

3.4. PEER EDUCATION – SCHOOL OF FREEDOM

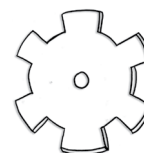


Aim

This is an exercise for a group of people who have been involved in workshops before and are therefore more or less experienced participants. The purpose of the exercise is to turn consumers of workshops into active facilitators of workshops, and to give them the self-confidence needed for facilitation.

 <p>Time needed Approximately three hours This workshop is a starting point for many workshops, run by the participants themselves, and so it could lead to one or more working days.</p>	 <p>Resources needed Two sheets of paper per person, one with the heading “What I’ve got to offer”, and one with “What I’d like to learn” Pens Felt-tip pens</p>	 <p>Group size 10 to 40 people</p>
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Step-by-step description



1. First, the facilitator explains that this workshop is the start of a whole range of new workshops, to be conducted by the participants themselves. He or she will explain that, in order to run a good workshop, it is not enough to have a good topic, but it should also be presented and run in an involving and interesting way. Also, he or she stresses that everyone has certain qualities, hobbies or talents people might not know about, and that there might be more people interested in this than they might first think.
2. Then, the participants are given a crash course in workshop facilitating. This should be a very brief explanation, mainly mentioning the build-up of a workshop using lively presentation, different methods (theoretical and practical), graphic aids (pictures, cartoons) and actively involving the participants through discussion, role-play or theatre. If possible, plan an ideal workshop before the “School of freedom” exercise and let participants take notes on the structure, methods used and presentation techniques.
3. Hand out the sheets and explain their purpose. On the one saying “What I’ve got to offer”, participants can fill in what talents, hobbies or skills they have. Point out that this can be anything, from street dance to writing song texts, from civil disobedience to making postcards, and from basic Chinese to Reiki. On the second paper, “What I’d like to learn”, participants can mention what they would like to know more about. These too can range from learning to bake bread to learning more about religions, and from playing football to writing slogans for banners. All participants are given 15 minutes to write down one to three subjects on both papers. In the meantime, the facilitator also fills in the forms and prepares two signs, “Supply” and “Demand”, and sticks these on the wall. When people are finished filling in the sheets, they can stick them on the wall under the respective signs.
4. Everyone is given 15 minutes to take a closer look at what the others have to offer and what is being asked for. On the supply side, people can put a cross or a dot with a felt-tip pen if they would like to be part of that workshop. On the demand side, people who feel they could give a requested workshop can write their name next to it. Those who are also interested in that subject can simply put a cross or a dot next to it again.
5. The group then takes a look at which subjects are most popular and elects a number of them, depending on the time available. In general, most workshops will take two to three hours, but this can be adapted. Ideally, everyone in the group should have a workshop to prepare, though sometimes this will be practically impossible.

6. The group is then divided into smaller preparation groups of four to seven people. This can be done at random; being part of the preparation group does not mean you have to facilitate or even attend the workshop. However, there should be at least one person whose subject was elected present in every group. It should be clear to the groups how many people, approximately, the workshop will be given to, and how much time is available.
7. The preparation groups take a closer look at the elected subjects in their group. What could be good ways to present the subject? What energisers, role playing, discussion techniques could be used? How much time should be used for theory and how much for the practical part? How can all people attending the workshop be involved? Within the group, they create structure and content for the workshop(s) selected. The facilitator regularly looks in on the groups and advises and helps out.
8. All groups reunite again and present the structure and content for the workshops they have developed.
9. With a small group of volunteers, the workshops are programmed into the larger schedule. Different workshops can be given simultaneously.

Reflection and evaluation

Individual part

- ▶ Was it hard to think of subjects you know something about or wanted to know something about?
- ▶ Were you surprised by the reactions of others, both their offers and demands and their reactions to yours?

Preparation groups

- ▶ Was it hard to make up the structure for the workshops in the preparation groups?
- ▶ Did everyone participate? If not, why?
- ▶ Were there conflicts over how the workshop should be run?

Plenary

- ▶ What did you think of the presentation of the structure of the workshops by the other groups?
- ▶ How do you rate your group presentation?
- ▶ Do you feel confident enough with this structure to run a workshop?



Some further tips

This exercise has been used at international summer camps to serve a double purpose; on the one hand, to make the camp more attractive to everyone by democratically deciding what workshops will be offered, and on the other hand, to involve everyone in the organisation of the camp by giving them responsibility for a workshop. Also, the workshop is a good method to discover what knowledge is present within the group and realise that sometimes it is not necessary to hire professionals to do the job for you.

This method can be used as practice for peer education on more serious topics. Once young people have learned that it can be fun to stand in front of a group and think of different ways to pass on knowledge of one's favourite topics, trivial as it may seem, they will gain self-confidence from it.

In the summer camp setting, it was possible to prepare and run three-hour workshops, with two or more workshops run simultaneously, giving people a chance to choose which they would like to go to. When there is less time available, these could also be adapted to half-hour or one-hour workshops, possibly even facilitated by two or three people who are interested in or have knowledge about the same topic. This might be a good alternative for those who feel uncomfortable about the idea of leading a workshop on their own.

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