Bootcamp Methodology for Green Skills

(Toolkit for Youth Workers and Trainers)

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Background

This methodology is developed in the framework of the project Green Entrepreneurship and Local Culture: Youth Workers on the Move (RECALL). The project is a capacity-building initiative, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union in the framework of Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices - Capacity building in the field of youth.

The project's main objective is to support European and Asian organisations to promote green skills, circular economy, and youth-led green entrepreneurship in encouraging positive social change in rural areas of the countries involved in the project. Based on their cultural traditions and identity, and supported by these organisations, young people can find inspiration to use nature and local resources sustainably, start entrepreneurial endeavours, which preserve the environment, and contribute to their communities' wellbeing.

The current methodology was developed on the occasion of the youth workers seminar for cooperation and it is going to be tested and used during the following activities planned to take place in the framework of the RECALL project:
-   The training for trainers and youth workers "Bootcamp for Geen Skills"
-   The local boot camps for young green entrepreneurs, that are planned to take place in each RECALL country (Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania, India, Bhutan and Thailand)

The partners have chosen to use the Bootcamp approach because it allows using different techniques for up-skilling in a very short period with long-lasting effects on the learners.

Besides the methodology, which provides some tips and information, useful for planning and conducting the training activity, we recommend having a look at the rest two materials (toolkits for young people), which go together with this document: "Local Resources and Cultural Traditions for Circular Economy" and "Green Entrepreneurship and Local Culture". They are available on the official website of the project: project-recall.eu/

Objectives

The objective of the methodology is to support youth workers and trainers in the process of planning and implementing the local boot camps for green skills, mainly aimed at young people from rural areas (including follow-up activities).

Target groups

This material is designed to be used by youth workers and trainers, working with young people from rural areas, mainly for the promotion of green skills and youth-led green entrepreneurship.

However, in a wider context, it can be used by anyone designing non-formal educational programs for young people in the context of the development of rural areas, recognising and valorizing the local culture of the rural communities, sustainable development, circular economy and youth-led green entrepreneurship.

I. A little bit of theory

Key principles of Non-formal Learning

The boot camp for green skills is designed to be a **non-formal learning experience** - an extra-curricular activity for young people designed to help them improve their skills and competencies, complementing the formal educational curriculum. As such, the Bootcamp activity shall follow the key principles of the NFL:

- **Voluntary participation** - the participants join the activity voluntarily (it is not a compulsory part of their school or university curriculum) and when joining the activity they are free to participate or not in some of the exercises or tasks, which they are not comfortable with

- **Learner-centred approach** - the focus of the learning process is not the content taught, but the learner. This means that the youth workers/trainers/facilitators shall always adjust the content and the way of teaching to the realities, needs and capabilities of the learners, or *"start from where people are"* (Ghanea et al., 2021, p. 35)

- **Aimed at learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship** - while the main purpose of the formal educational system in many countries is to prepare good professionals for the labour market (and thus - foster economic development), non-formal learning is more about developing life skills, which are more related to the development of the society of responsible, engaged and active citizens

- Based on **involving both individual and group learning** with a collective approach - ideally, the non-forming learning experience is designed in a way that recognises and provides space for individual learning (where each individual can identify his or her own learning goals and works towards achieving them) and also group (or so-called cooperative learning). Group learning activities promote dialogue within the group, allowing participants to learn not only from the trainer but also from each other, it creates an environment fostering team working, social, communication skills and self-esteem. In addition, "group activities enable students to discover deeper meaning in the content and improve thinking skills." (GAUTAM, 2018, p.823)

- **Holistic** - when designing the learning experience, the trainer shall take into consideration the whole person (including their physical and mental state) as well as an integral part of the society - "The whole person lives in the whole world where everything is interrelated" (Ghanea et al., 2021, p. 32)

- **Process-oriented** - this means that the "teaching" process is not only about presenting and memorising facts, but rather about the way how people understand, process and integrate the new knowledge or information in their real-life environment. "The aim of process-oriented instruction is to foster and facilitate self-directed learning preparing for lifelong learning" (Bolhuis, 2003, p. 338). In order to make the process even more effective, it is important to allow enough time/space for self-reflection of the learning outcomes.

