

HANDBOOK
Learning
Circles in
the Nordic
Context

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1. Introduction

Learning circles intend to create a framework that allows circle participants to develop new knowledge and opportunities for action in relation to actual challenges and issues through a co-creation learning process.

The Purpose and Target Audience of Learning Circles

The concept of learning circles as a co-creation and participant-led working method with a bottom-up approach is not new in the Scandinavian and wider Nordic context. However, this method has become more topical in recent years due to the competencies required by our increasingly complex social and working lives including issues such as active citizenship, social cohesion, skills development and cooperation across professions in the workplace. At present, this circle approach is the subject of further enhancement and revitalisation in a number of contexts with different aims, and in a number of different settings in both public and private sector workplaces, as well as wider civil society. Common to all these initiatives is the use of reciprocal learning through dialogue and the exchange of experiences in combination with theoretical and professional input from the circle's facilitator or external "guests".

Participants may be local residents, interest groups, voluntary organisations, or employees in businesses, public sector workplaces, municipalities and regions drawn from a range of professions, for instance.

This method has been developed in relation to adult target audiences of all ages and can also be used by young people. It is essential that participants have a common task that they either want to work together to better resolve or they share an interest in learning more about, and that decisive significance is attributed to the participants' own experiences.

The Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook contains guidance and inspiration on how to work with the circle approach. It presents thoughts and reflections that participants and facilitators may wish to consult when initiating and implementing learning circles in their own contexts. This handbook has been written to inspire further development and work on co-creation participant engagement and co-creation learning processes.

The Background of this Handbook

The Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) has provided support for the Nordic development of the circle working method via a range of networks, including its network for entrepreneurship, "entrepreneurial learning and innovation", which conducted a Nordic pilot project titled "Transformative Learning Circles",^[1] as well as the ongoing "inclusion and leadership" circle. The results of these initiatives indicate that thematic circle work across the Nordic countries provides a special opportunity to share and further define one's own practice. Thoughts are put into perspective and further nuanced through joint Nordic themes. Through the exchange of experiences, this organic and flexible working method develops new knowledge that can be linked to new opportunities for action in one's own practice.

This working method is based on the Nordic tradition of flat social structures which results in proximity between those in power and co-creators, as well as cooperation through dialogue and the exchange of experiences. The intention behind this handbook is to contribute to the further development and definition of this method.

1. https://nvl.org/Portals/0/DigArticle/15329/NVL_report_learning_circles_300118.pdf

2. Learning circles

Learning circles is a term for gatherings of participants that examine various events or subjects over a longer period of time using varied forms of meeting.

What is a Learning Circle?

The circle as an arena for collective learning has several applications. It can be used in different workplaces both as a way to develop skills and to develop businesses. Solving shared work-related issues and dilemmas, and staff collaborating on the basis of different outlooks and roles, are all important factors when establishing a circle. Study circles are also used to read literature or educate groups in a particular field of knowledge. In your leisure time, you may encounter circles that have been formed to gather people with similar interests, such as cultural activities or other personal interests. In principle, anyone who wants to participate in a circle can do so regardless of their background or age. Common to all is that the circle is a long-term gathering that depends on continuous participation.

"The circle is a long-term gathering that depends on continuous participation"

Types of Learning Circles

Circles aiming to facilitate various kinds of collective learning can be divided into three different types in the adult education context: study circles; transformative learning circles; and research circles.

A) Study circle

This is a form of learning circle that usually has a pre-defined syllabus and reading list in place. The purpose of the circle is to study a subject (e.g. language, ideology, a book) or problem with the help of a teacher/leader and suitable literature.

B) Transformative learning circle^[2]

This is a form of learning circle that aims to promote more specialised and transformative changes in practice.

C) Research circle

The research circle differs from the other circles in that the circle is characterised by a research-led approach. Research circles are based on the principle of mutual exchange between researchers and practitioners, with activities in the circle being based on research-focused activities. As a method, the research circle's origins lie in practice-based research and action research. In connection with academia's so-called "third task" – public outreach – the research circle has become a popular method among researchers in Sweden.

