

Facilitate First Thyself: The Person-Centered Dimension of Facilitator Education

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This paper discusses the role of the person-centered dimension of facilitator education, which emphasises the attitudes, personal qualities, and/or presence of a facilitator. An overview of person-centered facilitator education, as described in the literature, is provided to enable the interpretation of the findings of a study that explored the theories and practices of facilitator educators. Operating within the interpretivist paradigm; and using a naturalistic inquiry approach, thematic analysis was used with semistructured interviews, participant observation, and graduate surveys. The findings confirmed the importance of helping emerging facilitators to develop high levels of self-awareness and a better understanding of how to manage their presence in the group. The possibility of person-centered facilitator education acting as a form of psychotherapy was flagged as a potential issue even though this was not the case in the programs observed. The study also highlighted the importance of informing emerging facilitators, before enrolment in a program, that some participants may find person-centered facilitator education challenging and confrontational.

Keywords: Facilitation, Facilitator Education, Experiential Education

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The purpose of this paper is to share some of the findings of a study (Thomas, 2007) that sought to describe the theories and practices of facilitator educators. In particular, this paper focuses on the person-centered dimension of facilitator education, which emphasises the attitudes, personal qualities, and/or presence of a facilitator in an experiential education context. Some of the literature relevant to the person-centered facilitator education dimension will be reviewed to assist with the interpretation of the findings of the study. First though, an explanation of how person-centered facilitator education fits within the wider pursuit of facilitator education will be provided.

Dimensions of Facilitator Education

The training and development of facilitators to work in experiential education contexts is a multifaceted process. Previously, I conceptualised four dimensions of facilitator education described (either explicitly or implicitly) in the facilitation literature (Thomas, 2004, 2005). The dimensions of facilitator education model (Thomas, 2005) shown in Figure 1 is a nested boxes model, which graphically portrays the different approaches to facilitator education. The dimensions portrayed in the larger boxes are extensions of those portrayed in the smaller boxes nested inside them. In this respect, the model implies a progression in the depth and complexity of the facilitator education process.

The four dimensions shown in Figure 1 include: *technical facilitator education* approaches (see Bendaly, 2000; Hart, 1991, 1992; Justice & Jamieson, 1999), which are skills based and formulaic; whereas *intentional facilitator education* approaches (see Heron, 1999; Luckner & Nadler, 1997; Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, & Breunig, 2006; Priest & Gass, 2005; Prouty, Panicucci, & Collinson, 2007; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Schwarz, 2002; Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, & Gass, 2000) are purposively grounded in theory. *Person-centered facilitator education* approaches (see Hunter, 2007; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Ringer, 2002; Rogers, 1983) are still intentional but they emphasise the attitudes, personal qualities, or presence of the facilitator. Finally, *critical facilitator education* approaches (see Brown, 2002, 2004; Kirk & Broussine, 2000; Mindell, 1995; Warren, 1998, 2002) seek to raise an awareness of the political nature of facilitation. The examples from the literature provided for each of these dimensions place a strong emphasis on the specified dimension, although some of the examples also address other dimensions of the facilitator education

process. In the next section of this paper I provide some background information that explains what is commonly involved in person-centered facilitator education.

