

Workshop critique

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



Designing a more effective workshop is a daunting challenge to today's fast moving world that exhibits dynamism in various aspects. As a result it poses a daunting challenge to the workshop organizers and planners especially when there are sensitive issues regarding to conflicts, interracial misunderstanding and poor communication among the participants. In this regard, designing and implementing workshop for the young persons who face challenging issues when they have been asked to work in a group such as Communication, language barriers, cultural differences and conflicts, on which the participants wanted to improve on becomes a challenge.

As a consequence, design for such a workshop it is deemed necessary to critically balance the goals of the participants and the learning and facilitating resources against the philosophy and objectives of designers (Barbazette, 2001). This aspect of workshop planning and implementation is a key principle to a successful workshop implementation that guarantees positive outcomes of the workshop which some planners usually neglect. In circumstances that balancing principle is neglected the planners usually dominate their design with their views and views of the participants obtained from surveys such as TNA for this case.

Although in most cases in the process of workshop designing both planners and participant's philosophical and theoretical goals may be coherent in the sense that both aims at improving their educational process, the reality of the school environment can cause inappropriate planning and miscommunication in regard to workshop design. However, planners creativity, innovativeness and awareness can help arrive at a tangible

workshop that participants can implement the skills, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge to their daily practices in their respective schools and groups.

Therefore in designing an effective workshop the key domains that were considered are logistics, resources and content. Rationale for Workshop Design The rationale for workshop design was informed greatly by logistics involved, content and the learning and teaching resources. The design was highly influenced by the TNA conducted which revealed that the students or participants had difficulties working in groups in terms of communication, language, barriers, conflicts and cultural differences.

In this regard, the workshop was stimulated in away that it became a learner centered. The logistics involved in the workshop design to a greater extent contributed to the success of the workshop. By summing up the aim of the logistics involved in the workshop design, the workshop was supposed to impact day-to-day group work tasks of the participants (Barbazette, 2001). The focus of the workshop was centered on the understanding the principles and process of effective group formation and functioning with respect to diversity.

In order to ensure that the workshop materials are applied by workshop participants to their normal schooling life, the workshop plan utilized the following strategies: first, Individualization technique that used appropriate teaching technological resources to present individualized learning materials to the participants like reference to special links on the internet because we recognize that every participant has quite a bit to learn. Second, Time was

sufficiently allocated that facilitated absorption of principles and by most participants.

Third, the school support “ buy in” was also central to the plan as the school had to buy in the value of the workshop by permitting workshop to be conducted and students to participate. And the fourth aspect, was the selection of learning materials “ Take to class materials” that are relevant to content and participants. However, despite the logistics involved in planning for the workshop effective learning during workshop proceeding is determined by quality and concern of faculty, peer group, and effective content and pedagogy.

These factors are addressed by content, instructional approach and resources used in the following section. The content instructional approach was largely drawn from Kolb learning cycle (see figure 1) that utilized participant’s experiential knowledge as learning resource. Kolb learning cycle model (Kolb, 1984) emphasizes the use of learners experience to build new content. This approach is very important in learning and teaching undertakings especially to students in the sense that facilitator induces reflective aspect to learners in order for it to become a process and routine to develop learners.

Kolb learning cycle comprise of four phases: Concrete Experience, ReflectiveObservation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation, which must be adhered to in order to attain meaningful learning. By adhering to these four stages, the participants were able to reflect on their experience to formulate concepts which can be applied to

their future situations relating to group work. The new participant's behavior is tested out by exposing him or her to new situation or previous situations and comparing the effectiveness of learning outcome.

For instance, in this case speed ball was reintroduced to participants after learning and revealed that group competency has been gained evident by reduction in task performance time for 17seconds to 1 second. Briefly the four phases of Kolb's cycle are significant in enhancing learning and skills long term skills that the workshop participants can apply to real life situation. For instance, Concrete experience phase involves ' doing' aspect that drive for process and content of workshop through materials. The use of interactive games in workshop like speedball, this enhances experience on the past of participants.

Reflective observation is the participant's qualities and judgments of events and discussion of the learning process with peers (Cranton, 1995; Trotman, 2000; Gordon, 2002). As a result, participants were able to reflect on their training at the workshop and at the same time normal school learning situation this enable the students to have confidence with their colleagues and mitigate painful learning experiences. To enhance a meaningful reflection of the participants keep their journals or a log. Importantly, reflection aspect is vital mechanism to promote learning and professional development.

Abstract conceptualization helps learners to plan better future activities added to their reflection of theirpersonal experienceby being informed by educated theories. In this context, Educational theories were major drawn

from Luckman's model of learning development, forming, norming, storming and performing. While at the same time the Taylor's set of 16 guiding principles of effective groups was utilized see [table 1] (Taylor, 1996).

Through educational information added to the students own reflection, enables the participants to integrate theories and the analysis of the past actions to draw conclusion about their group work practices.

Active experimentation is the final and actualization phase according to Kolb cycle of learning in the sense that it enables the workshop participants to use conclusion drawn about present actions from Abstract conceptualization phase as a basis to plan changes to their group work performance, the Active experimentation phase is vital because it generates concrete experience to the participants thereby forming knowledge base to inform, educate others and develop effective group interactive skills.

Moreover, the attained concrete experience serve as a platform on which the participants of the workshop can review and reflect to form conclusion about the effectiveness of the outcomes. The content emphasis was drawn from Turkman's Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and ending model (see figure 1). These four distinct stages were emphasized on because the students complaint on their difficulties they do experience during working in groups greatly lie in the misunderstanding of the critical process of effective group formation and functioning.