Characteristics of Practice-based Learning Circles

Common to both transformative circles and research circles is that they aim to develop practice. Their methods and theoretical points of departure draw inspiration from participant-based research traditions and/or lifelong education. Key characteristics of participant-based learning circles, such as research circles, are:

1. They are based on participation and the individual's existing understanding, proficiencies and values. The point of departure is a learning process in which participating individuals in a group seek to examine how knowledge is shaped by perceptions of different realities and the importance of context to their interpretation.
2. They are based on critical thinking and reflection.
3. They aim to change both theory and practice and to create new knowledge and skills.

2. Transformative and intercultural learning have common characteristics. Encountering different or alternative interpretations and perspectives increases opportunities for reflection and learning. A Nordic circle with participants from different countries and organisations forms the basis for both intercultural (Lahdenperä, 1999) and transformative learning. In a Nordic circle, it is possible to compare different countries' policies, social systems and practices, which naturally increases knowledge of and insight into the significance of the context in relation to the relevant area of knowledge.

The purpose of learning circles/research circles is therefore to cast light on problems and issues in participants' daily lives from a number of different angles before finding solutions to the given problem. The work of the circle is thus rooted in the participants' own dilemmas and everyday problems. Working with everyone's contributions in the form of different experiences and knowledge entails the creation of something new – this is a mass of knowledge that cannot be formed in isolation by practice or research alone.

Working with Learning Circles in Adult Education Contexts – Idea Base and Learning Processes

Learning circles are frequently used in adult education contexts and for skills development. In terms of theories relating to adult education and skills development initiatives, Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (2003 [1983]) has been a key source of inspiration. He argued that most knowledge used by professionals in practice is not taken from any textbook. When Schön seeks an epistemology for practice, he instead identifies the significance of action and reflection to professional development. The important thing in relation to the learning is therefore that experiences are subject to critical scrutiny and reflection, which is made easier when this occurs collectively in a circle. The collective work in a circle enables the co-creation and innovation of knowledge.