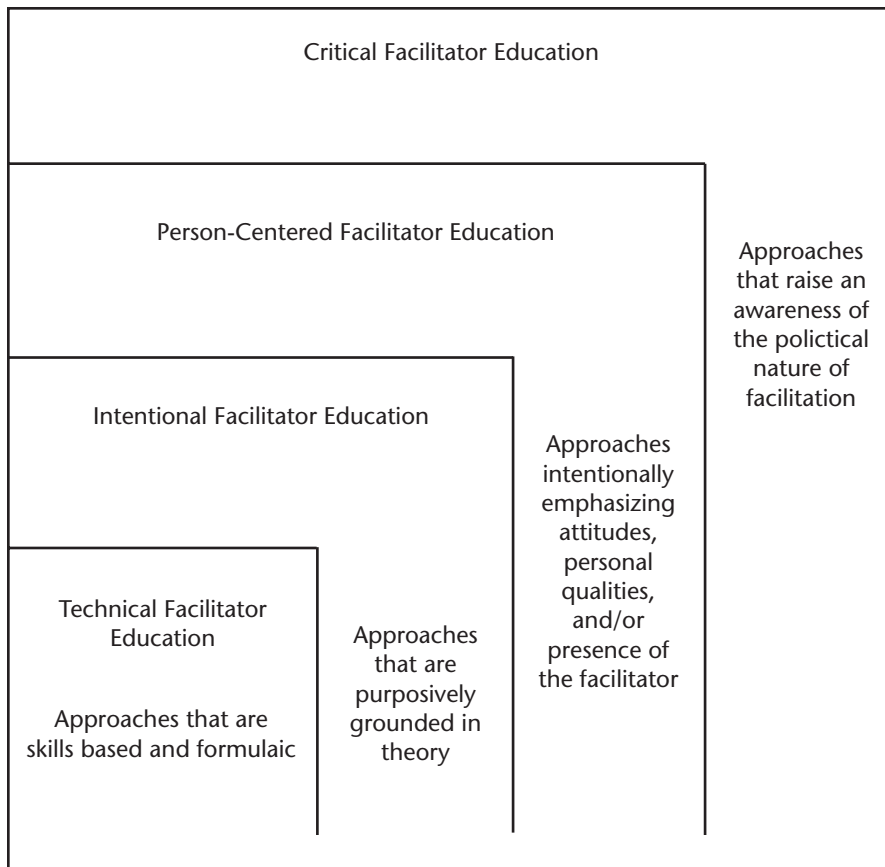


Figure 1. The dimensions of facilitator education (Thomas, 2005).

Person-Centered Facilitator Education

Person-centered facilitator education approaches focus on the personal qualities of the facilitator and the interpersonal relationship between the facilitator and group. The importance of this personal dimension in facilitator education has been highlighted by numerous authors in the facilitation literature. Hunter (in Hunter, Bailey, & Taylor, 1995) expressed her view that the effectiveness of a facilitator is determined by “who you are and who you are being for the group you’re working with.... The relationship you develop with the group is the key” (p. 201). Similarly, Hogan

(2002) articulated the importance of relationships and the need for facilitators to be *fully present* and authentic with group members. Ghais (2005) explained that no amount of brilliant skills and techniques will help an emerging facilitator if s/he lacks personal awareness, adding “whether we’re aware of it or not, our inner states, moods, attitudes, and thoughts are always on our sleeves” (p. 14). Jenkins and Jenkins (2006) focused on nine *disciplines* they believe facilitators must master to be effective and they explained,

The most difficult thing any facilitative leader can do is master himself or herself. Every leader experiences doubt, anxiety, cynicism, and his or her own dark side. Facilitative leaders need to restore their personal energy, maintain respect for both colleagues and themselves, find new sources of ideas and inspiration, and battle the human propensity toward self-limitation, caution, mediocrity, and dependency. (p. 1)

Ringer (2002) presented a unique perspective on experiential education facilitation, by advocating a “subjectivist” view that encouraged the facilitator to see his/her interactions with the group as influence rather than control. In his view, facilitators are aided less by technique and more through their *presence*, which is developed by enhancing a conscious awareness of their own subjectivity. Effective facilitation is “not about control of the group or dazzling with knowledge or skill, but simply maintaining your self fully present with the group and providing appropriate support for the group to achieve its goal” (Ringer, 2002, p. 18). Ringer encouraged facilitators to pay close attention to the complex mix of feelings, thoughts, actions, and memories that make them who they are.

Hunter (2007) considered the task of learning to facilitate oneself the most important work for any facilitator and she described the process as “a life journey—a scary and exciting journey that will take you to places within yourself that will surprise, delight, inspire, as well as disturb, horrify and disgust you” (p. 46). Hunter emphasised, however, that such a journey should not be about “fixing up yourself” (p. 47), but rather on growing, developing, training, and accepting yourself. She also explained that effective facilitators have to learn to cope with the doubts and fears that plague them and that part of the facilitator’s developmental journey is to accept his/her shortcomings and imperfections. Rogers (1983) suggested one of the most important tasks involved in educating facilitators is to help them pursue the goal of “becoming themselves.” This process of understanding oneself was considered critical by Rogers because of the central role of the person in the facilitation process. In recent times there has

been a resurgent interest in this personal dimension within the teaching profession. The summary of these developments provided in the next section will strengthen the discussion of person-centered approaches to facilitator education.

