Dynamic Facilitation

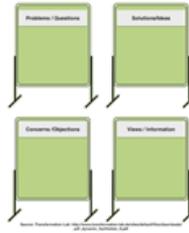|	
Field of application	Facilitation and collaboration method for dealing with complex challenges, which can be used in workshops and research projects that includes a group of stakeholders.
Resume / Brief description	A Dynamic Facilitation workshop starts with a certain topic on which every participant can give his or her opinion. No interruption is allowed as long as the person talks. The comments are written on cards or flipcharts along 4 panels and issues: • Problems / Questions, • Solutions / Ideas, • Concerns / Objections, and • Perceptions / Information. The facilitator takes the emotional element and the conflictive aspects out of the reflection round through differentiating and structuring the main arguments. Through this format every participant gets the chance to bring in their opinion and to listen to the other ones. The documentation and the process of listening provides at the end the opportunity to come up with joint solutions that are considering the different perspectives and arguments raised.
Target group	1. Students and graduates that want to learn innovative facilitation skills for their own research and for the facilitation of workshops 2. Members of the university or research departments that want to facilitate a meeting on a complex topic and that want to overcome linear facilitation approaches 3. For the facilitation of workshops and cooperation projects with outside stakeholders (e.g. businesses, support organisations, etc.) and for working out cooperation opportunities.
Group size	This format works especially with smaller and medium-sized groups of up to 15 people.
Objectives	The Dynamic Facilitation methodology has the objective to overcome classic facilitation methods often based on a very linear defined sequence. Different aspects are the following: • It provides a more dynamic approach to conducting meetings or workshops • It overcomes the setting of a sequential structure. In difference, it follows no steps that build on each other. • The content has no predefined agenda and not the objective of a clear outcome. • The facilitator starts with a specific topic or problem or question, but he or she gives flexibility for the group to follow it. Openness to what topics are emerging is a key objective of the methodology. • The way of facilitation targets towards the emergence of content-related breakthroughs that provide the opportunity to develop more complexity-sensitive solutions.

Requirements	**The tool is suitable to use, when** • Creative solutions are needed with building trust • Participants really want to find a solution • Issues have a strong emotional aspect and there are different perspectives involved • Issues may have hidden facets. **Materials** • 4 pin boards or flipcharts with 4 headings. If the group is smaller one pin board with the use of different coloured cards can also be an alternative. What is relevant are the 4 headings: • **Problems / Questions**: Involves statements that are phrased as questions on how to solve the given problem • **Solutions / Ideas:** Involves all possible solutions independent of which problem statement they belong • **Concerns / Objections:** Involves all concerns raised to given solutions and ideas. • **Perceptions / Information**: Involves all other statements, facts, or data which the participants speak out regardless of whether they are true or false **Time** • 2 hours to 1 day • A shorter meeting might just start the process which then can be continued
Implementation - Overview	The activity is realised in four main phases.

Implementation - Guidelines	At the beginning of a Dynamic Facilitation process there is always an initial question or a problem that is relevant for the participants and for which no solution is yet in reach. Based on this question, the process of reflection starts considering four main phases.

1. Co-Initiating

- At the beginning, there is a short check-in round in which each participant can describe his or her expectations and ask questions about the process.
- Everyone should have a chance to speak so that it is clear with which background he or she is present**.**
- The facilitator states that, dissimilar to classical facilitation, his or her role is not to follow an agenda. Also, he or she does not stop the group from changing the topic or focus. Instead, he or she allows spontaneous changes of direction.
- It is mentioned that during the workshop or meeting hierarchies are neglected and directors are becoming one among others.

2. Co-Seeing

- One of the group - usually the director or supervisor in the group - starts and introduces the topic that is important to him or her. The facilitator listens intensively and writes down the contributions on the 4 flipcharts. In this way, all opinions, concerns and ideas for solutions are mentioned and documented.
- Afterwards each participant has the time to contribute what is important to him or her.

3. Co-Sensing

- After everyone has made their perspectives visible, the inputs are structured and differentiated.
- The facilitator again presents all the documented inputs and aspects that were pointed out, but in relation to the main headings. In this way, he or she provides a summary of the discussion but in a structured way.
- Participants can have additional comments that are then written on cards according to the four headings.

4. Co-Acting

- After the reflection has been finalised, the group starts to reflect on the identification of further possible solutions and ideas.
- The next step is focusing on the question: "Which solutions and ideas seem to be most helpful?"
- Once the group has decided on one (or more) possible solutions, the reflection on the following question starts: "What do we have to do to realise the solutions and ideas?"
- Once the group has decided on concrete solutions, a classical method (e.g. like an action plan) can be used to plan the next steps in detail.

Reflection workshop with university and research institute representatives to increase local knowledge transfer with local businesses

Description of the context

Many universities and research institutes have the challenge to work together with local businesses. For many scientists it is more interesting to work with international research projects then to apply their knowledge to local business challenges. On the other side, these local businesses require new applied knowledge from the knowledge organisations in the surrounding. Many university staff members as well as consultancies that want to promote these local knowledge networks face the challenge to encourage local knowledge transfer projects due to very different opinions in the university or institute itself,. At the same time all employees and scientists know that they have to become involved in these projects if they want to get access to certain financial incentives.