Learning Processes in Practice-based Learning Circles

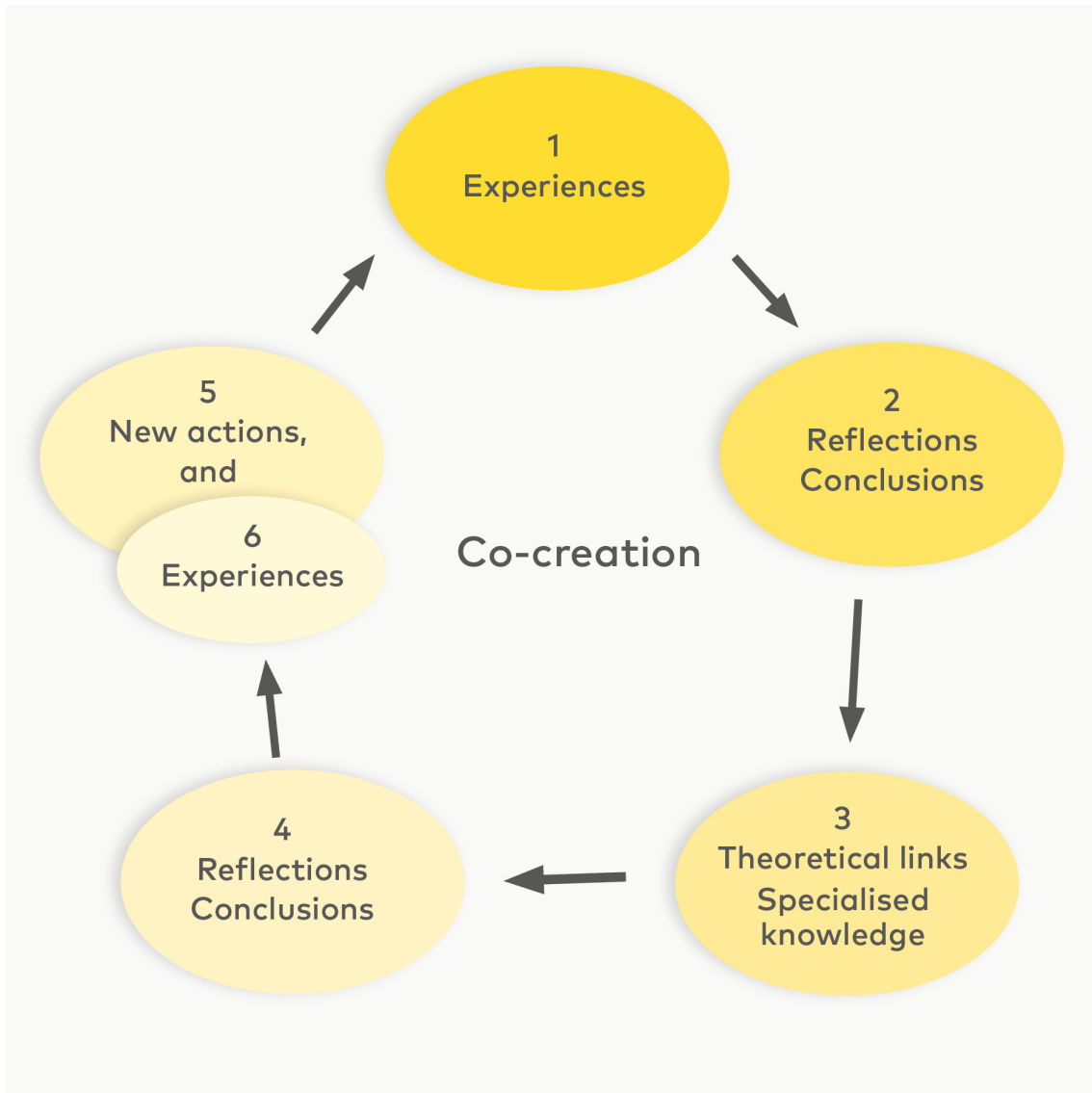
The focus in a learning circle is on the significance of the action and reflection to professional and knowledge development, which can also lead to the development of practice and the organisation. As such, learning in a circle can be described as a process where:

1. experiences related to the focus area of the circle are the starting point for the
2. reflections and conclusions that are then
3. specialised through the use of theories and models. Being able to make
4. new conclusions requires reflection and critical examination within the circle.

Learning should lead to new experiences, where action in practice gives rise to new

5. experience and skills (see image).

LEARNING PROCESSES IN A CIRCLE



Learning in the circle is characterised by a process – a long-term, collective learning process – that may result in qualitative changes to participants' competences and ability to change their practice. Collective work as part of the group enables both inquiry and co-creation.^[3]

3. Co-creation is "understood as a process of interpersonal interaction, involving relations, communication and leadership, aiming at innovation, i.e. at creating new values" (Dorsø, 2014). Bovill (2014) emphasises increased engagement and motivation, awareness of meta-cognitive perspectives and enhanced learning experiences and enhanced learning experiences as some of the qualities of a co-creational approach to learning and teaching. In a co-creation approach, participants are addressed not as receivers of information, but as shapers of knowledge and all participants are perceived as experts and diversity is valued.

3. Implementation and phases

The following describes how the work in a learning circle can be initiated, structured, led and implemented in practice.

This work with learning processes in the circle can be divided into three different phases:

1. formation of the circle;
2. focus on the task and co-creation; and
3. the closing phase.

A) Formation of the Circle (Learning Circle/Research Circle)

Initiative

The initiative to start a circle can be taken by different individuals within an organisation or institution such as a school or government agency, or by researchers in a higher education institution, or by someone who has read about circle-based work. Starting a circle with participants and leaders and securing funding for participants and leaders may be time-consuming.