- **Based on experience and active participation** - active participation is essential for the non-formal learning process "one should be active and engaged; one cannot sit back and be a passive observer" (Ghanea et al., 2021, p. 33). In order to achieve this, the trainer/facilitator shall ensure a supportive and welcoming environment, which encourages every participant to actively join and this way - participate in the process of the co-creation of the learning experience for the learner him/herself and for the whole group. In addition, active participation is closely related to **experiential learning**, which is described in more detail below.

- **(Ideally) Accessible to everyone** - this means that learning experiences shall be as available as possible to young people from various backgrounds and groups, facing various (geographical, social, health, and other) challenges. This can involve offering learning activities for free, designing an accessible and safe environment, organising the activity in a venue closer to the participants, etc.

The principles above are adapted from the list suggested by the Council of Europe suggested with the definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning. (The Council of Europe, *Definitions - Non-formal education*)

Besides the guiding principles, which should be the base for designing, developing and delivering a learning experience there is one more very important aspect of delivering a meaningful learning experience - having a **safe space** for learning. And here the point is not to make it only physically safe and accessible for all participants, but also to provide an atmosphere, where everyone can feel safe to learn, share their experiences, emotions, and opinions and not feel afraid to make mistakes and learn from them.

Ensuring a safe emotional environment first could help with the "group rules" or the "Group contract" - basically this is a list of rules, which is suggested by the participants themselves. Besides the usual ones ("do not be late for the sessions", "make mobile phones on silent mode", etc.) it is always highly recommended to have a rule on the way people shall interact with each other (such as "discuss the opinion/behaviour, not the person" or other ways to formulate the idea that a single action or idea, do not define the person and in case of disagreement it is not acceptable to label people and judge them.

Source of the image: @canvaoriginalstickers at canva.com

Experiential learning

As evident from the lines above, being holistic, participatory and process-oriented, non-formal learning is highly experiential. In order to organise and deliver a better learning experience, it would be very useful to keep in mind the Kolb cycle.

David A. Kolb is an American psychologist actively working in the field of learning theory. IN the 1970s he described the experiential learning process as a cycle consisting of four stages

1) Concrete experience, which people already have
2) Observation and reflection on that experience
3) Defining abstract concepts (knowledge, based on experience and reflection)
4) Testing the concept (experimenting), which leads to a new experience

Based on this model, Kolb defines four learning styles, which can be illustrated in the diagram below (McLeod, 2013)

Adapted from: Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle By Saul McLeod
https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html

A group of learners usually involves people with different learning styles, so in order to design a better and more effective learning experience, the facilitator has to keep in mind their characteristics and design a combination of activities which are relevant to all participants:

● People having the ***Diverging learning style*** of learning learn best when combining a concrete experience with reflective observation. They would enjoy activities such as group work, brainstorming, debates and sessions where they could give and receive personal feedback, and learn what others think and feel.
● People preferring ***Assimilating learning style*** are more focused on logic, concepts and ideas. They would enjoy clear explanations rather than practical examples and would prefer classical teaching activities such as reading, lectures and analytical tasks.
● People having ***Converging learnin style*** tend to prefer solving problems, finding practical solutions to tasks and situations, simulations, and experimentations.
● People with ***Accommodating learning style*** usually rely on intuition and on information from others, then on logical analysis. Such learners would enjoy experiential activities or discussions stimulating imagination ("what if…", "why not…?")

In addition, just like with any other psychological profile, it is important to keep in mind that one person might have dominating preferences for a specific learning style, but usually, most learners have different combinations of two or more styles. So, when designing educational programmes for groups of learners, trainers shall involve diverse activities, corresponding to the preferences of all four styles.

