



Lecture: How to teach Senior Volunteers in Iserlohn
By Lieselotte Berthold



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Silver Learners

Lecture: How to teach Senior Volunteers in Iserlohn

Introduction

My name is Lieselotte Berthold. I am 67 years old. I studied physics, I was a teacher for children in high school and for adults and I was the Director of this institute, the Volkshochschule of Iserlohn, an educational centre for adults. Two years ago I retired. Since then I am a professional coach for occupational career - and I give lessons, especially for Silver Learners. So I am both – Silver Learner and Silver Teacher.

Silver Age and good Mood

As silver ager you have the chance, the choice and the challenge to live and to learn in good mood.

Good feeling is a mood elevator. Good feeling corresponds to having good breath. You can test it with the following exercise, a part of a programme for silver learner:

Mindfulness Training: Muscular Stress States¹

1. Sit on a chair at a table (each normal height).
2. Sit on your thighs, not on the buttocks.
3. Relax the thighs completely and maintain this relaxation during the entire exercise.
4. The hands lie loosely on your lap.
5. While maintaining the relaxation in the thighs align the upper body in the sitting position a little bit.
6. While maintaining the relaxation in the thighs, lift the hands up over the table and place the palms flat on the table.
7. While maintaining the relaxation in the thighs press with the palms on the table to maximum effort.
8. Take the pressure back slowly.
9. Enjoy the good breathing and the good feeling. The relaxation often manifests itself in a yawn.

Senior Volunteers in Iserlohn

In Iserlohn there are lots of volunteer services related to churches, parties, service-clubs and non-profit organisations. The City Administration of Iserlohn gives - since 1994, now for 22 years – a special service for voluntary engagement. It's called "Continue – the volunteer service in Iserlohn". "Continue" is supported by two employees of the city of Iserlohn and has currently 171 volunteers, 127 females and 44 males, most of them silver-ager.

¹ By relaxing the thighs you were able to produce a pressure movement with the muscle tension of the "Structure I" (found by Edith Bucksfeldt, a silver-teacher of VHS Iserlohn). This muscle tension provides power during free breathing without generating a pressure on the larynx, thyroid gland and neck-and-shoulder-area.

“Continue” is/means

- A contact point for interested citizens of Iserlohn, who do voluntary work or make use of voluntary assistance (including visitations, accompanying and support services, small errands and childcare).
- A contact point to charitable and non-profit organisations in Iserlohn.
- An idea exchange for self-initiated projects.
- Commitment - regardless of age, occupation, party and religion.

“Continue” offers

- Advice and intermediation on voluntary work and offer of assistance.
- Realisation of own ideas.
- Participation in projects and events.
- Contacts with other active volunteers.
- Information, technical assistance, qualification and training.

Qualification and Training Programmes

Volkshochschule, as the educational centre for adults in Iserlohn, is the qualification-partner of the volunteer service “Continue”. Since 2014 they run the following courses for the members of “Continue”:

- “New Approaches to Civic Engagement”², a 9-day-qualification programme with the items:
 - Reflecting citizenship
 - Strengthening of self-confidence
 - Discovering competencies
 - Discovering new fields for commitment
 - Implementing new ideas and projects
 - Presenting the certificate “Experience for Iserlohn (EFI)”.
- “Mediators Training – Negotiating without Losers”, a 2-day-qualification programme with the items:
 - Mediation techniques for alternative dispute resolution
 - The Harvard Concept – Win-Win-Concept
 - Collegial consulting
- “Dealing well with yourself and others”, a 2-day-training of self-coaching with the items:
 - Communication techniques
 - Dialogue with others
 - Internal dialogue
 - The internal team
 - Relaxation and activation techniques
- “Mindfulness Training”, a 2-day-training of self-coaching with the items:
 - Mindfulness in present
 - Mindfulness and awareness
 - Everyday’s small “Rest-Island” for power reserve
 - Mindfulness and holism

² Based on the programme “Experience for Initiatives (EFI)” of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs

Learning Goals and Learning Objectives

Learning Goals

For example the qualification “New Approaches to Civic Engagement” is an outcome-orientated programme. The learners can reach four learning goals:



- **Mentor for Initiatives**
- Acting alone or in team
- Competencies of
 - Good consultation
 - Mentoring and mediation



- **Team Coordinator**
- Acting alone, creating and leading a team
- Competencies of communication and leadership



- **Networker**
- Acting alone or in team
- Competencies of communication and systemic overviews



- **Project Developer**
- Acting in team
- Competencies of
 - Communication and team working
 - Presenting and promoting

The learning goal “Project Developer” can be reached by everybody as a team member. The goals “Mentor for Initiatives”, “Team Coordinator” or “Networker” depends on learner’s abilities to discover or to develop the necessary competencies.

