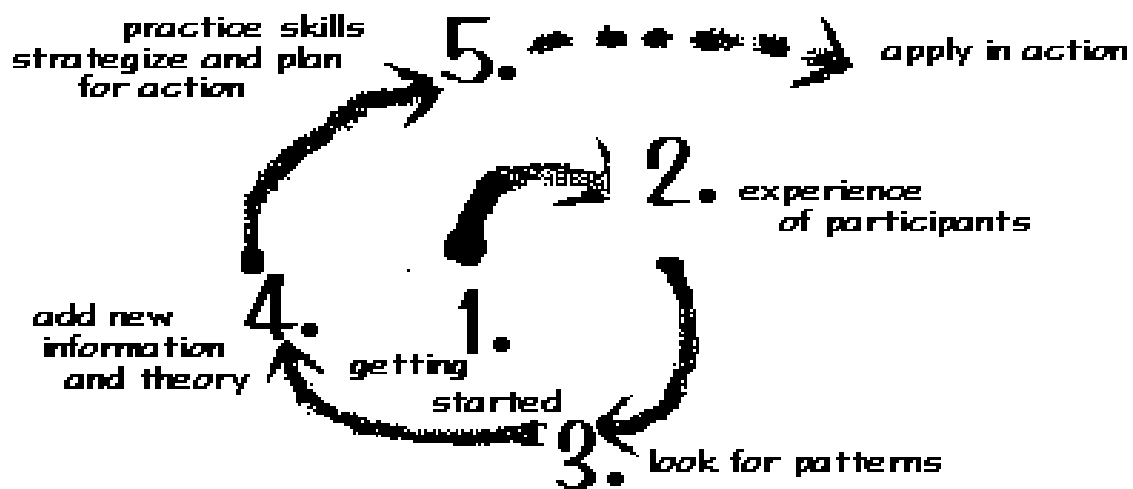


worksheet

the Programme Spiral

Stages of a workshop



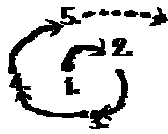
Source: Arnold, Rick, Bev Burke, e.a., *Educating for a Change, Between The Lines*, Toronto (1991)
developed further by Jan Haverkamp (2001 – 2003)

The ZHABA facilitators collective has published a range of worksheets that can help you with campaigning. These sheets can be obtained from the Internet on <http://www.zhaba.cz>

The ZHABA facilitators collective is a group of NGO facilitators. It helps non-profit organisations to improve their work. More information on <http://www.zhaba.cz>

© 2003 Stichting ZHABA facilitators collective

(parts of) this worksheet may only be copied or used in other publications after previous written consent of the Stichting ZHABA facilitators collective.



1. getting started

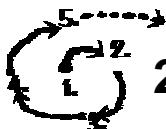
When people arrive in a workshop, they not only have a workshop on their minds, but a lot more. Everything that happened lately, the impressions of the travel, maybe impressions of a new town, new people, meeting old acquaintances, their problems at home or in their organisation - you name it. Furthermore most people from Central and Eastern Europe visiting one of your workshops (and many from elsewhere as well) may have their first experience with the methods and forms we use! Every participant carries her own set of impressions and problems and experiences in her mind.

To be able to start to *work*, we will have to *arrive*.

During the phase of *getting started*:

- technical things can be arranged (sleeping places, food, rules of the house, materials);
- facilitators and participants are introduced;
- we find out why people are there;
- the programme is introduced and discussed; when necessary the background of the used methods is explained;
- we set the atmosphere for the rest of the workshop.

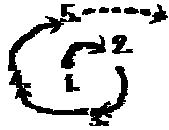
This all has to lead to an atmosphere in which we can start to work together.



2. experience of the participants

In our approach, we do not have one expert that tells us what reality is and how it should be changed. There are a lot of reasons for this. We will discuss them in more detail in the next chapter. But roughly we take as a basic premise that all participants are experts of some kind.

We try to combine all the expertise in the group to get a synergetic effect. The phase of exchanging experience from all the participants is therefore a very crucial one. Here we find out, which strong points we have in our group (special expertise, experience from people who are directly involved in the matter we want to address, access to information, access to media or special key persons, contacts with authorities, etcetera), which skills (skills of speech and expressing oneself, skills in organizing, artistic skills, all other skills), but also which weaknesses. We try to find out what we together already know about the problems we want to tackle. We try to build upon our common experiences from the past. We share our emotions involved in the theme we work on.



3. look for patterns

Our experiences will show a blanket of impressions. Putting our experiences together in itself does not yield a synergetic effect. We have to compare them and somehow add them up.

We can look for similarities, for differences, explanations. We can list up all the actors involved in the problem we want to address, the power lines involved. We can find out the material backgrounds of these problems.

Important key-words here are:

- recognition: When we recognize certain experiences from others, the credibility of our own experience grows. We may feel stronger and more certain.
- incompatibility: Some experiences at first glance are contradictory to ours. While looking for patterns, we might find together astonishing explanations for that!

Notice that the internal democracy in the workshops does not primarily have an ideological reason. On very practical grounds it appears that full democracy is necessary.

Also during this phase, it is of crucial importance, that everybody can have a voice. First of all, looking from different sides to the cloud of experiences that the group brings together, will yield very different views on patterns and explanations. But what is even more important, is that finding out patterns is not an end in itself. It is a step towards finding a way, a strategy to change unwanted developments. As a group of workshop participants we want to take part in creating that change! Therefore the understanding of the situation has to be *an understanding by the group*. If only a few 'leading persons' in the group take part in finding patterns, it will be more difficult later on to include the others in working out ways to change the situation. You could say, that we need a *common ownership* of the analysis.

