.* The best way to learn them, obviously, is by working in groups (learning by doing).

Aside from the formal roles of facilitator, coordinator and recorder, most groups need and find people to play a number of other group maintenance roles essential to the health and the progress of the group, some of the helpful roles for the group are: encouragers, feeling expressers, harmonisers, group observer and commentator, compromisers, standard setter, and gatekeepers and expediter.

Some group members may select, consciously or not, to play roles that are unhelpful to the group. Some of these are: freeloaders, withdrawers, aggressors, dominators, help seeker, self-confessors, blockers, and status and recognition seekers. The common aspect among these roles is a conflict between personal goals and group interest.

In addition to group maintenance roles, which are essential in keeping the group unified and efficient, every member, will have to play several task roles, some of these are: initiators, information seekers, information givers, opinion seekers, opinion givers, clarifiers, elaborators, innovators, orienters, evaluators, energisers and summarisers.

#### **Personality Types**

A group is composed of individuals, persons with their own personality dealing with a problem. An individual's personality affects how a person sees problematic situations and problems and goes about dealing with them. If a group consists mainly of people with a single personality type, problematic situations will be seen in only one way providing fertile ground for solving wrong problems. Therefore it is very important to have different personality types in the group to challenge one another's perspectives. Moreover, some personality types are better for adopting the different roles we have mentioned above.

Jung (1921) developed the theory that each individual had a psychological type. He argued that there were two basic kinds of functions which humans used in their lives: How we take in information and how we make decisions. He believed that within these two categories, there were two opposite ways of functioning. We can *take information* via: our senses or our intuition. We can *make decisions* based on: objective logic or subjective feelings. We all use these four functions in our lives, but it is possible to identify an order of preference for these functions within individuals. The function, which someone uses most often, is *the dominant function*; the dominant function is supported by an auxiliary function, tertiary function, and inferior function. Jung asserted that individuals either extraverted or introverted (*flow of energy*) their dominant function. The dominant function is so important, that it overshadows all the other functions in determining personality type. Later, a fourth dimension has been added, which is concerned with how we deal with the external world on a *day-to-day basis*: Judging or perceiving. The combination of our four preferences defines our personality type, see Table 1. Let us elaborate a little more about these four preferences (Goldberg, 1983).

The *Sensing or Intuition* preference refers to how we obtain information. We all need data on which to found our decisions. We obtain data through our five senses. There are two distinct ways of perceiving the data we gather. The sensing preference absorbs data in a literal and concrete fashion. The intuitive preference generates abstract possibilities from information that is gathered. We all use these two preferences, but to different degrees of effectiveness and with different levels of comfort. We are sensing when we: taste food; notice a stoplight that changes; memorise a poem; follows stages in a plan; etc. We are intuitive when we: come up with a new idea; evaluate the consequences of current decisions; register underlying meaning in what people say or do; see the big picture; etc.

The *Thinking or Feeling* preference refers to how we make decisions. When we make a decision that is based on logic and reason, they are operating in thinking mode. When we make a decision founded in our value system, or what we consider being right, we are operating in feeling mode. We are making decisions in the thinking mode when we: research a product via consumer reports and select the best one; do the right thing, whether or not we like it; always make a plan, etc. We are making decisions in the feeling mode when we: buy something because we like it; avoid upsetting people; say no to a job because we do not like the work environment; move to be close to someone we care about; etc.

When we talk about *Extraversion or Introversion* preferences, we are separating the two worlds in which all us live. There is a world inside us, and a world outside of our self. When we are dealing with the outside world we are extroverting. When we are inside our own minds, we are introverting. We are extroverting when we: talk to other people; listen to what someone is saying; cook dinner; work on a car; etc. We are introverting when we: read a book; think about what we want to do or say; are conscious of how we feel; think about a problem so that we understand it; etc.

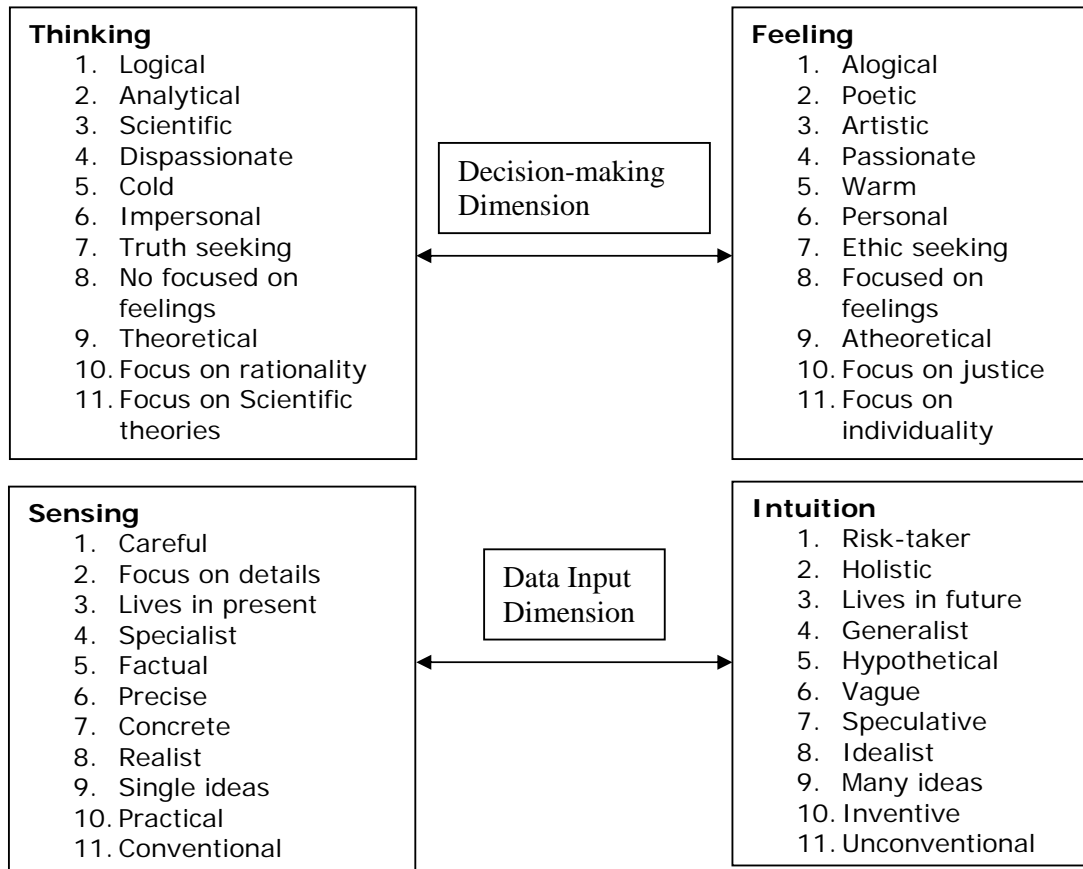


Table 1. The Jungian Dimensions (Mitroff, 1998)