The role of emotions in learning

Approaching the non-formal learning experiences from a holistic perspective, one should not miss paying special attention to the emotions of the learners' experience. In his book "Emotions and learning" Reinhard Pekrun states that "emotions profoundly influence learning and achievement." (UNESCO International Bureau of Education et al., 2014, p. 8). In the context of a learning activity, positive emotions *(such as excitement, enjoyment, hope, pride, and relaxation)* can enhance the learners' motivation to learn, keep their attention and interest in the information presented, and get curious and eager to learn more. On the other hand, negative emotions *(such as frustration, anxiety, shame or anger)* could lead to a lack of motivation, less engagement and less participation in learning.

More detailed information on emotions in learning is available in the publication [Emotions and learning by Reinhard Pekrun](link), published by UNESCO International Bureau of Education and International Academy of Education.

Emotions management is not really the preliminary task of the educators and trainers, however, being very focused on delivering the material and information, one should not forget to observe (and if needed correct) the emotional atmosphere of the group. For that purpose, the proposed activities in the programme should be designed and performed in a way that stimulates the positive experiences of the participants. During the training, the tasks and activities (or at least some of them) should be fun to do, and participants should feel safe expressing their thoughts and ideas. After the training, the participants should feel inspired and excited to implement what they have just learned in their real-life context.

If we look at the structure of the key competencies for life-long learning, in order to develop competence in a specific area one should have proper knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- In order to develop knowledge people need to study information, understand and explore ideas and concepts
- For developing, skills people need enough knowledge, combined with relevant time for practising
- For changing their attitudes people need to either experience emotions, which make them change their perspective on a given topic or problem or gain confidence in their skills and knowledge.

Gathering knowledge and developing skills takes time and it is not a realistic goal for a short-term training activity lasting a couple of days. But changing the attitude to the problem or topic can have a long-lasting effect on the participants and this can be achieved by triggering the relevant emotional response, which will keep the participants engaged in the topic after the learning experience.
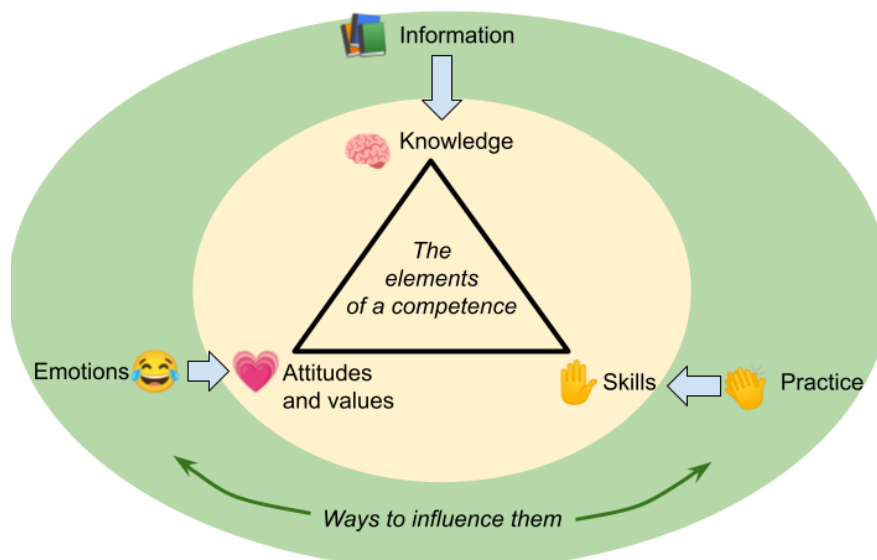
Green Entrepreneurship - What is it and how to "teach" it?

