

Young Migrant Integration Leaders [EXEMPLAR]

IO1 – Integration Leaders Curriculum

Module 6: Facilitating Groups

Self-directed Learning Content

Introduction to the Module:

This is the sixth module of the Integration Leaders Curriculum Manual. This module addresses the topic “Facilitating Groups”, which includes definitions of important terms; an overview on what we understand as “facilitation” with whom we tend to do so and why; an explanation of the multiplier role and why it is essential for the right implementation of EXEMPLAR; an overview of engagement strategies’ best practices and facilitation skills, why they are important when it comes to facilitating groups and which are paramount for this purpose.

In scientific discussions, group facilitation is completely attached and concretely connected to group success and productivity. The importance of the role of the facilitator has been the reason for several publications that pertain to experiential learning theory, emotional intelligence, business management and, even, the psychotherapeutic process. Through the study of such publications, we aim to create an awareness regarding the multifaceted role the facilitator has, the depth of which can only be reached through combining self-directed learning with experience and participation in group activities, such as the ones of the EXEMPLAR curriculum. We recommend that you study this content thoroughly and then keep it as a reference point in your personal development.

This module is focused on providing a basic theoretical foundation of relevant topics that are related to facilitating groups, as well as a stimulating reflection on these topics, and sharing several frameworks and best practices regarding group development and facilitation. Of course, as EXEMPLAR brings an innovative approach to this field, it is of great significance to point out that these frameworks and best practices are provided in an inspirational context and as a basis to develop ideas and experiment with them to produce new creative, efficient and effective approaches for civil society engagement.

Learning Outcomes Achieved:	Knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to recognize the most common barriers to participation in a group;- to understand ones’ own barriers as a facilitator;- to establish the level of participation in a group.
	Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to encourage participation;- to make more informed decisions about the facilitation context and methods as a facilitator/integration leader;- to use a sociogram.

	<p>Attitudes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support a group to work together in ones' role as an integration leader; - to become more sensitive to the needs of the participants in a group session; - to build confidence in ones' role as an integration leader.
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Theoretical Content:

The main theoretical content of this module will cover two topics: how we Prepare, Plan and Design a group session and Developing Participation.

The core idea of the module is that experiential learning theory is ultimately connected to the role of a group facilitator. Facilitators need to understand the background theories that sustain and inform their practice. To do this, we present to you the most prominent of the existing models of Group Development and Change, the scientifically identified features of successful groups and teams and the most prevalent barriers toward participation. We want you to gain as much of a spherical perspective of the facilitators' role as is possible, through such a brief text. So we chose to briefly and coherently present some of the most relevant bits of great theories which you can test during in-group activities and then reflect on at your own space and time.

The first step of the creation of a spherical perspective is acquiring the facts and knowledge. Then you can experiment with putting theory to practice, by altering your behaviour in relevant situations and gathering feedback from the interactions you have with other people. How far inside this path you want to go is up to you!

Definitions of Terms:

The following terms and definitions are of special importance in understanding the context:

Assertiveness: Assertiveness means to express your needs, wants, opinions, feelings and beliefs directly and honestly, without ignoring or disrespecting the needs and rights of other people involved. (Winstanley, 2005)

Conflict: The following definition comes from Wilmot and Hocker (2007): "It includes the following four elements: (1) an expressed struggle, (2) between at least two interdependent people, (3) who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others, and (4) to achieve specific goals." (Beebe & Masterson, 2009)

Facilitator: "A self-reflective, process-person who has a variety of human, process, technical skills and knowledge, together with a variety of experiences to assist groups of people to journey together to reach their goals." (Hogan, 2002, pp. 57)

Team: As defined by Winstanley (2005), "a team is a social unit or collection of people who interact and communicate with each other, whose behavior is regulated by shared values and norms, who are willing to expend effort to seek common goals and objectives, who have complementary roles and who perceive themselves as members of a team."

Sociogram: A chart that presents the interrelations of individuals in a group and makes structural analysis of a group or community possible.

Unit 6.1: Preparing, Planning and Designing a Group Session

Experiential Learning:

In the learning theory proposed by Kolb (1984), the experience is the starting point of the cognitive process that enables a person to learn. In his own words: "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38) The experiential learning cycle, as described by Kolb, is a four-stage learning cycle and the stages contained within it are the following: (1) Concrete Experience; the new situation that is encountered, or a representation of it, (2) Reflective Observation of the New Experience, (3) Abstract Conceptualization; that is, the newly developed idea about the concept, and (4) Active Experimentation; that is, the application of the new idea to the world in the context of curiosity. Many scholars and theorists later on based their conclusions on this learning cycle and the theory of Kolb.