*Judging or Perceiving* preferences refer to our attitude towards the external world, and how we live our lives on a day-to-day basis. Individuals with the judging preference want things to be neat, orderly and established. People with the perceiving preference want things to be flexible and spontaneous. Judgers want things settled, perceivers want things open-ended.

Combining the various preferences together results in sixteen different personality types, this means that in both theory and in reality, there are at least sixteen different ways of looking at and analysing any problematic situation. From a practical viewpoint, sixteen views are difficult to handle, it is easier to operate with those four more common personality types: Sensing-Thinking, Intuitive-Thinking, Intuitive-Feeling, and Sensing-Feeling, see Box 2.

*Sensing-Thinking* focus on technical problems, precisely defined in terms of conventional knowledge and technology. They are reductionists; decomposition is their main method. They prefer symmetry, order and control.

*Intuitive-Thinking* also defines problems in technical terms, but focusing in future technology and take broad systems as a whole into consideration, they use a holistic and systemic approach. They think outside the box, breaking symmetries.

*Intuitive-Feeling* also thinks in terms of large whole systems; but instead of technology and knowledge, they focus on people and humanity. They are concerned with broad issues related to equity, fairness, ethics and justice. They express a disdain to traditional structures and habits that cramp and inhibit feeling.

*Sensing-Feeling* also are reductionists, except that their units are human, not technical. They believe that only individuals and families matter.

### Box 2. More common personality types

If a group has enough diversity in its members, then it can generally produce at least four different definitions of a problem, reflecting the four basic personality types. If a group is not able to examine a problematic situation, at least from these four perspectives, then this inability is one of its most basic problems.

Another important aspect in group work is related to how the individuals communicate to each other. We need to recognise two ways of communication: transactional and transformational. Transactional communication is a plain transmission of information between sender and receiver. Transformational communication, on the other hand, is a heart-to-heart experience where individuals and ideas evolve together. Let us elaborate a little more on these concepts especially in what concerns problem solving and group work.

*Transactional communication* is focusing in the content: *What* is said? Information is transmitted: concepts and information are exchanged, modified or evaluated. People remain the same although they improve their skills or have new understandings. Individuals remain detached from the problem they talk about and the people they talk with. The process can be programmed step by step, as with an agenda. The results (knowledge, skills, decisions, etc.) are measurable. Associated concepts are: discussion, input, training, team, compromise, agreement, and decision-making.

*Transformational communication* is focusing in the process: *How* is said? New information is created: concepts, information, and individuals all evolve together. People are moved by the experience, and become different in a meaningful way. Individuals are fully involved, building trust and a collectivistic sense. The process is highly dynamic: people go with the flow. Measurable results are often greater than transactional results. Associated concepts are: dialogue, involvement, learning, community, negotiation, consensus, and choice-creating (group dynamics).

Most group work is aimed at *decision-making (convergent thinking)* rather than *choice-creating (divergent thinking)*. In decision-making work style agendas are prepared, goals are defined, and stepwise methods keep people on track. However, by structuring this form of communication, thinking is narrowed, the potentialities of people are diminished and the possibilities for change limited. Choice-creating is when people confront an issue they care about seriously in a manner that allows them to be: authentic, open-minded, openhearted, learning, cooperative, engaged, respectful, creative, and efficient.

### **3. Case Study: Young Entrepreneurship**

LEADER+ West Zealand, Denmark, has taken the initiative to take the first steps towards transnational cooperation among some leader areas in North Europe. LEADER+ areas from Finland, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden and Denmark have shown special interest about cooperation around the theme: “young entrepreneurship”. Therefore, LEADER+ West Zealand, has planned, organised and carried out a workshop in cooperation with the author of this book, the facilitator.

The workshop took place at The Kalundborg Production School, Svebølle, Denmark, during the time period December the 8th to December the 9th, 2004. A group of eight persons participated at the workshop representing LEADER+ areas from: Finland, Scotland, Sweden and Denmark. Most of these persons did not know each other in advance, but they have experience in working in groups from their jobs in their respective countries.

The main objectives of this workshop were:

- To get an overview of the different local projects of the represented LEADER+ areas that can give basis for transnational cooperation around the theme: “young entrepreneurship”,
- To select some concrete projects/ideas related to the theme of the workshop for further elaboration, and
- To illustrate in practice how to organise and facilitate such an event as a participative and creative group work composed of two steps, first a *divergent process* and thereafter a *convergent process*.

#### **The planning of the workshop**

The workshop was planned to start at December the 8th, 2004. The participants will arrive to The Kalundborg Production School, Svebølle, at 4.00 pm. The director of LEADER+ and the facilitator agreed in the program described below as well as the different topics to be discussed.

The workshop will start with a presentation of and sightseeing at the production school. At 6.30 pm a dinner will be served at Bromølle Kro, a nearby Inn. At this Inn the participants and the facilitator will stay overnight.

At December the 9th, the workshop will start at 9.00 am. First each representative of LEADER+ areas will present their local projects and ideas for transnational cooperation projects.



After lunchtime, served at the production school, the participants will be divided in two working groups. A facilitator will support each group. The main objective of the group work will be first to produce as many suggestions for projects as possible using a brainstorming technique. This is the so-called divergent process. This process will take around one hour. After the divergent process, all participants will meet at a plenum and each group will present their ideas about transnational projects. Then, it will be a coffee break.

