

19

Where do you stand on learning?

A lively discussion about assumptions and personal theories on learning



Aims

- To stimulate a discussion in the group on the topic of learning
- To challenge assumptions about how learning happens
- To raise awareness of our own learning preferences



Group

- Min 6 people



Needs

- Signs saying 'I agree' and 'I disagree' on opposite sides of the room
- Room big enough so the group can move around
- Statements written on separate flipchart sheets
- Line on the floor (e.g. using masking tape, a rope, chalk) midway between the 'I agree' and 'I disagree' signs



Time

- 60-90 mins



Step by step

The method is an adapted version of the classic 'statement exercise'. The facilitator reads out a statement and asks participants to position themselves in the space between the 'I agree' and 'I disagree' signs on opposite sides of the room. The closer they are to the signs, the more they agree or disagree. The closer they are to the middle line, the less they agree or disagree. Everybody should take a stand, either on the 'agree' or 'disagree' side.

After everyone has positioned themselves, the facilitator invites people to explain their positions and to try and convince participants on the other side of the dividing line. Encourage active listening and do not allow wild debate. After all the arguments have been heard, ask if anyone is willing to change their position. If so, allow for a few additional comments from the people who have moved. Repeat for several statements.

Then, invite the group to sit in a circle for the debriefing.

Possible statements:

- Young people are always motivated to learn if the environment is supportive enough.
- If there is no visible change in behaviour, you cannot say that learning really took place.
- It is more effective to learn from failure than to learn from success.
- Most of the time, learning is an unconscious process.
- There is no learning without reflection.
- To become a truly self-directed learner, it is more important to be able to plan your learning than to be open to the unexpected.
- Learning to learn is more important than learning about the topic.

Identifying & documenting

Describing outcomes

Introducing Youthpass

Role of facilitator

**Debriefing**

- How did you feel during the exercise?
- Which argument from the exercise has been surprising for you?
- What assumptions do you have about learning?
- Where do these assumptions come from?
- Was this exercise a learning process as well?
- What did you learn in this exercise?

**Adaption**

- This activity poses a special challenge for young people who do not share the same linguistic skills, in terms of fully understanding the statements and their nuances. In this situation, make the statements more concrete e.g. "I learn more by watching one hour of TV than I do by sitting in class for an hour."
- Where the young people do not speak the same language, you can translate the statements and print them out on flash-cards.
- For small groups, you may play this exercise as a board game.
- If the exercise is used in individual mentor talks with a volunteer, you can use the statements as a kind of self-reflection questionnaire, as the basis for a conversation with the volunteer.
- This exercise could be nicely combined with educational videos from TED Talks that challenge some of the prejudices about learning and the role of educators in that process. Some nice ones are:
Sugata Mitra – Child driven Education:
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education.html
Ken Robinson – Changing Education Paradigms:
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms.html

**Tips**

Even though you tell participants that debate is not allowed, very often people get into heated discussions. If this happens, remind them of the rules, ask them to think about why they reacted like that – and keep it for the debriefing.

As the facilitator, try to involve silent participants as well as people who have positioned themselves in different parts of the space. This is a good way to get the whole variety of opinions expressed.

Adapted by Darko Markovic