Based on the experiential learning idea of effective learning, Heron (1999) explained that Facilitation has six dimensions, with a different facilitative question posed by each dimension, as well as three political modes of Facilitation. His theory, in turn, has been inspiring to many other researchers and theorists, reaching the world of Business Management through Daniel Goleman and his work on styles of Leadership (2000). Read the following paragraphs to learn more about the elements proposed in Herons' theory.

The **Dimensions of Facilitation** are interweaving and overlapping because they are mutually supportive. However, each one is an independent entity and deserves specific attention. This is so because the facilitators' intention and purposes should guide them (Heron, 1999).

Planning Dimension is goal-oriented. It is all about the aims of the team and the program designed to reach them. It concerns the distinct objectives set forth at the beginning.

Meaning Dimension has to do with the cognitive aspect. It concerns understanding what is going on, how participants make sense of the experience and the reasons behind the tasks they have at hand.

Confronting Dimension is about the challenge. Within this dimension, lies the topic of raising awareness about resistances and avoidance experienced in the group of people.

Feeling Dimension is a sensitive aspect of Facilitating. It has to do with the management of feeling and emotion within the group.

Structuring Dimension is the formal aspect. It is where decisions about the methods of learning to be employed and how the context is shaped.

Valuing Dimension concerns integrity. Here is where "creating a supportive climate which honours and celebrates the personhood of group members" goes (Heron, 1999, p. 7).

Now, each facilitative dimension carries a facilitative question into it. It is asking who will decide about the issue raised by each facilitative question? Will it be the facilitator, the facilitator along with the participants, or the participants alone?

This consideration creates or is created by the definition of the favoured mode of Facilitation. In the Complete Facilitators' Handbook by Heron (1999), the modes are described as

follows. First is the Hierarchical mode; second is the Co-operative; third, comes the Autonomous. As mentioned earlier, the mode of facilitation simply aims to respond to the facilitative question, who is responsible for decision making in the process of creating the process?

Using a Sociogram:

The group members' interrelations can be presented on a sociographic chart, known as "sociogram" (Moreno, 1953). This tool is created to present knowledge simply, regarding the relations among the people; who prefers whom, who rejects whom, as well as the neutral interrelationships among group members. The information that feeds the tool may be collected by simple questions, or activities for the whole group. The sociogram can additionally carry information about emotional and ideological topics that influence the attraction and rejection or, even, neutrality patterns. That is, it portrays the question "Why?"

Features of Successful teams:

Countless of teams have been formed and worked together in the past, and probably more will go through the developmental cycle in the future! Certainly, not all of these have reached successfully to the implementation of their common goals. What differentiates a successful team from one that is not? In the following paragraphs, I will present six features that define teams as successful, as they were presented in an informative book by Diana Winstanley (2005). As you will notice by reading the initial letters of each of the following six paragraphs, they form the acronym ALPDEC. You may also notice that each of these is vast in meaning and interconnected to several of the topics discussed in previous modules, such as Module 3 & 5.2 ("Effective Communication" & "Leadership Skills in Engagement Strategies"). This happens because they truly are relevant and dependent on each other.

Aims of the team members are common. The team members agree upon these common aims after discussion. It is through the discussion that the team identifies those aims that are common among the team members. The discussion also provides opportunities for all team members to understand the common aims. It is the role of the facilitator to design procedures for reconciling differences of opinion within the team so that the team efficiently reaches a set of common goals.

Leadership is the action of leading a group of people or an organization, and that is a complex term to define as there are several perspectives to consider. There are at least six identified leadership styles (Goleman, 2000), which are: **Coercive**: "Do what I tell you!", **Authoritative**: "Come with me!", **Affiliative**: "People come first!", **Democratic**: "What do you think?", **Pacesetting**: "Do as I do, now" and **Coaching**: "Try this.". All of these styles are potentially required for a team to be successful, depending on several other factors.

People who are participating in the team with the skills they each possess are vital to the success of the team. Trust and openness between team members are valuable, and for this reason, they need to acknowledge and manage conflict, as well as celebrate the moment.