Emphasising the “Person” in Teacher Education

Within the teacher education literature there appears to be a growing acceptance that a clear sense of self may contribute to an improvement in teachers’ effectiveness, as well as in their levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and job satisfaction (Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, & Kron, 2003; Flores & Day, 2006; Korthagen, 2004; O’Connor, 2007). Based on the view that teaching and learning are emotional and social practices (Hargreaves, 1998), it has been argued that the careful examination of teachers’ professional identities is necessary in order to establish a richer and more complete understanding of their work (O’Connor, 2007). However, as Flores and Day (2006) observed, “[It is] an ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences” (p. 220). Korthagen encouraged teachers to establish greater understanding and alignment between the different layers of the teacher’s behaviour, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission in order to create a more coherent whole.

Flores and Day (2006) found that the use of personal autobiographies can play a key role in “mediating the making sense of teachers’ practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers—and in reshaping teacher identity” (p. 230). However, participating in such self-exploration may be foreign and feel risky for many teachers, as Palmer (1998) suggested.

If identity and integrity are more fundamental to good teaching than technique—and if we want to grow as teachers—we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives—risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract. (p. 12)

The nature of a teacher’s work means s/he is regularly required to manage complex situations and make fast decisions, and often his/her behaviour will be largely automatic and intuitive (Nais, 1993). This in itself is not problematic, except that unconscious, untested beliefs and assumptions can dictate one’s actions (Romano, 2006). Hence, one of the challenges for teacher educators is to help teachers to identify inconsistencies between their beliefs and their practices and to assist them in uncovering the knowledge and beliefs underpinning actions, especially if

they have been guiding practice intuitively or automatically (Freese, 2006; Romano, 2006). Hamachek (1999) explained,

Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are. The 'who we are' facet of our teaching personality contributes significantly to the positive or negative tone of a classroom and, certainly, to students' receptivity to learning. (p. 210)

The teacher education literature describes a range of approaches teachers can use to explore their inner lives, including personal journals, self-assessments, personal narratives, metaphors, action research, peer observation, the use of mentors, and participation in learning communities (Freese, 2006; Korthagen, 1993, 2004; Palmer, 1998; Romano, 2006; Zehm, 1999). One creative approach developed by Weber and Mitchell (1996) used drawings to assist student teachers to reflect on personal histories; as one student reported, the process was,

... useful not only in making more explicit the images that influence us, but also in providing a way to evaluate, challenge, or reflect on those images ... bringing to light the nuances and ambivalences in people's views of teachers, as well as the historical, social, cultural, and personal stereotypes that can inform our professional knowledge of teacher education. (p. 312)

Potential Issues Associated With Focusing on the "Person"

It would be one-sided to ignore some of the concerns or problems identified in the literature associated with focusing on the person of the teacher or facilitator. Perhaps the most pressing problem is that self-concepts are resistant to change, even in light of facts that contradict them (Korthagen, 2004). It can also be challenging to find ways to help emerging facilitators increase their awareness that do not result in resistance, defensiveness, or shutting down (Freese, 2006). Weber and Mitchell (1996) expressed concerns that some approaches to raising the self-awareness of teachers focused too much on overcoming or unlearning past experiences. They believe it is more fruitful to work with, rather than to try to undo prior knowledge and experiences.

Study Purpose and Rationale

The study described in this paper set out to explore the theories underpinning the practice of facilitator educators because there was a lack

of clarity in the facilitation literature concerning the way that emerging facilitators actually developed their skills, knowledge, and experience. The study sought to establish the primary outcomes and essential components of facilitator education programs, as well as the theoretical foundations and values that informed the practice of facilitator educators. Finally, the study also asked graduates of the facilitator educator programs which processes they felt contributed the most to the development of their facilitation skills, knowledge, and experience.

My personal motivation for conducting this study was to inform my own practice as an educator preparing facilitators for work in experiential education contexts. Given my belief in the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, I was concerned by the paucity of reflective, critical writing in the literature describing the best strategies to develop experiential education facilitators, and the theories underpinning those strategies. The values and assumptions underpinning my teaching and research interests revolve around a respect for, and belief in, people, which is congruent with values underpinning facilitation (International Association of Facilitators, 2004).

Methodology

The interpretive paradigm and a naturalistic inquiry approach were the best fit for a number of reasons. Interpretive research is traditionally concerned with finding out how people make sense of the things they do by studying them in their natural settings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and it also allows for “multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11). Naturalistic inquiry in the interpretive paradigm is bound by the values and perspectives of the researcher, and rather than pursuing a facade of objectivity, the researcher carefully examines his/her own values, biases, theoretical dispositions and monitor his/her thoughts and actions accordingly (Schwandt, 2001). The study sought to involve facilitator educators in developing a project of mutual interest, blurring the line between the researcher and subject, and sharing responsibility for the findings that emerged and how they would be shared (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). My hope was to work alongside the facilitator educators in their natural settings to co-discover some principles about facilitator education that may be useful for others. For this reason, the facilitator educators in the study each agreed to be identified in this paper, which gives appropriate credit for their contributions to the findings of this research.