Theme or Specialisation

The point of departure when starting a circle with a more research-focused specialisation may be a series of dilemmas, questions, new educational needs or other developmental requirements that may be experienced in the practical work carried out by different people in a workplace or public authority. The shared problem and the shared growth in knowledge are the focus of the circle's work. Subject areas can be very varied, and may relate to issues such as inclusion, human

rights, innovations in business, leadership in the area of inclusion, gender issues, equality in the workplace and wider society, language development, voluntary organisations, and product development.

Recruitment of Participants

The recruitment of participants is an important step for many different reasons: a) based on the goal and how heterogeneous the group is that will form the basis for the work; b) the willingness and motivation to participate; c) the practical opportunities to participate. When recruiting participants, it is important to know whether participation is voluntary or more or less mandatory based on the agreements that different organisations have in place for their employees. Experience has shown that there are elevated levels of engagement when participation is voluntary and well-motivated.

Recruiting a researcher, which is an important condition for starting a research circle, can be problematic. It is advantageous if the researcher is familiar with co-production working methods and has a genuine interest in participatory approaches. The researcher's language and attitude are also important elements in the creation of a shared learning environment within the circle since there may be different types of expectations in relation to the researcher's role, status, methods and expertise.

Leadership of the learning circle is essential, and will place demands on the leader's/facilitator's skills and knowledge (this will be expanded upon in the next section on circle leadership).

"Discussions encompassing a range of views will not be shared outside the group"

Practical Conditions

It is necessary to clarify the practical conditions for gatherings – i.e. how many gatherings, dates and venues, travel, remuneration for time and other issues that are of importance in ensuring continuous participation.

In order to achieve learning processes that implement change, it is important that there is enough time to test and bring about changes, which means it is of value for

the group to meet at least five and up to ten times at intervals of between two and four weeks. It is desirable for each gathering to be of sufficient duration that all participants are able to be active participants in the learning process. As such, the number of participants may vary from a handful of participants (4–5) to a maximum of ten participants. It is also important that the venue for gatherings is furnished in a way that facilitates communication between group participants.

The First Meeting

The first meeting is important in terms of shaping and defining the foundations of the group's work. It is essential that there is plenty of time for introductions and discussions about expectations, goals, plausible working methods, actions between meetings, etc.

It will be helpful to reach an agreement in the *symbolic contract* in terms of confidentiality in order to allow for open discussions and problematisation without individuals facing any risk of being marginalised for their views. It is important to highlight that discussions encompassing a range of views will not be shared outside the group. In a circle exploring value-related issues, there may be difficulties around problematising and discussing values on a more specialised level with a normative and evaluative approach among the participants. It is crucial that this is addressed and processed by the circle on a continuous basis.

Creating a permissive and reflective environment, in which participants feel that they are an important part of the learning process, is important during the first meeting and during subsequent gatherings of the circle. Everyone's participation and views are important to the process. This will make demands of the learning group's leadership, which is discussed in further detail in the section on circle leadership. Any uncertainty during the initial gathering may put the leader under pressure to assume the role of lecturer or teacher, which will naturally give the impression that participants are "absolved" of any need to reflect or otherwise be active in relation to their own learning and that of others.

Specialised Knowledge

The initial gathering should include a connection to theory in order to clarify the circle's theoretical points of departure and chosen working methods, as well as any terms that are relevant in different contexts in order to develop reflections and discussions that focus on the subject at hand. Discussions may also remain superficial if there is an absence of specialised knowledge and structure (see the section on the learning process on p.5).

Language and Communication

When it comes to Nordic and other international circles, the issue of language is an important one to raise. Translanguaging is a new form of multilingual communication in which the use of different languages that participants can communicate in or understand is permitted. Everyone does not need to speak the same language, but it is important that there is a shared understanding of the message. There must be openness and curiosity in relation to the issue of language whenever something is not clear to all participants.

