

In this diary extract, Margit gives us an insight into a view from a different perspective, that of a frustrated participant in a workshop facilitated by someone else. On the one hand it shows us how difficult it can be for a skilled facilitator to be a participant in a training session, yet it is also a reminder of how important it can be for anyone in the business of facilitating to take regular opportunities to see things from the other point of view!
(Rod)

Feeling straitjacketed

The workshop on active learning was off to a good start. The first task got me personally involved, and it also made me curious about what was to come. We were asked to pick a room in our flat and say why we like it or dislike it. [...] It was interesting to listen to others and there was a feeling of expectancy in the air. How is this related to the topic of the workshop, active learning? [...]

Next, Robert, the facilitator of the workshop, introduced different categories for various learning styles. I was beginning to feel a bit lost. I didn't understand his categories. He asked us to hold on to our questions for a while. In the meantime, we were given further tasks to carry out in small groups. I was feeling increasingly uncertain about where we were going. I found it difficult to retain clarity without asking some clarification questions, without relating his categories to my past experiences. I felt as though someone was pushing me in a certain direction without allowing me to have a look at a map of where we are.

As the workshop proceeded I felt more and more straitjacketed. [...] Later there was a chance to ask questions, but Robert gave off signals of being edgy and irritated by our questions. What he presented through a series of structured activities had an internal logic of its own. However, our questions probed deeper and he would have needed to move outside of the framework he was presenting. He was holding on desperately to his categories, repeating parts of his presentation and giving clear signals of being annoyed with us. (Margit)