

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute</p> <p>Postboks 223</p> <p>2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00</p> <p>Telefax: 61 25 41 65</p> <p>e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>





# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.





### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.



Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.



## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women



only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## **4.5 What have the participants learned?**

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.





## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.



## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?



8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?



## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen





<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for



development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.



### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.



Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.



Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand



alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:



*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## **4.5 What have the participants learned?**

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.



## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.





## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?



## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:



- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project





# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of



the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.



### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.

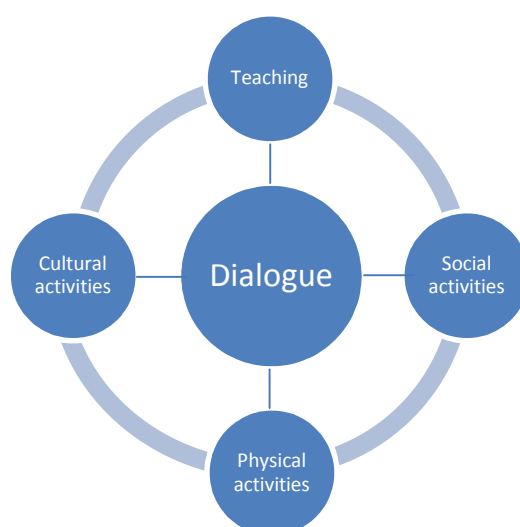


Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>



## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.



As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## **4.5 What have the participants learned?**

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*



*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.



## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.



## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.





## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?



## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin



- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.



### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant



involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.

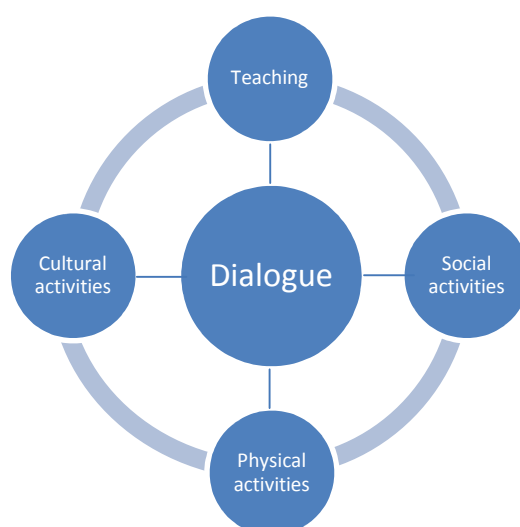


Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.



*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.



We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## 4.5 What have the participants learned?

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.



## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In



particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.



## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?





## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>



## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.



## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.



### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.



Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.



### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of



the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## **4.5 What have the participants learned?**

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict



now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.



## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.





## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?



## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?



### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.

ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>





# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course

- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.





### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust

These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.

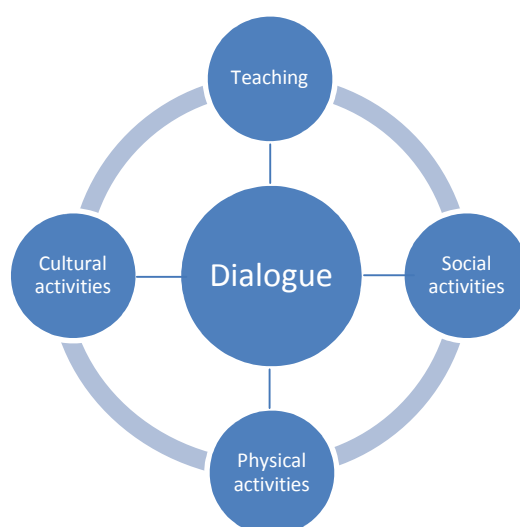


Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.



*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had

more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:



*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.

Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## 4.5 What have the participants learned?

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.





## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity

- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.



## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### From the first interview

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### From the second interview

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?



2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?



## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**

ENRI - report 13/2012

## **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

by

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen

# Eastern Norway Research Institute

Eastern Norway Research Institute was founded in 1984 through the collaboration of the regional councils and the boards of the colleges/universities in the counties of Oppland, Hedmark and Buskerud.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is located within the University College campus in Lillehammer and also has offices in Hamar. The Institute conducts applied, interdisciplinary and problem-orientated research and development.

Eastern Norway Research Institute is aimed at a broad and complex user group. Technical activities are concentrated in two areas:

- Business and regional development
- Welfare, organisation and communication

Eastern Norway Research Institute's most important project assignors are government departments and institutions, regional councils, government steering groups, the Research Council of Norway, the business community and industry organisations.

Eastern Norway Research Institute has collaboration agreements with Lillehammer University College, Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research. The knowledge resource is utilised in the best interests of all parties.



ENRI- report 13/2012

# **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

**An evaluation of a training program for practitioners  
in peace and dialogue work.**

By

Trude Hella Eide  
Tina Mathisen



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Dialogue with Diaspora</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Trude Hella Eide and Tina Mathisen
<b>ENRI-report :</b>	13/2012
<b>ISSN-no.:</b>	0809-1617
<b>ISBN-no.:</b>	978-82-7356-711-6
<b>Project-no.:</b>	1127
<b>Project Name:</b>	Nansen Fredssenter
<b>Project Employer:</b>	Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD)
<b>Project Leader:</b>	Trude Hella Eide
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The report presents an evaluation of the project "Dialogue with the Diaspora" undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia HercegovinaHercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.</p>
<b>Subject headings:</b>	Dialogue, Diaspora, Peace building, Training of practitioners, Nansen Dialogue
<b>Date:</b>	June 2012
<b>No. of pages:</b>	51
<b>Price:</b>	NOK 90,-
<b>Publisher:</b>	<p>Eastern Norway Research Institute  Postboks 223  2601 Lillehammer</p> <p>Telephone: 61 26 57 00  Telefax: 61 25 41 65  e-mail: <a href="mailto:post@ostforsk.no">post@ostforsk.no</a>  <a href="http://www.ostforsk.no">http://www.ostforsk.no</a></p>

## PREFACE


This report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD). The project consisted of a training course for practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The training took place in the period from 5<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation and conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. One of the projects main aims was to create a meeting place and encourage dialogue between representatives from the Diaspora living in Norway and representatives from their home countries. The project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


In January 2012, the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) was chosen to evaluate the project. This report is a presentation of that work. The conclusions drawn in the report are drawn from group interviews with the participants in the training course and our observations of the training throughout the course period.

The evaluation has a limited budget (one month) and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a complete evaluation of all facets of the training course. Given the limitations of the evaluation, we have, in accordance with NCPD, chosen to focus on the pedagogical adaptation more than the thematic content of the program.

We would like to thank all of the informants for their contribution to the success of this evaluation. Special thanks go to Aida Zunic for providing us with notes taken throughout the course period.

Lillehammer, June 2012

  
Svein Erik Hagen  
Head of research

  
Trude Hella Eide  
Head of project



# Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Description of the participants .....	8
1.2	Description of the training course.....	9
1.3	The evaluation .....	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	Documents .....	11
2.2	Group interviews.....	11
2.3	Observations .....	12
2.4	Written texts.....	12
2.5	Reflections on the choice of method .....	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	Different visions of learning .....	15
3.2	Dialogue as a learning strategy.....	16
3.3	NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs .....	17
3.4	Evaluating learning processes .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Expectations and motivations.....	21
4.2	The framework and content of the course.....	23
4.2.1	Themes and speakers .....	23
4.2.2	Varying pedagogical frameworks .....	25
4.2.3	Consistency and integration .....	28
4.3	Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator.....	28
4.3.1	Securing a safe and open environment.....	28
4.3.2	The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation .....	29
4.3.3	Feedback.....	31
4.4	The role of the participants.....	33
4.5	What have the participants learned?.....	34
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1	Organization of the training course .....	39
5.2	Pedagogical framework.....	39
5.3	Goal attainments .....	40
5.4	Recommendations.....	41
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>Attachments 1 Interview guide .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Attachment 2: Case .....</b>	<b>49</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) is an experienced organising body within the field of peace and reconciliation work. The centre hosts an academic department that provides experience-based knowledge about ongoing conflicts and practical dialogue work. The work of the NCPD spans from peace education for Diaspora groups, to refugees in Norway, and a dialogue network in the Balkans.