Round-up and Actions

Each gathering must end with a round-up, shared reflections, agreed actions for the interval between meetings, and plans for the next gathering, as well as any "homework" being set. Working in a learning/research circle is demanding both in terms of time and skills, and participants will often not be qualified to participate. Being involved in the planning and implementation of a development project seeking to continuously gather data, keep logs and reflect upon practice, and evaluate and identify how the development process can proceed are tasks that are time-consuming and take a great deal of effort.

B) Focus and Co-creation

Once the formation of the circle is complete, focused work and co-creation can begin in earnest. The different phases can usually take place more or less in parallel, but it is still important to distinguish between the phases in order to streamline the facilitation of a learning circle. During the *Focus and Co-creation* phase, there is a focus on the actual goal of the circle's learning process, which is made easier by a range of selected working methods. In order to gain access to practical experiences, a range of minor studies or observations of practice may be carried out. Different working methods may be applied, such as:

- *critical incidence*, in which participants identify critical situations that are most crucial to results or potential failures;
- *log*, in which participants keep personal notes in a logbook about their thoughts, ideas and reflections on experiences in order to put their silent knowledge into words. This logbook may also be used in the evaluation of the circle.
- *study visits and various types of visits to organisations to observe and reflect*

Focusing on actions in practice is an important part of the exercise of gaining knowledge for understanding and new perspectives on development in our daily work. Since the work of a research circle is participatory and practice-based by its very nature, participants are "forced" through a social interaction to analyse and review their own actions, perceptions, values and proficiencies. For example, experiences of ongoing work towards change and measures implemented can be processed using the following methods:

- *reflective team*, in which participants as supervisors discuss and reflect upon a participant's work without being involved in it,
- *supervision of each other's mini-projects to develop practice*,
- *reading of common literature, which is discussed within the circle*,
- *think tanks*, in which the point of departure is a question or query drawn from practice which is intended to lead to problematisation and a wealth of perspectives. Statements are reformulated into a question or query which everyone subsequently reflects upon.

The circle may vary between investigative, supervisory, problem/dilemma-based, innovative, or literature-based working methods, for instance, and the opportunity to seek out new forms lies with the group's participants. It is important that the leader presents different working methods while also remaining open to initiatives from group participants who are in practice responsible for their own learning in the circle. It is important to follow up on actions and ensure that conclusions are drawn from experiences where shared reflections may generate new insights and knowledge.

There may be a dilemma between on the one hand focusing and structuring activities around the circle's goals and on the other hand ensuring there is an openness to new thoughts and ideas from participants. There will also be personal differences in terms of a need for structure and firm leadership, and it is important to raise this in discussions and during the round-up of a gathering. The fact that there is always a diverse need for affirmation and acknowledgement among participants is also something that may pose an obstacle to other participants' engagement and ability to be active, which may disrupt focus on the learning. (The section on leadership includes some reflections on this issue.)

"Participants are included in the evaluation in order to allow them to reflect"

C) Closing phase

This phase may take place over the course of several gatherings and can be initiated during the first phase through discussions centring on what the conclusion of the circle's work should be. This might be a joint conference, documentation in the form of a report or a book, a film, an exhibition or another output that adds value to and makes visible the group's learning process.

This is of the utmost importance to the quality and commitment of participants' work.

Evaluations of the circle's work are important in order to allow for conclusions to be drawn and to expand knowledge about learning within the circle as an educational initiative for adult learning. It is important that the participants are involved in the evaluation in order to allow them to reflect and draw conclusions in relation to continued operational and skills development. An external evaluation is beneficial, although this may be costly and deprive resources from the project as a whole.

In order to avoid any **project effect**, where a temporary activity results in positive effects during the course of the project but once the project has concluded little has happened in terms of regular activities, there should be a focus on actions and change, as well as the implementation of new working methods. It is therefore worth drawing conclusions from the work of the circle on a continuous basis to ensure that there is sufficient time to take stock of learnings on different levels both in terms of personal skills and activities in practice. The essential interaction between different initiatives where learning circles are part of a wider project counteracts the negative project effect and has a greater impact at an operational level (Lahdenperä, Gustavsson & Lundgren, 2017).