Methods of Data Collection

The study utilised interviews and participant observation with seven facilitator educators and qualitative surveys conducted with the

graduates of their programs. These methods were chosen because they provided the opportunity to collect the kind of data appropriate given the purpose of the study. They also allowed me to build a strong rapport with the facilitator educators, which helped me to understand the rationale underpinning their theory and practice.

Although the first round of semistructured interviews with the facilitator educators was guided by a set of questions, I allowed the questions to emerge naturally over the course of an interview. More interviews with the facilitator educators were conducted as required and in response to data collected during the participant observation phase of the study. The emerging issues in the observed programs determined the content and focus of the follow-up interviews.

The participant observations in the study allowed me to see things from the perspective of the facilitator educators, and the primary foci of my observations were the strategies used by the facilitator educators to assist the emerging facilitators in developing their skills, knowledge, and competence. Secondary foci included: the sequencing of the program; key elements of the facilitator education process; references to theoretical foundations; and potential omissions or processes excluded from the facilitator education process.

In the study, a form of *reputational-case sampling* (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) was used and facilitator educators convening programs in Australia in 2005 were invited to participate in the study based on their profile in the field as a result of: their contribution to the literature (books and/or journals); their delivery of reputable facilitation training courses; and/or their involvement in facilitation conferences, meetings, and list-serves. For convenience, the sample was limited to seven facilitator educators of which four were based in Australia, two in New Zealand, and one in the USA. All of the facilitator educators agreed to be identified in this paper and they include: Glen Ochre and Ed McKinley from the Groupwork Institute of Australia, Shirli Kirschner from Resolve Advisors, Bob Dick from Interchange, Dale Hunter and Hamish Brown from Zenergy, and Roger Schwarz from Roger Schwarz and Associates. A brief description of their organisations and facilitator education programs is provided in Figure 2.

To provide another perspective on the facilitator education process, and a source of triangulation, a sample of the graduates of the facilitator educators' programs were invited to complete a survey. The survey involved three open-ended questions that sought to establish which processes within the training program the graduates found most helpful with their development as facilitators, and what improvements they suggested. Table 1 indicates the approximate number of graduates, the sample size, and the response rate for each facilitator education organisation. A random sampling strategy was utilised for the survey component of the