Over the last few years there has been an increasing interest in exploring the role of the Diaspora and how both individuals and groups from the Diaspora can be a part of the peace building process in their country of origin. The Diaspora living in Norway represents an ongoing connection to the conflict area in which Norway is engaged in peace- and development work. These people often have both the resources and the necessary drive to help develop their home country, but they often lack the networks and the knowledge that would enable them to contribute. By engaging with people who work with peace building in Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia Hercegovina, and those from the Diaspora living in Norway in a joint training course, the NCPD wanted to see if this could enhance constructive channels for communication. At the same time NCPD hoped that this process might lead to a better understanding between the two groups. The aim of the course was not only knowledge transfer from the NCPD, but also to create a meeting place and dialogue between representatives of the Diasporas and representatives from the home countries.

The training course took place at The Nansen Academy in Lillehammer and lasted for a period of four weeks in March 2012. The eleven participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq/Norway, Afghanistan and Afghanistan/Norway, and from Bosnia Hercegovina and Bosnia Hercegovina/ Norway.

The overarching aim of the training was to strengthen the participants' practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. More specifically, the goal was to:

- Share experiences of peace and develop competency in dialogue work
- Strengthen the ties between the Diaspora and the country of origin

- Accumulate knowledge and experiences that can be used to further develop a practical and theoretical training course

After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity
- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the Diaspora and the country of origin.

This report contains an evaluation of the training course and seeks to provide NCPD with knowledge about how to develop their teaching methods and the organization of similar training courses in the future.

## **1.1 Description of the participants**

It was thought that recruiting the right participants would have a significant part to play in the outcome of the training course, and the NCPD put a lot of work into the recruitment process. It was decided to recruit a total of six people from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia Hercegovina. These countries were chosen on the grounds that NCPD collaborates closely with other organizations working within these countries, which may, therefore, have offered assistance in the recruitment process.

When choosing the participants NCPD focused on putting together a dynamic group who they thought would be able to contribute to each other's learning process. At the same time it was important to ensure that the group was balanced in terms of background, prior experience, age, sex and ethnicity. All the participants sent a written application and were interviewed by representatives from NCPD. The most important criteria considered were the following:

- Motivation for participating
- Willingness to take part in dialogue with persons holding different opinions and attitudes from oneself
- Motivation to make use of knowledge and skills gained through the training course



- Relevant experience

Two participants came from Iraqi Kurdistan and one from the Iraqi Diaspora in Norway, one participant came from Bosnia Hercegovina and three from the Bosnian Diaspora in Norway, two participants came from Afghanistan and two from the Afghan Diaspora in Norway. The participants were in the age span from 20-40 years old. They were either students, or they work within a field related to peace and dialogue work at a University, folk high school or other institutions. Overall there was a balance of genders. However, the representation of genders from the particular nationalities was not equal. For example, all the representatives from Afghanistan were male and all the representatives from Bosnia Hercegovina were female.

## 1.2 Description of the training course

The structure of the training course was based on previous courses run by the NCPD that dealt with dialogue courses and training programs. The course included a combination of lectures and participant led workshops. The lectures were held by internal teachers from NCPD and Nansen Academy. A dialogue worker from the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia Hercegovina shared his experiences of the use of dialogue as a tool in the field and acted as a facilitator during several sessions.

During the four week course the participants also visited other organizations working with peace and reconciliation projects, such as the Nobel Peace Centre and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). In addition, the participants were engaged in the organisation of a seminar with invited guests and a discussion about the role of Diaspora in peace building.

The teaching programs main themes were:

1. **Identity and understanding of oneself** - Presentation of the participants and their countries. A critical glance at the situation in the participants' home countries.
2. **Conflict analysis and communication** - Conflict analysis of examples chosen by the participants themselves. Different dimensions of conflict – who sees what and why? Communication – a maker of conflict as well as conflict solver.
3. **Dialogue and conflict resolution** - Analysis of different methods of conflict solving with regards to the participants own examples. Dialogue in the Balkans – a model that can be transferred to other areas?
4. **The role of the Diaspora in peace building** - Challenges, opportunities and responsibilities from a life in exile. What expectations do the people working for

development, peace and human rights in the home country have of the representatives from the Diaspora?

### 1.3 The evaluation

The NCPD requested the Eastern Norway Research Institute (ENRI) to follow the training course to document and evaluate the teaching practice. The focus of the evaluation has been the following:

1. The participants experience and use of the training
2. The pedagogical framework used in the training course
3. How the training has been organized and implemented

Although, the three focus areas have been listed separately and in a prioritized order above, they are inter-related. How the participants experience the training depends on both the pedagogical tools used and the implementation of the training. To be able to elucidate the internal dynamics of the training course ENRI chose to conduct a process oriented evaluation. This means that we are interested not only in the outcome of the training course, but also on what happens during the course. Process evaluations do not only look at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton, 1990). Moreover, another objective of the evaluation is to contribute to the ongoing development of training courses. For this reason, a process oriented evaluation is a suitable approach to take since it focuses on insight, understanding and learning.

Central research questions were:

- How can the participant's experiences with the training course be related to the content and/or form of the training?
- In what way has the training been useful to the participants?
- What relationship is there between the teaching strategies employed and the participant's feedback about the training?
- What are the intentional and unintentional outcomes of the way the training was organized?

To investigate these questions, we chose to conduct a qualitative study. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach we chose.

## 2 METHOD

The evaluation is based on a qualitative approach that uses data from observations, group interviews and written texts. The methodology we chose was shaped by the focus of the evaluation and the research questions.

### 2.1 Documents

The purpose of the initial phase of evaluation, which examined relevant documents like the project application and information about the applicants, was twofold. Firstly, to define the evaluation questions in relation to the project goals and, secondly, as a starting point for the describing part of the evaluation process.

### 2.2 Group interviews

The group interview is a qualitative data collection technique with the purpose of interviewing several individuals together as a group. We chose to conduct group interviews because they are well-designed for discussions about common projects. Guldvik (2005) points out that a group interview gives the informants opportunities to supply, correct, challenge and reassure each other's narratives. Group work involves a certain degree of social control and social interaction, which can create a more 'natural' atmosphere for discussion. The group situation also allows the researcher to analyse interactions, possible disagreements, alliances, and the use of irony or humour between the informants.

We conducted group interviews with all of the participants both at the beginning of the course, to gather information about the participant's expectations, and at the end of the course when we focused on their feedback (Attachment 1). The participants were divided into two groups with six participants in each group. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that we used an interview-guide with questions we wanted to get through, whilst they also allowed the participants to elaborate on different topics and make suggestions. All the interviews were taped and, after analysing the data, the tape has now been cleared.

When doing group interviews it can be challenging to facilitate a situation where all the interviewees are given an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. This was also the case in our evaluation - probably due to variable skills in English. Informal

conversation with the participants during observation helped clear up uncertainties and nuances that were difficult to grasp during the group interviews.

## 2.3 Observations

As stated earlier, the evaluation is process led in order to take into consideration not only outcome, but also what happens during a project period. To be able to explore the internal dynamics of the training course it was also necessary to observe parts of the training. We were especially interested in the relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the ways in which participants contributed to the development of the course.

What people say in either an interview or via written texts contain much information. However, when complex situations or relations between participants occur, these forms of data collection may not be adequate. The observations of a researcher may then provide an opportunity to see what the informants are talking about, while gaining a deeper understanding of the particular situation or relations between people. According to Patton:

*Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews (Patton, 1990).*

Researchers observed four different days throughout the course period. The days of their observation were selected according to the themes that were being addressed and the level of participation expected from those on the course. The topics discussed while we were there were, sharing experiences, communication, dialogue workshop, dialogical way of discussion and preparations for the celebration of Norouz. Ideally we would have liked to have been present to a greater extent but, due to a tight budget, this was not possible. So as to get an overview of the content of the training, we asked a staff member at the NCPD, who was also a participant in the course, to help us gather notes from the lectures. She also functioned as our main contact, and has been available for questions both during and after the project period.

## 2.4 Written texts

Alongside the first group of interviews, we asked the participants to separately write down an answer to a case we had prepared for them (see attachment 2). Seven weeks after the course, when the participants were back in their normal environment, we sent them a follow-up task. We asked them to remember what they had answered in response to the case and whether they would solve the case differently now, after having gone through the training course at the NCPD. The answers have been analysed and taken as a measure of

the participants learning and an indication of the degree to which they perceived the knowledge as useful in their daily work.