Dr Saari and Dr Joensuu-Salo define Green Entrepreneurship as a *"special **subset of entrepreneurship** that aims at creating and implementing **solutions to environmental problems** and to promote **social change** so that the **environment is not harmed**."* (Saari & Joensuu-Salo, 2019, p. 302)

So, based on this concept, in order to become a "green" entrepreneur, one shall meet the following criteria:
1) have a sense of initiative and an entrepreneurial mindset
2) feel engaged in the environmental problems and be willing to put effort, energy and resources to minimize the risks or/and improve the state of the natural environment

Let's begin with entrepreneurship. There are two approaches to the meaning of this term - a broad and a narrow one:

> The **narrow approach** associates entrepreneurship with the ability to start and run one's own enterprise, be it a commercial or social enterprise.
> The **broad approach** associates entrepreneurship with abilities and attitudes that apply to a much broader context and emphasises the ability to turn ideas into action.
> (Andersen et al., 2017, 8)

What we see from both definitions, entrepreneurship in its essence is the sense of initiative[1], driving people to take actions resulting in creating value. Lackéus (2015) pointed out that the creation of value is at the heart of entrepreneurial activity (p. 9-12). Furthermore, he suggests the following model explaining the relationship between educational activities and their effect on entrepreneurial education:
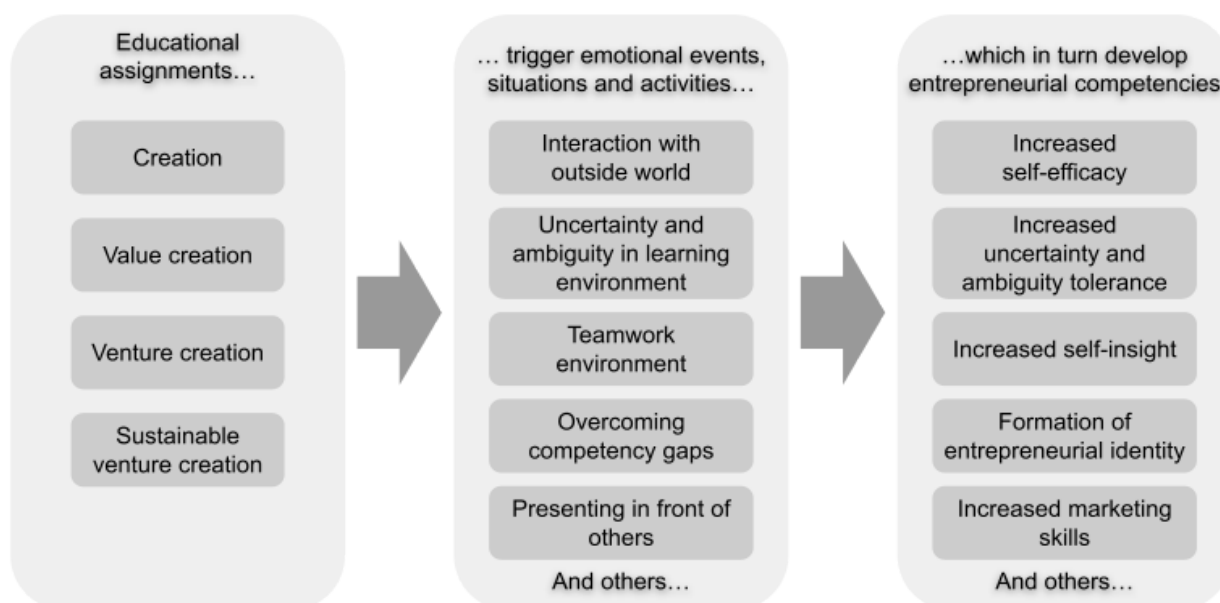
A model of entrepreneurial education and its outcomes,
source: Lackéus, M. (2015). Entrepreneurship in Education: What, Why, When, How?, OECD, p. 27

Based on the empirical data Lackéus has analysed, he concludes that in the framework of entrepreneurial learning, in order to reach the best results, educators shall focus more on the:

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[1] In the initial framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, introduced in 2006, the competence was formulated as "Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship". In the version revised in 2018, the name of this competence was summarised to "Entrepreneurship competence"

> *"assignments to create value (preferably innovative) to external stakeholders based on problems and/or opportunities the students identify through an iterative process they own themselves and take full responsibility for."* (Lackéus, 2015, p. 26)

He further explains that the evaluation process of the assignments should be more process-based (focused on the activities, the process of the solution creation and interaction between the learners within the group), not result-based (with a focus on the level of development of a certain competence. Only in this way, a deeper, self-reflective learning process can take place, which can foster long-term effects.

