

Visualisation in Participatory Programmes – VIPP

How to Facilitate and Visualise Participatory Group Processes

From 27 August to 1 September, a certifying training for trainers (Advance Creative TOF) took place at St Ulrich, Freiburg, Germany.

The trainers were Timmi Tillmann (German), Maruja Salas (Peruvian) and Tien Ake Tiyapongpattana (Thai). With 14 participants, the ratio instructor-trainee was generous and guaranteed a high learning effect.

Co-initiators and long-term developers of the VIPP methodology, Timmi and Maruja shared examples of their manifold interventions on all continents, working for the UN, NGOs, IOs and governments, at grassroots and policy-levels.

VIPP is a comprehensive approach that enables a trainer or facilitator to design, plan and run an event that is fundamentally participant-centred. While the trainer may be an expert in some area, more importance is given to the authentic learning process of the participants as they unfold their own potential in relation to the topic along the course of the event. Learning from one another – as social carrier of intelligence and development – is supported by exercises that continuously encourage pair-work, small group discussions and larger group presentations.

VIPP may be better known in environments of societal development from the grassroots upwards, perhaps because collective learning is more appreciated there than the individual and competitive knowledge-based approach of financially richer societies. However, it was clearly proven during the training that the method, when well adapted to its audience, is relevant and effective for all types of events. In fact, tapping into collective intelligence complements the individualized pedagogies developed in the 20th century. Also in mainstream educational systems in Europe, there is a move towards group didactics and leading indications towards lowering the competitive bar when learning.

VIPP is a creation from both the South and the North, though initially from the Global South asking for more democracy and collective processes. Roots are found in the works of Paolo Freire (Br) and Orlando Fals Borda (Co), but also with practitioners and professionals from the North such as Kurt Lewin (US) and Carl Rogers (US). Private corporations (Johnson & Johnson, US) and public enterprises (Agrideam, CH) have also contributed to the body of experience. The comprehensive card and chart techniques come from the Quickborn Team (Nitor, Com-Team, Neuland, etc.) and remain a widely spread method for meetings in industry and in civil society, certainly so in Germany.

VIPP is also plainly delightful. It is full of colour, movement, creativity and fun. No one sits for more than 10 minutes and everyone has a chance to expose their learning in action. For the facilitation of difficult problems, even conflicts, it lays down the fundamentals of solution-orientation: common definition of the problems, liberty to ask any question, anonymous responses to everyone's ideas, analysis of possible strategies, marking individual preferences, looking for what may be missing, arguing for and against one's own point of view.

Yes, VIPP is also for engineering problems and political conflicts. It all depends on the preparation and adaptation of the facilitator. And this adaptability is exactly what was exercised under the guidance of the trainers.

The participants (all professional trainers in INGOs, UN sites, research and/or training centres from Mali, UK, France, Germany, Lebanon, Ethiopia, The Philippines, Tunisia, Kenya, Thailand, Myanmar and India) left with the determination to use VIPP in varied ways for their future training, facilitation and action research.

For more information on VIPP, please consult:

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