Thereafter, it was planned that the groups will meet again to select at least one at most three projects for further elaboration and possible implementation. This is the so-called convergent process.

Finally at 3.30 pm, at plenum, the final projects will be presented and the most promising selected, using a votation procedure if needed. An action plan will be negotiated and the future work and responsibilities will be agreed upon.

After a short evaluation, at 4.00 pm the workshop will be closed. The facilitator will collect all the produced ideas and write a report about the workshop and the achieved results.

### **The development workshop**

#### **First day**

The workshop started as planned with a presentation of The Kalundborg Production School by the director of the school. This school is well known in Denmark because it has worked for years to provide a varied learning space and fundamentals for young disadvantaged youngsters, not in the form of education but in supporting the young people's entrepreneurship potentialities in product development. The main principles of the school are: *learning by doing and doing marketable products*. More about the school and its entrepreneurial profile can be found in the school's website at:  
[www.k-p-s.dk](http://www.k-p-s.dk)

The director also informed that related to the school, there is the Product Development Club. This is an informal, local forum for innovators that aims to: discuss and develop new ideas, develop prototypes, and find partners. The school is a natural-born member of the Club. More information about the Club can be seen in its website:  
[www.produkt-klub.dk](http://www.produkt-klub.dk)

Finally, the director of the school presented EXPO-DO, a hall located at the school that is available for exhibition of products. This hall is the physical home of the product development club. More about EXPO-DO can be seen by visiting its website:  
[www.expo-do.dk](http://www.expo-do.dk)

At 7.00 pm, we were having a wonderful dinner at Bromølle Kro. Around four hours were expended around a table in a very cosy atmosphere, socialising, interchanging opinions and experiences. This was a real warming-up and communication process that was needed before the serious work to be done the next day. At this initial stage of the group work, in an unconscious way, roles were assigned, status relations were established, shared values were discovered and conflicts were identified. The facilitator was the central person at the table; he

was already doing his job, conducting the group through the “forming” and “storming” steps (in the next section these concepts will be defined more precisely) of group work.

### **Second day**

As planned, we started at 9.00 am. Each LEADER+ area presented their work and activities with youngsters.

#### **Coastland LEADER+**

Coastland is located in South Finland, stretches from Bräviken in the north to Timmernabben in the south, comprising every parish district that has contact with the Baltic Sea. Coastland support projects in the following areas: Education, environmental issues, cultural promotion, local development, women’s issues, activities for young people, tourist promotion and other local enterprise. Special focus is given to projects for youngsters within the areas of: entrepreneurship, nature and cultural resources, food production, etc. In this program there is special attention to create broad frameworks for a better interaction between schools and youngsters. See further Coastland website: [www.kustlandet.com](http://www.kustlandet.com)

#### **Suupohja LEADER+**

The sub-region Suupohja is located in Western Finland in the province (region) called South Ostrobothnia. This sub-region is composed of five local municipalities: Tuova, Teuva, Karijoki, Kaukajoki, and Isojoki.

This program supports projects that enhance:

- The use of know-how and technologies to increase competitiveness, and
- The best use of natural and cultural resources.

For young people emphasis is given to create learning spaces based on motivation, entrepreneurship and a creation of a culture of self-reliance. Further information can be found in the following website:

<http://leader.suupohja.net/english>

#### **Lomond & Rural Stirling LEADER+**

This rural area is located in the centre of Scotland, west and north of Stirling. This program seeks to enhance the quality of life in this rural area by supporting projects, which priorities are to connect businesses, communities, and the public sector agencies, especially through projects developing new technology and connecting people to the natural assets of their area.

A working party has been recently created in order to identify and develop transnational cooperation projects. There is a special interest to cooperate with areas working towards young people and youth entrepreneurship, and also with other National Park areas, tourist areas developing their local produce outlets, local festivals, etc.

Several partners within the area are involved in projects for young people. A Scottish Charity, “Callander Youth Project”, aims to increase the quality of life of the young people (15 to 25

years old) of the rural area providing advice and support to young people projects, recreational facilities, training, etc. See further the following website [www.cyp.org.uk](http://www.cyp.org.uk)

The National Park is currently studying the feasibility of an apprenticeship support programme to encourage employers within the National Park to take on more apprentices (in the electrical, plumbing, building trades). A local high school within the rural area planned to set up a project to involve businesses with the school to develop opportunities for young people to get work experiences and practice. Transnational cooperation projects towards young people are something the Lomond and Rural Stirling LEADER+ and its local partners really wish to develop further in the next period time. Further information about the whole program can be found in the following website: [www.lrsleaderplus.org.uk](http://www.lrsleaderplus.org.uk)

### **LEADER+ Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd**

This program covers a rural area located in Småland, Sweden, and it includes the following municipalities: Eksjö, Hultsfred, Vimmerby and Krisdala in Oskarhamns municipality. The underlying principle of this program is to give children and youngsters a good environment to grow up in. The key concept is age integration and the improvement of the rural living environment. Projects should encourage collaboration between schools and business, untraditional vocational studies, transfer of handicrafts from older people to the youngsters, etc.

Several projects in the following areas have been carried out:

- Creativity and Entrepreneurship,
- Learning spaces: open spaces, meeting places and working places, and
- Summer camps with different themes and activities.

See further this program's website:

[www.astridlindgrenshembygd.se](http://www.astridlindgrenshembygd.se)

A very interesting activity is the KUL project. KUL is an acronym for kultur (culture), ungdom (youth) and landsbygd (rural areas). KUL uses culture and the media as a motivation factor and a way to introduce the youngsters' into creative and entrepreneurial activities. Here a representative of KUL presented Rock City in Hultsfred: a creative meeting place for music and entertainment industry. A project was started to make a plan to get in contact with the youngsters outside the community, and give them a chance to get back to the community. Another project is to start a "Navigation Centre"- a place were youngsters can find inspiration and guidance, this is a meeting place were the young people can get information about study possibilities, work, travelling, etc. See further the following website: [www.rockcity.se](http://www.rockcity.se)

### **Divergent process**

After the presentations of the LEADER+ projects the participants were divided into two groups and a facilitator for each group was appointed. The group task was to suggest themes for transnational collaboration projects using a brainstorming process.