Additionally, at the end of the course, the NCPD asked the participants to answer an evaluation form. With the consent of the participants, we have also been able to use these forms as data.

## **2.5 Reflections on the choice of method**

In section 2.2 we have explained why we chose to conduct group interviews with the participants to get them to reflect on a common experience. In retrospect, however, we think this may not have been the best way to obtain the interviewee's innermost thoughts and opinions about the course. While reading the evaluation forms that the participants had filled in for the NCPD, we found that the participants had been much more critical in their review of the course than they had been in the group interview. The dynamics of group interviews sometimes results in certain opinions becoming dominant while the opinions of others are overridden. Another reason could be that the participants did not want to seem negative in front of the others or give the impression that they were not grateful towards the NCPD. It should also be taken into account that it might be easier to concentrate and remember what you have experienced and how you felt about it, when you are sitting by yourself, reflecting on paper.



### 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we will introduce the theoretical perspectives we find useful for understanding the different pedagogical elements of the course to be evaluated.

#### 3.1 Different visions of learning

In theories of learning, different visions of learning may be addressed using different educational methods. Ludvigsen (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000) have created a simplified representation of the three forms of teaching that are presented as three different "types of classrooms"; *the traditional classroom*, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community*. Class types like these, are suitable to convey the fundamental differences between traditional classroom where the teacher "teaches" a subject matter and teaching practice which emphasizes that students should be active individually and in groups.

In *the traditional classroom* lectures will be prominent, while the students are less active. The textbook is the "framework" for acquisition of knowledge and the reproduction of this material is rewarded. Independence and creativity are less encouraged.

On the other hand, *the constructivist classroom* and *the classroom as a learning community* suggests more "modern" teaching, where students are active and working on problems, while the teacher acts as guide and mentor. While the *constructivist classroom* emphasise individual work, *the classroom as a learning community* is a collective label for systematic work in groups. Problem-based methods, cases and other forms of systematic group activities are often undertaken in the classroom as part of a learning community. This approach is meant to supplement and support the students' own problem solving. Students are also looking for subject matter and other materials that can support them in problem solving; they are not only "bound" by the textbook. Good and proper uses of varied sources are rewarded (Ludvigsen and Østerud, 2000).

The approach to learning taken in the training course "Dialogue with Diaspora" emphasises dialogue as the teaching method. Nansen Dialogue is a methodology that is developed through 15 years of working in divided societies in the Balkans. Dialogue workers from Nansen Dialogue courses provide methods and experiences which participants can make use of. Dialogue as a learning strategy, is based on participant

involvement and a facilitator leading the learning process in the group. Such an approach is within the tradition described by Ludvigsen (ibid) as "the classroom as a learning community". The project therefore advocates a training model of "train-the-trainers" training, in which participants learn both the content and methods that they should be able to transfer into their peace and reconciliation work later. One of the main objectives of the pilot project was to draw upon the individual participant's resources and expertise. A prerequisite for the success of such a learning strategy is that one has spent the necessary time to build trust in the group (Project /application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support for pilot projects in 2011).

### 3.2 Dialogue as a learning strategy

Løvlie (1984) describes different modes of communication that are the legacy of ancient Greece; rhetoric, dialogue and discourse. These modes of communication, among other things, say something about values and humanity. In rhetoric, one used oratory to gain control and effectively influence others. Through the use of rhetoric one was able to persuade others. Dialogue is about helping the other to redeem their knowledge, insights and awareness. According to Løvlie (ibid) discourse is, on the other hand, a more argumentative form of dialogue, where critique is a way to gain more insight and recognition.

Denominations	Rhetoric	Dialogue discourse	Discourse
Aspects	Persuade	Convince	
Action forms	Control	Interaction	Reasoning
Action context	Target agent-related	Unproblematized everydaylife	Problematized everyday life
Action goals	Effective influence	The good conversation	The better argument

Figure 1: Action types

Dialogue (from the Latin words "dia" and "log", which means two-and-call) means essentially a conversation between two or more persons. Dialogue is characterized by:

1. an interaction, in which the parties
2. exchange experiences, attitudes and interests
3. in an unproblematized everyday life and
4. in an atmosphere of mutual openness and trust



These points emphasize the importance of facilitating a neutral space in all dialogue work. It's about being able to create security and balance. Løvlie (1984) refers to Rogers and Freire's emphasis on empathy in the dialogue. This is about hearing what the other is saying, or what Rogers calls "to listen deeply" (ibid, p. 66). This aspect of empathy is essential in dialogue, but Løvlie also argues that there needs to be an emphasis on two other aspects. Consequently, for Løvlie, dialogue has three components: common sense, cognition and emotion. Expertise in dialogue means the ability to generalize (sense), the ability to change perspective (cognition) and the capacity for empathy (emotion).

### 3.3 NCPDs use of dialogue in seminars and training programs

The most important goal of dialogue is to create understanding. That is also the point made by the NCPD. Dialogue is, then, different from a debate. In dialogue one should not be interested in impressing one's own opinions, but rather to attempt to listen and understand by putting one's self in the place of the other.

Features of dialogue, as explained by the NCPD:<sup>1</sup>

- Relationships – exploring relationships
- Agreement – it is not necessary to agree
- Understanding – is of foremost importance
- Listening – equally as important as talking
- Judging – One needs to move away from moral judgments, as they can work as a mode of domination
- Non-verbal-communication – very significant
- Integrity
- Challenge – dialogue doesn't mean you should accept everything, challenge others
- Sensitivity – to know ourselves and to show others who we are even if we feel vulnerable
- Care about others
- Common language – what we are aiming to achieve
- Change – tool for personal and social change. Change is not a goal but an opportunity.

As mentioned previously, a main principal and tool in NCPDs training is the importance of making use of the participant's prior knowledge and experiences. The participants are expected to openly share their experience with the others, and listen and learn from people with different opinions and perspectives from themselves. This requires working closely with the group to build the trust and confidence of each participant and the rest of the group. This was one of the main reasons for inviting the participants to stay at the Nansen

---

<sup>1</sup> These points were presented in one of the lectures the second week.

Academy, a neutral space where the participants didn't have to think about either being a host/guest or worrying about what others from their own community would think about how they expressed themselves. "A space that makes dialogue possible" has been a key aspect in the model set out by the NCPD. Leisure time and the time between lectures and workshops are also considered important time spent together, where bonds are made and mutual understanding can be developed.

The model, depicted below, shows the central components of dialogue work. It is believed that participants can achieve a greater understanding of each other through shared experience. In "Dialogue with Diaspora" *Teaching* consisted of workshops, group work and lectures during the day. *Cultural activities* included visits to Lillehammer art museum, the ski jump arena and Maihaugen open air museum. Examples of different arranged *Social activities* were, movie nights, twist and tea, and celebration of Nowruz also known as Persian New Year. That said, informal meetings over a meal or shared routine activities are considered to be just as important. *Physical activities* could for example be walks in the city centre or along the lake Mjøsa.



Figure 2: Model of interacting elements in dialogue (Aarbakke, 2002)

Although the social space is of great importance, the facilitators still play an important role, providing ground rules and being trusted hosts that secured a safe space to discuss sensitive topics.

### 3.4 Evaluating learning processes

One of the most difficult aspects of evaluating a training course is to point to the concrete results that indicate what the participants have learnt. Learning evaluation is a widely researched area. One prominent researcher in the field has produced a well-known model for the evaluation of the learning process. Donald Kirkpatrick's (2004) model for the evaluation of training and learning is divided into four parts. The different levels within Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation are,

1. Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behavior - extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation/application
4. Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

In our circumstance the only parts of Kirkpatrick's model that we are able to review are, levels one and two, since we are unable to observe the students in their own job environments. This evaluation is therefore limited to an examination of parts one and two. As a result, we are not able to comment on the longer term effects of the training course. Even so, seven weeks after they ended the course, we send the participants a couple of questions to answer. This was mainly done in order to examine how useful the participants found the course, and can therefore be understood as an attempt to examine the participant's applied learning (level three). However, these results are not the focus of this evaluation or its outcomes. In order to grasp the effectiveness of this kind of training courses, one would need to do extensive research in the environments where dialogue and peace work are conducted. Hence, the evaluation does not extend to an analysis of the applied learning outcomes.