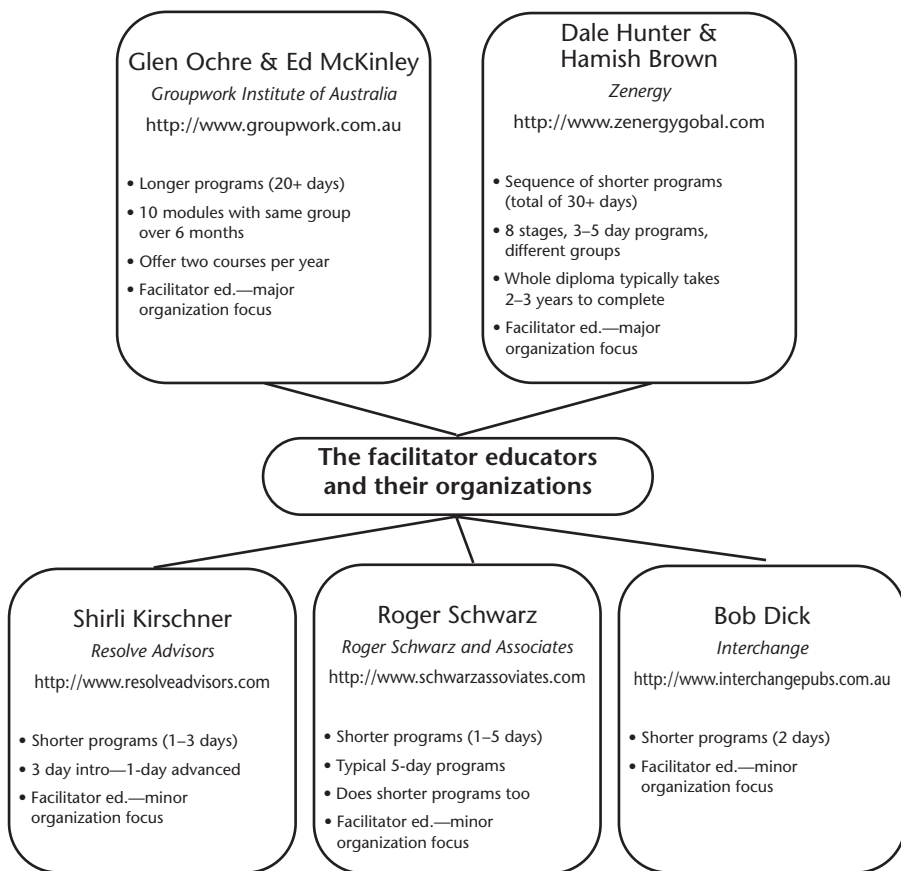


Figure 2. A brief description of the study's seven facilitator educators.

facilitation course, except for organization B, which elected to invite all of its graduates to participate using its email list.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved a combination of three concurrent flows of activity: *data reduction*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing and verification* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction occurred continuously from the start of data collection and included writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions, and writing memos. The constant comparison method, conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), was used once the data was coded to identify themes,

essences, or patterns within research data. Data display was achieved with graphs, charts, and networks in order to see what was happening and to assist with conclusion drawing and verification.

Interpretivist researchers accept that the concept of objectivity is flawed and claims of research objectivity “pretend that our preconceptions and biases are not influencing our research when they actually are an unavoidable influence on research practices” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 53). Rather than focus on objectivity and reliability, researchers within the interpretivist paradigm seek to demonstrate dependability and authenticity. Lincoln and Guba’s (2003) *authenticity criteria* were adopted in this study as the hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, and valid interpretive inquiry. Their first criterion, *fairness* ensured that all stakeholders’ views were sought and member checks were used with the facilitator educators to enhance the accuracy of transcribed interviews and field-note summaries. The second criterion of *ontological and educative authenticity* was achieved by being open and explicit about the methods I used and my reasons for using them. The final criterion of *catalytic and tactical authenticity* referred to the potential for my inquiry to prompt research participants into action and discussions. Fortunately, some of the facilitator educators have indicated that their participation in this study has led to improvements in their courses.

Table 1
Graduate Survey Details

Organization	Educators	Facilitator Graduates	Approximate Number of Distributed	Survey Responses	Response Rate %
A	Glen & Ed	100*	32	12	37.5
B	Dale & Hamish	556*	556#	80	14.4
C	Bob	55^	25	5	25
D	Roger	80^	40	7	17.5
Total:				104	
				Average:	23.6

* These total numbers included graduates of their courses over a number of years.

These graduates were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate in the online survey.

^ This number represents the graduates of a single course, or series of courses, provided in 2005.

Other strategies, in addition to member checking and triangulation, were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, including *prolonged*

engagement, thick description and *auditing* (Creswell, 1998). The issue of prolonged engagement was resolved by completing 35 days of participant observation and interviews with the facilitator educators over an 18-month period. The findings presented in the next section provide a thick description, which enables the reader to make judgements about the transferability of the findings. A research journal and memos were used to document the research process, and the exact details of each quotation provided an audit trail that ensured the conclusions drawn are traceable and defensible.

Findings

Four primary themes emerged in the study: *important facilitator educator values and actions*; *key facilitation concepts*; *important elements of the facilitator education process*; and *the role of self-facilitation*. In this paper I will only report on the self-facilitation theme because it has the most relevance to the focus of this paper. The findings are presented under the two subthemes of *self-awareness focus* and *emphasis on being*. The names given to the themes listed above were not common in the facilitation literature and they emerged from the data collected in the study.

Self-Awareness Focus

All of the facilitator educators focused on helping their emerging facilitators develop a greater self-awareness, although program length determined the extent of this focus. The longer programs, provided by Glen and Ed (20 days) and Dale and Hamish (30 days), enabled more opportunities to explore this self-awareness focus for two apparent reasons. First, the longer programs provided the space and time for the in-depth exploration of sometimes complex issues and, secondly, the longer programs allowed the facilitator educators to develop a supportive group for this deeper self-exploration to occur.