The groups went through this creative process for around one hour. Thereafter, the obtained results were presented in a plenum. The results of each divergent process are described in Box 3 and 4.

At plenum, the facilitator classified the different proposals in three groups:

- (P)..... International projects
- (T)..... Teaching experiences
- (S)..... Sharing resources

### **Convergent process**

It was agreed to converge by selecting one project of each group. One participant suggested converging in plenum instead of going to work in groups again as planned. This change was unanimously accepted.

After some short discussions, the participants agreed in selecting the following projects for further development (no need of votation):

1. International project based on the experiences of Sweden organising “meeting camps” (a six days transnational happening in Sweden) (P),
2. To identify some schools in the different countries (fiery souls among teachers) to support the establishment of entrepreneurial thinking (T), and
3. To establish a web-based forum for exchanging and sharing resources, experiences, tools, techniques, information, good examples, stories, pictures, etc. (S).

The following projects were suggested:

- Booklet reporting results/achievements about entrepreneurship (S)
- International joint projects, for example each area dealing with a product (P)
- Teacher exchanges using two models (T):
  - Entrepreneurial camps during a week, and
  - Learning experiences for individuals/groups
- Join work involving several schools producing products, activities or/and processes (P)
- Presentation of good practices in the web using SMART GROUPS (S)
- Tool-box sharing creative/innovative tools and methods (S)
- New organisation forms for team-working
- Divide a project in tasks, each country focuses in a task (P)
- Support local industries (P)
- Support primary schools (T)
- International exchange week (P)

Box 3. Report of Group 1

The following projects were suggested:

- Booklet: the good story (S)
- Meeting place for creative youngsters, maybe organised as a tour (P)
- Exchange of experiences/developments between partners (S)
- Course on “The art of facilitation” (T)
- Voluntary work (European linking, shelter village) (P)
- Opening the schools /creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship) (P)
- Creative meeting points (P).

#### Box 4. Report of Group 2

#### **Action plan**

It was decided to work further with these three proposals looking for possible implementation. Three subgroups were established for further elaboration of the projects and action:

1. LEADER+ Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd and LEADER+ West Zealand collaborate to implement the first project (entrepreneurship camps),
2. Coastland LEADER+ and LEADER+ West Zealand collaborate to investigate on the possibility of implementing the second project (supporting schools), and
3. The Kalundborg Production School takes the initiative to establish a web-based forum.

#### **Conclusions**

This event was a very nice experience in the planning, development and implementation of a creative group work development. The facilitator had an “easy” and pleasant task due to the enormous engagement and motivation of the persons participating in this workshop. It was of vital importance that the group and the facilitator met together one day before the workshop day, the performing event. There was good time to learn to know each other and the dinner and the post dinner chat was a very fruitful warm-up process. This meant that the workshop the next day was a very productive and creative event. Having established roles, personalities, and norms, the group’s time attention, focus, and energy was increasingly directed at the group task and decreasingly concerned with group maintenance, procedural questions, or personalities. The creative environment provided by the Production School was also optimal for such a workshop. The facilitator conducted several synergetic processes. The facilitator was also convinced that the participants of this workshop have learn something about organising and facilitating creative processes so that they might use these experiences in their future work and meetings.

Two weeks after the workshop, project 3 from the action plan has already been implemented. A web-based network has already been established using SMART GROUP, a web based group information system managed by The Kalundborg Production School.

One month after the workshop, sub-group 1 presented a proposition for a project: The Entrepreneurship Camp 2005. The entrepreneurship camp aims to give young people the

possibility to develop their creativity and entrepreneurship spirit. It is designed for young people in the age 14-19. This project was successfully implemented in summer 2005 and the camp was organised by LEADER+ Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd.

In addition, the created network is planning new cooperation possibilities and new ideas and projects related to young entrepreneurship in the near future.

#### **4. Five Stages of Group Work Development**

The following five stage model of group work development was first published by (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). This model is an extension of the four stage model presented in (Tuckman, 1965).

##### **Stage 1: Forming**

In this stage, personal relations are characterized by dependence. Group members rely on safe, patterned behaviour and look to the facilitator for guidance and direction. Group members have a desire for acceptance by the group and a need to be known that the group is safe. They set about gathering impressions and data about the similarities and differences among them and forming preferences for future sub grouping. Rules of behaviour seem to be to keep things simple and to avoid controversy. Serious topics and feelings are avoided.

The major task functions also concern orientation. Members attempt to become oriented to the tasks as well as to one another. Discussion centres on defining the scope of the task, how to approach it, and similar concerns. To grow from this stage to the next, each member must relinquish the comfort of non-threatening topics and risk the possibility of conflict. Box 5 shows some ways to begin workshops.

1. Go around the room and have each member state what he/she wishes from the upcoming workshop,
2. As facilitator, share your thoughts about where the group is at, how it is progressing, ways the group might be getting stuck, etc.,
3. Ask members if they have any unresolved feelings or thoughts about the previous session: "Did anyone have any after thoughts or leftover feelings about last session?"
4. Ask: "How is each of you feeling about being here today?"
5. Have each member complete the sentence, "Today I'd like to get actively involved by",
6. Announce: "As a way of beginning, let us have a brief go-around and have each of you say what you'd most like to be able to say by the end of this session"
7. Inquire of each member: "what were you thinking and feeling before coming to the group today?" or "Whom (or what) are you most aware of in this room right now, and why?"

Box 5. Some ways to start a workshop

**Stage 2: Storming**

The next stage is characterized by competition and conflict in the personal-relations dimension and an organization in the task-functions dimension. As the group members attempt to organize for the task, conflict inevitably results in their personal relations. Individuals have to bend and mould their feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs to suit the group organization. Because of "fear of exposure" or "fear of failure," there will be an increased desire for structural clarification and commitment. Although conflicts may or may not surface as group issues, they do exist. Questions will arise about who is going to be responsible for what, what the rules are, what the reward system is, and what criteria for evaluation are. These reflect conflicts over leadership, structure, power, and authority. There may be wide swings in members' behaviour based on emerging issues of competition and hostilities. Because of the discomfort generated during this stage, some members may remain completely silent while others attempt to dominate.

