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The sea of learning

A dynamic visual exercise to make people think about how they have learnt so far in their lives



Aims

- To reflect on important learning moments in life
- To become aware of what and how they have learnt
- To share and compare with others



Group

- Any



Needs

- A large piece of paper for every participant
- Markers, pencils, paint
- Coloured paper
- Glue
- Scissors



Time

- 2-3 hrs



Step by step

Introduce the participants to the aims of the exercise and get a large piece of paper and pens, pencils and watercolours. Ask participants to look back at their lives and think about times or events when they really felt they had learnt something. The results of this reflection should end up being illustrated on the piece of paper, using the metaphor of crossing a sea. Use examples such as: boats, islands, different streams, wind, fish; that can help create the metaphor. They have half an hour to do this.



Debriefing

In small groups of two or three, people can share as much or as little as they like about their sea. Ask participants to find out if there are any similarities or major differences concerning what and how they learnt.

After reflecting in small groups, participants rejoin the main group. The following questions can be asked to continue the discussion:

- How was it to use this metaphor for your learning?
- What was challenging about finding your most important learning moments?
- Was there anything surprising in your personal reflection?
- What were the similarities and what were the differences when you shared your 'river'?

Identifying & documenting

Describing outcomes

Introducing Youthpass

Role of facilitator

**Adaption**

- Participants can experiment with different kinds of materials such as play dough, origami, Lego bricks, etc. to create obstacles, diversions, characters, and means of transport, thereby adapting the exercise to a more interactive environment.
- This tool can be adapted into any other shape or situation. The sea can become a learning path, a river of learning, a learning road, a tree of learning or even an adventure video game with obstacles, challenges and different levels of difficulty.

**Tips**

Depending on your group of learners, you might have to address the issue of drawing something on a piece of paper and sharing it with others. Some people might feel uncomfortable about drawing. Others see themselves as not creative enough to turn their thinking into an illustrated metaphor. It is important to take those fears away. Sometimes it might help to show one or two examples.

One of the 'surprising' elements for participants is often that the most important things they have learnt took place outside of traditional learning environments like schools, courses, etc. This gives you an opportunity to analyse what it is that makes a situation or environment fit for learning. This could also open a discussion on 'how we want to create a learning environment here in this activity or project'.

Put the drawings on the wall after the exercise so that people can look at each other's seas and continue talking.

Submitted by Paul Kloosterman (adapted by Juan Ratto-Nielsen), Handbook for Facilitators. Learning to Learn in Practice