Design and Delivery are playing an important role in the teams' journey to success. For this reason, the team needs to define success clearly with standards, performance levels and key result areas.

The **Environment** that surrounds the team is also a relevant topic, and it may include stakeholders, their interests, further information, threats, potential trends and opportunities.

Change is constant, and teams need to value creativity and flexibility, by reassessing their aims and the reason for being frequently.

Team Roles:

The team is comprised of several members, and there are several different roles that each member can play in a group meeting or workshop. In a book written by Belbin (1993) about team roles, you can find nine different roles, which I will briefly introduce in the following paragraphs. It is possible to assess the characteristic roles a specific team member can assume through several introspective questions, which are presented in more detail in the book itself. The importance of identifying the preferred role of each team member is that you can “employ” the people who are suited for each role by assigning the role to them and briefly explaining to them their tasks. In other words, you can delegate these roles in your group meeting, so that your team members will feel more authentic in working on the task at hand, through their unique perspectives.

The **Coordinator** is usually a calm person whose behaviour is mature and controlled. The coordinators are perceived as more self-confident among the team members. They welcome all potential contributions to the discussion. They treat everyone on merit, without prejudice and beyond stereotypes. The coordinator clarifies the goals and objectives of the whole team. The coordinator promotes the decision making process and can delegate tasks to others well.

The **Shaper** is an out-going person who is dynamic and can challenge other people. He or she thrives under pressure; when other people would begin feeling crushed by stress, they are enjoying doing their job. They have the courage and drive to overcome obstacles. They are ready to challenge inertia, complacency, self-deception and ineffectiveness in the group.

The **Plant** is a person who is considered by others to be serious-minded and yet unorthodox, while at the same time, is highly individualistic. One of their positive qualities is that they are creative! They are an imaginative genius who can solve difficult problems. When other people admit defeat in solving a riddle, the Plant is producing idea after idea about the solution of it.

The **Resource Investigator** is an extroverted and enthusiastic person with highly developed communication skills. Their capacity for developing their social network and making new acquaintances is great. They enjoy exploring new opportunities and respond well to challenges.

The **Monitor / Evaluator** is a person who is prudent and sober. Some might perceive this person as unemotional because they focus their attention on the accuracy, and they are hard-headed. They tend to judge and discern differences easily in comparison to others. They would gladly help in separating things that differ slightly from each other, and this is a skill that may prove to be highly valuable in the decision-making process.

The **Team Builder** is socially oriented. This role is one that fits a person who is sensitive to situations and mild in temperament. They co-operate well, they respond well to the team spirit and are diplomatic. This person can help in calming the waters

and averting friction since they are highly perceptive and listen well. In general, they are the heart of the team spirit!

The **Implementor** is a conservative and dutiful person who is disciplined and rather, predictable. Their ability to organize and their practical common sense makes them your obvious superpower in turning ideas into practical actions. Also, they are hardworking and reliable.

The **Completer / Finisher** scores high on conscientiousness and is highly ordered. They can go through painstaking procedures to follow-through. Some may perceive them as perfectionists, and some of them really are. They enjoy searching for errors and omissions and yet, they do manage to deliver their task completed on time.

The **Specialist** possesses and gladly provides rare knowledge and skill, yet they tend to be loners and single-minded. However, they in many aspects are self-starters. In the team, their contribution is valuable.

This set of nine team roles, presented initially by Belbin in 1993, shows how varied a team can be and yet, how all these different people may, in fact, be required for a team to be successful in attaining the common aims.

Models of Group Development and Change:

There are several models of group development and change, but to facilitate groups, we find that the model proposed by Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman and Jenson (1977), fits our goals more than others. So, in the following paragraphs, you will learn more about the stages that any group might be going through from the beginning through to the end of the collaboration, whether this is a meeting or a multi-session workshop.

Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing	Adjourning/Mourning
Testing and Dependence	Intra-group Conflict	Group Cohesion	Functional Role Relatedness	Celebration of success, Dealing with the loss Saying Goodbye

(Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jenson, 1977)

When the group or team is formed, the members are quite dependent on each other, looking to others for direction, being polite to one another and testing the ground. This is the first stage in the group development stages proposed by Tuckman (1965), and it is called **Forming**.