In order to progress to the next stage, group members must move from a "testing and proving" mentality to a problem-solving mentality. The most important trait in helping groups to move on to the next stage seems to be the ability to listen.

**Stage 3: Norming**

In this stage, interpersonal relations are characterized by cohesion. Group members are engaged in active acknowledgment of all members' contributions, community building and maintenance, and solving of group issues. Members are willing to change their preconceived ideas or opinions on the basis of facts presented by other members, and they actively ask questions of one another. Leadership is shared, and cliques dissolve. When members begin to know-and identify with-one another, the level of trust in their personal relations contributes to the development of group cohesion. It is during this stage of development (assuming the group gets this far) that people begin to experience a sense of group belonging and a feeling of relief as a result of resolving interpersonal conflicts.

The major task function of stage three is the data flow between group members: They share feelings and ideas, solicit and give feedback to one another, and explore actions related to the task. Creativity is high. If this stage of data flow and cohesion is attained by the group members, their interactions are characterized by openness and sharing of information on both a personal and task level. They feel good about being part of an effective group.

The major drawback of the norming stage is that members may begin to fear the inevitable future break-up of the group; they may resist change of any sort.

**Stage 4: Performing**

This stage is not reached by all groups. If group members are able to evolve to stage four, their capacity, range, and depth of personal relations expand to true interdependence. In this stage, people can work independently, in subgroups, or as a total unit with equal facility. Their roles and authorities dynamically adjust to the changing needs of the group and individuals. Stage four is marked by interdependence in personal relations and problem solving in the realm of task functions. By now, the group should be most productive. Individual members have become self-assuring, and the need for group approval is past. Members are both highly task oriented and highly people oriented. There is unity: group

identity is complete, group morale is high, and group loyalty is intense. The task function becomes genuine problem solving, leading toward optimal solutions and optimum group development. There is support for experimentation in solving problems and an emphasis on achievement. The overall goal is productivity through problem solving and work.

### **Stage 5: Adjourning**

This final stage involves the termination of task behaviours and disengagement from relationships. A planned conclusion usually includes recognition for participation and achievement and an opportunity for members to say personal goodbyes. Concluding a group can create some apprehension - in effect, a minor crisis. The termination of the group is a regressive movement from giving up control to giving up inclusion in the group. The most effective interventions in this stage are those that facilitate task termination and the disengagement process. Box 6 shows some recommendations to end workshops.

1. Ask members to tell the group briefly what they learned about themselves through their relationships with other members in that particular session.
2. Ask, "What was it like for you to be in this group?"
3. Instruct, "Let us do a quick go-around and have everyone say a few words on how the group is progressing so far and make any suggestions for change."
4. Indicate, "Before we close, I'd like to share with you some of my reactions and observations of this workshop."
5. Ask if anybody has any feedback that they would like to give another member or the facilitator.
6. Determine if there are any issues that members would like to return to or explore in the next workshop.

#### Box 6. Some ways to end a workshop

These five phases are not to be moved through as rapidly as possible. Problems in performing may often be traced back to insufficient storming and norming, for instance. Group discussion, while storming out some controversies, may return to issues involved in forming, redistributing responsibilities, rediscovering common values, and modifying procedures. Analogously, a group having difficulty in performing may either implicitly or explicitly, need to redefine some norms. These phases do not need to be followed linearly, these phases are considerably more fluid and interactive, as well as less deterministic, with groups moving freely between stages. Groups need to develop through different stages if they are to become high-performing teams. Most groups never reach such levels because the task does not require them to be revealing and open. But messes often require highly innovative solutions demanding a high-performance from the group.

If the members of the group are highly experienced in group work and are highly motivated for participating in the problem solving process, the facilitator can conduct the first three stages very effectively. Then focus will be placed in the performing stage. This was seen in the case study presented in Section 3.



**Communities of Practice**

The model described above has an individual-centred conceptualization of group development, where each person has to find its place and role in the group work. The main assumption of this model is that group development happens through adaptation of each member. Group work can also be understood from a social concept where each individual is incorporated in a socio-cultural space.

The idea that group work involves a deepening process of participation in a community of practice has gained significant ground in recent years. Communities of practice have also become an important focus within organizational development. Many of the ways we have of talking about learning and education are based on the assumption that learning is something that individuals do. Furthermore, we often assume that learning has a beginning and an end; that it is best separated from the rest of our activities; and that it is the result of teaching.

The basic argument made by Lave and Wenger (1991) is that communities of practice are everywhere and that we are generally involved in a number of them - whether that is at work, school, home, or in our civic and leisure interests. In some groups we are core members, in others we are more at the margins. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words we learn. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise.

A community of practice defines itself along three dimensions:

- The content - its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members,
- Its functions - mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity, and
- Its resources - the shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artefacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time

The interactions involved, and the ability to undertake larger or more complex activities and projects through cooperation, bind people together and help to facilitate relationship and trust. Communities of practice can be seen as self-organizing systems and have many of the benefits and characteristics of associational life

These ideas have been picked-up most strongly within organizational and community development circles. Perhaps more significantly, the growing interest in 'the learning organization' in the 1990's alerted many of those concerned with organizational development to the significance of informal networks and groupings. The model gave those concerned with organizational development a way of thinking about how benefits could accrue to the organization itself, and how value did not necessarily lie primarily with the individual members of a community of practice.

Communities also appear to be an effective way for organizations to handle unstructured problems and to share knowledge outside of the traditional structural boundaries. In addition,

the community concept is acknowledged to be a means of developing and maintaining long-term organizational memory. These outcomes are an important, yet often unrecognized, supplement to the value that individual members of a community obtain in the form of enriched learning and higher motivation to apply what they learn.

