

The Role of a Facilitator: Challenges

Framing: *This activity is taken from the training Facilitation and Co-Facilitation through a PAR Lens Through role-playing and group discussion participants will work through challenging situations that often arise when facilitating. Participants will reflect on their process of dealing with the situation and share their experience with the group so that everyone can learn from each other.*

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Copies of Role-Playing Scenarios
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Small group directions written on chart paper or handout

Group Size: 5 or more

Facilitators' Note: *Before starting the activity, pick out the role playing scenarios that best fit your group.*

Activity

Opening: (5 min)

Action: Discussion on the challenges identified and quick brainstorm

Talking Points: Facilitator A will discuss a few of the challenges that have come up in previous discussions or common facilitating challenges.. Examples could include:

- Wanting to bring in new people and how to do that
- How to engage with the powers that be
- Addressing a tough issue that comes up in the group.
- Any other facilitation challenges that the group is interested in discussing

Actions: Facilitator B will jot down the group's thoughts from the discussion

Main Activity (35 min total):

1) Role Playing Exercise (20 min)-Small Groups

Talking Points: Facilitator B will explain the exercise:

Based on some previously raised facilitation challenges and/or some examples that raise common concerns, we're going to break into small groups and role play a scenario. Each group will be assigned a scenario to act out for the larger group.

Actions: Divide participants into small groups of 3-5 and distribute role-playing scenarios. In their small groups participants should:

- Identify the problem or challenge in the scenario
- Identify who the relevant/key people are in the scenario
- Identify strategies to address and think about how to best resolve the problem or challenge in the scenario
- Discuss together the ways you'd address this as facilitators and come up with a few examples to share with the larger group
- Decide how to act out or describe the scenario for the larger group

2) Regroup (15 min) - Large Group Discussion

Actions: Facilitator A will guide discussion. Each group will perform or talk about their scenario in front of the larger group. After each performance, the larger group can discuss what they saw in the scenario, and their thoughts of what they would think/feel/do if they were in those situations.

Closing (5 min):

Action: Each participant can share one idea they are taking with them to use the next time they encounter one of these facilitation challenges.



ROLE PLAYING HANDOUT

Scenario I -- Facilitating Challenging Conversations

Roles: co-facilitators from your group, 1 parent who makes insensitive comment/assumption, 2 parents who agree

You are facilitating a meeting where parents from all over your school district are discussing the issues going on in the elementary and middle schools and what should be different. Parents from across the district, as well as parents who are in leadership roles at the school and district level, are present. A number of issues focusing on discrimination and inequity are raised, and how race and class are connected to these issues. The issues are brought up by parents who have faced discrimination and inequality in their schools and school system.

One of the parents in the room dismisses these issues and also expresses assumptions about the parents who face discrimination and inequity, saying or implying that these parents are “too passive, and don’t care enough about their children’s education,” that the “fault lies with these parents, not the system.” Several other parents express agreement.

- As a facilitator(s), how would you address these comments?
- How would you engage the group of parents in this conversation?
- How might you center the voices of those who experienced the discrimination and inequality they spoke about?
- How would you frame the discussion? Why is this important?



Scenario II -- Power Dynamics and Building Community

Roles: co-facilitators, 1 city official

You are helping to facilitate a meeting that a group of engaged community members called for with city officials to address concerns your group has about racial profiling and lack of respect exhibited toward the community from law enforcement. In your group you have documented multiple occurrences that reflect this lack of respect and of the profiling that has taken place. When presented with the information, the city officials disagree about law enforcement's lack of respect for the community and become dismissive and defensive.

- As a facilitator(s), how would you engage with the officials in this conversations while insuring that the group's concerns aren't minimized, that their voices are not silenced?
- How would you frame the issue and proposed strategies? Why is this important?

Scenario III -- Integrating new Members and Valuing all Voices

Roles: co-facilitators, 1 new member

You are facilitating during a meeting and realize there is one new member in the group. The group already consists of individuals that have been coming for awhile and have built relationships with each other and as a group. The new member is very shy and is hesitant to participate.

- How would you welcome the new member?
- How would you begin to integrate him/her into the group?
- What are some ways to integrate him/her genuinely and organically?
- How do you keep the group moving forward while also making sure the new member's experiences and knowledge is valued?



Scenario IV: Dealing with Different Cultures and Assumptions in the Group as Facilitators

Role: co-facilitators, 2 grad students

You are facilitating a meeting about a PAR-based research project related to the group's work with different communities. There is a diverse set of community members and grad students present. The group discusses possibilities for the research project and the roles and responsibilities of the project and those working on it. Disagreements, though subtle, become clear between community members and grad students about the different roles and responsibilities. The situation feels tense as differences about who is the "expert" are raised.

- As a facilitator, how would you address the differences (and what they mean regarding power and privilege, for example) among the people in the group?
- How would you facilitate the group discussion so everyone can express their concerns--acknowledging underlying issues and disagreements--without the discussion becoming unproductive or going astray?
- How and why is framing particularly important in this scenario?