Based on this, we can conclude that effective **entrepreneurial learning takes place in line with the key principles of non-formal learning**, introduced a bit earlier in this material - it is process-oriented, participatory activity, oriented on individual and group learning.

So, once we already have an idea of how to teach entrepreneurship, the next question is - how to design the learning process in order not only to foster a sense of initiative in the young people but also to motivate them to integrate sustainability into the process of turning their ideas into actions.

The good news is that, according to a number of researchers, young people are in general engaged with environmental issues and tend to live, act and behave more eco-friendly. A massive survey by Bath University conducted in 10 countries, involving 10 000 respondents aged between 16 and 25 years. The key findings reveal a high percentage of awareness of young people on the key climate change issues: "84% *(of the respondents)* were at least moderately worried (...), 75% said that they think the future is frightening and 83% said that they think people have failed to take care of the planet" (Hickman et al., 2021, p. e863-e873)

On the other hand, according to UN statistics, published in 2011 "84% of the surveyed young people agree that they need more information to prevent climate change."[2] Possibly, for ten years, this percentage has changed a bit, however, the importance of proper and reliable information should not be underestimated (otherwise phenomena such as "greenwashing" would never appear).

So, when designing a training activity, aimed at motivating young people to get engaged in green entrepreneurship, it would be a good idea to plan a session where young people could meet an expert in the field of sustainable development, ecology or climate change, who can talk with the learners and guide them how to find reliable information on these topics. Another option would be to organise a session where the participants themselves can share their own misleading information or beliefs on climate change and how to find and analyse information on these topics.

II. From theory to practice - The Training

Designing the experience

The starting point for this step should always begin with the "why" - why is this training activity needed and why do we do it? Usually, the answers would come after conducting the **training needs assessment**. One important aspect here is to consider this from the perspective of all stakeholders involved: the participants (learners), the organisation hosting the activity, the funding body (if such), and even the wider community. In the T-kit publication ["Training Essentials (2nd ed.)" by the Council of Europe](#) this process is very well explained, and some tools for such analysis are described, so it would be a good idea to have a look at it and get some inspiration.

After the complete analysis is done, the learning objectives and learning outcomes can be formulated. But what is the difference between both?

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[2] #YouthStats: Environment and Climate Change available at
https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climate-change/

- **Learning outcomes** define what kind of change (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) the participants should reach after the learning activity. They are usually described as knowledge or awareness of a certain topic, ability, as well as readiness/ willingness to do something
- **Learning objectives** are more specific and operationally defined. In addition, they shall be defined in a way, that the results of the training can be measured and evaluated.

A good way to track the progress of the learners *(and check to which extent the learning outcomes and objectives have been met)* is to organise initial and post-training evaluation sessions and compare the results. It would be very useful to base it partially or entirely on self-assessment, as this would enhance internalising the information and improve the long-term results of the learning experience.

After knowing what and why we want to achieve through the training activity, it is time to design the training programme itself and create the schedule of activities. There are several factors that we should consider, including:
- **characteristics of the venue** - the space, the possibilities to adjust the environment (possibility to create circle or areas for group work), internet connection (in case we would like to present something from the internet - website, video, etc.), availability of the learning space *(working time, access during weekends/non-working days, if relevant)*, accessibility for people with special needs and physical safety of the environment.
- **profile of the participants** - in order to design suitable activities, it is necessary to know the age, language cultural/ educational/ social background, prior experiences, and level of competence in the field (...) of the trainees. However, keep in mind the GDPR rules when processing such data.
- **participants' expectations** - in the context of the non-formal training activities in the field of youth, it is quite often that participants have additional expectations, besides learning more about the topic of the training. Such might be: networking possibilities, exploring the venue (in case they come from other countries or cities), practising foreign languages, etc. In order to make sure to meet them to the most extent possible, a good idea to be to plan a session for sharing expectations (*sharing "Expectations and fears" is a good tool for that)* and make sure the programme is designed, taking them into account. In addition, it would be very valuable to organise a feedback session at the end of the activity in order to check how well did the trainers do their job :)
- **activity flow** - in order to keep the attention of the learners and to keep them engaged for the whole duration of the training activities it is good to combine static with dynamic activities (changing places, standing and putting sticky notes on the wall, group work). In addition, we shall keep in mind some moments shared in the first part of this document - make the learning process active and participatory, try to manage the emotions in the group and direct them in a positive direction using suitable for the group approaches.

