The Future Workshop

In the 1970’s the method was developed by Robert Jungk and Norbert R. Müllert as a tool in the political fight of civil groups to better enforce their interests to create a future worth living for. It enables a group of people to develop new ideas or solutions of social problems or conflicts. It is a well structured method, fosters self-organisation, awareness, fantasy and action competence, but it requires good preparation and support by trained moderators.

Phases of the Future Workshop

Preparation phase

The methods, rules and the scheduled course of the workshop (in accordance with the participants) are introduced. Preparing the room together with the participants and to look for enough space to move around is a further suggestion.

Critique phase

The problem is investigated critically and thoroughly. First of all, a visualised brainstorming is performed. The participants write the critical points on moderation cards, pin them on a board and together cluster and title them. As a result a general and critical question concerning the problem is framed.

Fantasy phase

After dealing with the problem, the future workshop does not immediately search for the solution. First all participants try to work out a vision, to draw an exaggerated picture of future possibilities. For this exiting and playful activity a relaxed atmosphere should be provided (regarding the room and by playing ice-breaking games). As a first step to build upon it, the previous critique cards can be converted into their opposite (i.e. instead of “our politicians never pay attention to our opinions”: “In every community project the mayor is asking for our comments”...). The group divides into smaller groups who develop unusual, utopian solutions. It is important that in this phase all ideas are welcome, regardless of their practicability. They all are collected in an “idea storage”. The ideas are presented to the others in a creative way, like paintings, role play, sketch, collage, etc. This helps to think “out of the box”.

Implementation phase

The ideas found are checked and evaluated with regard to their practicability. If solutions are found, they are finally written down and an action plan is prepared (who does what, when, where and how).

Permanent workshop

This is the realisation phase of the solution concepts.

Most frequently the first 4 phases of the Future workshop take place over a weekend (every phase half a day), in some cases each phase may be run through within one hour.
In Innsbruck the topic of the Future Workshop was: “My institution as an ESD institution in the year 2025”

In the first phase - the critique phase – the participants visualised their institutions and wrote down on moderation cards what would hinder them from turning their institution into an ESD institution. We collected and clustered them. Then the participants wrote their names on small cards and pinned them to one of the clusters. After some shifts three topics were selected. For one of the topics too many people had pinned their names to one topic, so this group formed two subgroups on two slightly different topics.

- schools to foster ESD
- developing ESD competences for teachers (institutions)
- teacher education for ESD

In the second phase – the vision phase – the participants divided into their smaller groups, took the cards concerning their selected topics and reformulated them as their opposite. The result were cards with positive perspectives.

The cards formed the basis on which the participants created a positive vision on their topic. One group prepared a performed story, two groups showed a short theatre and one group explained a painted poster on their visions.

In the third phase each group selected one part of their visions and tried to find ways to realize it. The resulting posters were presented for the whole group.