The table on the next page, illustrates the structure of the model.

level	evaluation type (what is measured)	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates <b>felt</b> about the training or learning experience.	'Happy sheets', feedback forms.  Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain.  Not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the <b>increase in knowledge</b> - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training.  Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills.  Less easy for complex learning.
3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of <b>applied learning</b> back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the <b>effect</b> on the business or environment by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation.  Process must attribute clear accountabilities.

Source: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Expectations and motivations

We found that all the participants were very motivated to take part in the course! Most of them had experience of dialogue and peace work, either related to their work at home, or due to the fact that they have participated in courses at the NCPD before. They seem to perceive each other as equal participants, regardless of background and previous experiences, and stress that being in this course gives them a possibility to “breathe calmly”. Two of the participants said,

*Here we are all mutual.*

*When you are in some kind of neutral place it is....you don't have an audience around and you are free to express yourself, so I think it is a great opportunity for us.*

Sharing experiences was an element of the course that all the participants appreciated and valued. They saw an opportunity to learn and discuss with people that had similar experiences and ask questions such as, what have they done? How did they succeed? The fact that the course brings together participants from conflict and post-conflict areas, is inspiring and gives a good opportunity to learn from real experiences. For example, another participant commented,

*I think the aim is that we should learn from each other's experience and talk and the way we will interact in the workshops and the way we will act together. It will give us the chance to share our thoughts and experiences. At the end we can do better in our workplaces and do something more than we are doing now. So it is an experience being here, the environment, the people, the teachers and lecturers.*

*If you are working with these things and you need someone to share your experiences with, I think this is the right place to be.*

In conjunction with the desire to learn from others an enthusiasm to learn from the NCPD's experience was demonstrated. One of the participants expressed an interest in establishing a dialogue centre in his home country. Most views were aware of the fact that the NCPD has experience in working in conflict areas and that it has facilitated many seminars like this.

*They (NCPD) have quite good experience with these kinds of workshops, so we are learning from this (...)*

The informants argue that what we can call “*the NCPD-method*” is a new way to work with peace, which they find interesting. They have been working with peace before, but not with the same emphasis on dialogue. One participant noted that he was new to the field and although acquainted with peace work he had not engaged with the concept of dialogue in this way before. His organisation was contacted by NCPD by e-mail, and invited to send an application for the course. They discussed who should go and he was the one who was chosen because they found him the most motivated. His organisation was one of the pioneers of peace building in his home country. They had been working with peace building for a long time; however, the issues surrounding the development dialogue was a new area for them. They wanted someone to attend the course. This was timely, given the debates in the country concerning reconciliation and dialogue within government. There was, therefore, a strong interest in learning about what other people have actually done with the skills of dialogue. For instance, one interviewee said,

*We have a dialogue now in our country, but it is not very transparent and the parties have never admitted that they want to have a dialogue. They have never admitted they want to give up something. This is not a dialogue. We have some traditional techniques, but we need to enrich those techniques and learn from others, and we need to mix them with our traditional techniques. I want to learn from the experience from the other countries, and to use it in our country.*

This quotation tells us that he wanted to learn something which would be of practical use to him. There was an expectation that a *practical approach* would be taken towards the different issues. Across the group there was a shared interests in and enthusiasm for learning more practical skills. Some of the participants were familiar with NCPDs approach to peace work from reading about it and the course presented a chance to learn about it in a practical way. What appears to be important in this context is to learn the different *skills in dialogue*, besides of course the definitions of dialogue and what distinguishes dialogue from discussion, debate, and conversation. The participants appear to be motivated by the fact that the course lasts for four weeks and, in that way, gives a real chance to learn the methodology and be able to practice in front of tutors. Moreover, it is said that the length of the course gives the participant’s time to process what is going on in the course. None of the participants have ever taken part in a course of this duration before. Their previous experiences had been characterised by tight schedules and no time for reflection.

## 4.2 The framework and content of the course

### 4.2.1 Themes and speakers

We asked the informants their opinion on the themes and speakers presented during the program. In chapter 1.2 we described the schedule for the program. We have not, however, asked for feedback on all the topics included in the program. This chapter presents a summary of the participants feedback related to general discussions about how they found the content of the program. Nine different lecturers were involved in the program and each had a different level of involvement. Some had responsibility for a program that run over several days while others gave short one hour lectures. We asked participants to give feedback on the various speakers and their lectures. All in all they found the lecturers interesting and good, although they had comments on their various pedagogical methods.

The overall themes for the first week were identity, communication and conflict analysis. In the second week Dialogue and peace building were the headlines, while the theme in the third week dealt with transforming conflicts.

Being introduced to communication in the early stages of the course was, of course, related to the fact that active listening, body language, to speak on behalf of oneself (etc) helps to set the ground rules for communication within dialogue. Opinions about how the first week went varied. For some, this week was overloaded with facts and new issues; others found it as a good introduction and basis for the coming themes. All the informants said they experienced the first week as intense and heavy, mostly due to the fact that they were all new and spent much energy to get to know each other. They found the introduction to communication interesting. It seems that this is a theme the participants were not too well acquainted with.

The program presented “identity” as one of the main topics for the first week. Yet, it was felt that not enough time was spent on the topic. Participants were disappointed that they did not receive a thorough introduction to the subject. They mentioned having encountered the subject a few times during the four weeks, but still felt they missed out on a detailed explanation of the topic. It is clear that identity is a central theme in dialogue work and needs to be dealt with explicitly.

The second week was mainly devoted to the theme of peace building and work referring to experiences from the Nansen Dialogue’s work in Bosnia Hercegovina. The participants were all very well satisfied with lectures that were based on real experiences from the field. The use of their own experiences in the field by the lecturers to illustrate their points was thought to be particularly useful and was a highlight of the lectures for many participants. It contextualized and demonstrated the relevance of the material. This, in turn, made the teaching more interesting and accessible for the participants.

*(He) could not have given a good lecture if he had not had a practical background, and vice versa.*

The feedback on content also addressed how the material is presented. The adoption of different educational framework made lectures more interesting, and especially when lectures were combined with the ability to practice.

*I liked the way XXX taught us, (...). He first had a small lecture and so the work shop. He mixed the group differently. We were all relaxed. He said there is no right answer. It was interesting with practical exercises.*

Likewise, using narratives was highlighted as particularly good. To be given a lively presentation of history was new and surprising for some of the participants who associated history from their own education as something boring and factual.

On the other side, a couple of informants said the presentations from some of the lecturers were monotonous and humdrum. This meant that the lecturer had problems to motivate the group. One said she had problems following what was being said because she felt the lecturer was uninterested. The other claimed the presentation was boring because it was *dry*. They also criticized the lecturer for having too little time and missed having time to go further into the substance or to discuss and practice. This was a critique from several of the participants.

When discussing the role of the two coordinators the informants said they had a very good impression of them both. They managed to create a good atmosphere of relaxation and confidence. Some wanted to see more of them, and felt they had experiences it would be interesting to hear more about. For a deeper description of the role of the facilitator, see chapter 4.3.

During the weekend between the third and fourth week a seminar with invited participants was arranged. The title of the seminar was “the role of Diaspora in Peace-building” and a separate program was made for these days. According to the informants they have commented on this in their evaluation to the organizers. What they discussed in our interview was the role of the Diasporas in this seminar. They responded that there was so little time devoted to the relationship between participants and the invited guests. The seminar was too full with activities and there was not enough time to have conversations with the participants from the Diaspora, which was the intention of the seminar. They had some discussions, but it only proved the distinction between them, they said. They were not able to reach a clear level of understanding, and, hence, unfortunately the happening was therefore an example of non-dialogue. The interviewees felt that this could have been more successful if the seminar had been organized differently. Among other things they wanted a clearer and more defined focus on the intention of this meeting, so that one had



more time to discuss what was really important. This citation from one of the informants exemplifies this:

*(...) but the weekend-seminar they should have been stricter because some of the participants talked for a very long time. I understand the reasons for them not wanting to interfere, but for us who are here for only four weeks, many things were not useful. Either we already knew them or we didn't have an opinion about it, so we... I think they should have said that you have five minutes to speak instead of twenty. Because we were thirty people from three countries and more countries were represented and of course we all wanted to say something and with the time limits it was impossible.*

Another theme that was not given enough time, was the question related to the specific follow-up after completing the course. During the last week several of the participants asked for more time to discuss how they could make use of their newly acquired knowledge, after leaving NDCP. They clearly had an expectation that they would spend more time discussing this subject. They had, among other ideas, begun to think about using the course as a network, but needed to discuss how this network could be organized.