The notion of community of practice and the broader conceptualization of situated learning provides significant pointers for practice

Learning in groups is in the conditions that bring people together and organize a point of contact that allows for particular pieces of information to take on relevance; without the points of contact, without the system of relevancies, there is not learning, and there is little memory. Learning does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part.

There is an intimate connection between knowledge and activity. Learning is part of daily living. Problem solving and learning from experience are central processes. Facilitators need to reflect on their understanding of what constitutes knowledge and practice. Perhaps one of the most important things to grasp here is the extent to which education involves informed and committed action. These are fascinating areas for exploration and, to some significant extent, take informal educators in a completely different direction to the dominant pressure towards accreditation and formalization.

### **5. Dealing with conflicts (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000)**

In the course of a week, we are all involved in numerous situations that need to be dealt with through negotiation; this occurs at work, at home, and at recreation. A conflict or negotiation situation is one in which there is a conflict of interests or what one wants is not necessarily what the other wants and where both sides prefer to search for solutions, rather than giving in or breaking-off contact.

Few of us enjoy dealing with conflicts-either with bosses, peers, subordinates, friends, or strangers. This is particularly true when the conflict becomes hostile and when strong feelings become involved. Resolving conflict can be mentally exhausting and emotionally draining. But it is important to realize that conflict that requires resolution is neither good nor bad. There can be positive and negative outcomes. It can be destructive but can also play a productive role for you personally and for your relationships - both personal and professional. The important task of the facilitator is *to manage the conflict*, not to suppress conflicts and not to let conflicts escalate out of control. Many of us seek to avoid conflict when it arises but there are many times when we should use conflict as a critical aspect of creativity and motivation.

You will be constantly negotiating and resolving conflict throughout all of your professional and personal life. Given that communities and organisations are becoming less hierarchical, less based on positional authority, less based on clear boundaries of responsibility and authority; it is likely that conflict will be an even greater component of organizations in the future. While negotiation is an art form to some degree, there are specific techniques that anyone can learn.

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest. Sometimes the individual is not aware of the need and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he or she wants and actively works at achieving the goal. Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, jobs, children, pride, self-concept, ego and sense of mission or purpose. Early indicators of conflict can be recognized, see Box 7. There are strategies for resolution that are available and do work. Although inevitable, conflict can be minimized, diverted and/or dissolved.

Conflict is destructive when it takes attention away from other important activities or undermines morale or self-concept. Conflicts can also polarize people and groups, reducing cooperation and collaboration. A conflict is negative when increases or sharpens differences, and when it leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour, such as fighting or name-calling. Conflict is constructive when it results in clarification of important problems and issues and it results in solutions to problems. Conflicts are positive if they involve people in resolving issues important to them and cause authentic communication. Conflict can help release emotion, anxiety, and stress. Conflicts can contribute to build cooperation among people through learning more about each other and joining in resolving the conflict. Conflict is also constructive when helps individuals develop understanding and skills.

- Body language
- Disagreements, regardless of issue
- Withholding bad news
- Surprises
- Strong public statements
- Airing disagreements through media
- Conflicts in value system
- Desire for power
- Increasing lack of respect
- Open disagreement
- Lack of candour on budget problems or other sensitive issues
- Lack of clear goals
- No discussion of progress, failure relative to goals, failure to evaluate fairly, thoroughly or at all.

#### Box 7. Conflict indicators

Conflict is destructive when it takes attention away from other important activities or undermines morale or self-concept. Conflicts can also polarize people and groups, reducing cooperation and collaboration. A conflict is negative when increases or sharpens differences, and when it leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour, such as fighting or name-calling. Conflict is constructive when it results in clarification of important problems and issues and it results in solutions to problems. Conflicts are positive if they involve people in resolving issues important to them and cause authentic communication. Conflict can help release emotion, anxiety, and stress. Conflicts can contribute to build cooperation among people through learning more about each other and joining in resolving the conflict. Conflict is also constructive when helps individuals develop understanding and skills.

Searching for the causes of conflict is essential to be successful in resolving the conflict. Nine possible causes of conflict include:

- Conflict with self
- Needs or wants are not being met
- Values are being tested
- Perceptions are being questioned
- Assumptions are being made
- Knowledge is minimal
- Expectations are too high/too low
- Personality, cultural, or gender differences are present.

Box 8 gives some guidelines for reaching consensus through collaboration (Lax and Sebenius, 1986)

Negotiation is a sequence of events, not an incident. There is a tendency to think about conflict or the negotiating situation as an isolated incident. It is probably more useful to think about conflict as a process, or a complex series of events over time involving both external factors and internal social and psychological factors. Conflict episodes typically are affected by proceeding and in turn produce results and outcomes that affect the conflict dynamics.

Groups often collaborate closely in order to reach consensus or agreement. The ability to use collaboration requires the recognition of and respect for everyone's ideas, opinions, and suggestions. Consensus requires that each participant must agree on the point being discussed before it becomes a part of the decision. Not every point will meet with everyone's complete approval. Unanimity is not the goal. The goal is to have individuals accept a point of view based on logic. When individuals can understand and accept the logic of a differing point of view, you must assume you have reached consensus. Follow these guidelines for reaching consensus:

- Avoid arguing over individual ranking or position. Present a position as logically as possible.
- Avoid "win-lose" statements. Discard the notion that someone must win.
- Avoid changing of minds only in order to avoid conflict and to achieve harmony.
- Avoid majority voting, averaging, bargaining, or coin flipping. These do not lead to consensus. Treat differences of opinion as indicative of incomplete sharing of relevant information, keep asking questions.
- Keep the attitude that holding different views is both natural and healthy to a group.
- View initial agreement as suspect. Explore the reasons underlying apparent agreement and make sure that members have willingly agreed.

#### Box 8. Reaching consensus

A negotiation usually involves a number of steps including the exchange of proposals and counter proposals. In good-faith negotiation, both sides are expected to make offers and concessions. Your goal here is not only to try to solve the problem, but to gain information that will enable you to get a clearer notion of what the true issues might be and how your "opponent" sees reality. Through offers and counter offers there should be a goal of a lot of information exchange that might yield a common definition of the problem.

