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How do you define peer-to-peer-education and learning?

I define peer-to-peer as learning that is learner-led, where the people in the room share the learning. It presumes that everyone in the room has something to contribute. It is easiest for me to think about What P2P is not: it is not having a teacher directing all the learning and students taking it all in; the students are NOT empty vessels, waiting for knowledge/skills to be poured in.

What are your experiences with p2p education? (here you can describe your experiences as a participant, as well as a teacher, enabler or observer)

I have experienced p2p as a learner and an observer.

As a learner, I have found it a rich experience – learning from other practitioners has been hugely valuable, and often more valuable than the learning from the „teacher“.

As an observer I have seen that many people get more involved in the lesson because of the style of delivery. Their confidence appears to increase. I have also noted that a few people seem to prefer a more traditional approach – they repeatedly look to the facilitator to lead the session and find the peer-to-peer approach frustrating – they want an „expert“ to be in charge.

What would you say is the biggest benefit/advantage of p2p-education?

Engagement, especially for people who may have had a difficult experience of traditional education. This style of learning builds learners confidence in their own knowledge. I think p2p approaches mean these learners are more likely to stay involved in the learning and therefore experience the satisfaction of competence, which means they are more likely to try out other types of learning too.

What are the limits of p2p-education?

Some skills/knowledge need specialist knowledge and are not suited to p2p. I don't want to go to a dentist who has learned her skill through p2p – I want to be sure my dentist has had specialist training! People who think of themselves as „successful learners“, people who have experienced success through traditional teaching methods, may find this approach challenging. Which is why I believe p2p is most appropriate for people who are sometimes called reluctant learners.

What, in your opinion, are the requirements of individual learners and teachers for p2p-education and learning to be successful? (this question is focused on what the facilitators, teachers and enablers of p2p-education need to make p2p-learning processes possible)

Learners need to be open and have some trust in the group. This means that the facilitator needs to frame the learning with team-building, trust-building activities. The facilitator must be highly-encouraging, and have a strong belief that everyone has something to contribute. If the facilitator lacks deep respect for the learners, p2p will be less effective – learners cannot have confidence in the group if the facilitator does not have confidence in the group.