*I am sitting now with more questions than I had! I had expected that they talked more about what to do in the future, how to cooperate with each other. I thought we would spend more time talking about that, but we only talked about it once.*

It was in relation to this point that the majority of participants felt disappointed and, given the emphasis placed on this point by the organizers, it is important feedback to take into consideration. As already mentioned, an important element in the whole program was the social activities throughout the course. This was especially important in terms of creating confidence in the group. According to the participants without the social happenings, the course as a whole would have been less successful. Although social activities were scheduled throughout the program, participants still asked for more spare time. Several of the participants experienced the program as quite intense, and called for more relaxation and reflection time. There could have been periods during the day of longer breaks or more days off.

#### **4.2.2 Varying pedagogical frameworks**

One of the main objectives of the course was to train practitioners to be able to use dialogue as a tool in the field. The pedagogical framework that was used can be traced back to the theories of problem based and process oriented learning (Dewey, 1916; Kirkpatrick, 2004) and experience based learning. Experience based learning involves developing skills through rigorous reflection on one's own actions and the consequences of these, together with other group members. The exchange of experiences helps create mental models of how one can proceed in similar situations. According to these pedagogical frameworks theory and practice should be closely connected. For example, a lecture should not stand

alone but be a part of a sequence with both preparation and follow up work, where the learner gets the chance to both take in and try out new knowledge (Bjørke, 2006). We can recognize this in the way the workshops were normally structured. For instance they started with a small lecture, followed by group work and ended with the different groups presenting their answers in plenary followed by a discussion. Throughout these sequences, the role of the facilitator will switch between being largely in control (e.g holding a lecture and give instructions) to being focused on learner centered activity, which is steered less by the facilitator (Jacques, 2000). While observing some of the workshops, we noticed that the shift between lecture and group work is a critical phase where the purpose of the group exercise has to be clearly outlined if the exercise is to fulfill its purpose. We wonder if this aspect could have been improved upon, as there seemed to be too much responsibility placed on the participants to devise learning objectives without a proper framework for guidance.

During the dialogue workshop the participants were divided into smaller groups and given an exercise called “The diamond” where they were supposed to rank the thirteen elements of dialogue and decide within the group which three elements to remove. One member in each group was given the assignment of being an observer. According to the interviewees, few of them had actually realized that one of them should take the role as an observer, and many of them forgot to practice the elements of dialogue as they were discussing within the group. One interviewee, who remembered his role as an observer said:

*The result was that we were going to find out about the diamond and how we were going to solve it, but for me it was the process and the role of the observer that was the important, but that was not highlighted very much, and that was something that we needed extra work on. Because in a dialogue you have to be mindful whether this is dialogue, or this is negotiation or this is compromising. So for me, within that group there was not much dialogue, because they were determined to agree on something. I was expecting the team to, ok, I cannot agree on this, leave it blank, kind of find out if the other party really agrees to that or not, or if he forces himself or not. So... but when we saw the results they said (the observers) that can be changed and so on, but they forgot how the process went. That is why my role was to highlight those issues, whether they had compromised, whether they had negotiated or whether they had a dialogue over this.*

Another informant replied:

*We had forgotten that we needed observers. We were so focused on the task, the assignment.*

What the first informant points out is that this exercise had two purposes: one was to solve the task of deciding what to leave out of the diamond, the other was to focus on the process and how the members of the group practiced dialogue. Most of the participants focused on the first, although the latter was the main objective of the exercise. The facilitator did not set aside time to really highlight this point. The fact that the participants forgot the role of

the observer shows that they did not have a clear understanding of the task. Furthermore, the facilitator did not give the observers sufficient instructions to be able to engage properly with the task. As we understand it, the aim of giving some of the participants the role as an observer was to give the rest of the participants' feedback on how they practiced dialogue. Yet, as we go on to discuss in the next chapter, giving constructive feedback is a difficult task, one that is not easy undertaken if you do not have any specific guidance about what you should observe.

In the session afterwards, when all the groups gathered to reflect on the task, the focus of discussion was "the diamond". As the interviewee above said, the observers were talking about how the group could have chosen differently. They did not give specific feedback on how the groups had managed to use dialogue as a tool. The facilitator did not follow up on this. Consequently, dialogue was not put into practice.

Also, in the final interviews some of the interviewees called for more concrete instructions from the facilitators. This involved, firstly, a clearer explanation of the tasks they were given. One interviewee asked for facilitators to offer role models saying,

*I believe in experiential learning, so when someone teaches you communication they should embody this in their own actions. It is very difficult to do, but important. Take for example crying – I will understand if you can cry in front of me, not only in theory. When you bring people into a work-shop you learn something, but at the whole it is about the atmosphere, and here this was not perfect.*

The interviewee problematizes the fact that learning is both hearing, talking, feeling and doing. When we asked the informants to elaborate upon how the lectures and exercises were integrated during the course, some of the informants requested a stronger focus on practice. Through practice you are strengthening your skills and thus increasing your competence. As one person remarked:

*For me I think communication was a forgotten lecture. When it comes to communication I didn't feel like we changed much due to lack of practice. I feel like I was not able to remember everything that I learned through that lecture. The practical aspect of it was missing.*

To practice is important to be able to improve your skills. To be able to learn about communication one must communicate. Other informants also called for more variation in the pedagogical methods, for example, one person proposed using role-play and theater, to create more varied learning. In other words, there is a greater potential for the organizers to take advantage of the classroom as a learning community (cf chapter 3.1).

### **4.2.3 Consistency and integration**

As an overall impression, the participants are all very well satisfied with the composition of the program. They found the program satisfactory, developing from the basic themes on the first days towards the more complex and difficult themes in the third week.

Participants are generally very satisfied with the way the various topics were put together and built on each other. On the whole they found the program logical, but some informants suggested there could be a better integration of the key themes, especially between the first week and the rest of the program. This corresponds with our own observations from the second week when the topic was closely related to the theme of communication in the first week. When we carried out our observations, in the second week, the participants were introduced to dialogue as a key-concept in all peace building. Group work should be carried out by using the dialogue method. As far as we could observe, there were few attempts to relate discussions, observations or experiences to concepts or theories of communication during this lecture. Even though, the relevance of communication in dialogue is obvious.

The other issue raised by the observations, was, like the feedback given by participants, that we thought the exercises sometimes lacked a clear introduction. This meant that participants did not carry out the tasks in line with the proposed or intended learning objectives. One should be aware of the importance of being clear about frames, limits and intentions in process-learning, that help students to find meaning in the exercises/tasks.

## **4.3 Group facilitation and the role of the facilitator**

As shown in the previous chapter, the course consisted of varying teaching methods. This chapter will focus on the workshops and group work, where the pedagogy of small group teaching and the role of the facilitator is essential. Our observations also identified some aspects of the facilitator's role that we would like to give special attention.

### **4.3.1 Securing a safe and open environment**

As stated earlier an important aspect of the NCPD's training is to make use of the participant prior knowledge and experiences. To make this possible, the facilitators play an important role in making the group members feel secure and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings. This is essential, not only because the group depends on the knowledge that the participants bring into the group, but confidence in oneself is also an important component when it comes to competence building (Youngs, 1996). The way the course was organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, was, as we saw it, a critical factor in building a secure environment.

As outlined previously, engaging in social activities creates a neutral platform where the participants can get to know each other as equals. Bringing this confidence back to the classroom can make it easier for the participants to open up to each other and speak about difficult subject. Some of the participants also told us that the facilitators played an important role by always being accessible and open to sit down and have a talk. When asked about how they experienced sharing personal issues with the group, most of those interviewed said that it has been good. One of them said:

*I feel confident inside. I feel more global. That gives me the confidence to be more open.*

Another informant put it this way,

*We have had a lot of discussions. I have told personal things, which can be more useful than theory and such.*

But, there are also other experiences, such as the one described by this interviewee,

*Yes, but it takes time for me to get closer. It takes time to adjust, get used to everything here. People who come from conflict areas do not open up easily. They need to feel real interest in their stories. Program like this is not that deep.*

Although this informant would need some more time to be able to really open up to the group members, our overall impression is that the informants feel that the facilitators fulfilled their role when it came to securing a safe environment for the group to work together.