During the second stage, the individuals begin getting to know each other a little bit better and, naturally, some sort of conflict is usually bound to be evident and apparent. This is neither good nor bad, because it all depends on how conflict will be managed by the Facilitator. Conflict can turn out to something positive. However, the evident “symptoms” of this stage are low morale because conflict comes with its’ effects: discomfort and confusion. It is, therefore, not strange that this stage is called “**Storming**”.

The third stage, **Norming**, is characterized by open exchanges and discussions. The group becomes more cohesive, and trust begins to build up. The group members identify common ground, and they identify group norms and clarify their roles.

This means that the group becomes more productive and the morale increases again. This brings them to the fourth stage, which is called “Performing”. The functional roles develop relatedness, and the group begins working together towards achieving goals. This is a natural outcome because the group members are more focused on the task, but it is also dependent on good facilitation skills.

The final stage was added to the model by Tuckman and Jensen in 1977, and it is called “**Adjourning**” or “**Mourning**”, because the group members need to distance themselves from the relationships they have formed within the group or team. The group needs to either change or disband, and after all of what has occurred, it is frequently a difficult moment. But it is also frequently a fascinating moment of celebration, as the aims and goals of the group or team have been achieved! More on the models can be found in Jaques (1995).

In her presentation of some of the most important models of group development and change, Diana Winstanley (2005) explains how apart from the stages a group is going through; there are two levels of operation which are also important. She explains how in 1961, Wilfred Bion highlighted two levels: (1) the **work group**, and (2) the **basic assumption group**. According to Bion (1961), there are three basic assumptions that the group may share. These are: (a) Dependency, (b) Fight or Flight, (c) Pairing. These govern whether the group will be productive towards their objectives and ultimate goal, or it will only be focusing on individualistic goals and needs. Again, there is not just one optimal basic assumption that will work for all groups. Instead, the optimal basic assumption depends on the desired goal or aim of the group or team. So, for instance, a doctor may benefit from the basic assumption of Dependency to convince the patient to take the prescribed medication. However, an atmosphere of passivity cannot help a creative group reach their goal.

Unit 6.2: Developing Participation

Importance of Facilitation:

It is evident from all the above, that facilitation is an important aspect of group performance. The following paragraphs aim to gather together some of the most relevant topics in which facilitation is paramount to the success of a group process. Read carefully while reflecting on what has already been learned and make use of your critical thinking skill in acknowledging your own opinions, as to which aspects of group productivity and success rely on facilitation.

Group Development and Change: As we have already seen, group development is a complex phenomenon that is governed by some dynamic processes. It is in maintaining the appropriate group climate that the facilitators’ role is paramount. Because through such practice, the group culture that develops can serve the reason for the groups’ existence, the purpose of its’ initial formation.

Experiential Learning: The grounding theory behind some of the most important publications on Facilitation is the Experiential Learning Theory proposed by Kolb (1984). Since we accept that we can only know what we know about something through its’ application, facilitation is offering the safe ground in which teams and group members can experiment and work on their professional development. The theory even has applications in self-directed learning, because, through the work of a facilitator, the content can be structured to create the right balance between the factors that affect information retention and application of knowledge into practice.

Welcoming: Participation in group activities can be improved through the Facilitators' welcoming behaviours and actions, even before the group becomes an entity. We have visited the several dimensions in which the facilitator can intervene during the Design phase of a group session, whether it is a single meeting or a recurrent workshop. Specifically, we know, now, that balancing between neutrality and creating a supportive climate is the optimal way to go. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that this balance may be reached in practice by a variety of decisions, behaviours and actions taken by the Facilitator.

Team Roles: One of the most important topics we have covered in this text is about giving space to each team/group member to have a specific, clearly defined and active role in the team or group. It is the facilitators' responsibility to create a process in which such a role delegation can happen naturally and without creating unnecessary conflict that will stall the group performance and development.

Collaboration: Another important responsibility of the Facilitator, as we have seen so far, is to create such procedures for reconciling conflict that members of the group or team can collaborate effectively.

