
Two factors, people and application, can spell success or failure in the workshop approach to learning.

What Makes a Workshop Jell?

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WORKSHOPS are offered to aid the individual's advancement as learners and as educational workers. Educators today are concerned that workshops be good. What then is a good workshop? The following are several of the characteristics of a good workshop:

- A good workshop starts where the learner is and takes that learner as far and as fast as the learner desires toward a mutually accepted goal of the learner and the workshop's resource personnel.

- A good workshop must be offered at a time and for the length of time convenient for the participants.

- A good workshop embraces accepted goals that are feasible and explicit.

- A good workshop provides a match of resources with the learner's needs and personality.

- A good workshop must offer the learner an opportunity to gain strength and objective validation from one's colleagues.

- A good workshop does not separate content and cognition from interpersonal relationships, meanings, feelings, and attitudes.

- A good workshop assists learners to communicate honestly and effectively with themselves and with each other. It enables the learner to minimize personal cultural blocks that prevent honest communication.

- A good workshop permits the learners and other human resources a continual opportunity to denounce the workshop; to quit; to invest and involve themselves in it; to verify their capacities; and to function more securely within their own limits.

The Workshop Way

After conducting workshops for a number of years this author discovered Earl

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Kelley's book *The Workshop Way of Learning*.¹ This little book published in 1951 and written about Kelley's experiences with in-service workshops at Wayne State University excites the reader to marvel at the agelessness of a work. Although today educators have substituted a concern for goals for that of process, the book reveals an ardent concern for people and for the dynamics of interaction between them.

Kelley develops principles which include a concern for one person's attitude toward another; the need to learn better human relations; the acceptance of each person's worth and ability to contribute to the common good; the recognition that all people want to learn and will learn as long as the learning relates to an individual's purpose; the need to deal with current issues and problems; and a recognition that cooperation is more to be desired than competition.²

Perhaps a reason that *The Workshop Way of Learning* has meant so much to this author is that the indicated principles and techniques are similar to those which have been accepted as reasonable and have been used with success. Curricular and instructional personnel who assist others to develop professionally could recognize that two words embody the concepts and factors which can afford "success" or "failure" to the participants. These words are *people* and *application*.

Two Needed Factors

The ability and willingness of *people* to work together, to accept each other, to trust each other are of paramount importance for a successful workshop. Trust and acceptance enable every individual to feel at ease with self, with each other, and with the resource personnel. Some participants may find that their personalities do not mix with others in the group. This may not be critical in short workshops, lasting a day or two, but in workshops in session over several weeks, personality clashes could be critical. Friction

¹ Earl C. Kelley. *The Workshop Way of Learning*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1951.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.



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may be lessened when participants recognize that at any time they could denounce the workshop or quit. Resource persons should be aware of personality conflicts they may have, or conflicts that occur with other participants.

Conflicts often turn up when purposes of various individuals are not in agreement. Fewer personality clashes will occur when each person has the opportunity to move his or her own individual purposes into action. An individual who assumes a personal goal should be given the opportunity and assistance (when requested) to plan and develop procedures and strategies to fulfill that goal. This means the development of feasible approaches (those approaches that have a chance for success rather than establishing procedures or strategies so general or so encompassing that there would be little opportunity for success.

Besides offering participants opportunities initially to develop personal goals and approaches, care should be taken that in all workshop activities, the goals held by the participants are recognized. The workshop's resource personnel and participants should be expected not only to assist in goal accomplishment but also each should constantly engage in identifying the processes that are occurring. Open appraisals that consider actions, efforts, and statements of all participants do much to relieve tension, avoid

misunderstandings, and promote mutual development toward individual goals.

All efforts and goals of workshop participants should have *application* to everyday tasks and activities. Often workshops have been designed to develop long-range goals and philosophical stances related to institutions rather than people. The participants must feel that the purposes they embrace and the activities in which they are engaged relate directly and immediately to their teaching, administrative, or supervisory tasks.

Nothing is more discouraging to participants than to expend effort continually for that which does not appear to be of immediate concern. This is especially true today when many problems are felt to be overwhelming. Developing theories and generalities with individuals who are beset with personal survival problems is similar to reading bedtime stories to a lion which hasn't eaten for a week. The lion may hear but has something else in mind.

Programs developing only long-range goals, even when these are goals accepted by the individual, usually are not as successful as those that concentrate on the immediate day-by-day problems which constantly confront people. Workshops offered over a time span permit the participants to evolve, plan, and test ideas and approaches. Thus participants can mutually consider these concepts, and can help each individual to a sense of greater personal worth generated from relating one's studies to one's immediate world.

Workshops successfully involved with the immediate world can help allay the participants' fears for the future. Individuals who can cope with the present, gain hope

that they can also cope with the future. Immediacy, however, is not always helpful. Some individuals become immersed so deeply in solving immediate problems that they lose sight of goals, balance, and comprehensiveness. Immediate problems can become a directing force for persons in workshops and, if too severe, could immobilize individuals.

Resource people should not exhibit authority to the degree that other participants will come to depend entirely upon them. At times the processes for a good workshop demand that the participants be mired not in immediacy, but that they examine their concerns in broader terms. In such circumstances the resource personnel may intervene by globalizing the issues being considered. For example, the participant might suggest that the major issue is "to develop procedures to encourage youngsters to pay attention." Workshop resource personnel then might ask, "What should be the nature of education?"

Globalizing is effective in workshops that extend for longer than one or two days. This author found that using globalizing techniques over several sessions caused workshop participants who appeared dependent upon the resource personnel to seize the reins of the workshop, to suggest new approaches, and to work with visible commitment to accomplish their own purposes.

What makes for a good workshop?

- A concern for *people* as individuals and as members of the group who have personal needs that can be met;

- An affirmation that *application* of learning is essential for participants. □

Future ASCD Annual Conferences

1974	March 9-13	Anaheim	Anaheim Convention Center
1975	March 15-19	New Orleans	Rivergate
1976	March 13-17	Miami Beach	Convention Center

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