#### **4.3.2 The facilitator's role in leading the group facilitation**

From the outside the facilitator's role might be perceived as being easy since in a group process, the participants themselves are supposed to lead the discussion. However, on the contrary this process oriented learning actually demands a lot from the facilitator. The facilitator has to establish ground rules, pay attention to all the group members and see that everyone gets a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is to lead the group on their way to new understanding (Rogers, 2010).

Broadly the participants agreed that the facilitators had a strong focus on the group climate and paid attention to the groups functioning during workshops. According to one informant, the facilitators were able to adjust their role as they got to know the group, not being a lecturer, but rather listening and supporting the group members. The interviewee also points out that the facilitators showed interest and gave attention to all of the participants:

*Every day they got more integrated with the group they were feeling the pulsation of the group. Most facilitators would say, this is how you should do it, but they were very supportive of the group. Nobody got extra attention; they were into all of the group members.*

One informant did not entirely agree. He felt that there were a few participants who got to speak much more than others and that the facilitators should have steered the discussion so that other people's opinions could have been voiced. This criticism was also expressed about the seminar (see chapter 4.2.1). Rogers (2010: 122) point out that it can be hard for a facilitator to stop a person from talking, especially when one has spent a lot of time making the participants feel confident enough to share their experiences, but if it is in the interest of the group as a whole, interrupting can sometimes be necessary.

Another informant points out that she especially liked one of the facilitators because of the way he structured the workshop and also because of the way he encouraged the group members and made them feel relaxed. She emphasizes that on several occasions he told them that there were no wrong answers and that he took every contribution seriously:

*We had the theory as a small lecture, and then we had the workshop and then there was time for questions. And he mixed groups differently and... I felt that we were all relaxed because he was always saying that there is no right answer to this and...we could all be saying different things and he would say yes ok and...so with him I think I enjoyed it the most.*

What we can understand from this citation is that the facilitator was able to pick up on, and bring forward different themes and points that the participants brought to light without questioning if they were right or wrong. The egalitarian style of the facilitator was perceived as very different from what some of the participants were used to and perhaps, for this reason, was well received.

Another aspect of the facilitator's role is to sum up the main points from the work and direct discussion by encouraging people to explore and explain their ideas (Rogers, 2010). According to the interviewees the facilitators did a good job at summing up and pointing out the main points of a discussion before ending a session. During our own observations we were sometimes left wondering why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions in order to initiate reflection on parts of the participants. This issue was illustrated during the "dialogical way of discussing" workshop, where the participants were divided by gender into two smaller groups. The task was to use dialogue so as to discuss what it is that men do not understand about women and vice versa. During group work the men and women made a list to answer the question above. In the women's group (while the observer was present) the discussion revolved around how men are simple and women are complicated, and how communication between the two parts can, therefore, be difficult. In the men's group they discussed women's clothing traditions in different cultures, and how men are affected in different ways by these. When the two groups gathered half an hour later, they presented their lists to each other. The discussion revolved around two themes: women

only want the movie star man and women wanting to feel secure but without being controlled. The facilitator listened and helped answer some of the questions that were brought up, confirming and encouraging the participants to explain their thoughts. But he did not ask any critical questions that could have helped the participants explore the question from a different angle nor seek to examine why they came up with the points they had on their lists.

The question (what is it that men do not understand about women and vice versa) invites a stereotypical pattern of thought, which was reinforced by the separation of the group by gender. The purpose of this was probably that the participants would need to practice the dialogical tools during the final discussion. From the observations we made we concluded that the discussion could have been more challenging and stimulating had the facilitator been more pro-active in addressing issues further. This is important since one of the main elements in dialogue skills is the ability to change perspective (cognition) and to put one's self in another's position (ref chapter 3.2).

After the session we asked one of the facilitators responsible for the course why the facilitator did not ask any critical questions and if this was a strategy normally used by the facilitators at the NCPD. She replied that they normally let the participants lead the discussion on their own and that they typically use themes like the one above because this is something everyone has experience with and has an opinion on.

As we have seen, the NCPD places a strong emphasis on learner centred activity and an egalitarian approach by the facilitators. This can be characterized as one of the strengths of NCPD's learning methods and it is very much appreciated by the participants. Nevertheless, taking this approach does not mean that the facilitator should avoid steering the learning process. On the contrary, it is important to be able to structure the discussions brought up by the participants, in order to enhance the learning process.

### **4.3.3 Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of a learning process as it helps the participants adjust their practice and evolve as practitioners of dialogue work. According to Rogers (2010) to give feedback is one of the most difficult parts of a facilitator's role because people often associate feedback with something negative. Feedback may, in fact, be either positive or negative, but, Rogers argues, people tend to listen to and absorb feedback when it is specific, descriptive and about behavior, rather than if, for example, it arises from personal opinions. Therefore feedback should be directly connected to the task the group members are practicing and be specific to each individual and how they are doing.

We asked the participants if they had gotten individual feedback from the facilitators on how they practice dialogue. The interviewees say that they did not get much individual feedback and that most of the feedback was directed at the group as a whole.

*No. Just as a group but not as individuals. Learn in the group and then you present, and then the group gets some feedback. More on the content of what the group is presenting not on how they do dialogue.*

This informant also points out that the feedback that was given to the group also mostly was about how they had solved the exercise (the content), and not about how they had practiced dialogue. Another interviewee replied that they had tried to give each other feedback but this was not very well organized.

One of the interviewee's mentioned the exercise "the diamond" which we have discussed in a previous section. Here the participants themselves were supposed to observe each other and give feedback, but this did not work out exactly as planned. The interviewee said,

*The observer didn't get any instructions on what he/she was meant to observe. It was not well planned this feedback. It was not so clear. It is not structured. I have never been asked or given a specific feedback individually.*

This citation suggests that it is due to a lack of structure that participants did not receive any individual feedback (although this was the purpose of the exercise). The interviewee asks for better planning and more instruction from the facilitators in order to be able to both give and receive feedback from other participants. Another interviewee commented that it would have been better if some of the facilitators who had expert knowledge of dialogue could observe them and give feedback:

*It would have been good if one person who is suitable for dialogue work. To observe you and tell you for example, you have a wrong body language, or you have some way to go (...) to give you remarks and feedback.*

This was actually the intention during the workshop mentioned in section 4.3.3 called "dialogical way of discussion". During the group work, the facilitator leading the workshop and another facilitator observed the groups to see if the participants managed to use the different elements of dialogue. While walking from one group to the next, I asked what the facilitator had observed while watching the women. The facilitator replied that she noticed that the women at several times "took" the argument of the other and explained what the other had meant. This is not a proper procedure in dialogue, she explained, because one should always let each participant's argument stand on its own and respond with your own thoughts about the subject in matter. Unfortunately, when the group was gathered after the discussion, this feedback was not given to the participants.



Back in the classroom the facilitator leading the workshop said that he had forgotten to say that the participant were supposed to have the thirteen elements of dialogue in mind when they were in discussion groups, but that he hoped they remembered anyway. When asked what she had observed, the other facilitator said that she had noticed that the women had found the question more difficult than expected (what had she observed?), and also that the men and women had talked about many similar themes. None of her comments were about how the participants had practiced dialogue as a method.

This suggests that the course could benefit from placing more emphasis on structuring the way feedback is given. By, perhaps, being more focused on giving feedback during group work where it is easier to give concrete feedback related to the activity the participant are doing at the moment. As shown in the citation above, some participant would have liked more feedback on how they, for example, use their body language during dialogue and what they need to work on in general. This is important to make the participants feel confident when they are going to use dialogue in their own work at a later stage.

#### **4.4 The role of the participants**

As earlier described, one of the strongest motivating factors for the participants was the opportunity to share experiences (see chapter 4.1). Sharing experiences is also one of the main objectives of “Dialogue with Diaspora”, as described by the organizers. Another intention was to learn from each other through sharing experiences and it was hoped to strengthen the ties of the Diaspora and the country of origin. With these aims in mind, we asked participant whether the course had raised awareness about the relations of the Diaspora to the countries of origin.

