

Shakin' the classroom

Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool.

What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

The *Ideas Lab* method is based on collaboratively developing and sharing ideas on a specific issue in a short period of time. This method is not about solving problems in a neoliberal sense by developing products and then selling them. Rather, the method is intended to be process-oriented. It is meant to initiate certain processes of reflection in the first place. Within the triad of critique - utopia - transformation, the focus is placed on the differentiation of utopian ideas. It tries to free oneself from paralyzing logics of thought that ask for "feasibility" or to deal with the critique of the actual state in eternal loops and thus to stabilize it in parts.

Procedure:

1. Group formation (ideally 3-5 people) First, the participants have time for themselves to collect ideas on the topic. Ideas are written down on cards with a title and a short description.
2. Then each person presents 1-2 ideas to be discussed. Duplicating or emerging ideas can be rephrased or added during the discussion.
3. Two groups come together, pin or tape their cards to a surface (board, flipchart, table...). There is space for follow-up questions about ideas. Each person now receives five stickers and can allocate up to four of them to one or more preferred idea. The three most popular ideas per board are collected. If there is a tie between two or more ideas, the remaining stickers can be distributed among them again.
4. If a final overview/list is to be created, it is advisable to limit it. Online voting tools are suitable for this, in which everyone can participate with an invitation link via smartphone, and which automatically lists the most popular (e. g. 10) ideas.
5. Optional: Further develop these ideas in other parts of the workshop.

In which way is this method alternative?

How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

The *ideas lab* focuses on a self-taught approach to the thematic issue, the sharing of already existing knowledge and the associated production of "new" knowledge in the process of collaborative work. In this sense, this method is not about the classical (and usually strongly hierarchizing) transfer of knowledge from people "with" knowledge to people "without" knowledge, even though one or more people lead the workshop. However, the focus here should not be on the status of an all-knowing expert, but rather led by intrinsic interest for a topic as the best prerequisite for transferring enthusiasm to the workshop participants. An explicit framing of one's own non-knowledge on the part of the facilitator is helpful to establish flat hierarchies right from the beginning. Overall, the focus is on the knowledge and experience of the participants. Therefore, there is no need for knowledge input from "outside", it is about developing utopias from within oneself and together with others.

What are your experiences with the method?

In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

There are two concrete contexts in which I got to know the method - once from the perspective of a participant and once from the perspective of a facilitator. In both cases the topic was "sustainable urban development". The choice of the topic remains flexible though.

First experience (participant): Here, during a three-hour event at the European Youth Event (EYE) at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, about 50 teenagers and young adults aged 16-29 from all over Europe came together to develop and discuss ideas for the following question: *What is your model for the sustainable city?* The final list of ten demands for more sustainable and greener European cities was finally discussed with Members of Parliament.

Second experience (facilitator): Here, workshops were conducted at high schools in Dakar by the Goethe-Institut Senegal with pupils between 13 and 17 years old. The explicit question was: *What should your city look like in 2050; how can it become more sustainable?* Here, the ideas lab method was just one of several methods and activities during the day-long event. At the end of the workshop, the students planted trees together with the NGO Trees for the Future to make the schoolyards greener in the long term.

In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for?

E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

The method is suitable for very diverse contexts. The examples above both come from one-day-workshops in youth education. However, the method is largely independent of age, location, culture, class, race, gender, topic and so forth. It works within institutions (schools, universities, museums etc.) as well as outside (non-formal education).

What are the requirements for applying this method?

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

- Works better indoors than outdoors
- Ideal number of participants: 15 – 40
- Required material
 - Note cards (A5)
 - Big blank posters (A1) / flipchart
 - Permanent markers
 - Stickers
 - Wifi
- crucial points in different contexts
 - sensibility and reflecting on power relations, depending on the relationship between facilitator and participants and participants among each other, but this should actually apply to barely any method

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed. (up to 200 words)

Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contexts?

The Ideas Lab method is related to "Design Thinking" and "Hackathons". Here, too, the aim is to develop ideas together in a short time. Design Thinking is inspired by the working methods of designers; to have them involved and work with transdisciplinary participants. The hackathon, on the other hand, originates from the computer science sector. The goal of a hackathon is to create functioning software or hardware by the end of the event. The ideas lab, as I propose and present it here, is not about being able to present a finished and mature idea or a product at the end, but primarily about the collaborative process and exchange. A space is to be created or made available in the first place, in which the impossible can be thought and thus hegemonic (social) orders are implicitly questioned without being dominated by the logic of utilization.