

Dialogue© Drives Competitiveness

How to Drive Competitiveness
by Dialogue Workshops

EPROCA-ESBAS CONFERENCE
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Scandinavian Competitiveness Group

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1. Is Dialogue "Scandinavian"?

most probably not

- Free churches, labour unions, social democracy
- Relatively peaceful labour market since WW2
- Economic growth and shared welfare prosperity
- Consensus on structural change and value addition
- Flat organisations; most people address most
- A strong reminiscence of historical common ground
- A free agent, cunning, silent, conservative, "lagom"

2. Solid Under-Pinnings and plenty

1. Socrates & Plato
 - originators of the educated practice of dialogue
 - coined the concept of dialectics
2. Kant & Hegel
 - coined the concept of dialectics
 - explored the concept of overcoming
3. Wittgenstein
 - understood the essential and subtle omnipresence of language and language games in human behavior
4. Tavistock & Emery
 - created the winning concept for the British war pilots
 - pioneered systems theory of human behavior
 - invented and explored the practice of the search conference
5. Arendt, Habermas & Gustavsen
 - captured the essence of birth, beginning and change
 - crystallised the modern concept of dialogue
 - merged the ideas of dialogue, open systems and language
 - invented the theory and operative practice of the dialogue workshop
6. Scandinavian Competitiveness Group
 - provides the most effective dialogue based tools for facilitation of innovation and cluster based competitiveness

3. The Dialogue Workshop

setting the stage

- General purpose ; to accomplish needed and sustainable distinct change or transition in social systems
- Scope; could be any "cut" that it takes to realise the needed particular change or transition
- Participants; are those concerned , ideally 20-80
- The noble art of inviting & satiscing; the insider & outsider
- Time; welcome lunch day 1 and farewell lunch day 2
- Space; local, remote, empty plenary and small rooms
- Introduction of purpose; inspiration, rationale, limitations
- Introduction of method; examples of rules & understanding

4. Dialogue Workshop in Action the typical case of innovation system*

1. Agreement on the most important objective for an innovation system **among** the entrepreneurs, **among** the researchers, **among** the policy makers and **among** the financing actors – each stakeholder group generally agree without having to argue very much
2. Agreement on the most important objective **between** the stakeholder groups in the innovation system
3. Agreement on the most important challenges **between** the stakeholder groups

*The stakeholder groups are profoundly specific in innovation systems, as they are in a small or in a big private company, as they are in a university or other knowledge institutions, as they are in a local or in a national government, in Manchester United, South Africa or any "gestalt"; while the principles and practices of how to run a dialogue workshop are general and useful across all specifics

5. The Dialogue Workshop

has to be carefully prepared in every detail

- Each of the three dialogues thus far are performed in small groups and carefully constructed individual by individual – the size of the small group is max 8 participants
- A chairperson for each group is carefully selected and assigned in advance; being responsible for the completion of the task in time and for the quality of the dialogue; chairpersons are not selected for more than one dialogue session
- Rapporteurs are carefully selected and assigned in advance; being responsible for compiling the final conclusions or decisions of the group in an endorsed written format; and to report the result to the plenary, i.e. to the other groups; rapporteurs are not selected for more than one dialogue session
- The length of each dialogue session varies from 10 to 60 min from situation to situation and is decided by the facilitators

6. Change is There – is it Real?

sensed by some but usually not discovered until later

The critical point of change is already achieved...

- ... if there emerged an agreement between the major stakeholder groups regarding the most important objective
- ... and certainly reinforced if there emerged an ensuing agreement between the major stakeholder groups regarding the most important challenge
- ... if not too many of you pretended silence or lied excessively
- ... if you are wise and realise that in the end nobody can escape Wittgenstein

7. Loosening up in the Evening

discovering that change is possible only if...

- Now we all know where we are going (and that the road is mighty long) and what is haunting us (our fears and others threats)
- Now is the perfect time for a couple of aperitifs and after that a good (but not long lasting) dinner
- Around the table with the wine you notice the inevitable small emerging discussions, everywhere on the same topic; what to do (ideas, projects, etc.)
- Coffee is served in a room where it is possible for all participants to contact each other
- It is getting late, it is getting early...

8. Picking up in the Morning

rearranging the scene sensibly

- The best inside facilitator is the last one in bed the day before
- Breakfast Day 2 is an excellent opportunity to gather some key participants and the facilitators for a mutual briefing
- Test validity of ideas and initiatives emerging from the evening before; are they consistent with the objectives and challenges that were prioritised already before dinner?
- Typically the most engaged participants now gradually but clearly start to take on the leadership in the process
- The first session day 2 is in plenary; the chairs in a single or double circle; reflections and ideas on how to proceed
- A decision on whether to use the prioritised objectives and challenges or an emerging alternative is made in plenary

9. Strategy & Action Commitments

purring kitten

- Participants select the objective and challenge they want to engage in
- Max one hour for the small groups (split in two or more if necessary) to agree on a strategy
- A total of 15-30 min feedback and reflections in plenary
- One hour in small groups to make detailed action plans to start working on immediately and six months ahead
- Personal commitments, time schedules, meetings, resourcing, etc.
- A total of 15-30 min feedback and reflections in plenary

10. Assessing a Workshop

and ensuring the next steps

- Free individual oral assessments by each and every participant in presence of the others
- Major engagement in content and "what's next?"
- Some are able to sense the impact of the dialogue
- Few detect the simple and ingenious process design
- A follow up workshop is confirmed

11. Follow-up Workshop

template 1a

- 13-14 welcome lunch
- 14-17 reporting - plenary
- 17-18 refreshments
- 18-19 what went wrong and why - small groups
- 19-24 dinner followed by mingle
- 08-09 breakfast – facilitators and key participants
- 09-11 improve strategies/actions – open small groups
- 11-12 feedback and reflections – plenary
- 12-13 evaluation of result, dialogue and process
- 13-14 farewell lunch

12. Facilitation Services

professionalism is key

- The most important success factor
- Insider and outsider
- Preparing and facilitating an entire initiative
- Preparing and facilitating one single workshop
- Follow up workshop
- Assessment workshops for feasibility & pilots
- Series of 4-10 for major initiatives
- Documenting & reporting
- Facilitating before, between and after the workshop
- Advising key players
- Effective facilitators know their value

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>20 years of >500 dialogue workshops
not long time ago one went out of hand
a number of drop outs before going live

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Users of services by

Dialogue© Drives Competitiveness:

Pan African Competitiveness Forum
Baltic Sea Region Innovation & Competitiveness
BSR InnoNet European Commission DG Enterprise
TCI The Competitiveness Institute
Clusters and Innovation Systems around the World

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SCG assists you to enact a dialogue that drives innovation, cluster development and competitiveness

SCG provides an approach to dialogue predicted by theory and practice to produce the change or transition needed

Tack!

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