Learning Objectives

Since learning is a psychological process three fundamental levels of learning objective-domains can be defined, according to the taxonomy of Benjamin Bloom³ and others:

Psychomotor learning objectives:

- Action-based.
- Psychomotor objectives focus on change and/or development in behaviour and skills.
- Learning of physical movements such as
 - Short gymnastics-sequences for coordination and relaxation.
 - Voice coaching for speaking clear and loud enough in a group.
 - Body language for presenting in front of a group.

Affective learning objectives:

- Emotive-based.
- Learning of attitudes, beliefs and values.
- Affective objectives target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotions and feelings in contact and communication with themselves (self-confidence), with others and with groups (due to the levels: receiving, responding, valuing, organising and characterising).

Cognitive learning objectives:

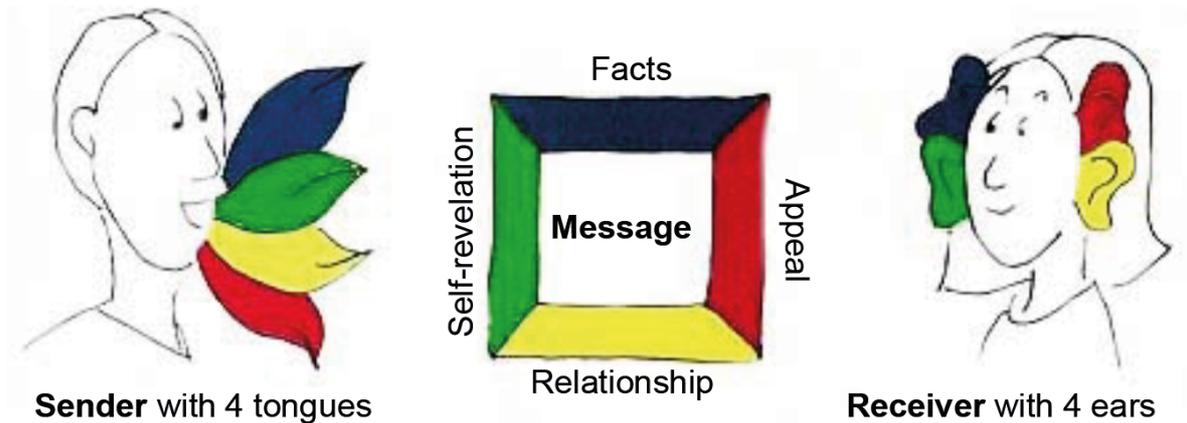
- Knowledge-based.
- Learning of information and the processes of dealing with that information, for instance techniques of moderating, mentoring, mediating, public relations etc.
- Cognitive objectives target the levels: apply, analysing, synthesising and evaluation of learning materials.

According to this taxonomy the learning objectives of the learning programme for the “Continue” members has its focus at level psychomotor and affective for each individual and at level cognitive for a team. About 30-40 % of the learners reached the highest cognitive objectives individually and led the other team members to success.

³ Good introduction to Blooms taxonomy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blooms_taxonomy

Teaching Methods

Round about 30 % of the qualification “New Approaches to Civic Engagement” was taught by deductive way, that means: teaching theory, leading to experience in order to verify the theory. For example the topic “communication”, explained by a model of Friedemann Schultz von Thun, an expert of communication and author of popular books on the theme was presented step-by-step till the following comic was completed:



Source: Friedemann Schulz von Thun, www.schulz-von-thun-institut.de

The use of pictures, comics, symbols etc., various exercises and continual repetition facilitated the learning process.

Round about 30 % of the programme was learned inductive by experimenting and presenting the results.

The main social form was the group work.