To play or not to play? The role of the games in the learning process. In the context of non-formal learning in the field of youth, almost every single programme includes ice-breakers, get-to-know games, energisers, etc. In the hands of an experienced trainer literally, everything can be a training tool - a game, a story or even a funny video. However, sometimes trainers do not pay enough attention (or forget to) to the proper debriefing of the activities. We should keep in mind, however, that, the traditional formal (and sometimes nonformal) education in many countries is usually delivered in the form of lectures, exercises and tests. So, people who are used to being taught this way do not always understand (and accept!) the games or other "fun" activities to be part of the training programme. Having this in mind, the trainers should always leave space for proper discussion, debriefing and other ways to make everyone in the group understand what is the purpose of these activities. On one hand, this would be very beneficial in supporting the learning experience of the group (as different people see different things and can draw different conclusions from the same

activity, story or experience). On the other hand, the debriefing part ensures that everyone would see the learning effect of the activity and feedback like "we only played silly games" would be prevented.

Delivery of the activity

A well-designed activity, in general, would be easy to deliver following the preliminary developed programme. At the same time, besides focusing on the schedule of the learning activities, it is important to pay attention to the way of development of the group dynamics.

As stated at the beginning of this document, non-formal learning takes place both on an individual and a group basis. So, group dynamics is an important aspect of the whole learning process. Here it is good to remember Tuckman's model of five stages of group development:
1. Forming - the participants first meet each other
2. Storming - the group members understand that they need to start cooperating on common tasks and some small internal conflicts occur
3. Norming - the creation of common rules and ways to implement the group work
4. Performing - the most productive stage, when the group members work together in a smooth and organised way
5. Adjourning - when the tasks are completed, the activity is over and it is time for the members to leave the group (or rearrange it for another task)

So, this model gives some hints on what to expect to happen in the group, and what kind of activities we could design in order to pass through this process (especially phase 2) in a smooth way.

Another thing is the awareness, that we shall be ready to handle **conflicts** in the group - be they smaller or bigger ones. A useful tool for managing conflicts is the **safe and respectful** atmosphere we have created at the beginning (remember the "group contract") of the activity. Another important tip would be to remember that conflicts can be best resolved when discussed calmly and the point is to aim for cooperation between all sides involved in order to find a win-win situation. It is not the easiest thing to do, but it is worth trying.

**After the activity/Follow-up**

No training activity shall be conducted for the sake of making an activity. The long-term impact shall be the driving force for this and it has to be somehow checked, measured or documented. Of course, this should be kept in mind even before the activity, but the thing here is really to do the proper follow-up.

One piece of advice would be to **create a real or virtual space**, where the participants of the training activity can meet up and **share their "life after the training"** - discuss how the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during the activity have affected their life afterwards - was it helpful? how? in which situations?

Another action that would add value to the training activity and its results would be the **dissemination and exploitation of the results**. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, when organising a training activity, we should take into account not only the direct participants but also the local community. So, there are different ways how the local community could benefit from this activity - besides having more skilled members (the direct participants) it is possible to share some of the materials/ key outcomes/ intellectual products (if relevant) to the open public. This would be definitely appreciated!