To some degree all of the facilitator educators articulated their reasons for focusing on self-awareness with the emerging facilitators. Glen was very clear that facilitation processes, skills, and tools are built on a firm foundation of self-awareness, and her maxim was “facilitate first thyself” (field notes, day 1, 11/4/05). She explained that emerging facilitators must have “an understanding of what pushes our buttons” (field notes, day 1, 11/4/05). For Glen, this especially applies to more difficult facilitation contexts where high levels of interpersonal conflict are common, and in these situations “if we can manage ourselves—we can manage the group” (field notes, day 1, 11/4/05). Shirli described the need for facilitators to be able to “hold the space” and recognise the role of the “self-as-instrument” when facilitating (field notes, day 2, 1/9/06). So, although

Shirli did not attempt to do intensive self-awareness work in her shorter program, she did explain the need for an emerging facilitator to “work on yourself” (field notes, day 2, 1/9/06).

The facilitator educators used a variety of theoretical frameworks or approaches to develop the personal awareness of their emergent facilitators. Glen’s *community of selves* model was used to help emerging facilitators better understand some of the thoughts and feelings they experience when attempting to facilitate groups. The model was introduced on the third day of a 20-day course, and henceforth underpinned much of the analysis, coaching, and discussion regarding the development of facilitator self-awareness. The model, which is based on the work of Freud and Jung, involves exploration of conscious and unconscious processes in facilitation settings. . According to Glen we have an inner community of selves that informs and guides the way we interact with the world in different contexts. At some level all selves contribute and play a part, but we also learn to subvert or control selves because we feel they need to be managed or subverted and, depending on how we have lived our lives, we learn which of our selves to “stick out the most” (field notes, day 3, 19/4/05). Glen encouraged the emerging facilitators in her program to do the “innerwork” necessary to process their reactions to things when they are learning to facilitate (field notes, day 3, 19/4/05). In her programs, Glen places significant emphasis on being *awake*, and she used this term to describe the state of being fully aware of what is going on both inside the facilitator as well as in the group.

Shirli explained that emerging facilitators need to ask, “Where is the little piece of discomfort for us that will bring the big breakthroughs?” (field notes, day 2, 1/9/05). According to Shirli, some people are able to access the tools to do this “working on yourself” with no outside help (field notes, day 2, 1/9/05). However, she did warn that once an emerging facilitator resolves one area of dysfunction s/he will find another, which is why she maintains that the journey of becoming an effective facilitator is always interesting, albeit a little frustrating at times.

Dale and Hamish were not prescriptive about the frameworks or tools emerging facilitators should use on their journey of self-awareness, but Dale explained that emerging facilitators who find themselves getting “triggered” need

... some kind of a personal development method, some way of processing all that stuff. There needs to be a lot more work put into that among the facilitation community, 'cos usually that is pretty much just ignored. But I think that people will have their own way of handling stuff that comes up, so I certainly wouldn't like to say, or dictate, how people would work with it but,

definitely, everyone needs some method. (Dale, transcribed interview 1, 20/8/2005)

A number of the facilitator educators focused on the unconscious processes that are at work in groups and in the facilitation role. Glen used her community of selves model to gently make “the underworld accessible without doing 10 years of psychotherapy” (field notes, day 3, 19/4/06). She indicated that exploration of these often dark recesses must be invitational and the “unconscious isn’t dragged out,” but rather “it must be invited out, teased out, getting permission to go there and with love” (field notes, day 3, 19/4/06). She considers her framework for exploring the unconscious a “way of going deeply, lightly” (field notes, day 3, 19/4/06). Shirli discussed how in her program unconscious processes could get in the way of a facilitator’s development. She indicated that “the reason it is hard to get to your [learning] edge is that you have a self-defensive mechanism” and that “these mechanisms are good at keeping us away” from some important discoveries (field notes, day 2, 1/9/05). To help emerging facilitators explore the effect of their community of selves on their functioning as facilitators, Glen utilises *sociodramas*, which are sophisticated role-plays similar to the voice dialogue method developed by Stone and Stone (1989).

The facilitator educators in the study placed a strong emphasis on the need to help emerging facilitators to practice self-facilitation, which is consistent with the recommendations of those authors whose approaches best fit the person-centered dimension of facilitator education (Hunter, 2007; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Ringer, 2002). This program emphasis was based on the premise that facilitators must be aware of, understand, and be able to manage their internal reactions to their participants, especially in challenging situations. Hunter (2007) encouraged facilitators to maximise what she called “free attention,” which she defined as “the part of your awareness not caught up with thoughts, feelings (emotions), and body sensations” (p. 51). She recommends emerging facilitators find appropriate personal development methods to “heal old upsets” (p. 51) in order to maximise free attention. It was the view of the facilitator educators in the study that without this ability to manage themselves, facilitators will have large gaps between how they planned to facilitate groups and how they actually facilitate groups, particularly when they feel threatened or challenged. This finding is consistent with the literature (Flores & Day, 2006; Freese, 2006; Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Romano, 2006; Schwarz, 2002, 2005).