When it comes to learning from the Diasporas, it appears that the participants expectations were not met. They emphasize that they have benefited and learned about cultures and histories of each other’s countries, as in these quotes:

*As a whole, a good and informative course. I learned a lot about the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.*

*I learned much about the other countries.*

But on the other hand, they are disappointed that there was not a more explicit focus on, interaction with, or discussion about the Diaspora. In particular, this concerns the seminar that was arranged during the course, which placed special emphasis on working together with the Diaspora. As noted earlier, several informants found the seminar a disappointment, as they did not have the necessary time they wanted to talk to and discuss with the Diasporas:

*I expected much more interaction with the diaspora. It was not enough.*

*We also met Diasporas from out of Norway, but this was too little. To have effective dialogue we need to practice more, we need to push each other and be active. We need to have practice in the long term and repeatedly. We need to have a more concrete outcome.*

Further they criticized the Diaspora for being less relevant to discuss with, presumably because they are fastened in the history: *"The Diasporas are somewhat some years behind us"*. This critique was directed towards the invited guests of the arranged seminar, and not at the participants in the training course. However, there was some criticism of the selection process for the candidates of the course. This concerns background, language skills, and gender. In the group interview we had an interesting discussion where this theme was the focus. Some criticized the selection of participants for being too one-sided and for not taking into consideration gender. Others emphasized that they were not here to represent their country, so therefore it doesn't matter that they are only women from one country and only men from another. This is exemplified in this dialogue during the last group interview:

*I1:- I am not satisfied with the participants. We represent not BH. We are only girls. We are all very well educated. We have similar values. They should pay attention to what kind of people they select. I think the Kurdish group was best – female and male,*

*I2:- But we were not here to represent our country. We were here as individuals and to learn something. Why were there no girls from Afghanistan? Maybe because they are not allowed to go out of the house? The two percent who are allowed to go out, they will not come to such course. They are on a higher level.*

*I1:- When I talked to the girls from Afghanistan in the seminar they gave me a total different story than what you have given me during these weeks. That is why there needs to be both. The organizers should have a plan – what kind of participants do you want, what do you want from them.*

Another interesting point is expressed by one of the participants, who observed a difference in the way some participants behave alone and as part of a group. She noticed that when she talked to the participants from one group separately, they share positive experiences from their country. But when they go on to share opinions within the group, they focus more on the negative. Maybe they feel pressure to do that, she suggested, since the rest of the participants are more interested in the negative side than the positive?

## **4.5 What have the participants learned?**

In the first interview we asked all the informants to write down a description of a conflict situation that they have either been involved in or could have been likely to encounter. Seven weeks later we asked them to write down how they would approach the conflict

now. We wanted to find out whether they approached the conflict differently after attending the course. This exercise was done in order to be able to assess what Kirkpatrick describes as the third level in his model for evaluating training and learning (chapter 3.4). The third part of Kirkpatrick's model addresses applied learning, the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied in practice and how patterns of action and behaviour have altered. To evaluate the impact of learning we would, however, need to attend to the subjective learning processes of the participants in detail. As this was beyond the reach of this project, we chose to combine observe and measure skill levels before and after training with an evaluation of feedback supplied by participants. Due to the scope of this evaluative report we are unable to complete an analysis of the impact of the learning on the participants.

The questions posed, however, were, has something changed in the way you see the conflict now? And, if so, what is different? To this question most of the participants pointed out that there has been some change and that the main difference they have noticed has been in the way they think about conflict:

*The difference is that now I see conflict more in an academic way.*

*I have become more convinced that in many areas of our life conflicts are inevitable, if it is not an inherent aspect of our nature, it is of our collective life that can be displayed in different fashions, sometimes destructively.*

*Now, if I would go back into the same situation I would have much more awareness about it and I can decide and cause less damage.*

*I feel confident in settling our conflict in a positive manner. I now feel that I will be able to express my feelings caused by our conflict. I hope this will give me an upper hand to decide for myself. Also, I trust our relationship will remain intact as nothing will come in the way of our long term friendship.*

In the second question we asked, why do you think you see the conflict differently now? The answers showed that the interviewees had a broader perspective and experienced a more complex understanding of conflicts after being part of the training course. The following citations exemplify this point:

*Because I became more vividly exposed to some conflicts around the world, because of the comparison between Norway, and other countries, especially those in conflict. On the other hand, the lectures, group works and exercise provided me with further insights and tools to look at conflict differently; e.g. we learned more about conflict analysis, communication, dialogue, etc. These all have given me the ability to explain a conflict and to think about it as something that can be prevented, resolved and transformed.*

*I definitely know it is because of the knowledge that I achieved throughout the course. But the knowledge though, didn't only "reach" to me during the lessons. I think I learned them more during the workshops, and also by working with people whom I didn't know from before.*

*Now, I think I see the situation from a different angle and have more awareness about the situation. Always experience and more information give you the courage to take more efficient decisions.*

The third question asked: how would you approach the conflict now? The answers indicate a more nuanced view of the conflict, as well as several new ways of understanding the conflict, and new tools to approach the conflict:

*I think I would change the place of the meetings and I would take it out of the office we used to have the discussions. I also would try to build more trust and talk about common things between all sides not only taking into consideration who is better. I think if that happens now I would take very differently from the first time.*

*I prefer to address the conflicts at a deeper level that will help develop and maintain trust between us. This is difficult, takes a little longer, at a cost of my pride or finances, but helps to enhance my commitment and dedication for the sake of relationships and deeper feelings with close ones. I really see and try to experience conflict as the opportunity to build new relationships- and to prove myself as a worthy human being.*

Some of the participants have also started to teach their colleagues about dialogue as a method for thinking about conflict and helping them improving their own communication skills:

*Especially the impact of NCPD's program has been that I am more convinced that dialogue is a strong tool, so I will always try to keep the channels of dialogue open even in very difficult times. I have discussed this with my colleagues, and encouraged them to use each and every opportunities to have dialogues, and this has decreased a harsher treatment of some employees by senior ones. I helped the junior colleagues to improve their communication skills and think in more dialogical way. I also have sensitized my colleagues in Peace and Conflict Studies Department (where I work) to focus more on capacity building in dialogue and include dialogue technics in their programs. Public Peace Dialogue is a program that is going on by our office, in which we have tried to create dialogues (though not very directly) amongst different layers of our society on some controversial issues.*

It is also interesting to notice that people react emotionally different to conflicts now, and have gained more self-knowledge:

*Before the seminar I could easily get angry, impatient or maybe rude, if people did not understand my way of thinking. Now I have learned that the key to solving conflicts is more up to me and my way of acting towards the other part.*

*It's difficult to say, but I think that I would approach the conflict with more confidence in myself and in my ability to solve the conflict. I would most likely try to find out why it in the first place has become a conflict, and then try to fix it with a dialogue and patience.*

*Since the seminar it is not a lot that is different, but I truly learned a lot about myself and the conflict that others are experiencing. I have no longer so many doubts about myself, and I think that nothing else is more important if I want to work with this in the long run.*

In general we can say that participants found the course useful, and have already made larger or smaller changes in their behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, in response to knowledge gained on the course. Interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes here are an understanding of dialogue as an essential tool for dealing with conflicts, an increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation, why people react as they do and a way of thinking about conflict not as a battle to be won but as a process one can engage with.



## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we seek to summarize some of our findings from the pilot project and discuss the ways in which the implementation and teaching practises can be further improved. We also look at the extent to which the aims of the project have been reached by referring to feedback from participants.

### 5.1 Organization of the training course

Our overall impression from interviews and observation is that one of the NCPD's strengths is building trust and providing a safe environment for the participants to open up and take part in an immersive learning experience. Several of the participants felt that they gained confidence in themselves in regards to speaking about their own feelings and their role as dialogue workers/in conflict solving. The way the course is organized, letting the participants live together at the Nansen Academy, spending both working and leisure time together, played a significant role in building confidence. However, some of the participants felt that the program was too intense in the beginning and that they did not have enough time to adjust to the Norwegian conditions. Some of the participants also said that they were not used to reflecting on or talking about personal dilemmas. They therefore wished they could have had some time to themselves to work on this. Moreover, because of the tight program (which started 09.00 and went on until about 21.00), several of the participants felt that they did not get enough time to just talk to each other and elaborate upon different views and experiences.