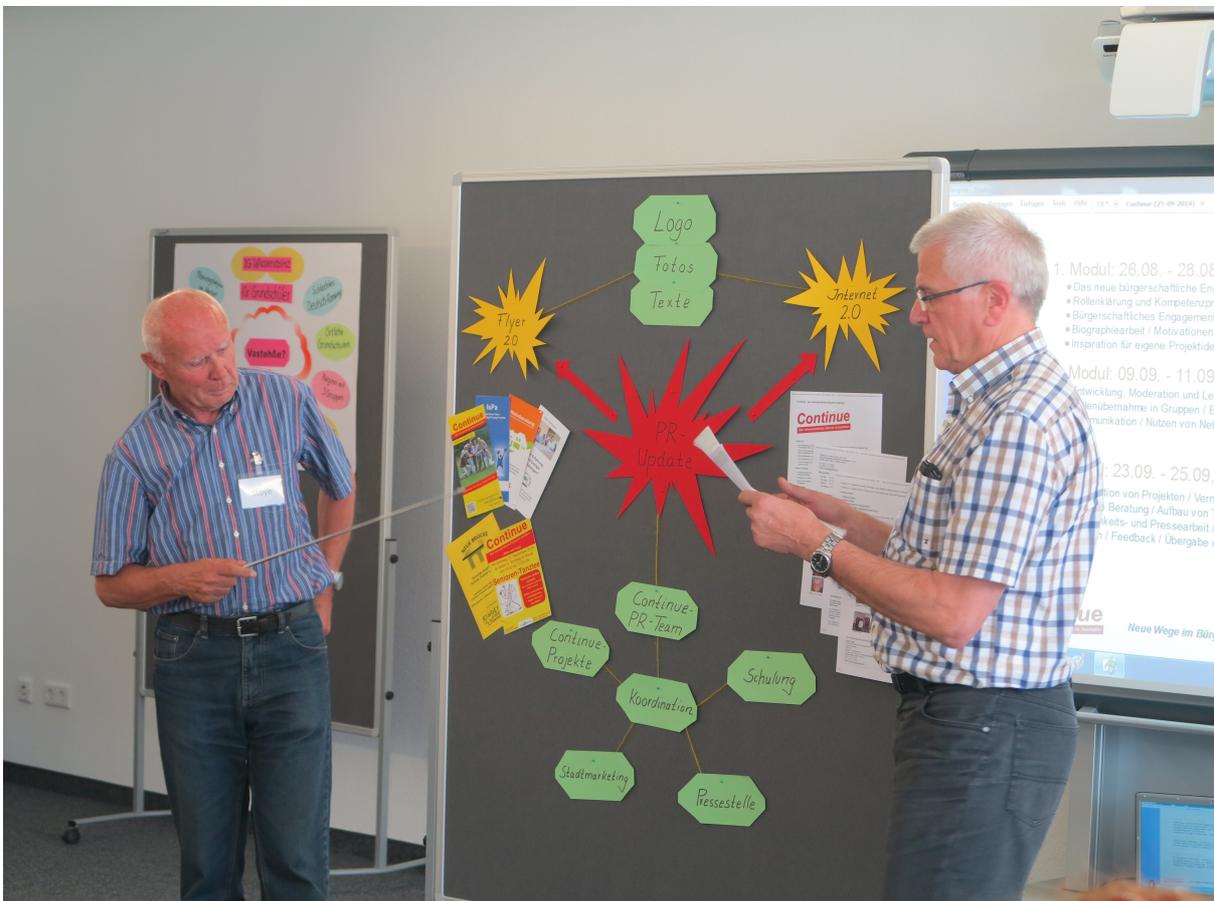


Planning a project “Phoning-Chain”

40% of the teaching method was a mixture of deductive and inductive methods. Structured advice led to free experience.