An important issue, raised by some of the emerging facilitators in the survey component of the study, concerned the potential for an emphasis

on self-facilitation to blur the line between facilitator education and psychotherapy. The focus on developing self-awareness was frustrating for some graduates, as evidenced by the following comment.

I found the emphasis on 'emotional sharing' to be of concern, in that I fail to see how encouraging participants to share things that they have not even shared with family or partners—and the resulting emotional reactions—to be unrelated to the purpose of the course. I do not agree that such emotional openness with, usually, work colleagues and/or strangers, to be of value and have not found this a necessity before or since. (survey response #18)

Another graduate shared a similar view when s/he indicated, "At times we seemed to be helping people try to come to terms with quite personal and deep issues that were in my view well outside the scope of the course" (survey response #22). However, other graduates also suggested a way that this problem could be addressed. For example, one explained, "I think it would be useful to let participants know when first embarking on [the organisation's] training that this is not 'how to do' training but rather a 'how to be' training" (survey response #17). Of course, the focus on personal development did not upset all graduates, and many indicated they found the focus very beneficial. For example, one participant noted: "Looking back at the course (several years ago now), the key thing for me was having the opportunity to learn through personal exploration in a 'safe' group environment" (survey response #58).

These findings confirm that facilitator educators who encourage their emerging facilitators to develop their self-awareness need to advise them that participation in their programs may be challenging and confrontational. This allows emerging facilitators to make an informed choice about their participation before enrolling in the program. However, according to the facilitator educators, the difficult nature of developing self-awareness is not an appropriate excuse for emerging facilitators to avoid participation in this developmental work. This is consistent with the stance taken by the group counselor education field in which experiential participation in group counseling sessions is a compulsory requirement despite the fact that it is at times difficult or awkward for the trainees (Anderson & Price, 2001; Kottler, 2004; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). It is important to clarify that despite the facilitator educators' emphasis on developing self-awareness, their programs were not like psychotherapy sessions, which by definition are focused more specifically on helping individuals to resolve issues or problems of an interpersonal, intrapsychic, or personal nature (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of

Australia, 2006). On the contrary, the facilitator educators consistently demonstrated an unconditional positive regard for their participants, choosing to reinforce their emerging facilitators' capabilities and competence rather than their shortcomings or problems.

Finally, as a consequence of my own experience in this study, I would recommend participation in a facilitator education program that uses a supportive group environment to foster the personal exploration required to develop self-awareness and the ability to self-facilitate. I would also concur with the recommendation made by Hamachek (1999) and Ringer (2002) that an improved self-understanding can be fostered by considering the influence of unconscious processes when facilitating. Gaining an understanding of unconscious processes can help emerging facilitators by: reducing the occurrence of transference and counter-transference behaviours; guarding against unnecessary personalization; and clarifying the way that their self-pictures act as filters through which they view the world (Hunter, 2007).

In the next section, the findings within the sub-theme titled *emphasis on being* are presented. Within this discussion the need for emerging facilitators to develop the capacity to be authentic and real with their groups is described.

Emphasis on Being

The overlapping and related concepts of *being-with*, *being real*, or *being in the moment* were included by many of the facilitator educators in their courses. The essence of the emphasis on being is that effective facilitation is about more than *doing* things with groups. The facilitator educators argued that there are intrapersonal and interpersonal elements that emerging facilitators must understand and practice even though Western culture finds them elusive and slippery to describe. Hamish and Dale, who specifically teach emerging facilitators about the concept of *being-with*, explain the concept:

Being-with is a conscious act of connecting with others. Being-with is about being aware of your own sense of self and at the same time sensing the self of another.... It also involves having a strong respect for another's limits, boundaries and choices. (course text, p. 34)

In their entry-level course, Hamish explained to me, "I am trying to help them develop a way of being that is effective but also cooperative. And one of the things about that is being kind of real" (transcribed interview 1, 16/8/2005). Glen taught her emerging facilitators that the "key to good facilitation is about being real, being yourself" (interview notes, 16/6/05). Bob explained that "when people experience others as people

that is all it takes” (field notes, day 1, 28/11/05), suggesting that good facilitation is not about activities, but rather it is more about helping participants make real contact with each other. Hence, being real is not only a goal for emerging facilitators because it helps their facilitation, but it is also beneficial because it role models an effective form of interpersonal functioning for the future recipients of their facilitation efforts.