4. Circle leadership

This section explores leadership of the circle and various key aspects to ensure the success of the learning processes that lead to the group's goal attainment.

The leadership role is described using a variety of names, including facilitator, supervisor, research lead, or educator. Regardless of name, all these roles are responsible for organising, structuring, streamlining and leading the circle's learning processes.

Task

The circle leader's primary task is to interpret and facilitate the understanding of the questions that the circle is addressing. In this process, the leader must strive to establish an ongoing and reciprocal relationship with and between the participants. However, being able to understand and change one's work assumes that practical experiences will be analysed and reflected upon against the backdrop of a more theoretical understanding. One of the purposes and advantages of working in a research/learning circle is that participants become more reflective and "thoughtful" in their work. Another task of the leader or leaders is to support the work of the circle through ensuring there is a focus on experimentation and experiences, and by helping to analyse and evaluate results. Leaders must also take the initiative to contextualise through the use of theories and to find research results or suitable specialised literature.

"Facilitating communication between participants is key to a circle"

Perspective Competence

Individuals leading a research circle must in practice be able to handle multiple perspectives simultaneously: the participant perspective; the change agent perspective; the teacher perspective; and the researcher perspective. They must be able to serve as the facilitator of learning in the circle. For the leader of a learning circle/research circle, the learning process itself is their focus. Participants must be provided with opportunities to share their experiences, ideas, questions, thoughts and suggestions without the leader adopting a hasty or dominant perception of how the work and learning process will be carried out.

Communication

The leader's language, conceptual apparatus and ability to communicate are all tools that will benefit this investigative method by providing participants with feedback on their questions and their understandings of the facts. One approach is to reformulate statements into questions. Facilitating communication between participants (the facilitator's task) is key to a circle. As such, communication cannot be one-directional and leader-centric, but must instead be participant-centred and based on co-creation.

Further Specialisation and Theoretical Links

The theoretical understanding of models and theories must be constantly renewed in order to be usable when seeking to describe, understand and handle complex activities without a normative and evaluative approach. It is important to invite external speakers, read literature or otherwise offer specialised knowledge in the area under discussion.

Opposition and Different Personalities

Since the goal of the inquiry-based working method is to create something new based on the purpose of the learning circle, the leader should be capable of leading both learning processes and group processes, as well as being able to inspire and handle different participant personalities. There will be different types of people in every circle with a greater or lesser need to communicate and be at the centre of attention. To ensure that one person does not dominate communication requires

leadership that distributes "airtime" and draws out those people who do not usually occupy much communication bandwidth. It may therefore be advantageous to go around all members of the circle to enable everyone to express their views and thoughts.

All change provokes resistance which may be difficult to identify and process. It is therefore helpful if there are two different leaders who are able to reflect upon and analyse events in the circle and thereby contribute to better understanding and processing.

The Work of the Leader between Gatherings

Much of the circle leader's work will take place outside the circle gatherings. This includes recording and compiling what has been discussed during each gathering and circulating this to the participants. This should encompass an initial analysis and interpretation of the group's shared experiences. The circle leader's skill and expertise are important for a number of reasons. The responsibility of leading the work of the circle also entails documenting circle gatherings and proposing prospective sources of knowledge, as well as examining, analysing and systematising the shared questions. Evaluations of research circles (Lahdenperä, 2011; 2014) have shown that distributing this responsibility between two people is a successful approach as one assumes the role of "facilitator" for gatherings while the other assumes responsibility for the learning process of the circle.

Supervision

In order to distance themselves from circle participants and what is taking place in the circle, it is beneficial for the circle leader to be part of an action team along with an experienced supervisor (Lahdenperä, 2011). It is also an important part of the quality of leadership to be able to air issues in the circle and have the opportunity to carry out meta-analyses of the circle's learning process.