Instead of a summary
This mindmap represents the information discussed in this document.
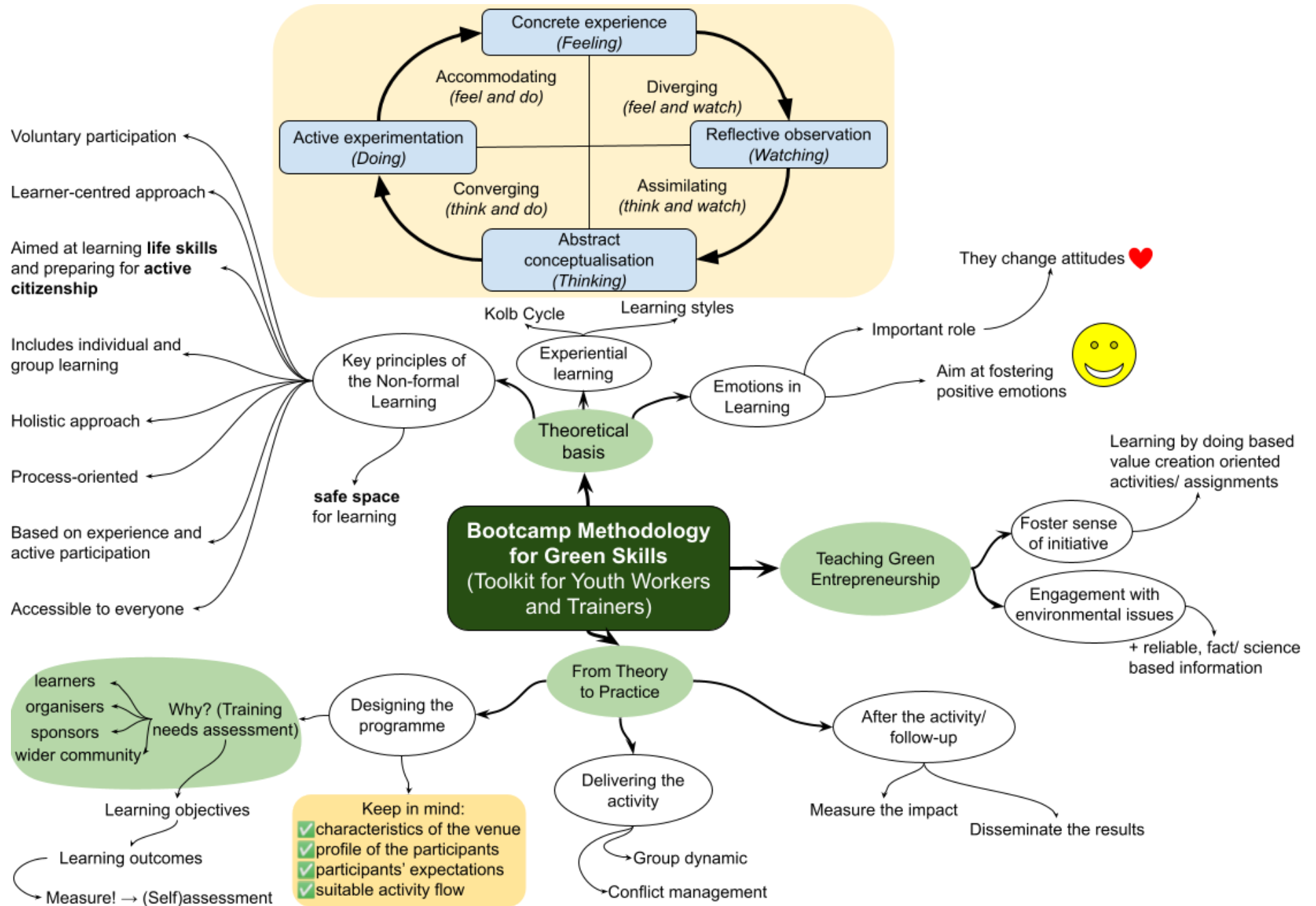
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Developed in the framework of the project Green Entrepreneurship
and Local Culture: Youth Workers on the Move (RECALL),
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union
Project Ref.: 617410-EPP-1-2020-1-BG-EPPKA2-CBY-ACPALA,
Grant agreement 617410