Looking for patterns

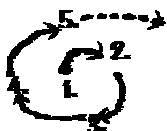
Let's take a closer look at Juro. He was one of the participants during one of my workshops. He normally focused on his own experience. He failed to see, that around him there are people with similar experiences, which can support him in his image and his judgement. He worked on traffic issues and knew everything about a newly planned motorway.

During a round in which everybody explained how the motorway effected him or her, he was astonished to hear that others had received similar information as he had, but from other sources! These people around him also could give bits and pieces to gain better understanding why the motorway was following a certain route. And in turn, Juro's *own* experience strengthened others in their view. Juro found himself growing in a group of like-minded people!

But there was also another side of the medal. His experience, and that of these other people I talked about, was very technical. There were also some other people who had a completely different experience concerning this motorway. They did not know much about the technical backgrounds. But they told about traffic politics. About investment policies from the European Union and the state.

When Juro's knowledge was put next to this knowledge - there seemed to be nothing to compare! Until he understood that his experience fitted in this political perspective. For instance, the strange behaviour of the road company - sometimes looking completely irrationally - made more sense.

He learned to focus his knowledge towards a strategy to actually *stop* the development of this new motorway, instead of trying to change its course.



4. add new information and theory

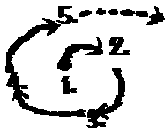
Outside our group of participants there always will be a lot more information and experiences that might be valuable. In the conventional ways of education, this new information is mostly the starting-point for learning. Here we introduce it later. If we take the "outside" theory and information as a starting point, this will obscure our view on our own position. It will focus our thinking (and working) on the priorities that are included in the new information and theory - *not* on the priorities that our experience, wants us to set; that are important to *us*. This is an important notion: the own experience first has to set the priority for the direction in which we want to work together; only *then* we need to look around for outside information and experience to help us. Because:

- We want to address concrete problems and work to concrete changes. One of the large complaints from many (possible) active people in the environmental movement is: there is a lot of talking, but people don't *do* anything. The main reason for that is, that most groups try to deal with abstract problems and abstract solutions. These abstract problems and solutions are often dictated by (interesting, no doubt) information coming from outside. But to really be able to *make a change*, we will need to address concrete problems. Our own life, our own experience and the life and experience from the people in our direct neighbourhood (the other participants in the workshop) are the strongest vehicles to show us concrete issues, concrete problems, and suggest us concrete changes. Books, theories, professors from outside cannot show us why air pollution in our town is a problem. They can show us abstract statistics (which will help us in our struggle for clean air!), but they only make sense to us if they relate to our own experience: children with a weak health, people we know with asthma, the fact that we are irritated by car-exhaust, etcetera.
- To push through the changes, we want to see, we need a large motivation. Or call it a sense of responsibility. Only the feeling "this is my thing" will help us through the difficult moments in the struggle for change. If the outside information pushes us, it is very easy to wander off in years of fundamental research around the problem - in creating all kinds of information structures that don't change anything. But if it is *our own problem*, we will *want to see change*.
- The strong feeling of responsibility is also one of the forces that keeps us alert to be precise. The risks caused by mistakes in our strategy will hit us harder when we deal indeed with *our problem - our change*, and not with someone elses.
- Information and experiences will always be distorted. Official figures may have been adapted to political realities, attitudes towards a company director may be distorted on the basis of his corrupt reputation, scientific reports may only show part of the problems involved, etcetera. Therefore it is important that we *judge* the information from outside. When the information from outside comes in the start of the workshop, it will be the judgement of only a few (the lecturer, the expert, the facilitator, a few 'noisy' participants) that will set the position of this information. To tackle problems with a group, however, requires high quality criteria! When we can compare outside information and outside experiences with our own (from the whole group), we adapt more strict criteria than when only a few people set them - without a real possibility for the others to judge these criteria.

[continued on next page]

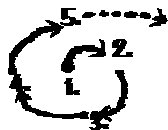
This together explains why the conventional educational methods have brought forward so many very good experts, but so little people that indeed in practice are devoted to real, tangible improvements of our society!

Short: To motivate (and educate) people best and most efficient *in their own interest*, information and experience from outside are instrumental for working on their own priorities. Still, information and experiences from outside are of very high value. They can help us evaluate our own experiences, test the patterns we found, show new patterns and new directions for action. They can give us new arguments and challenge our own. Therefore in the workshop process, this input from outside is an important part. It can be in the form of previously prepared written or electronic materials, of resource persons from outside - it can also be in the form of a break in which participants start to collect information and bring it back in the group. This information can be anything from newspaper interviews with politicians, expert reports, a lecture from a scientists, an excursion to a factory. On the basis of our own experience and group criteria, developed in the earlier parts of the workshop, this outside input can find an optimal place in our learning and... in our strategy for change.



5. practice skills, strategize and plan for action

At a certain moment in the workshop, we will move from the analysis to the actual action of change.... and discover that we need certain skills for that. This can be "being able to talk to parliamentarians", "write press-releases", "make a good looking report for politicians on the threats for otters" to "how to react on police during a direct action" and many things more. We will need to work out a strategy to make the changes we have devoted ourselves to and we need to divide responsibilities and tasks - make arrangements for the future: the action.



ACTION!

The final outcome of any getting together is - of course - something that is DONE, something that is HAPPENING. Ideal workshops work towards ACTION.

This action can be concrete work done by workshop participants after the workshop. It can also be the end of the workshop itself...

.... and then - after some time, you probably want to reflect your experiences again, look for patterns, add new information, strategize again and prepare for new action.... growing in every round of the spiral....