Such an approach suggests the importance of perception-conflict is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, situations which to an outside observer should produce conflict may not if the parties either ignore or choose to ignore the conflict situation. Conversely, people can perceive a conflict situation when in reality there is none. Once aware of the conflict, both parties experience emotional reactions to it and think about it in various ways. These emotions and thoughts are crucial to the course of the developing conflict. For example, a negotiation can be greatly affected if people react in anger perhaps resulting from past conflict.

Then based on the thoughts and emotions that arise in the process of conflict resolution, the facilitator formulates specific intentions about the strategies he/she will use in the negotiation. These may be quite general (e.g. plan to use a cooperative approach) or quite specific (e.g. use a specific negotiating tactic).

Finally, these intentions are translated into behaviour. These behaviours in turn elicit some response from the other person and the process recycles. This approach suggests the facilitator pays particular attention to these generalisations (Fisher et al, 1997):

- Conflict is an ongoing process that occurs against a backdrop of continuing relationships and events,
- Such conflict involves the thoughts, perceptions, memories, and emotions of the people involved; these must be considered,
- Negotiations are like a chess match; have a strategy; anticipate how the other will respond; how strong is your position, and situation; how important is the issue; how important will it be to stick to a hardened position,
- Begin with a positive approach: Try to establish rapport and mutual trust before starting; try for a small concession early, and
- Pay little attention to initial offers: these are points of departure; they tend to be extreme and idealistic; focus on the other person's interests and your own goals and principles, while you generate other possibilities

## **6. Dialogue (Friedman, 1992)**

Dialogue is about what we value and how we define it. It is about discovering what our true values are, about looking beyond the superficial and automatic answers to our questions. Dialogue is about expanding our capacity for attention, awareness and learning with and from each other. Dialogue is a communication process leading directly to personal and organizational transformation. It assists in creating environments of high trust and openness, with reflective and generative capacities. One might think of dialogue as an approach in the development of the following organizational disciplines: continuous learning, diversity,

conflict exploration, decision making and problem solving, leadership, self-managing teams, organizational planning and alignment, and culture change (Bohm and Edwards, 1992).

One might think of dialogue as a stream of meaning flowing among and through a group of people, out of which may emerge some new understanding, something creative. Dialogue moves beyond any one individual's understanding, to make explicit the implicit, to build collective understanding, and to create a cooperative working community. It is often useful to contrast dialogue with discussion. In dialogue we are interested in creating a fuller picture of reality rather than breaking it down into fragments or parts, as happens in discussion.

Dialogue slows down the speed at which most groups' interact by employing deeper levels of *listening and reflection*. Another important aspect of dialogue is its open-endedness. This means letting go of the need for specific results. This does not mean there are no results from dialogue; in fact there are many. However, in releasing the need for certain predetermined outcomes; important issues can be allowed by surface which often goes undiscovered in agenda-based meetings.

A final important aspect of dialogue is that it creates a community-based culture of cooperation and shared leadership (communities of practice). It moves groups from the dependency, competition and exclusion often found in hierarchical cultures to increased collaboration, partnership and inclusion. David Bohm (1985) likened discussion to an activity where we *throw* our opinions back and forth in an attempt to convince each other of the rightness of a particular point of view. In this process, the whole view is often fragmented and shattered into many pieces. The intentions of dialogue and discussion in group work are quite different and are contrasted in Box 9. The facilitator should be able to switch from dialogue to discussion and vice versa, as it is needed in the process.

<b>Dialogue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To inquire to learn</li> <li>• To unfold shared meaning</li> <li>• To integrate multiple perspectives</li> <li>• To uncover and examine assumptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To tell, sell, persuade</li> <li>• To gain agreement on one meaning</li> <li>• To evaluate and select the best</li> <li>• To justify/defend assumptions</li> </ul>

Box 9. Dialogue vs. Discussion

Box 10 presents some behaviour and actions that can support dialogue in group work. The more consciously we use them, the more they help us to enter into and sustain the dialogue. And, all the skills are interrelated. For example, as we begin to draw aside the curtains of our judgments, we develop the capacity to speak and listen without the automatic colouring of past thought patterns. We become less reactive, more aware of the assumptions through which we filter our observations. Choosing to suspend these assumptions, we may

experiment with expanding the horizons of our perceptions, increasing the number of points of view available to us. By creating space to reflect on what we perceive, seeking the next level of inquiry, opening up our senses and listening deeply and actively, with the intention to discover, understand and learn we enter into dialogue.

### **7. Focus Groups (Morgan, 1997)**

Focus group work involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic. Focus group interviewing is particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic.

The benefits of focus group work include gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life or work and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation. Problems arise when attempting to identify the individual view from the group view, as well as in the practical arrangements for conducting focus groups. The role of the facilitator is very significant. Good levels of group management and interpersonal skill are required to facilitate a group successfully. Focus groups are used in social research, in market research, more recently in medical research and design of artefacts.

There are many definitions of a focus group, but features like organised discussion, collective activity, social events, and interaction identify the contribution that focus groups make to technical, social and action research. Let us define a focus group as:

*A group of individuals selected and assembled to discuss and comment on, from personal experience and knowledge, the topic that is the subject of the workshop.*

Focus groups are a form of group interviewing but it is important to distinguish between the two. Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants. Focus groups however rely on *interaction and dialogue* within the group based on topics that are supplied by the facilitator. Hence the key characteristic which distinguishes focus groups is the insight and data produced by the interaction between participants. The tapestry weavers introduced in Chapter 3 is an example of a focus group.

The main purpose of focus group work is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys. These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Focus groups are not natural but designed events. Focus groups are particularly useful when there are power differences between the participants and decision-makers or professionals, when the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest, and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic.