One of the deterrents to being authentic in the facilitator role for many emerging facilitators was the *fear of failure*, especially the failure to make the right intervention at the right time. In the facilitation courses I observed, the emerging facilitators regularly expressed frustration and disappointment with their mistakes when trying to facilitate. This was despite the fact that the facilitator educators promoted a different perspective on mistakes and failures.

We never get to the point that we are so experienced that we never stuff up, [and] good facilitation is about being robust enough to make mistakes.... Humility is a significant characteristic of a facilitator and the opposite of being required to be the expert. (Glen, interview notes, 16/6/05)

Similarly, Hamish specifically sought to create a learning culture that embraced risk-taking because it allowed emerging facilitators to learn more. He deliberately set out to create, “a place to bring forth our brilliant and broken bits” (field notes, day 1, 16/8/06). Bob not only talked about tolerance for mistakes but he also role modeled an openness and ease when dealing with the awkwardness of recovering from his own “mistakes.” Bob was seemingly comfortable to be quiet for five to ten seconds in order to refocus and start again. He explained:

If I get really stuck, I just say, “I am really stuck,” and I suggest we back away from it. I then usually ask for suggestions. If there are no suggestions which gain agreement, I may then ask participants to join me in collecting information and analysing our process. (Bob, member check email, 28/12/06)

One of the graduates of Bob’s programs indicated in the survey that s/he found “the careful choice of words and language and the explicit backtracking to select a more correct phrase” really helpful (survey response #20).

Shirli took a different approach to managing the quest for perfectionism in her emerging facilitators, by suggesting that “It is okay to operate with a limp, however, if you want to ‘run marathons,’ you may have to deal with it” (field notes, day 2, 1/9/06). In other words, although

perfection is not a prerequisite to effective facilitation, if emerging facilitators want to be able to facilitate effectively in difficult situations (run marathons) then they may need to do *innerwork* to eliminate their limp (their imperfections) in the future.

Although emerging facilitators frequently shared their frustration and disappointment with not facilitating as well as they believed they could or should, the facilitator educators in this study encouraged them to be real or authentic with their groups. Expecting to facilitate perfectly places unnecessary pressure on facilitators, which hinders rather than helps them to function effectively. Authenticity as a facilitator also includes the ability to deal with one's imperfections. In fact, an openness and acceptance of one's fallibility has been described in sections of the facilitation literature (Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006)—as well as the facilitator educators in the study—as a prerequisite to facilitate effectively. So, while it is not clear where the mythical quest for facilitation perfection originates, the data collected in the study indicates that it is time to actively discredit the value and reality of this pursuit.

Conclusions

The findings of this study confirmed the importance of the person-centered dimension of facilitator education as described in the literature. The facilitator educators reinforced the view that effective facilitation requires the facilitator to do more than understand theories and attain technical competencies. Furthermore, the view that facilitation prowess can be attained quickly by following “recipes” or learning new “tricks” was disputed by the facilitator educators in the study, just as it has been discredited by numerous authors in the facilitation literature (Ghais, 2005; Hunter, Bailey, & Taylor, 1999; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006). On the contrary, the facilitator educators emphasised the need to help emerging facilitators develop high levels of self-awareness and self-management. They also confirmed the importance of encouraging emerging facilitators to do the innerwork required to help them better understand their relationships with groups and their presence in the group. This work was considered a prerequisite to maximizing the emerging facilitators' free attention so they can be fully awake to what is happening in their groups. As explained by Parker (1998),

Knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. (p. 2)

Another important conclusion emerging from this study concerns the potential to blur the line between person-centered facilitator education and psychotherapy. Though none of the facilitator educators in this study engaged in what could be described as individual or group psychotherapy, a small number of program graduates expressed some concerns about inappropriate levels of psychological depth (Ringer & Gillis, 1995) in the programs they experienced. Even though the facilitator educators in this study did not practice psychotherapy within their programs, this does not rule out the possibility that some emerging facilitators may find therapeutic sessions with a suitably qualified practitioner a beneficial part of their development journey as facilitators.

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