Conclusion

Each learning circle is unique in terms of its participants, leaders and learning processes, ensuring that the work and experience of each individual circle is exciting no one circle is like any other. As such, it is impossible to provide detailed instructions on how to lead a circle. The learning is a collective creation that must accommodate experimentation and curiosity. The external framework for the work

of the circle is important, but the establishment of internal frameworks for participation and engagement is even more important. That is what makes "miracles" happen and results in rich and relevant learning outcomes.

5. Theoretical background and inspiration for learning circles

As noted in the description of learning circles, their theoretical and disciplinary foundation is found in the participatory research tradition of action research.

Action research is the name given to research that aims to change and develop practice. As a research method, action research first emerged in the 1940s when the psychologist Kurt Lewin adopted the term. Lewin and his research group presented three of the key ingredients of action research:

1. Participation and collaboration
2. Democratic ideals
3. A close connection between theory and practice.

With his motto "nothing is as practical as a good theory", he sought to find theories and methods that could be useful when making changes to practice (Lahdenperä, 1999). Lewin (1946) developed a cyclical learning model (plan-act-observe-reflect) in order to portray this type of working process, which has been a cornerstone in the development of action research methods and approaches.

In the 1960s and 1970s, interest in action research as a way to change society increased. Educator Paulo Freire is regarded as the foremost proponent of this strand of social-focused action research. He is known for his work on literacy campaigns and adult education initiatives among Brazil's poorest members of society.

He combined practical, educational activities with the simultaneous performance of social analyses. His work has inspired an emancipatory approach in which the focus of the action research is on underlying social and political standpoints, such as highlighting groups whose voices are not heard among decision makers (Mattson, 2004).

The critical action research tradition known as *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) is based on the idea that research is both emancipatory and a tool to change society. According to Habermas (1974), this critical approach has an emancipatory outcome through highlighting unsatisfactory states of affairs so that people wish to bring about change.

The popularity of PAR increased in the Nordic countries during the 1970s, which may be due to the contemporary ideals around education that were prevalent in the region (Gustavsen, 2001). In addition to compulsory primary and secondary education throughout the Nordic countries, there is also a long tradition of lifelong adult education. Dialogue, participation and critical thinking were regarded as important factors that would encourage citizens to feel jointly responsible for society. It was through various study circles inspired by this educational tradition's democratic perspective that PAR slowly began to first spread in the Nordic region (Rönnerman & Salo, 2014).

"Dialogue, participation and critical thinking encourage citizens to feel jointly responsible for society"

A number of Swedish researchers (Holmstrand & Härnsten, 2003; Persson, 2008) believe that the research circle as a form of learning circle is linked to the educational tradition found in the Swedish labour and trade union movement where the study circle was – and remains – an important feature. With roots in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, study circles came to play a significant role in the emergence of popular movements in Sweden. The very first research circles were established to organise encounters between scholarly and experience-based knowledge. Research circles were to be based on the principle of mutual exchange between researchers and practitioners, with activities in the circle being based on research-focused activities.

The critical approach of PAR has also served as a model for participant-based action research in a Scandinavian form such as learning circles. Elden & Levin (1991) discuss "co-generative learning" based on a learning process that strengthens participants in three ways:

A) participants identify insights, understanding and opportunities in relation to their social world;

B) participants learn how to learn more; and

C) participants learn to create new opportunities for action.

A learning circle thus becomes a tool for skills development, professionalisation and business and organisational development. Both the actual situation and the context in which practice is set constitute important objects of development.

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About NVL

The Nordic Network For Adult Learning (NVL) is a programme run by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U).

The goal of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research is to ensure that the Nordic region is a cohesive and dynamic area in terms of education, research and innovation, while also striving to ensure the best possible Nordic added value and strength. Adult education and lifelong learning is one of a number of prioritised areas.

NVL is a network-structured organisation that works across sectors and transnational networks. NVL consists of a head coordinator who takes overall responsibility for NVL, as well as five national coordinators who are responsible for their networks and the link between the national and Nordic, in addition to three further points of contact representing the self-governing areas of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland.