Regarding the composition of single lectures, workshops and group facilitation, we find that the course could have benefitted from a closer cooperation between the project managers and the lectures. As it was now, the seminar can be described as a patchwork of different approaches and themes that the NCPD is working on. A more obvious integration of themes would have improved the structure of the program even more. We would, for example, advise that more attention be paid to the concepts and theories from the first week and their relationship to the topics in the rest of the program.

### 5.2 Pedagogical framework

When it comes to the pedagogical framework there is a need for a clearer consistency between what is lectured on and what, then, becomes the focus in the group work. In

particular, we found that the connection between what was taught during communication workshop and dialogue workshop should have had a stronger relation to the group work that followed. There seemed to be a general pattern that the group work consisted of a task that should be solved and then the group's answers subsequently being presented in plenary. The presentations led to a lot of waiting for the audience, with no other intent than to listen. One can imagine various ways to engage the audience that could lead to a more dynamic learning environment. One way would be to make use of observations and feedback as a form of meta-learning. Observation as a learning method was used to a certain extent, but there is a need for clarification surrounding the intent behind the approach and the learning outcomes for the participants. Similarly, there is a need to integrate ongoing feedback as a central part of the learning strategy. A significant part of a training course is that participants practice what they learn and, in turn, that this will promote reflection upon both process and practice (theory and practice). Development of practice requires reflection on practice. Often it's about becoming aware of unconscious values and habits in the form of tacit knowledge.

Some of the participants found it unfortunate that interesting discussions were either stopped, due to the need for progress in the program, or impaired by a few people talking too long. We observed several examples of interesting discussions and exchanges of views, which the facilitator did not pick up on. This may be explained by the need to get through a busy program. There are, however, two points concerning this issue which we would like to raise. Firstly, the project might have had too many focuses which the facilitator did not have time to go into the different subjects that were brought up in-depth. Secondly, this may indicate the need for clearer processes of facilitation. That might, for example, include a more firm control and, maybe more importantly, a clearer framework for the discussion.

As we see it, the participants were supposed to have two roles during the training course. I) As professionals seeking to learn the tool of dialogue for the purposes of their work practice. II) They were part of different groups representing either home country or Diaspora, seeking to find ways of collaborating. What was missing was a clarification of how these two roles fit together and why and how the course could aid further cooperation and dialogue between the groups.

### **5.3 Goal attainments**

The over arching goal of the training was to strengthen the participants practical skills and theoretical understanding of peace, dialogue and reconciliation work. After participating in the training course the participants should have:

- Developed skills to be able to analyse conflict situations
- Increased knowledge of their own way of communicating and own identity



- Understood and experienced the use of dialogue as a method in peace and reconciliation work
- Increased understanding of how it is possible to strengthen each other's commitment to the peace work through networking between the diaspora and the country of origin.

Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants in chapter 4, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. But as pointed out, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

## 5.4 Recommendations

This evaluation report has shown that the “Dialogue with Diaspora”-program is an important contribution to developing the dialogue skills among its participants. However, the program needs to be further developed. Through our enquiries we found that some pedagogical improvements to the training course could be made:

- Initiate fewer activities the first week. Take into account that participants use a lot of effort just to adapt and get to know the new environment and people.
- Clarify the main thread through the program. Remember to build on what has already been completed, while pointing towards things to come.
- Consider whether the number of subjects/themes/topics should be reduced
- Set more time to reflection during the whole period. It is important to remember that reflection can also be integrated into different educational activities such as writing reflection notes, log book or drawing.
- Take advantage of the classroom as a learning community in providing a variety of educational activities.
- Set aside sufficient time to discuss how participants will use their expertise and their new network, in the future.
- There is a need for further development concerning the role of the facilitator in leading the group facilitation. This includes several of the points to follow:
  - Be clearer on the instructions, frames and intentions with the exercises and tasks.
  - Be aware of the part facilitators have as role models and the importance of trying to embody what is taught.
- Integrate feedback in the learning process - both individual feedback and group feedback.
- Be clearer about what the task of the observers is. Give the observers structured guidelines and allow the observers to present their observations in the class or to the group they observed.



## 6 REFERENCES

Aarbakke, V. (2002). *Mutual Learning – Facilitating Learning in Former Yugoslavia*. PRIO Report 2/2002.

Bjørke, G. (2006). *Aktive læringsformer – Handbok for studentar og lærarar i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Guldvik, Ingrid (2005): *Takt og utakt, sagt og usagt. Kjønnssrettferdighet og kvotering i lokalpolitikken*. Institutt for sosiologi og statsvitenskap, Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet, Trondheim.

Kirkpatrick (2004): in Lai, L: *Strategisk kompetansestyring*, Fagbokforlaget.

Løvlie, L. (1984): *Det pedagogiske argument*. Cappelens pedagogikkbøker. Cappelen Forlag

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rogers, J. (2010). *Facilitating Groups: Getting the Best Out of a Group*. Maidenhead, GBR: Open University Press

Youngs, B.B. (1996) *The Six Ingredients of Self-Esteem: How They Are Developed Or Eroded in Your Child*. Torrance C.A. Jalmar Press.



## ATTACHMENTS 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

### **From the first interview**

#### *Introduction*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourselves, name, where you are from and what your work is?
2. What motivated you to apply for participation in this course?
3. In what way have you prepared yourselves before coming to Norway?
4. How would you define the concept dialogue and peace and dialogue work?

#### *Expectations*

5. What are your expectations of this course (what do you expect to learn?)
6. What do you expect to learn from the other participants?
7. How do you see your own role and contribution?
8. In three words; describe your idea of the ideal peace worker.

### **From the second interview**

#### *Expectations - fulfilled?*

1. Has the course as a whole turned out the way you expected?
  - if not; what is different from your expectations?

2. Have you been able to exchange ideas with other participants like you expected when you first came to the course?
3. Have you had the opportunity to use your qualifications in a positive way?

*The content of the course*

4. You have had different lectures.
  - Which ones has been the most interesting ? and why?
  - Which ones did you find least interesting?
5. You have had different kinds of activities, training, and teamwork.
  - Have the intentions of the activities been clearly communicated to you in advance?
  - Did you understand what you were supposed to learn?
6. How did you find the balance between the theoretical and the practical topics?
  - Was is a good balance or was it too much of one or the other?
  - Was the theoretical topics integrated in the practical exercises?

*The role of the facilitators*

7. The teacher's role is to facilitate the learning process for the participants. What are your experiences on this?

8. Did you get constructive feedback on your own role and attendance? For example when you were practicing dialogue?

*Usefulness*

9. Will you be able to work with the diaspora you met here in Norway, when you return to your home country? Will you keep in touch?
10. How has the course been useful for you in relation to your ordinary work?

We`d like to contact you in a month's time with some e-mail questions regarding the course's usefulness. Is this ok with you? And will you reply?





## ATTACHMENT 2: CASE

From our first interview with the participants:

Case 1:

Think about a specific conflict situation that you either have experienced or that it is likely that you could face in your work;

1. Describe the conflict
  - Who are the participants in the conflict?
  - What started the conflict?
2. How would you approach the conflict?

After seven weeks, we asked the following questions:

Case II:

In our first meeting we asked you to write down a description of a conflict situation that you either had experienced or that it was likely that you could face in your work. Based on what you wrote, try to answer the following questions:

1. Has something changed in the way you see the conflict?

If yes:

- a. What is different?
- b. Why do you think you see the conflict with different eyes now?
- c. How would you approach the conflict now?

If no:

- d. Why hasn't anything changed?

### **“Dialogue with Diaspora”**

The report presents an evaluation of the project “Dialogue with the Diaspora” undertaken by The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD), March 2012. The project consisted of a training course for 13 practitioners involved in peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia Hercegovina and people from the Diaspora living in Norway. The course was organised around the themes of identity and communication, dialogue, mediation, conflict solving, and the role of the Diaspora in peace building. Drawing on the accounts and feedback given by the participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the broad aims of this course have been achieved. The interviewees reported greater trust, self-confidence and more courage. Other important outcomes are better understanding of dialogue as an essential tool in for dealing with conflicts, and increased openness to learning about the background of the conflict situation. Still, there remains room for improvement in the area of developing of practice in the course. Likewise, it seems that there should be some changes in relation to strengthening the long-term cooperation and network among the participants and the NCPD.

**ENRI Report 13/2012**

**ISBN nr: 978-82-7356-711-6**