

Training Facilitation

Trainers in adult education workshop play several roles:

- **Expert:** the trainer transmits knowledge and skills, answers questions (or promises to obtain information later), and clarifies misconceptions.
- **Socializing agent:** the trainer strives to share values and ideals – ensure democratic values within the workshop, embrace international best practices for protecting Human Rights (the right to associate).
- **Facilitator:** the trainer leads the sessions in such a way that participants are encouraged to participate fully in acquiring the new knowledge and skills introduced in the workshop.

Trainers can facilitate different types of learning:

- Learning about subject matter – good governance for NGOs.
- Learning about the relationship between the subject matter and real life – achieving good governance leads to NGO accountability, trust of donors and sometimes reduced government supervision.
- Learning how to apply knowledge acquired –

Group discussions play a major role in an interactive training program. To lead group discussions effectively, facilitators will need various **facilitation skills**. They should know how to deal with different types of participants and uncomfortable discussions.

Who is the facilitator?

A facilitator is someone who helps a group of people understand their common objectives and assist them to plan to achieve them without taking a particular position in the discussion.

A facilitator should have the timekeeping, following an agreed-upon agenda, watching the group and its individuals in light of group dynamics. Facilitator should also enjoy listening skills. (Kaner, et al, 1996). It is critical to the facilitator's role to have knowledge and skill to be able to intervene in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

A facilitator shall respect all point of views and others.

Attitude/behavior as facilitator or Trainer:

- Stay relaxed and calm;
- Be open and honest;
- Be a good listener; observe, record, observe, record...;
- Do not panic when the group is silent; wait patiently for them to think about what they want to say;
- Do not interrupt people (except when in the interest of the rest of the group, e.g. when someone speaks for too long);
- Do not make judgements of people's responses (for example, saying that 'this is good, and that is bad') or humiliate anyone;
- Do not let arguments dominate the discussion; encourage participants to re-focus on the main topic;

- Be aware of language barriers; let people talk in the language they are most comfortable in (and ask someone else to translate if necessary);
- Use visual aids and body language to help overcome language barriers;
- Have eye contact, stand up and move around, speak slowly, use your voice (intonation);
- Make it as interactive as possible - involve and engage participants. Ask questions and invite participants to tell their stories;
- Use humor if natural for you, and smile;
- Choose words, stories, numbers, and cases that capture interest (use real examples to illustrate your points);
- Address concerns, questions, issues as raised by participants, while sticking to the main messages you want to get across.

Key Facilitation Tasks and Tools to ensure an effective training

Essentials at the beginning of the training:

Introductions / traditional or creative methods
 Overview of goals and objectives / Clarifying expectations
 Agreement about rules of the training
 Setting the patterns of communication
 Ensuring everyone arrived mentally and laying a common starting point

How to keep the energy going?

Ice-breakers
 Energizers
 Change method (e.g. instead of large group, discuss in pairs)
 Include physical movement in the exercises
 Interactive presentations
 Get a break!

How to ensure active and equal participation?

Keep agreement alive
 Introduce “equal chances” facilitation techniques such as “go around”, “brainstorming”, “once-twice”, “pro-contra”, “echoing” etc.
 Use small group work
 Ensure participation happens in the small groups as well (design group composition, appoint facilitator, give clear task for every group member etc.)

At the closing of the training:

Ensure participants are conscious of what they learned (e.g. “what am I taking with me”, “top ten list”, summarizing learning points)
 Ensure they are committed to take the next steps (e.g. what I will do on Monday morning, action plan development recap, enveloped obligations etc.)
 Provide a space for feedback – verbal evaluation or creative evaluation exercise (“temperature”, “scale”, “sandwich” etc.)
 Evaluation forms to be filled after verbal feedback and after giving diplomas (if applicable)

Trainer Communication Tools

1. Open and Closed Questions

Open questions help people formulate their thoughts and learning points; closed questions express the interpretations and preconceptions of the trainer. Closed questions are yes / no questions, while open questions ask something the learner feels, thinks, knows etc. so they usually start with “what”, “why”, “how”?

2. Confrontation and Support

The trainer has to keep a balance between the two interventions. The whole group or some members need support e.g. in the case of lack of self-confidence and the group also needs to hear the satisfaction of the trainer with their performance. Confrontation is needed, e.g. if someone's behavior hinders the process or achieving the goals. When the trainer formulates his/her confrontational sentence, he/she should avoid both being aggressive and being defensive. (Assertive communication.)

3. Mirroring

The trainer can give feedback to the whole group, a part of the group or one member if she/he observed something which is not visible for the persons involved. The best way of mirroring is describing rather than giving judgement. Mirroring, coupled with an open question often helps move the process forward. E.g. “I see that noone wants to volunteer for this task. Why do you feel uncomfortable?”

4. Summarizing

If a member of the group speaks a lot, it helps if we summarize in a sentence, like this: So, you are saying that... It helps the person to concentrate and the trainer to facilitate the process. Summarizing is also effectively used when the group is eager to discuss a topic too much in detail or driving the conversation away from the main topic – the trainer can mirror and summarize so everyone is satisfied that the message is heard and not dismissed. E.g. “I see you are really interested in this, it important because..... “

5. Silence

The trainer has to help people formulate their thoughts, which sometimes means that some of them need more time and silence. She/he has to involve the passive members as well as to handle the dominant/active people. Silence can be needed for the group to familiarize with a new concept or something shocking for them. But the trainer has to recognize “creative” silence from boredom or ignorance.

6. Saying No

The trainer is responsible for the process and the task of the group, therefore she/he has to focus on the framework (time, tasks, objectives etc.). It means that sometimes she/he has to say no and take the responsibility if the group does not like it.

7. Communication blocks

These communication blocks hinder the open relationship between the trainer and the group:

- intimidating
- insinuating
- being ironic or cynical, using humor in the wrong way
- threatening
- labeling
- blaming, making the other feel guilty
- patronizing
- dismissing
- being appreciative without a reason (too sweet)
- blackmailing

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