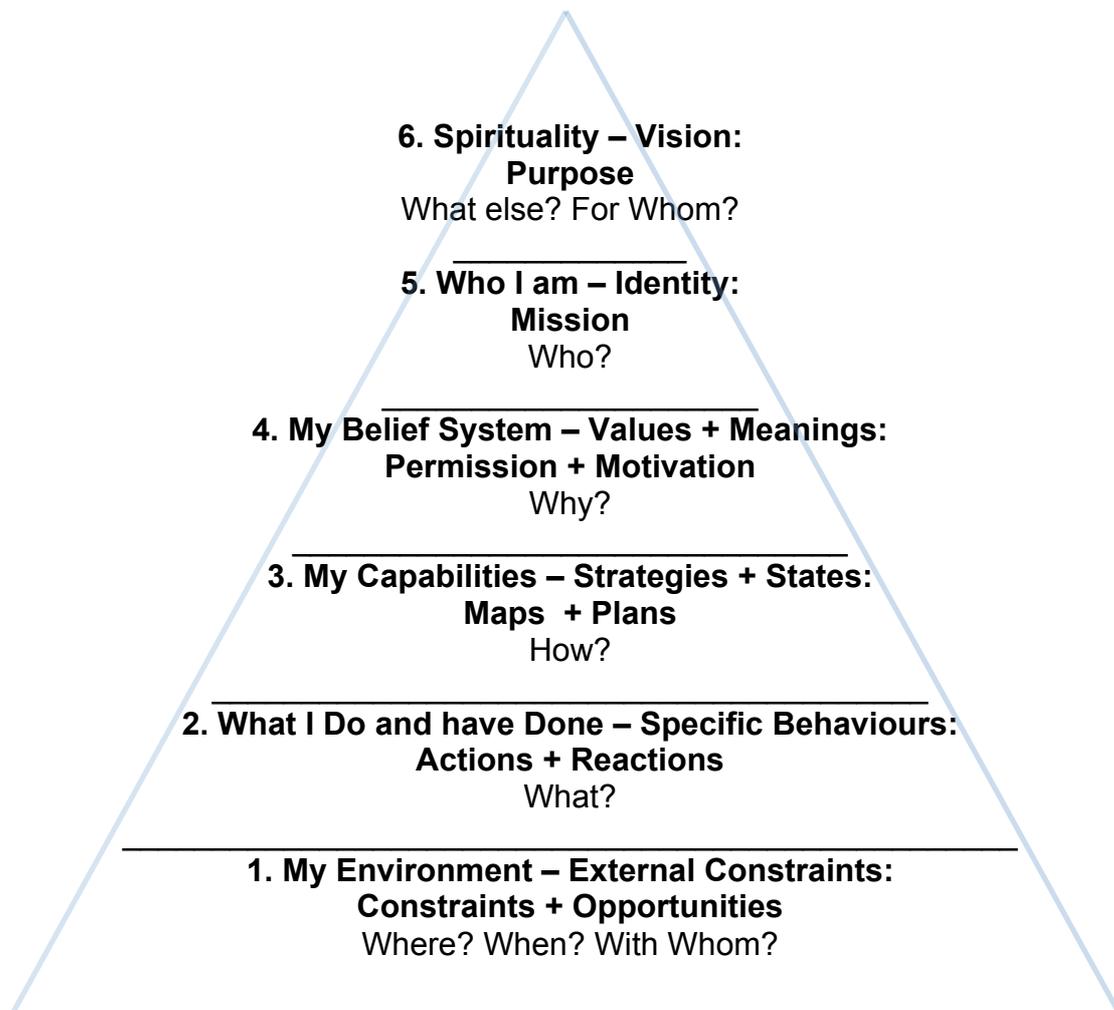


Presentations of the project "Nature Trail Seilersee" (above) and the project "Relaunch of public relation tools" (below)



Neuro-Logical Levels of Learning

The anthropologist Gregory Bateson initially formulated the concept of logical levels of learning and change as a mechanism in the behavioural sciences. Robert Dilts adapted the term “Logical levels” for the use in “Neuro-Linguistic-Programming NLP”. The levels refer to a hierarchy of processes within an individual or a group or an organisation:



The function of each level is to synthesise, organise and direct the interactions on the level below it. Changing something on the upper level would necessarily radiate downward, precipitating change on the lower levels. Changing something on a lower level could, but would not necessarily, affect the upper levels.⁴

⁴ Robert Dilts: <http://nlpuniversitypress.com/html2/LmLz38.html>

As a teacher I use the neuro-logical-levels for structuring the lessons: bottom up.

1. I mention with whom I run a lesson, where and when. That leads to the atmosphere of the room, the illumination, the warm welcome, the seating, the communication media, the timetable etc.
2. Reflecting the topics I structure the lessons: What is the teaching subject?
3. How could this subject be taught? In this area I create the learning clusters, the media use and the learning-relaxing intervals.
4. My belief in the value of the teaching subject and the sustainability when established in the learners leads me to...
5. Being a well-informed and empathic teacher, assisted by good material and media. Bringing learners to a new thinking and more competencies.
6. Now we, the learners and me, belong to a group of people who are multipliers of this learned subject.