Team Cooperation:

Introductions (Welcoming & Participation)

At the beginning of a team workshop, the facilitator is faced with a few problems that do not belong to the team and that need to be solved immediately at the start. The first one is, that the participants are curious as to who the Facilitator is as a person. One thing to do is introduce yourself, but that might come across as arrogant, especially if your choice to present your work achievements is perceived by people as boasting. Another problem is the Workshop Culture Shock that perfectly describes what happens to people who have not attended a workshop in some time. How do you explain to them the difference between the presenter, the trainer and the role of the Facilitator? The third problem is that the participants most likely do not know each other and are really wondering about their connection with each other. What arrangements do you make to get them to introduce themselves in an appropriate and time-efficient manner? (Hogan, 2007)

Barriers

Culture: Culture is "a learned system of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, values and norms is shared by a group of people." (Beebe & Masterson, 2009; also look into Smith, 1966) Whereas Collectivistic cultures tend to value the benefit of the group more than the benefit of the individual, in Individualistic cultures, the opposite is true. The assertive individuals who are self-starters and take the initiative are favoured in Individualistic cultures, such as Northern Europeans, Northern Americans and Australians.

In contrast, Collectivistic cultures such as Arabs, Southern Europeans, Africans, Asians and Southern Americans, value the sacrifice of individual goals toward the mutual benefit of the group. Although within cultures, there are individual differences, there are norms and rules that in general, people of different cultures follow (Kim, Hunter, Miyahara, et al. 1996). One example of these is the value appointed to autonomy and initiative.

Now we will consider an important differentiation of cultures, which are distinguished in terms of how much emphasis is given to the nonverbal cues and the surrounding context of the interaction, into **High Context** vs **Low Context Cultures**. Klopff and McCroskey have

provided an interesting piece of knowledge to the matter of intercultural communication, in their 2006 publication.

Through them, we learn that in High-context cultures, that is, the rather more collectivist cultures, people tend to prefer information that concerns the surrounding environment, and this may mean that a big part of the message can be implied in the communication. The members of such cultures respond to nonverbal cues, they share information freely, they rely on physical context for information and they take into account things such as the environment of the encounter, the situation, the gestures and the mood of the person they are speaking with.

In contrast, what we consider to be more Individualistic cultures, that is, Low-context culture members expect the information to be explicitly provided through words. They are less aware of nonverbal cues, of the environment in which the encounter takes place and of the situation. They tend to segment and compartmentalize information, they need detailed background information, they view knowledge as a commodity and they value detailed directions from a specialist. In simple words, the verbal expression is favored more than the nonverbal expression to them.

But what about physical contact and culture? Knowing more about the group members' preferences about this matter can influence your decisions on seating arrangements, and help you in understanding the defensiveness seen in some people who might be annoyed by the level of eye contact and being touched by others in the group activities. So, as the terms imply, people from high-contact cultures appreciate more the natural power of touching in communication, of maintaining eye contact for more than just a brief moment, of seating near the person they are speaking to. In contrast, people from Low-contact cultures prefer more personal space and less eye contact (Beebe & Masterson, 2009).

The conversational style is another topic that you will find discussed in sociological literature about cultural differences because there is a tendency in some cultures to speak at the same time as their counterpart, or because some cultures prefer to speak about matters deep and personal, whereas others do not favour such discussion topics. This is very much so regarding the concept of time! Some people are strict and punctual, whereas others are more lenient about it.

Again, jumping to stereotypical conclusions about a persons' preference on account of his or her culture is unwise. Still, it is worth noting that by acknowledging some cultural preferences of people from different parts of the world may allow us to be more sensitive to their emotional needs and stability, and may increase the level of respect among the group members.

Gender: Regarding gender differences in preferences for the above-mentioned considerations, there seems to be evidence that supports that there are differences both within a culture and among cultures that are relevant to Gender. That is, researchers have found that women and men differ in their nonverbal communication preferences. In the publication by Mayo and Henley (1981), we can find many examples of such differences and more information on research evidence. What is important here is to remember that this knowledge should not be feeding stereotypes, but instead increase our awareness into the various possible obstacles we might encounter in designing and implementing meetings, activities and workshops with a variety of people.

Conclusion

Through all the above, we have learned that Group Development and Change depends on good facilitation skills since the facilitator is responsible for designing the processes that work alongside the development of the team. But also we have seen how the appropriate design for success depends on good facilitation skills because there is not just one optimal template of designing a meeting, a workshop or any other format of group activity that will work for all groups, all teams, all topics and all learning or production objectives.

Group members' learning is not completely autonomous; it also depends on the contribution of the facilitator. We have learned that it is through the facilitators' attendance to the facilitative questions of each Dimension that the needs of the individual group members are met. Also, we have learned that facilitation politics govern the decisions made regarding the design and planning. This means, in effect, that the facilitator, even though he or she has to be neutral, plays a distinctively vital role in the implementation of successful group work.

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