- *Suspension of judgement when listening and speaking.* When we listen and suspend judgment we open the door to expanded understanding. When we speak without judgment we open the door for others to listen to us.
- *Respect for differences.* Our respect is grounded in the belief that everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honoured for the perspective which only they can bring.
- *Role and status suspension.* Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No one perspective is more important than any other dialogue is about power with, versus power over or power under.
- *Balancing inquiry and advocacy.* In dialogue we inquire to discover and understand others perspectives and ideas and we advocate to offer our own for consideration. The intention is to bring forth and make visible assumptions, relationships and gain new insight and understanding. We often tend to advocate to convince others of our positions Therefore a good place to start with this guideline is to practice bringing more inquiry into the conversation.
- *Focus on learning.* Our intention is to learn to from each other, to expand our view and understanding, versus evaluate and determine who has the "best" view. When we are focused on learning we tend to ask more questions, try new things. We are willing to disclose our thinking so that we can see both what is working for us and what we might want to change. We want to hear from all parties so that we can gain the advantage of differing perspectives.

Box 10. Behaviours that support dialogue

### **The use of focus groups**

Focus groups can be used at the preliminary or exploratory stages of a study inquiry or a conference, during a study, perhaps to evaluate or develop a particular programme of activities or after a programme or workshop has been completed, to assess its impact or to generate further avenues of inquiry. They can be used either as a method in their own right or as a complement to other methods.

Focus groups can help to explore or generate hypotheses and develop questions or concepts for questionnaires and interview guides. They are however limited in terms of their ability to generalise findings to a whole population, mainly because of the small numbers of people participating and the likelihood that the participants will not be a representative sample. Examples of research in which focus groups have been employed include developing HIV education in developing countries, understanding how media messages are processed, design of computerised artefacts, and distance interviewing of family doctors.

Interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences.



Another benefit is that focus groups elicit information in a way which allows facilitators to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it. As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood. If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behaviour and attitudes will be more readily articulated.

The benefits to participants of focus group research should not be underestimated. The opportunity to be involved in decision making processes, to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with the facilitators can be empowering for many participants. Not everyone will experience these benefits, as focus groups can also be intimidating at times, especially for inarticulate or shy members. Hence focus groups are not empowering for all participants and other methods may offer more opportunities for participants. However if participants are actively involved in something which they feel will make a difference, and focus group work is often of an applied nature, empowerment can realistically be achieved.

Another advantage of focus groups to clients, users, participants or consumers is that they can become a forum for change both during the focus group meeting itself and afterwards. For example, the participants in the workshop can experience a sense of emancipation through speaking in public and by developing reciprocal relationships with the facilitators.

Although focus group work has many advantages, as with all methods there are limitations. Some can be overcome by careful planning and facilitation, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. By its nature focus group work is open ended and cannot be entirely predetermined. It should not be assumed that the individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the facilitator to clearly identify an individual message. This too is a potential limitation of focus groups.

On a practical note, focus groups can be difficult to assemble. It may not be easy to get a representative sample and focus groups may discourage certain people from participating, for example those who are not very articulate or confident, and those who have communication problems or special needs. The method of focus group discussion may also discourage some people from trusting others with sensitive or personal information. In such cases personal interviews or the use of workbooks alongside focus groups may be a more suitable approach. Finally, focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with the others in the group.

The recommended number of people per group is usually six to ten but some researchers have used up to fifteen people or as few as four. Numbers of groups vary, some studies using only one workshop with each of several focus groups, others meeting the same group several times. Focus group sessions usually last from one to two hours. Neutral locations can be helpful for avoiding either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building. Otherwise the focus group workshops can be held in a variety of places, for example, people's homes, in rented facilities, or where the participants hold their regular meetings if they are a pre-existing group.

It is not always easy to identify the most appropriate participants for a focus group. If a group is too heterogeneous, whether in terms of gender or class, or in terms of professional and 'lay' perspectives, the differences between participants can make a considerable impact on their contributions. Alternatively, if a group is homogenous with regard to specific characteristics, diverse opinions and experiences may not be revealed. Participants need to feel comfortable with each other. Meeting with others whom they think of as possessing similar characteristics or levels of understanding about a given topic, will be more appealing than meeting with those who are perceived to be different.

### **The role of group facilitator**

Once a meeting has been arranged, the role of group facilitator becomes critical, especially in terms of providing clear explanations of the purpose of the group, helping people feel at ease, and facilitating interaction between group members.

During the meeting the facilitators will need to promote debate, perhaps by asking open questions. They may also need to challenge participants, especially to draw out people's differences, and tease out a diverse range of meanings on the topic under discussion. Sometimes facilitators will need to probe for details, or move things forward when the conversation is drifting or has reached a minor conclusion. Facilitators have to keep the session focused and sometimes they may deliberately have to steer the conversation back on course. Facilitators have to ensure everyone participates and gets a chance to speak. At the same time facilitators are encouraged not to show too much approval, so as to avoid favouring particular participants. They must avoid giving personal opinions so as not to influence participants towards any particular position or opinion (Kreuger, 1988).

Finally, the degree of control and direction imposed by facilitators will depend upon the goals of the research as well as on their preferred style. If several facilitators are involved in the facilitation of a focus group, agreement needs to be reached as to how much input or direction each will give. It is recommended that one facilitator facilitates and the other takes notes and checks the recording equipment during the meeting. There also needs to be consistency across focus groups, so careful preparation with regard to role and responsibilities is required.

### **8. Final Remarks**

Group work, group development and group empowerment are important issues in the facilitation of problem solving processes. Workshops and conferences for problem solving are purposeful social interventions that can be designed and facilitated in many different ways.

In Chapter 2, the facilitation of a large group was discussed where the participants will be allocated to sub-groups that will be facilitated to solve specific tasks. The tasks are not the same but interrelated, therefore discussions at plenum are also planned. The processes of the group work at each sub-group are very different due to many factors. Therefore, the facilitation processes need to be evaluated.

In Chapter 3, a less experienced group was facilitated to deal with crucial problems related to the survival of their craft an art. The facilitator had a rather complex job while conducting the

group in a developing process. During the workshop there were many conflicts and disagreements to be settled down. Fortunately, the workshop ended with fruitful results and the participants were so empowered that they were able to continue working after the workshop to achieve their visions.

Finally, in this Chapter a very experience group was facilitated in an exemplary way to generate group dynamics and usable projects to be implemented.

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