The content planned was aimed at covering and teaching the participants how to form, storm, norm, perform and adjourn the group once it is through with the task assigned. The group forming stage the emphasis was on the

group leader role was stressed since there is little agreement from the team other than leader guidance and direction. Moreover, the many questions relating to objectives, purpose and individual concerns should be answered by the leader, while the members can engage in system testing to understand it better.

Therefore, the forming phase entirely is dependant on the leader's directives. The second phase of storming, the members may experience difficulties in decision making and struggle for positions. As a result, these struggles cause increase of purpose clarity but plenty of uncertainties may also persist. Therefore, the workshop participants were informed to be tolerant with different views of members disregarding their ethnic, gender or race, and try as much as possible to reach an agreeable compromise in line with their goals to avoid emotions distract their progress (Farbstein, 2003).

The workshop participants were informed that if they successful undergo the first two phases, then the third stage of norming will come in automatically with ease in decision making and agreement amongst the members.

Moreover, the group shall have strong unity, commitment and respect for the leader. Thereafter, the team moves to performance stage where the team shall be more strategically aware of why it is doing what it is doing due to shared vision without strict supervision or leader direction.

As a result, the team shall have ambitions to over achieve their goals, easy conflict and disagreement solving and the group shall work with less instructions and directives, while the leader's role shall only be streamlined

to delegate and oversee the performance. Then lastly, the group can adjourn as the last stage when the task has been accomplished successfully.

The participants were informed the joy and fulfillment of adjourning stage rests on group dissolution when everyone move to do other things or assignments feeling good about what's been achieved. Therefore, group member ought to strive to have a happy ending by facilitating a successful group formation and functioning in their school learning activities. In addition to Turkman's model of group formation and performing, Taylor's 16 principles of effective group performance were included in the content since they guide and help group running normally.

These included: Testing inferences and assumptions, Sharing all relevant information, Focusing on interests as opposed to positions, Agreeing on what important words mean, Being specific when referring to anything like using examples like Peterson and not you, Disagreeing openly with any member of the group, Make statements and then invite questions and comments and Explaining the reasons behind questions, actions and statements.

Additionally, jointly designing ways to test disagreements and solutions, Discussing undiscussable issues, Keeping discussions focused, there should be no taking of cheap shots as they may distract the group, All members are expected to be participating in all phases of the group processes, Exchange relevant information with non-group members, Make decisions by consensus, Doing self-critiques. These principles are vital and useful to group as they offer guidelines to successful group functioning and performance.

Workshop resources were carefully selected since the learning resources can be turned into a factor with a positive impact (Farbstein, 2003; Kieren, 2005; Smith, 1998). The challenge towards meeting sufficient workshop resources was funding or financial limitation to avail the necessary resources to the participants such as handouts on principles of effective group performance and the Turkman's model of group forming, storming, norming and performing. Despite financial limitation, there was use of relevant text books, reference to important websites for information regarding effective group functioning and use of charts was widely used.

In addition to that, the participants were requested to write a position paper in rejection or support of the pedagogical innovations used in the workshop.

Workshop outcomes The workshop outcome from my observation, it was very good and the team was able to communicate with each other, they have followed exactly the Tuchman's model of team development, forming, storming, and norming, performing, and then ending. Moreover, I observed that the conflict on the norming stage was not obvious because the number of the team members were few; therefore they were able to overcome their conflict so easily.

Additionally, during the activity, I noticed that some students showed leadership skills and some were just followers and listeners. The major theory that can be used to explain this show of behavior is goal setting and reinforcement theories. This is in the sense that the participants were able to set their personal goals that motivated and spurred their behavior and need to achieve. While on the other hand, the facilitators were able to

reinforce positively the participants especially by use of extrinsic motivators. As a result, the survey results obtained from students showed that they all liked a lot the workshop (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

Recommendations for improvements The workshop was successful but needed more aspects and issues to be looked at or incorporated. For instance, during facilitation there is need to integrate workshop design with more academic theory and application in sense that they are interwoven to have it deliver skills and knowledge at its best. The making of this linkage can help to continue the momentum from the participants' experience. However, there is need to revolve around more personal theory around participants responses to the experience and less of academic theories.

Furthermore, there is need to allocate sufficient time to maximize the outcomes of the activity by considering its implications and impacts of day-to-day participants academic undertaking. And finally, learning and teaching resources ought to have more attention paid to and proper resources mobilization to even include handouts to help participants with application outside the workshop. Lastly, the TNA need to be clearer and all inclusive to include wide views of stakeholders. Conclusion In conclusion, the paper has looked at the workshop design and implementation with insight to its outcomes.

The success of the workshop demonstrate the fact that technical competency at any organization is not enough, but rather the interpersonal skills that facilitates individuals development of effective work relationships. In order to attain that, there was collaborative approach to design and

implement the workshop to meet the needs from various participants' perspectives. As a result, the workshop was able to successfully transfer of learning to behavior because: first, participants improved their communication skills demonstrated by reduction in speedball exercise time from 17 seconds to 1 second.

This also indicates that Participants had attained an increase in self-awareness in relation to body language, tone of voice and active listening. Moreover, the participants showed that they were less aggressive and more assertive in relation to their approach while interacting with their peers. Secondly, the participants gained insight into behavior of self and others. Therefore, the participant developed a sense to appreciate others' cultural, racial and ethnic differences and was able to adapt necessary communication styles aimed at improving their interpersonal relations.