Engagement and co-creation are key pillars in NVL's work. There are currently ten Nordic networks in NVL working on a time-limited basis on tasks relating to MR-U's priorities. NVL facilitates cooperation between and across these member networks. The NVL Icelandic network is an example of a cross-Nordic network collaboration.

NVL'S GOALS ARE:

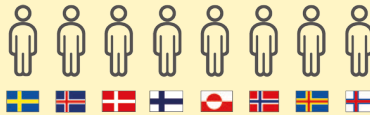
- to promote skills development and cooperation in different fields of adult learning in the Nordic countries
- to help to develop Nordic adult education systems through enhanced dialogue with MR-U and the rotating presidencies of the Nordic Council of Ministers
- to contribute to personal development and democratic participation through different forms of adult learning
- to contribute to cross-sector and national cooperation
- to promote Nordic cooperation in civil society and working life, and especially in lifelong education
- to disseminate experiences of and results from Nordic cooperation around adult education.

ABOUT NVL

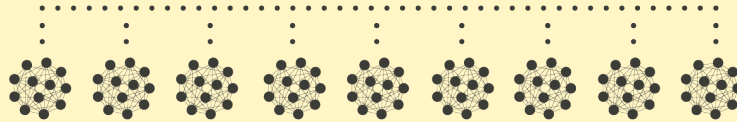
Nordic Council of Ministers

NVL The Nordic Network for Adult Learning

NVL is a network-structured organisation consisting of one head coordinator and eight further coordinators/points of contact from across the Nordic region and across sectors



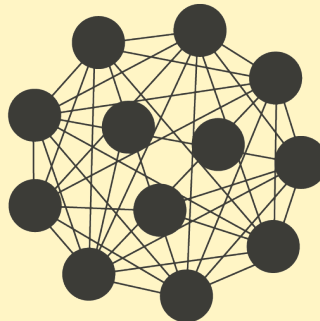
Work takes place within networks of expertise



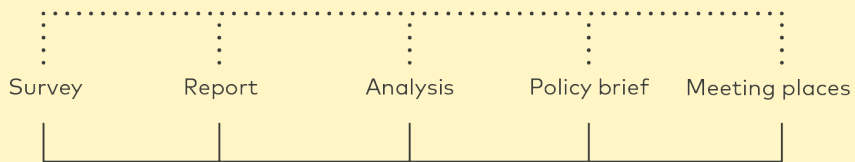
Examples of networks:

Each network consists of representatives from across the Nordic region and across sectors:

- Government authorities and agencies
- Education
- Lifelong learning
- Research
- Business and workplaces



Products



Results are used at both a policy and practical level across the Nordic countries and by the Nordic Council of Ministers

ABOUT NVL'S NETWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING AND INNOVATION

NVL's network for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial learning and innovation has carried out a pilot project encompassing three transformative learning circles (TLC) that has tested and evaluated new approaches to organising skills development for adult educators and others involved in adult learning processes.

Teaching and learning methods that promote participants' creativity, develop entrepreneurial spirit and encourage innovation have been the focus of three different learning circles.

The pilot project (2015–2017) promoted cooperation between businesses and educators, and developed participants' entrepreneurial attitudes so that they can work with others to take more responsibility and create change. The learning processes developed and tested during the pilot project are inclusive, based on participants' knowledge and skills, and encourage their active participation in and shared responsibility for their learning outcomes.

The project has made Nordic cooperation visible through the participating organisations in the three Nordic learning circles, as well as their local background groups and networks. The knowledge base has been created through a collaborative process at a Nordic level and then been implemented directly in participating organisations at a local level. These Nordic solutions have created change at both a national and local level. The results have a high degree of transferability at a Nordic level and are directly relevant at a local and national level.

Thematically, the three learning circles focused on inclusion in working life and society:

- A) Learning circle on integration in the workplace;
- B) Learning circle on entrepreneurship, innovation and education;
- C) The NVL Icelandic network focusing on integration in the island community.

**Handbook
Learning Circles in the Nordic Context**

www.nvl.org