As a learner my learning progress aligns the logical levels: bottom up

1. I recognise first the surrounding, the atmosphere and the people around me. A comfortable room with furniture according to adults and sufficient lightning, catering and a hand-out, written with big enough letters, brings me in good mood.
2. I listen to the subject: What? Starting the tutorial, I ask: What does the teacher want me to do? While doing this I learn...
3. How to do this. I notice the differences of doing things with or without the new advice or structure. I increase and develop my competencies.
4. With these competencies my values and meanings are enriched and developed. I am more motivated as before. Using the new learned structure...
5. I am now a person who knows his competencies, well grounded by the subject I learned. I can find a metaphor for myself in a certain context. Since I say as a silver learner, "I am a mentor for initiatives" or "I am a team coordinator" or "I am a networker" or "I am a project developer", I am aware of my competencies to manage these jobs.
In this level I am able to present - for example - the plans or the results of a project.
6. Now I belong to the group of people who are multipliers of this learned subject. The certificate in my hand ensures me that I succeeded!

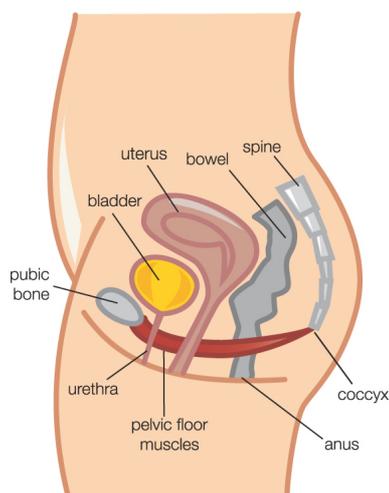
Now I align the logical levels top down and take the new vision with my new capabilities and competencies back to level one and start my new activities as "mentor of initiatives"/"team coordinator"/"networker"/"project developer".

Learning by Associations and Metaphors on Logical Level 3

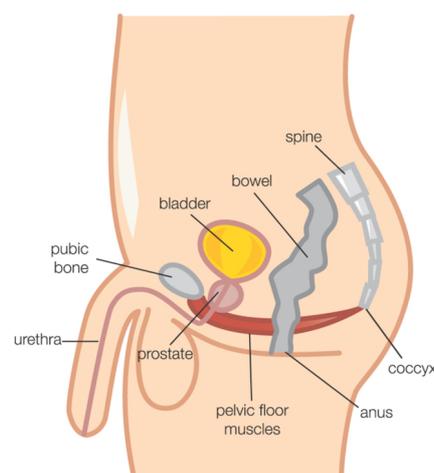
By the use of associations and metaphors learning is easier and quicker. By transferring the competencies of virtual reality to the real reality you don't need to know "how?" – you can already do it. Success on logical level 3 causes success on level 2.

A teacher of gymnastics at our school for adults, Volkshochschule Iserlohn, experienced an example of this. She ran a course of "Pelvic Floor Exercises" for silver learners.

Pelvic floor muscles are the layer of muscles that support the pelvic organs and span the bottom of the pelvis. The pelvic organs are the bladder, bowel, uterus in women and bladder, bowel, prostate in men. The diagram below shows the pelvic organs and pelvic floor muscles in women (left) and men (right).



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The Continenence foundation of Australia says on its website: "The first thing you need to do is find out which muscles you need to train. It is very important to correctly identify your pelvic floor muscles before moving into a regular pelvic floor muscle exercise programme. To find out how to find and strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, see the links ..." Long explanations follow, separately for men and women.

The teacher for gymnastics at Volkshochschule Iserlohn found for her silver learners another way of teaching, a visual and associative model: "Imagine you are on a meadow with lots of daisies. By wonder you are able to pick the friendly blossom with your anus muscles. Hold it, embrace it with the muscles and bring it slowly up – continuously embraced – through your body and take it out of your mouth. Relax. What a wonderful daisy."

Next week a silver learner gave her a feedback of his training-success: "Thank you, I've got already bunches of daisies."