Consultancies like Mesopartner often make use of the Dynamic Facilitation methodology in these situations with a group of representatives of local knowledge organisations. The objective of these Dynamic Facilitation workshops is to explore opportunities for concrete projects with local businesses and business organisations.

Source: https://participedia.net/method/1692

Starting point

Identification of a topic: "How can we strengthen the knowledge transfer with local businesses in the region?"

Main discussion aspects

The discussion often includes controversial arguments although the conflict between participants is reduced. The reason is that everybody can express all their arguments, and nobody is allowed to interrupt the other. On this topic main discussion lines could be going into the following direction:

- Businesses need our support and we have to work locally.
- Our international work is more relevant because it provides us access to state-of-the-art knowledge and international knowledge networks.
- The staff is mainly familiar with international funding sources, less with local ones.
- The reputation of the research institute and university research is based on publications. Why should we put the reputation at risk?
- The reputation would be high if we can demonstrate that we are able to apply our knowledge to reality and to our own environment.

There are more arguments against or in favour of the local knowledge transfer focus. In the following, some answers along the four headings are documented:

Problems / Questions

- How can we assure both, staying involved in the international knowledge network as well as creating local business-research networks?
- How can we get more information about local funding opportunities for the initiation of local knowledge transfer?
- How can we change the incentives for reputation? Currently, the focus is mainly on the number of publications rather than the realisation of local innovations.

Solutions / Ideas

- Starting pilot projects with students and faculty inside factories to test opportunities.
- Starting a local knowledge transfer initiative that provides also reputation to the university or research centre.
- Doing a number of visits to motivated businesses to identify opportunities for knowledge transfer.
- Providing incentives for local knowledge transfer projects (e.g. a local innovation contest).

Example of application

- Moving into international knowledge networks which are also interested in promoting local knowledge transfer projects and learn with them.

Concerns / Objections

- The university or research institute cannot change the incentive system. Main employees and researchers were selected based on publications and international research activities and rewarding systems.
- Students have no additional time to do other knowledge transfer projects apart from their assignments.
- Students are mainly interested in researching topics that are related to international challenges.

Perceptions / Information

- Businesses are not really interested in knowledge transfer.
- We cannot find a common language with local businesses. They are not listening and not innovation oriented.
- There are international donor organisations or a fund available in the country where we can apply for local innovation projects.

The joint reflection with the staff members often changes at a certain point when all arguments and resentments are spoken out and structured. It often provides a breakthrough in which certain opportunities emerge. For example, the result can be that other research institutes are also interested to start with a contest for students and young researchers to find local knowledge transfer solutions through cross-innovation workshops within businesses.

In this case a solution could look like this:

- As a first step it is decided to identify businesses that want to participate in such internal workshops, in which students and researchers first get an impression about the production process and products.
- Then students and researchers will work with faculty on different solutions through a kind of cross-innovation workshop or in a kind of hackathon.
- The first ideas are then presented to the local businesses.
- Local businesses provide comments. They can then express which potential solution sounds feasible or realistic.
- Another opportunity is that in the presentation and discussion of innovative ideas with the businesses more concrete and jointly defined knowledge transfer opportunities will emerge.

The example above is just one example where the Dynamic Facilitation method can help to move from a relatively complex discussion of a topic towards a concrete result. An action plan format can finally help to define concrete next steps if the example of knowledge transfer contest or cross-innovation workshop approach should become realised.

Support

Dynamic Facilitation requires much attention from the facilitator. Thus, it is good to get support from another facilitator who writes down on the cards while the leading facilitator moderates the process. Two facilitators would be good to be present. An alternative is to ask one of the participants to write on the cards or to document on flipcharts the main issues based on the directions from the lead facilitator.

Templates, Graphics for download	The main features of the Dynamic Facilitation method can be found in the presentation Dynamic Facilitation.ppt There are many graphics available in web search engines that visualise the main directions and logics of Dynamic Facilitation. Have a look at visualisation ideas for flipcharts at the Community of Practice website http://www.dynamicfacilitation.com/index.html More information is available at: https://www.knaus-consulting.ch/en/services/large-group-facilitation/dynamic-facilitation.html#illustration-df
Additional format/ references	**Information on the method and step-by-step handouts:** Dynamic Facilitation Community of Practice page: http://www.dynamicfacilitation.com/index.html The Dynamic Facilitation Method:https://participedia.net/method/1692 Online-Manual from the founder of the Dynamic Facilitation method, Jim Rough: http://www.co-intelligence.org/DFManual.html A manual for Dynamic Facilitation and the Choice-Creating Process, by Rosa Zubizarreta and Jim Rough (2002), https://de.scribd.com/document/403917595/Dynamic-Facilitation-Manual **Videos:** Choice-creating and Dynamic Facilitation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Nc9lIXLB1s Dynamic Facilitation – How it Works (by Jim Rough & Rosa Zubizarreta): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpESecMWtfE