ETICOF

PEDAGOGY FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Guiding organic conversion

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Introduction

Organic farming is more than an alternative production system—it is a transformative approach that requires rethinking agricultural practices, economic strategies, and environmental responsibilities. As global demand for organic products grows, higher education institutions are called upon to prepare a new generation of professionals who can navigate the complexities of this transition with both competence and confidence.

The Erasmus+ project Education, Training and Innovations in Conversion to Organic Farming (ETICOF) responds to this need by developing innovative pedagogical resources for teaching and learning about organic farming. Bringing together five partner institutions from four European countries, ETICOF integrates European and national policy priorities with practical teaching approaches. It aims to strengthen the development of organic farming by supporting educators and learners through the provision of structured, high-quality educational tools.

Central to this effort are two complementary outputs: the Pedagogical Guide, which provides theoretical foundations, innovative teaching methods, and reflective practices designed for adult learners; and the Exemplary Module Courses (EMC), which translate curriculum content into adaptable one-day teaching units.

Together, these resources bridge the gap between theory and practice. They equip educators with methods to foster critical reflection, creativity, and participatory learning, while offering students structured opportunities to engage with real-world challenges in organic farming. By doing so, Pedagogy for Organic Farming in Higher Education promotes excellence in teaching, supports lifelong learning, and contributes to the wider transition toward sustainable food systems.

Part 1: THEORY OF HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION

The first part of the Pedagogical Guide presents the core and additional skills and competencies of skilled educators. Then, the teaching process itself will be developed. Finally, some elementary guidelines for creating teaching materials and teaching activities are introduced.

1. Competences of Skilled Educators

1.1 Core Skills

Every educator needs a blend of technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, communication skills, and practical experience. Skilled educators play a crucial role in shaping the quality of education and the overall development of students by tailoring instructional methods to diverse learning styles, ensuring that all students have an opportunity to succeed.

Regarding the ETICOF project, knowledge expertise comprises a comprehensive understanding of organic farming, its principles, practices, and regulations. It also requires knowledge of its benefits for the environment, landscape, water management, human health, and society.

Pedagogical skills depend on effective teaching methods, including interactive and participatory tools, techniques, and approaches, such as hands-on workshops, field trips, and group discussions. Educators should familiarise themselves with creating structured, coherent, and comprehensive curricula tailored to the different learning levels and needs of adult learners. They should also be able to design assessments that accurately measure understanding and progress and provide constructive feedback.

Communication skills involve fast and effective speech, but mainly include explaining complex concepts clearly and engagingly. The educator must listen actively and understand the learner's questions, concerns, and feedback to support their learning effectively. One should be flexible in adjusting teaching methods and materials based on the learners' background and ambitions for the final aims.

Hands-on experience in organic farming is the core of sharing real-world insights and practical tips. Ideally, the educator can provide solutions to common challenges faced during the transition process or advise on where to find appropriate supportive resources. A strong connection to the community of stakeholders in organic farming, including local organic farmers, roof organisations and networks, certification agencies, and other relevant actors, is highly favourable for facilitating learning opportunities and support.

1.2 Additional Skills

Other recommendations for the educator's skills and competencies that enhance learning include motivational and inspirational skills, familiarity with suitable technology and resources, tailoring content to the audience, and ethical and sustainable perspectives.

Educators demonstrating their passion, enthusiasm, and commitment to organic farming are more believable, inspiring, and motivating. Thus, creating a supportive learning environment that encourages experimentation and learning from failures is easier.

Proficiency in using digital tools and resources, as well as knowledge of technology, such as online learning platforms, multimedia presentations, and virtual farm tours, is likely to be helpful. Adult learners should be introduced to the latest developments, research, and technologies in organic farming.

Adult learners are a heterogeneous group with different experiences and expectations. Thus, the content and teaching materials should be tailored to suit the diverse audience, encompassing various age groups, educational backgrounds, and learning preferences. Its importance is in relating content to the learners' local context and specific conditions of their farms and communities.

Core values in organic farming are sustainability, minimising harm to nature, and ethical farming practices. Adult learners are encouraged to critically evaluate their practices and

consider the long-term impacts of their actions. Other tips for teaching conversion to organic farming include:

- Blended learning combines classroom instruction with practical fieldwork.
- Case studies and success stories: Use real-life examples to illustrate the challenges and benefits of the conversion process.
- Hands-on activities – engage learners in soil testing, composting, and organic pest control.
- Collaborative learning: Foster a community of practice where individuals can share experiences, support one another, and learn together.
- Continuous professional development – Engage in ongoing learning through workshops and courses, and network with other professionals in the field.
- By developing these skills and competencies, educators can effectively guide adult learners through the transition to organic farming, making the process both educational and inspiring.

2. Experiential Learning

This pedagogical guide is inspired by the experiential learning (Phronesis) method. Experiential learning is an active, hands-on, interactive approach to education where individuals gain knowledge and skills through direct experience rather than passive instruction. This learning method follows a structured cycle that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. It is a process in which people, individually or in collaboration with others, seek to reflect, evaluate, or transform what they have experienced to discover new resources and possibilities that these experiences offer. This newly acquired information is then given assigned personal meanings with individual impact on the immediate reality of life and functioning within it.

Several fundamental principles guide the success of experiential learning. These guidelines ensure that learners actively engage with their experiences and apply their newfound knowledge effectively. Included among the basic principles are:

- **Learning by Doing:** Knowledge is acquired through hands-on experiences rather than passive listening or reading.
- **Reflection**: Learners must reflect on their experiences to extract insights, identify patterns, and understand the significance of their actions.
- **Active Participation:** Learners actively participate in learning, engaging with real-world problems and making decisions that influence outcomes.
- **Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** Experiential learning encourages learners to analyse situations, think critically, and develop creative solutions.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Learning occurs in dynamic environments, requiring learners to adapt, experiment, and refine their approaches based on feedback.
- **Personalised and Meaningful Learning:** Experiences should be relevant to the learner's interests, goals, and prior knowledge to increase motivation and engagement.

- **Collaboration and Social Interaction:** Learning is often enhanced through teamwork, discussions, and peer interactions, which foster communication and cooperation skills.
- **Application of Knowledge:** Learners apply what they have learned to new and diverse situations, reinforcing their understanding and making learning transferable.
- **Continuous Learning:** Experiential learning is an ongoing process in which mistakes and failures are seen as opportunities for growth and improvement.

3. Learning Cycle

A tool commonly used in experiential learning is the learning cycle. The learning cycle is a structured process that describes how individuals acquire, process, and apply knowledge through a series of interconnected phases or stages. The purpose is to analyse every functional experience. The discussion should be closely tied to the just-lived experience for it to be beneficial. There are several different models of learning cycles.

3.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

One of the most well-known models is Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, developed by an American pedagogue, David A. Kolb. Kolb's work was influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, who had previously published in this context and emphasised the importance of experience in learning. Kolb's model is based on the idea that learning is a continuous process where individuals acquire knowledge through direct experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. The model considers that a concrete situation differs from an abstract one and that verbal information must be supplemented by experience within the learning process. Each learning process contains four components: concrete experience, hindsight, generalisation, and active testing. It starts with an activity. At the end of the activity, there is a look back, a reflection, where essential moments in completing the task are recalled. The next step is generalising components that influenced the activity and were assumed to be helpful in similar situations in the future. The final step is then to validate the newly acquired experience actively.

The Four Stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle:

I. **Concrete Experience (Experiencing):** The learning process begins with a direct experience in which individuals actively engage in a task, experiment, or real-world situation. This stage emphasises hands-on learning, in which individuals participate in an activity without necessarily analysing it in-depth at that moment.

II. **Reflective Observation (Reflecting)**: After engaging in an experience, individuals take time to reflect on what happened. This stage involves observing, analysing, and thinking critically about the experience to understand what worked, what did not, and what could be improved.

III. **Abstract Conceptualisation (Thinking)**: At this stage, Learners connect their reflections to theories, principles, and frameworks. They develop new ideas or modify existing concepts based on their experiences and reflections.

IV. **Active Experimentation (Doing)**: In the Final stage, learners apply their newly acquired knowledge to new situations, testing different approaches and refining their skills. This step leads to new experiences, restarting the cycle.

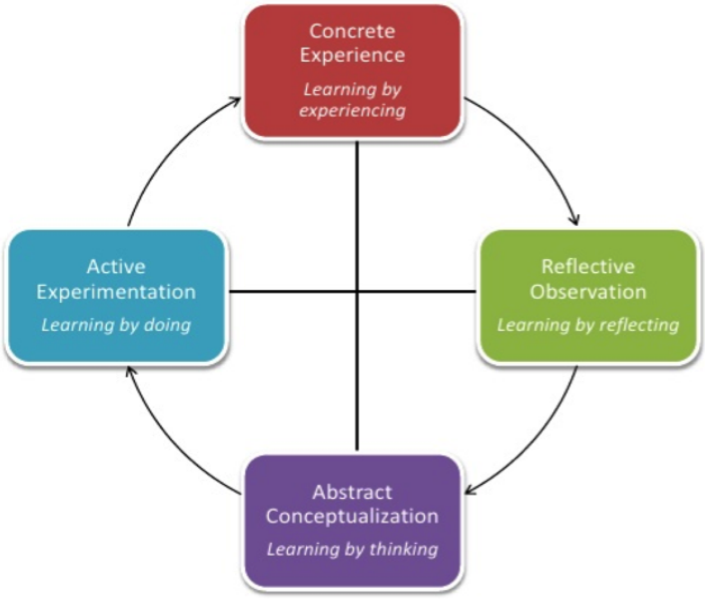


Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Adapted from Kolb, 1984).

The presented model can be divided into two parts. The first describes a concrete activity involving the experience of something new, followed by reflection and the application of newly acquired knowledge. The second part focuses on in-depth processing of previous experience and reflection. In this way, the learner develops a more general judgment that can be applied in their life. An important additional aspect is the incorporation of the social and cultural construction of learning into the experiential learning cycle. This perspective emphasises that learning is an individual process deeply influenced by social interactions and cultural contexts.

Another dimension was emphasised by John Dewey (who was already mentioned above as a source of influence for Kolb's learning cycle). In his theoretical concept, he emphasised that:

- Experience is the foundation for learning,
- Learners actively construct their experiences,
- The process is inherently holistic,
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed, and
- The entire educational process is strongly influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs.

An important additional aspect is incorporating the social and cultural construction of learning into the experiential learning cycle. This perspective emphasised that learning is an individual process deeply influenced by social interactions and cultural contexts.

In this approach, the action orientation should again be viewed as the core of educational activities. Additionally, Adult learners ideally observe and participate in organic farming practices, using their experiences from participation and observation to generate knowledge not only about the practice itself, but also about the entire system through a reflective process. This includes the notion that past processes and patterns do not necessarily contain what is needed to address the challenges of the present and the future. It is, therefore, not sufficient to learn from the past; it is also necessary to develop learning toward the future. According to this approach, learning comprises visionary thinking and moral imagination.

3.2 Assessment of Experiential Learning

When integrating experiential learning into educational formats, the question of assessment may arise, as traditional forms of assessment do not adequately align with the way this approach functions. Assessing experiential learning requires a multifaceted approach that evaluates the process and the outcomes of hands-on experiences. Methods such as reflective journals, case studies, and portfolio reviews allow learners to document their experiences, challenges, and insights. Observation-based assessments, where instructors evaluate students' engagement in real-world tasks, provide direct feedback on skill development. Additionally, peer reviews and self-assessments encourage learners to analyse their growth and learning progress critically.

4. The Nextfood Approach

The Nextfood approach is an innovative and competency-based educational model designed to promote sustainable agriculture through experiential learning, multi-actor collaboration, and competency-based education. This Nextfood approach is an action-oriented learning model that brings together learners, farmers, researchers, and stakeholders to address fundamental challenges in agroecology and food production. It integrates hands-on fieldwork, participatory research, and reflective learning, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

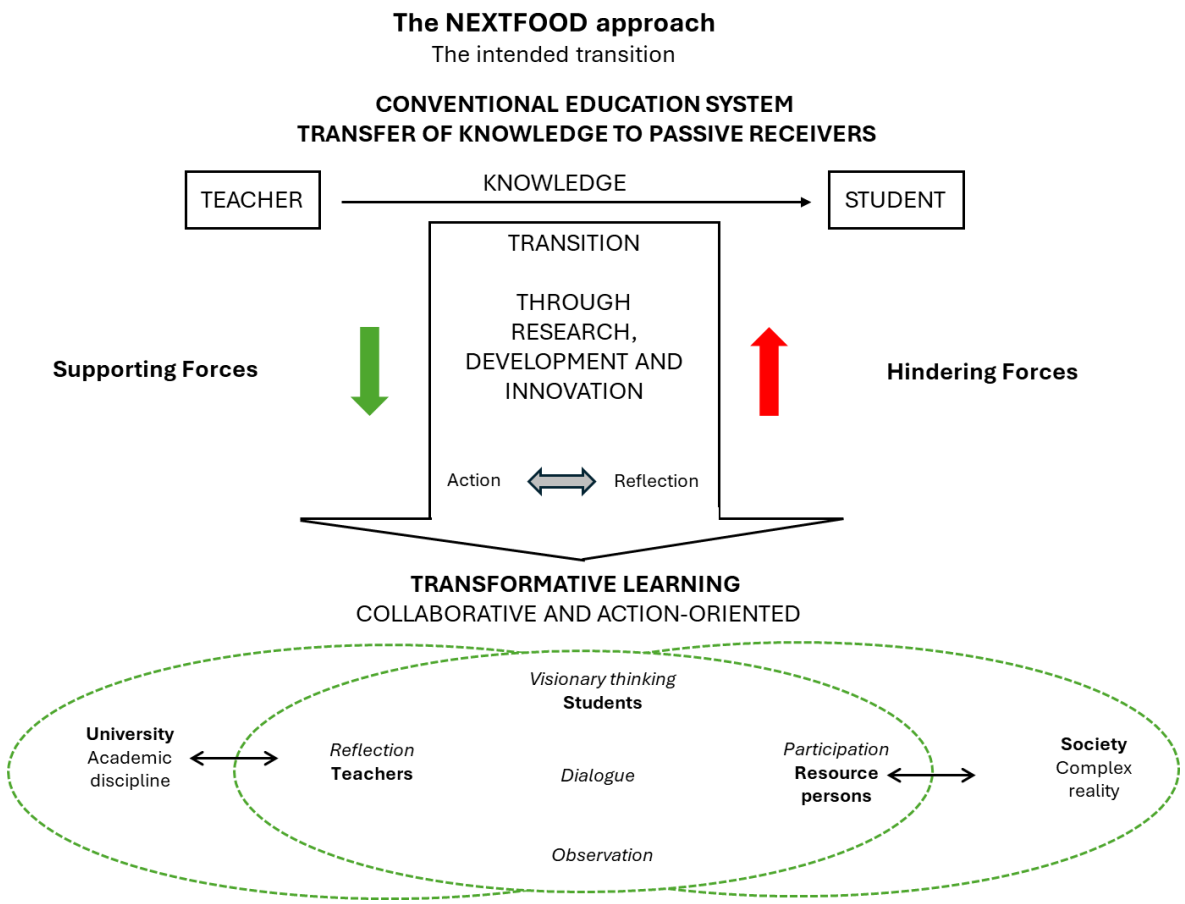


Figure 2. The Nextfood approach: The transition towards transformative and action-oriented learning (Adapted from Lieblein et al., 2021).

The Nextfood approach fosters a shared dialogue among all stakeholders, where learners, educators, and other societal stakeholders can come together and learn from one another. The dialogue space comprises five core competencies: Observation, Reflection, Participation, Dialogue, and Visionary Thinking. The action-oriented learning process in which educators empower learners, stakeholders, and communities to bring capital is

based on democratic premises. Educators introduce learners to relevant theories and concepts and practice the necessary classroom competencies. Other competencies are gained via the core competencies presented in the Nextfood approach above:

- **Observation** is the starting point for learning about complex situations in the field. It is subjective and based on the actual problem.
- **Reflection**, as Kolb states, transforms experience into knowledge. It explores and examines our perspectives, attributes, experiences, actions, and interactions. Reflection is observation in the inner world. An example:
    - Consider a course you attended but did not take much from— What was the reason? Was it maybe due to a lack of engagement, unclear instruction, or an absence of real-world connections? Reflecting on such experiences can reveal common barriers to effective learning.
    - Conversely, think about a course where you learned a lot—what made it impactful? Was it maybe the interactive nature of the lessons, the instructor's enthusiasm, or the relevance of the content? Understanding these factors allows educators to identify best practices.
- **Participation** is a transformative process focused on making a difference. It links previous experiences and the competencies needed to solve new problems. It provides a shared experience that offers context for classroom discussions.
- **Dialogue** helps us notice the nature of thinking. It increases our capacity to listen and to become aware of others' expressions of ideas. Dialogue provides a safe space for exploring and challenging the assumptions behind our thinking.
- **Visionary thinking** in this process involves insight and imagination connecting with gained values and a sense of purpose, creating mental images of a desired future state. It builds on the past towards a sustainable future. It allows one to explore and discover more possible futures fully.

During the learning process, the educator facilitates all activities and competencies, combining core pedagogical skills with additional skills that consider the process and the social, cultural, and emotional context influencing the learning. Learning should also be oriented toward innovation and the future.

5. Integrating Experiential Learning Into Practice

When creating your modules and courses, following a structured, learner-centred approach is essential to ensuring effective knowledge transfer and engagement. To integrate experiential learning into practice, educators should create opportunities for hands-on engagement, reflection, and continuous improvement. Begin by defining clear learning objectives that align with the overall course goals and competencies learners should acquire.

Effective planning is essential for integrating experiential learning into organic farming activities. Educators and trainers should:

- ✓ **Define Clear Learning Objectives:** Identify specific skills and knowledge that learners should gain from the activities, ensuring alignment with course goals.
- ✓ **Design Hands-On Activities:** Develop tasks that actively engage learners, such as soil preparation, crop rotation planning, and compost production.
- ✓ **Structure Learning Sequences:** Arrange activities logically following the Experiential Learning Cycle, moving from experience to reflection and experimentation.
- ✓ **Facilitate Reflection and Feedback:** Incorporate structured reflection through journals, group discussions, and mentor feedback to help learners analyse their experiences.
- ✓ **Incorporate Assessment Strategies:** Use observation, self-assessments, and project evaluations to measure learning outcomes and progress.
- ✓ **Provide Support and Resources:** To enhance learning experiences, offer guidance, instructional materials, and access to experienced farmers or agronomists.

Part 2: LEARNING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Effective learning requires a combination of methods and techniques that cater to different learning styles and enhance knowledge retention. The List of ten learning methods and techniques offers educators and adult learners tools for considering the learning process theory. Each method includes the proposed technique's name, time requirement, required materials, and objectives. The description also indicates where it is appropriate to use the given learning approach.

6. Think-Pair-Share (TPS)

Time required:	Flexible, about 30 minutes
Materials needed:	Writing paper
Recommended place of use:	Classroom or online

Aims:

- ✓ Encourage a high degree of classroom participation.
- ✓ Assist learners in developing a conceptual understanding of a given topic.
- ✓ Develop the ability to filter information and draw conclusions.
- ✓ Develop learners' ability to consider other perspectives on the topic.

Description of method

The Think-Pair-Share method is designed to encourage adult learners to think about a given topic, enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with a peer. This learning strategy promotes classroom participation by encouraging a high degree of learner response, rather than using a basic recitation method in which a teacher poses a question, and one student offers a response. This strategy provides an opportunity for all participants to share their thinking with at least one other learner, which, in turn, increases their sense of involvement in classroom learning. Think-Pair-Share can also be used as an information assessment tool; as learners discuss their ideas, the educator can circulate and listen to the conversations taking place, responding accordingly. In this strategy, when a problem is posed, students have time to think about it individually, then work in pairs to solve the problem and afterwards share their ideas with the class.

Step-by-step procedure

- ✓ **Step 1:** Decide on the topic for this lesson. Explain the strategy and its purpose to your participants, and provide guidelines for the subsequent discussions. Explain to learners that they will (1) think individually about a topic or answer a question, (2) pair with a partner and discuss the topic or question, and (3) share ideas with the rest of the class.
- ✓ **Step 2:** Think – Educators begin by asking a specific, challenging question about the topic that participants will discuss. Participants "think" about what they know or have learned about the subject for a given time (usually 3–5 minutes).
- ✓ **Step 3:** Pair – Each participant should be paired with a different participant. Educators may choose whether to assign pairs or allow learners to select their partners. Learners share their thoughts with their partners, discuss ideas, and question their partners' thoughts on the topic (5–10 minutes).
- ✓ **Step 4:** Share – Allow each group to choose which partner will present their combined thoughts, ideas, and questions they have to the rest of the group. After the collective "share," you may have pairs reconvene to discuss how their thinking has perhaps changed due to the "share" element.

Suggested topics to be used

- Crop management techniques, weed control
- Ethical considerations of GMO use
- Impact of biotechnology on crop yields
- Plant protection options in organic farming
- Animal husbandry changes

Tips/Tricks

- ➢ This method can be applied to various daily classroom activities, including concept reviews, discussion of questions, brainstorming sessions, review of quizzes, and development of ideas.
- ➢ This method is particularly effective in fostering critical thinking and encouraging collaborative learning, which are essential in fields like agriculture, where problem-solving and decision-making are crucial.

Graphical illustration

Figure 3. Think-Pair-Share Learning Strategy. Source: www.readingrockets.org

Additional resources

https://www.readwritethink.org/
https://www.ablconnect.harvard.edu
https://msduffyspeaks.wordpress.com/2015/03/18/think-pair-share/
https//www.readingrockets.org/classroom-strategics/think-pair-share/

7. Roadmap Creation

Time required:	Flexible, about 1 h 30 m – 3 h
Materials needed:	Presentation cards in different sizes and markers
Recommended place of use:	Classroom, a circle of chairs with enough space in the middle

Aims:

✓ Becoming aware of the timeline, milestones, and tasks of a project.

✓ Becoming aware of possible obstacles.

✓ Creating ideas on how to overcome possible obstacles.

Description

Realising a big project is a great challenge. It is beneficial to think through the aspirational process beforehand, as far as it is foreseeable. This method visualises a process regarding timelines, milestones, and tasks. A group of participants (up to 25) works collectively on it by adding more and more presentation cards to the ground, where the roadmap is forming. The moderator leads the participants to think about the process in a very structured way: What is the goal? What are the milestones? What steps do these milestones need? What obstacles are possible, and how could they be solved?

Step-by-step procedure

✓ **Step 1:** Participants sit down in a circle of chairs. Presentation cards on the floor, one on each side of the circle, state "status quo =, e.g. conventional farm" and "desired state/goal =, e.g. organic farm." The question, "What steps do we need to take to get from the status quo to the desired state?" is written down on a flipchart or board.

✓ **Step 2:** The educator functions as moderator, writes cards and places them on the floor. During the phases, anyone with an idea can raise their hand and submit a contribution.

This exercise can be done in 4 rounds:

- **First round**: Milestone determination (more oversized cards)
- **Second round:** Determination of tasks that need to happen to reach each milestone (smaller cards, e.g. blue)

- **Third round:** Determination of possible obstacles (smaller cards, e.g. red)
- **Fourth round**: Idea collection of possible solutions (smaller cards, e.g. green)

Graphical illustration

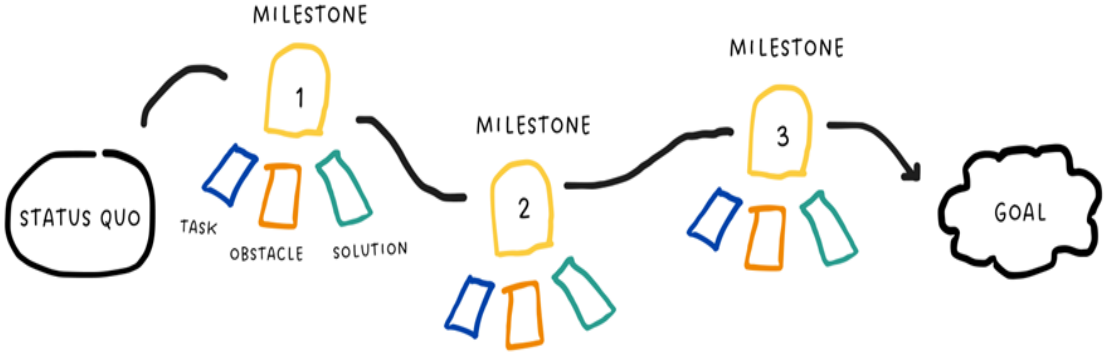


Figure 4. Roadmap creation method. Source: Author's creation.

Tips/tricks

- Write down the four rounds (Milestones, required tasks, possible obstacles, and possible solutions) on a flipchart so students have a clear idea of the process.
- Allow a minute to think in each round before opening it for contributions.
- Some theoretical knowledge about the issue is needed beforehand to identify milestones.
- The exercise will be easier and quicker if the educator prepares, e.g., milestone cards in advance and only works with the students on rounds 2-4.
- To shorten the exercise, limit the number of cards per round – usually, the process does not need to be worked through in complete detail

8. Jigsaw Method

Time required:	Minimum one hour
Materials needed:	Computers, internet, books, research papers, etc
Recommended place of use:	Classroom

Aims:

- ✓ To encourage collaboration and teamwork among learners.
- ✓ To encourage creativity, improve critical thinking, and engage all learners in the learning process.
- ✓ To explain the concepts to one another and deepen understanding of the subject.

Description

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning technique in which learners are interdependent to achieve a common goal. The basic premise of the jigsaw is that students work in small, interdependent groups with individuals given the responsibility for becoming „experts " in one aspect of a topic that they then teach to their peers to accomplish an overall group goal. Learners are divided into small groups, each responsible for becoming experts on a different aspect of the same topic. Ultimately, every student has a deeper understanding of the various aspects of the topic. Cooperative learning, such as the jigsaw method, has a positive effect on learners' achievement, improves learners' attitudes towards the subject area, and enhances learners' relationships compared to traditional competitive or individualistic learning methods. Two key elements of the jigsaw are group goals and individual accountability.

Step-by-step procedure

The Jigsaw method is known for its simplicity and ease of implementation. The steps of the method:

- ✓ **Step 1:** Description – Describe the jigsaw to the participants, explain why you are doing it (improves learning), and acknowledge that participating may be out of their comfort zone.
- ✓ **Step 2:** Formation of Jigsaw Study Groups. Divide the class into smaller groups, each consisting of 5 to 6 learners. The groups should be diverse in terms of gender, abilities, background, and other relevant factors.

- ✓ **Step 3:** Assignment of content**-**Each jigsaw group will receive the topic divided into subtopics or smaller, manageable sections. The number of subtopics should align with the number of members in the jigsaw group. Each member can be assigned one subtopic. During this stage, the group can designate a leader to ensure organisation.
- ✓ **Step 4:** Formation of „expert groups "- Learners from each jigsaw group who have been assigned the same section—subtopic of the content gather together to master their specific part. They are called the expert group. The expert group collaborates temporarily to investigate their assigned subtopic in depth, gathering information, summarising key points, and brainstorming to develop a thorough understanding. They can use textbooks, online resources, or any relevant materials.
- ✓ **Step 5:** Return to jigsaw groups – Following the expert group meeting, learners will return to their initial jigsaw groups, ensuring that each group includes at least one "expert" on every section or subtopic of the content.
- ✓ **Step 6:** Teaching and sharing – At this point, every learner assumes the role of a teacher within the jigsaw group. Their task is to teach their fellow group members about their designated section of the content. This teaching phase includes explanations, discussions, addressing questions, and ensuring everyone in the group grasps the material.
- ✓ **Step 7:** Assessment and evaluation – To assess how well learners understand and retain the content, they can take quizzes, participate in discussions, or engage in group activities.
- ✓ **Step 8:** Whole-class discussion – To conclude the Jigsaw method, the class can meet for a full-group discussion. During this discussion, they can share what they have learned and reflect on the importance of teamwork and collaboration.

Source: https://www.e-student.org/jigsaw-learning-method/

Suggested topics to be used

Here are practical models in organic farming:

Main topic:

- Organic crop production cycle (select the crop)

Subtopics:

- Soil preparation, crop requirements
- Crop nutrition, crop establishment
- Selection of varieties, specific needs
- Weeds, pests, and disease management
- Harvesting, post-harvest handling, storage

Marketing, economic considerations

Graphical illustration

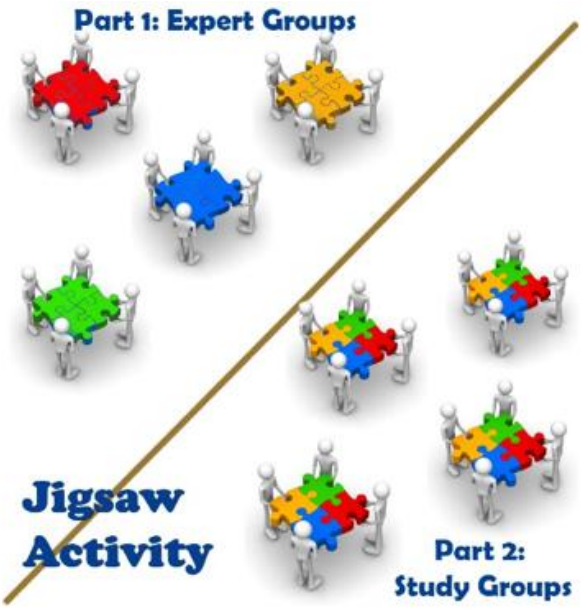


Figure 5. Jigsaw Active Learning: Expert groups and study groups. Source: Tomaswick, L. (2017).

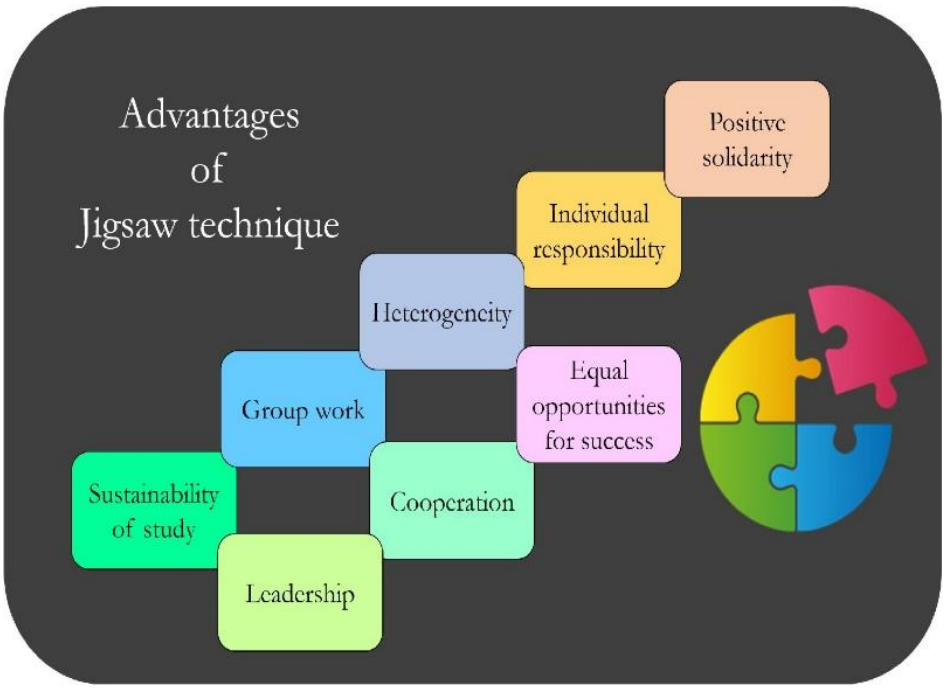


Figure 6. Advantages of jigsaw classroom technique. Source: Eachempati et al., (2017).

Tips/tricks

- Frequent difficulties connected with the Jigsaw method include peer interaction, time management, and individual reluctance.
- Managing peer interactions within groups presents a challenge. To address this issue, we can establish transparent group norms, assign rotating roles to group members, and promote self-regulation, empowering them to manage their group interactions and conflicts independently.
- Time management – to make the most of the available time, it is essential to ensure that group members comprehend their roles and responsibilities through clear instructions. Utilising time-efficient, structured activities such as timed discussions, debates, or concise presentations can help keep the learning process on track.
- Some individuals may exhibit reluctance, often stemming from unfamiliarity or discomfort with the Jigsaw method. In these instances, it becomes essential to clearly explain the method's rationale, emphasising its advantages in enhancing learning outcomes and fostering collaboration skills. To ease them into the process, starting with more straightforward Jigsaw activities can be beneficial before progressing to more complex topics.

Additional resources

https://www.jigsaw.org/
http://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/jigsaws/activities.html
http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/collection/
https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/jigsaw-teaching-strategy/
http://www.kent.edu/ctl/educational-resources/active-learning-jigsaw/
http://teachertrainingasia.com/teaching-blog/

9. Generating Consent

Time required:	30 minutes
Materials needed:	
Recommended place of use:	Everywhere

Aims:

- ✓ Getting to know the concept of "consent" vs "consensus"
- ✓ Learning how to moderate consent to make good decisions faster
- ✓ Finding solutions to complex questions

Description

There is a difference between "consensus" and "consent". Consensus means that everyone agrees with a suggested decision, and consent means that everyone decides to move forward with this decision, even if it is not their first choice. (They might not love it, but can live with it.) By considering the people's tolerance range, consent makes decisions more straightforward and quicker, as they don't have to be perfect.

Moderating consent can be a game-changer when working with a team. It can also serve as a means to resolve conflicts related to contentious issues. It takes listening carefully to every position, especially any strong concerns, and then formulating a suggestion on how to proceed together. For education on organic farming, we suggest using this method, for example, to find consensus on positions concerning controversial matters, such as questions of agricultural policy-making.

Step-by-step procedure

- ✓ **Step 1:** A topic is introduced in the form of a controversial statement.
- ✓ **Step 2:** The moderator asks the group: "What do you think about this?" Ideally, all positions and essential arguments on the issue will be heard. If this method is applied to a larger group, at least eight speakers with ideally diverse perspectives should have the opportunity to elaborate on their points. The moderator notes the most critical issues on a board for everyone to remember.

- ✓ **Step 3:** The moderator asks the group a question: “After you have heard all this, who can suggest how to change this statement?” The proposed new statement is written down word by word for everyone to see.
- ✓ **Step 4:** The moderator asks the group a question: “Are there any strong enough concerns or objections with this suggestion? If yes, please explain and suggest a modification.” Again, the modified version is written down.
- ✓ **Step 5:** This process of raising concerns and modifying the statement accordingly continues until there are no more strong concerns or objections within the group. The suggested statement has been consented to.

Suggested topics to be used

A rather extreme position that the group can discuss controversially and formulate a joint position on, like

- “Our country needs to aim for 100 % organic agriculture by 2050.”
- “Synthetic pesticides should be banned completely.”

Tips/tricks

It is essential that the discussion does not deviate from a structured group discussion into a dispute between two or more participants. This is the moderator's job. They need to ensure that every speaker addresses the moderator directly, listens carefully, and notes every vital issue.

Additional resources

Make Good Decisions Faster: Move from Consensus to Consent | By Gustavo Razzetti (fearless culture.design)

10. Silent Walk

Time required:	Flexible, from 1-1,5 hours
Materials needed:	Optional: papers, coloured crayons and coloured pens, flipchart
Recommended place of use:	Farm setting

Aims:

- ✓ To explore the spirit of the place (Genii loci).
- ✓ To make the senses open and receptive to nature.
- ✓ To stimulate individual question formulation and critical thinking.
- ✓ To foster a personal connection with the environment, enhancing awareness of natural and artificial elements.
- ✓ To encourage mindfulness and present-moment awareness, allowing participants to experience their surroundings fully.

Description

The silent walk aims to help participants become more aware and receptive to their surroundings. During the walk, each participant should observe the natural and artificial elements on the farm and become mindful of the natural processes. The leader or guide will lead the way without pointing out specific things, allowing each participant to discover connections between natural and artificial elements independently.

Step-by-step procedure

- ✓ **Step 1:** Individual silent exploration – Each participant explores the farm individually for about half an hour in complete silence. During this time, participants should focus on observing their surroundings without talking to others, drawing attention to specific features, or becoming distracted by unrelated topics. They are encouraged to notice both natural and artificial elements of the farm and make mental notes of any questions or comments for future discussion.

- ✓ **Step 2:** Regroup and reflect – After a brief rest, all participants return to the original starting point. Now, they have the opportunity to share their observations and ask questions to the farmer. Participants might ask about the purpose of certain features

on the farm, such as whether the fishpond is used for economic reasons or purely for recreation, why certain crops like millet haven't been harvested yet, or the reasoning behind the farmer's choice of specific crops, such as a particular type of pumpkin.

- ✓ **Step 3:** Group discussion – Once back together, the group engages in a discussion about their experiences during the silent walk. Participants can share their experiences of exploring the farm individually and in silence, as well as what it was like to observe without asking questions immediately. They can discuss what they found beneficial or insightful during their silent exploration, as well as any aspects that were challenging or frustrating.
- ✓ **Step 4:** Creative expression – Each participant is invited to draw on paper what they enjoyed most about their silent exploration. This could be a specific aspect of the farm, such as a flower, a particular feeling, or a memorable scene like the colours of fallen leaves in autumn. They may also choose to depict human-made structures they encountered, such as a barn or a bridge. After everyone has completed their drawings, the group comes together to share and discuss their artwork.

Tips/tricks

The time needed for the silent walk depends mainly on the area to be explored and the type and number of questions participants may have. Suppose you plan to continue with other activities after the silent walk. In that case, you can set aside questions that will be addressed later, mainly if they cover broad topics like the farm's crop rotation or grazing methods. There is no need for farmers to provide immediate explanations for everything. You can also collect all the questions on a flipchart to ensure that everyone's inquiries have been addressed by the end of the training.

Additional resources

The silent walk is based on the method of Ruskin Mill College (https://rmt.org/)

Graphical illustration

Figure 7. The farmer answers the participants' questions. Credit: Apolka Ujj

11. Visualisation Creation

Time required:	1 h 30 m
Materials needed:	Paper (e.g. flipchart), markers, presentation cards, tables
Recommended place of use:	Classroom

Aims:

✓ In-depth understanding of theoretical input.

✓ Understanding interconnections.

✓ Memorising complex information.

Description

It is a great way to promote in-depth understanding and memorisation of complex information. The theoretical input can be presented in several ways, e.g., text snippets, a short lecture, or independent research. The learners receive their task – to visualise the presented knowledge – upfront, so they can take notes individually. Afterwards, the group work begins, and the visualisations are drawn on flipcharts. Ultimately, at least two to three results should be presented, compared, and discussed.

Step-by-step procedure

✓ **Step 1:** Input phase – Presentation of information, e.g. via text snips or lecture or independent research (depends on the topic, approx. 30 min).

✓ **Step 2:** Visualisation phase:

- Group finding: 2-5 students per group (approx. 5 m)
- Task: "Create a visualisation of the previously acquired knowledge."
- Group work (approx. 20-30 m)).

✓ **Step 3:** Presentation phase – Short presentation of 2-3 results, comparison, questions and discussion (20-30 minutes).

Suggested topics to be used

Applicable for most theoretical inputs, processes, or models, e.g.

- Conversion process
- Models of communication theory
- Effects of implementing a more diverse crop rotation

Influence and effects of climate change on agriculture and organic farming, and possible adaptation measures to climate change in organic farming

Graphical illustration

Figure 8. Visualization creation proceSs: From input to presentation. Source: Authors creation.

Tips/tricks

If information is conveyed through a lecture, ensure that students have access to the presentation to review during the visualisation phase.

Additional resources

Using apps such as PowerPoint or canva.com, students could also prepare a digital visualisation.

12. Sales Pitch With Fab

Time required:	Explaining the exercise: 5 minutes Activity: 15 minutes Group feedback: 10 minutes
Materials needed:	Two main options: • A series of cards with the names of objects written on them. (If these are laminated, they can be used repeatedly in the future.) • A series of objects. The objects (whether represented by cards or not) can be everyday items, such as a stapler, mobile phone, pen, watch, photo frame, can opener, flask, or camera tripod. These two methods can also be combined by creating cards for objects that are difficult to bring to the training course, but could still be interesting to consider for this exercise.
Recommended place of use:	Classroom

Aims:

✓ To provide a 30-second pitch using the FAB method for a given product.

✓ To help learners understand the significance of benefits and advantages over features.

Description

This method provides practice in delivering a quick sales pitch. The structure of the pitch is based on the FAB methodology, which stands for Features, Advantages, and Benefits. It helps to understand the significance of benefits and advantages over features (as it is common for most people to focus on features instead of the advantages primarily). The FAB method effectively communicates the unique value of organic agricultural products by linking their features to concrete benefits that resonate with customers' values and

preferences. Whether in a face-to-face sales situation, marketing materials, or online platforms, this approach can help drive sales and build lasting customer loyalty.

Step-by-step procedure

- ✓ **Step 1:** Put the stack of cards or the objects at the centre of a table and get everyone to sit around it.
- ✓ **Step 2:** Ask each person to pick an object and provide a 30sec sales pitch. The sales pitch should be based on the FAB method, so it is supposed to contain features, advantages, and benefits of the product.
- ✓ **Step 3**: Ask for a volunteer to start the sales pitches.
- ✓ **Step 4**: After each pitch, ask participants to provide feedback.
- ✓ **Step 5**: Continue until everyone has provided a pitch.
- ✓ **Step 6:** Optionally, if there is still time, learners can go through a second round of sales pitches.

Follow with a discussion:

i. Which part of the FAB method was critical in making a sales pitch convincing? (Expected "advantages")
ii. What happens if the product is described only based on its features?
iii. What happens if the product is presented with what it doesn't do rather than what it does?
iv. Where could the FAB method be used other than in a direct sales pitch? (Expected "selling ideas to others")

Tips/tricks

The objects (whether represented by cards or not) can be everyday items, such as a stapler, mobile phone, pen, watch, photo frame, can opener, flask, or camera tripod.

Ideally, it would be nice if everyone went through new objects, so make sure there are enough objects before going for a second round.

It is recommended to choose items that relate to the students' background (i.e. a specific organic product).

Suggested topics to be used

Applicable to Marketing.

Graphical illustration

Figure 9. How to create a sales pitch. Source: www.slidemodel.com

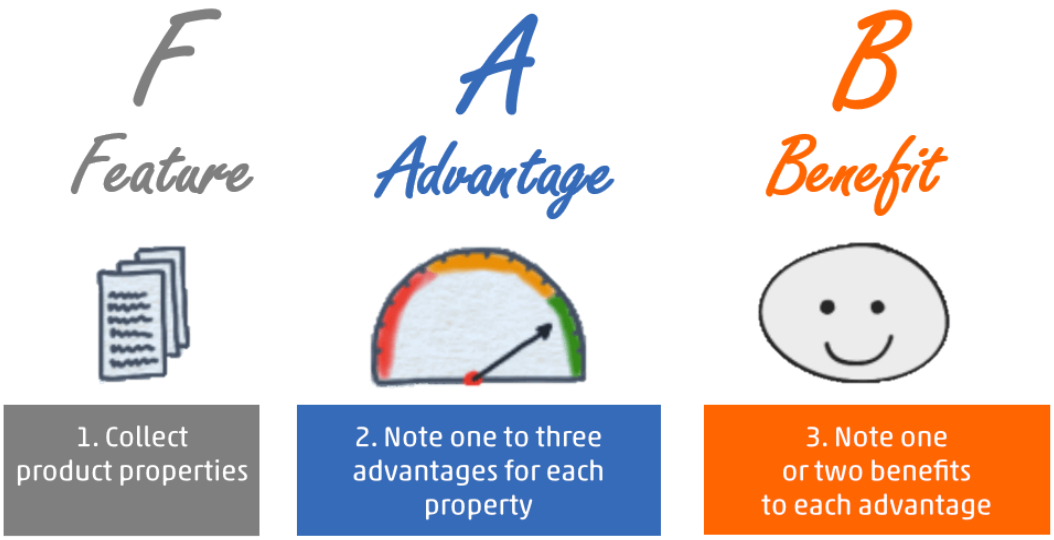


Figure 10. Feature-advantage-benefit-the-fab-formula**.** Source: (Preuß, 2019).

Additional resources

https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/sales-pitch-examples
https://www.launchnotes.com/glossary/features-advantages-and-benefits-analysis-fab-analysis-in-product-management-and-operations
https://slidemodel.com/wp-content/uploads/06-sales-pitch-how-to-create-a-sales-pitch.png

13. Fishbowl

Time required:	60 minutes
Materials needed:	• Circle of chairs • 3-6 chairs in the inner circle Key questions for the moderation
Recommended place of use:	Auditory, Seminar room/classroom or open space on the campus

Aims:

✓ To discuss and debate the pros and cons of conversion to organic farming.

✓ To build their own opinion about the conversion to organic farming.

✓ To change perspective.

Description

The sociocracy method, "FISHBOWL," can be used to organise constructive discussions and debates on a given topic. The technique helps manage a debate and keep it under control, even when a large number of people are participating. In this technique, at any given time, a group of people will be actively debating, while the rest of the group listens and takes notes on the various viewpoints presented. Through an iterative process, participants will have multiple opportunities to listen to and discuss the topic. The fishbowl technique is ideal for various situations where a discussion involving numerous perspectives is necessary. It is also an approved tool for training courses and involving students in various discussions about a specific topic.

The great advantage of the fishbowl technique is that it lessens the distinction between the speakers and the audience, while allowing many people to voice their views. It is ideal for large groups (max. 50 persons).

Step-by-step procedure

Preparing the room: A circle of chairs is arranged for participants and the audience, with an inner circle of 3-6 chairs (one moderator, 2-4 participants or meaning leaders, and one empty chair).

✓ **Step 1:** First, the moderator explains the question or topic, e.g., a discussion about the pros (opportunities) and cons (obstacles) of converting to organic farming.

- ✓ **Step 2:** Then the moderator explains the discussion rules (the outer circle is just listening while the inner circle is debating) and invites some (2-4) learners to join the inner circle of the Fishbowl. The moderator can also deliberately select participants to sit in the centre. Ideally, these participants are well-versed in the topic and can articulate their ideas effectively. This gives the debate a solid start and sets a high standard.
- ✓ **Step 3:** The debate in the inner circle of the Fishbowl starts. The participants in the outer circle listen, take notes, and refrain from interrupting the inner circle's discussion. As long as there are empty chairs at the centre, any person from the outer circle may join the centre at any time.
- ✓ **Step 4:** When any person of the inner circle has no more arguments, they leave the inner circle and join the outer one. Any other person of the outer circle can take their place. There should always be a minimum of 2 people participating in the discussion at the centre.
- ✓ **Step 5:** After 60 minutes, the moderator concludes the Fishbowl session by summarising the key points discussed and thanking all participants and the audience for the interesting discussion.

The Fishbowl technique doesn't necessarily need a moderator, but using one is recommended. The moderator sits in the inner circle but should not participate in the debate. Instead, they focus on ensuring the debate runs smoothly and offer guidance when needed. The moderator should ensure that only learners from the inner circle speak, and those in the outer circle listen. Additionally, the moderator can ask participants to return to the topic if they stray too far off course.

Suggested topics to be used

Module 1: Conversion to Organic Farming in Theory and Practice

The method can also be used in other modules (e.g. Module 4: Communication and Cooperation for Organic Farmers or Module 5: Achieving Sustainability despite Risks and Climate Change). In this case, the key question should be adapted to the module topic.

For example, for Module 5, the Fishbowl could focus on the advantages and disadvantages of O.F. compared to other alternatives (e.g., permaculture, regenerative agriculture, etc.).

Graphical illustration

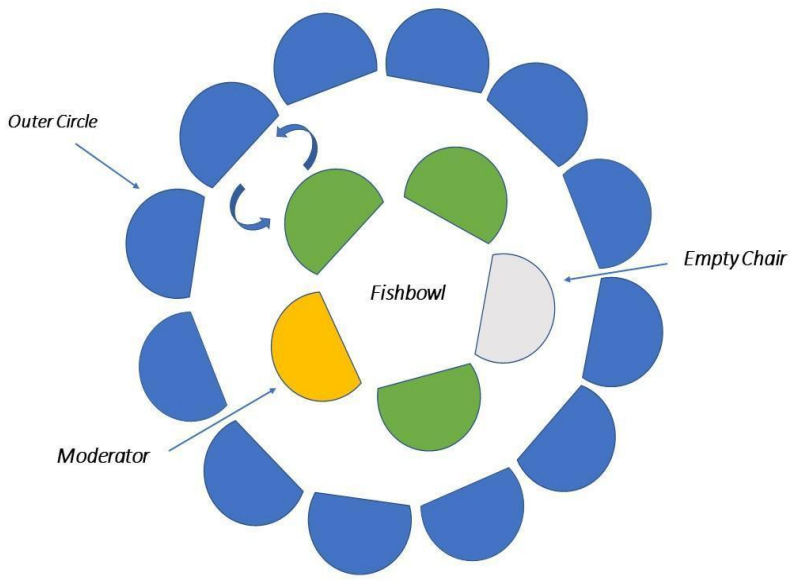


Figure 11. Fishbowl illustration (Adapted from Adelman, 1993).

Tips/tricks

The Moderator ideally encourages as many students as possible to join the Fishbowl discussion. Additionally, they remind the outer circle to listen, and if necessary, to stop discussions outside the fishbowl.

Depending on the size of the group and the room's acoustics, it can be helpful to use microphones.

There are two main modes:

Open Fishbowl: In this mode, one chair in the centre is left empty. At any point during the discussion, any member of the audience can join the Fishbowl. When a new person joins, a current member of the fishbowl must voluntarily leave, which frees a chair. The discussion continues as participants enter and leave the fishbowl.

Closed Fishbowl: In this mode, all chairs are filled. The people in the fishbowl continue with the discussion until a pre-set timer runs out. At this point, all members of the fishbowl leave for the outer circles, and a new group from the audience enters the

fishbowl. The discussion then continues. Iterate until many or all members have participated in the fishbowl.

Additional resources/links

https://www.skillsconverged.com/blogs/free-training-materials/fishbowl-conversation-technique
https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/fishbowl-technique
https://projekte-leicht-gemacht.de/blog/softskills/kommunikation/fishbowl-methode/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVCFGLVZA3w

14. Opinion Barometer

Time required:	30-45 minutes
Materials needed:	• Two sheets of paper (DIN A4) • Sheet 1 states, " I fully agree." • Sheet 2 states, "I disagree." • A pre-selection of questions for the educator
Recommended place of use:	Seminar room/classroom or open space on the campus

Aims:

✓ To enter a new topic dynamically

✓ To learn something about the variety of views in the group

✓ To give impetus to form an opinion

✓ For Educators: To get a quick overview of the knowledge state of the learners

Description

The opinion barometer is a sociometric method used to demonstrate and visualise the variety of opinions in a group of learners concerning a specific topic. The learners decide where they stand on the respective question on a scale from "I fully agree" to "I disagree". The teacher can also question some people to explain their decision to dive deeper into the topic. It is essential to refrain from discussing or judging individual positioning decisions or opinions within the group.

Step-by-step procedure

Preparation: The educator positions two sheets of paper ("I fully agree" and "I disagree") on two opposite sides of the room.

✓ **Step 1:** The educator explains the procedure.

✓ **Step 2:** They ask the first question. Participants now get some time to position themselves between the two poles.

✓ **Step 3:** After everyone has found their position, the educator asks three or more learners to explain why they are standing in this position and to share their opinion. Ideally, at least the most extreme and one average position are questioned.

Suggested topics to be used

Module 5: Achieving Sustainability despite Risks and Climate Change

The method can also be used in other modules (e.g. Module 4 or Module 1). In this case, the exemplary questions can be adapted to the module topic or even elaborated jointly with the learners.Examples for these to use, e.g., in Module 5:

- Due to the small scale of its operations, organic farming is unable to contribute significantly to feeding the world. After everyone has found a position, the teacher asks why they think this way.
- Organic farming is the only sensible solution to combat climate change. After everyone has found a position, ask how O.F. helps to answer or adapt to climate change.
- Organic farms help to protect ecosystems. After everyone finds a position, ask what special effects organic farming has on the environment (water, soil, species...).
- Conversion to Organic farming is associated with high costs and personal resources. After everyone has found a position, ask why they think this way.
- Conversion to O.F. should be promoted/ funded more by the state and the EU. After everyone finds a position, ask what the challenges and advantages of more funding/promotion are.

Can you imagine running an organic farm after your studies? After everyone has found a position, ask what concerns or obstacles people have.

Tips/tricks

- Choose no more than six questions, so there is enough time to ask for and discuss more details.
- Ask two or three people about their preferred position. Don't comment or judge their answers unless facts are stated incorrectly and need to be corrected objectively. Avoid discussion among the learners.

Additional resources

https://www.anti-radicalisation-handbook.isp.org.pl/en/methods/opinion-barometer
https://www.endlich-wachstum.de/kapitel/materials-in-english/methode/opinion-barometer/

15. Rich Picture

Time required:	10-45 minutes
Materials needed:	• Pencils, paper, coloured markers, or electronic devices with software for painting.
Recommended place of use:	Classroom environment, outdoor

Aims:

✓ Identify the issue you wish to address.

✓ Develop an unstructured description of where the problem lies

Description

The Rich Picture is a method that allows participants to describe, explore, acknowledge, and define a situation, expressing it through diagrams, symbols, and words. A rich picture helps to understand the complexity of an entire situation. It is a way of thinking that considers the whole. It is based on the idea that 'a picture is worth more than a thousand words'. The rich picture method can be conducted in groups or individually. This method helps to initiate a discussion and foster a broad and shared understanding of a situation.

Step-by-step procedure

✓ **Step 1:** Identify the issue you wish to address.

✓ **Step 2:** Using a large sheet of paper, drawing tools, pictures, words, and symbols, create a detailed picture of a situation that you want to evaluate.

✓ **Step 3:** Begin drawing the central elements and progressively add details.

✓ **Step 4:** Incorporate symbols and illustrations to represent different components and their relationships.

✓ **Step 5**: Show interactions, flows, and feedback using lines and arrows.

✓ **Step 6**: Ask people to present their rich pictures, explaining the principal elements and the links between them.

✓ **Step 7:** Compare the pictures drawn by the participants and cluster their ideas (rich picture) that are most similar to the critical topics to discuss, as identified.

Tips/tricks

Motivate the participants not to be afraid of drawing and to be creative and flexible in their approach.

Graphical illustration

Figure 12. Rich picture illustration. Source: mspguide.org

Additional resources

https://mspguide.org/2022/03/18/rich-picture/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7CTREXtFuk

Part 3: EXEMPLARY MODULE COURSES

The structure of the Exemplary Module Courses (EMC) has been designed to be clear and easy to follow, allowing trainers and participants to quickly grasp both the content and the flow of each training day. Each suggested topic day is linked directly to the corresponding curriculum module and the relevant chapter of the educational material, ensuring consistency between the written resources and the practical delivery.

For every topic, we provide a concise summary that outlines the core themes and objectives (content description), followed by a structured breakdown of the material to be addressed during the day. Alongside this, we identify the key competencies and skills that participants are expected to develop, making it easier for trainers to align their teaching with broader learning outcomes.

The daily schedule is then presented in a clear table format, which includes not only the sequence of activities but also practical considerations such as coffee breaks, group work, and time allocations. Detailed suggestions for teaching methods are included, ranging from lectures and discussions to interactive exercises, allowing trainers to adapt the delivery to their specific context.

It is important to emphasize that the EMC framework is offered as a flexible guide. While it represents an approach that has been tested and proven effective in practice, it is not prescriptive. Trainers are encouraged to adjust the content, timing, and methods according to the needs of their learners and the specific conditions of their training environment.

16. Analyzing Farm Suitability When Converting to Organic Farming

➔ Exemplary Module Course for module 1: Conversion to organic farming in theory and practice" of the Curriculum conversion to organic farming in higher education.

➔ Associated educational material for this course is published in "Pathway to organic farming. Selected topics to facilitate conversion". Chapter 1: Analyzing Farm Suitability When Converting to Organic Farming.

Content Description

This course provides learners with essential knowledge and tools to assess farm suitability for organic conversion. The course covers key topics such as soil health, environmental impacts, organic farming principles, and farm management practices. The course will enable learners to make informed decisions for a successful conversion to organic farming. The course concludes with a practical example, providing learners with a real-world illustration of successful assessment and conversion.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

- evaluate the effects and benefits of transitioning to organic farming on biodiversity, water resources, and ecosystem sustainability.
- determine farm readiness and outline practical steps for a successful transition to organic farming.
- explore the farm's unique characteristics (genius loci) in relation to its potential for organic farming while stimulating critical thinking and inquiry to assess its suitability and identify key areas for improvement.
- explore the farm's natural and artificial elements, enhancing understanding of what makes an environment suitable for organic practices.
- build collective problem-solving and idea-sharing capacity.

One-Day Module Course Structure

Site location and description	Farm with opportunity for presentations and facilitated discussions.
Ideal season	At any time of the year, preferably during spring to autumn.
Slot 1.: (9:00- 10:30)	In this slot, the introductory lecture will engage learners and familiarize them with organic farming principles, allowing them to collect common knowledge.
Recommended teaching methods	**Icebreaker activity and guided discussion** **Step 1: Trainer introduces themselves and outlines the day's goals and flow.** **Step 2: Ask each learner to state their name, location, and one fact they know about organic farming.** This can also be done using example questions: "What do you think organic farming means?" "What words come to mind when you hear "organic farming?" "What do you think is the biggest challenge for organic farmers?" **Step 3: Write responses on a board or flipchart to identify shared ideas.** This will help create trust, identify shared ideas, and set the tone for participatory learning. Step 4: Learners explain their responses in two sentences. **Mini-lecture** on the principles of organic farming The trainer introduces the principles of organic farming using a short presentation.
Coffee Break: (10:30-11:00)	
Slot 2.: (11:00-12:30)	In this slot, the learner will explore the farm context in order to analyze its current status and brainstorm specific challenges in relation to conversion.
Recommended teaching methods	**Silent walk with reflection** **Step 1: Individual silent exploration**

	Each learner spends 15 minutes exploring the farm in silence, observing their surroundings without distraction or discussion. They should focus on both natural and man-made elements and mentally note any questions for later. During the walk, they should identify positives and negatives on the farm that make it suitable or not suitable for organic farming (e.g., infrastructure, crop diversity, location of the farm, nutrient supplement opportunities, human resources) **Step 2: Regroup and reflect** Learners return to the starting point to share their observations and collect their questions about farm features, crop choices, or management decisions, and list them on a flipchart. (Optional: They may share how it felt to explore alone and observe without speaking, highlighting what they found valuable, surprising, or challenging during the process.) At the end of the course day, the group checks the questions and answers together.
Recommended teaching methods	**Think-Pair-Share** **Step 1: Pose a critical question:** for example, "What strategies can be used to improve soil fertility under these farm conditions*?* OR *What organic soil management practices can be implemented to improve soil structure and fertility during the transition?* **Step 2: Think:** allow the participants to write answers quietly (5 mins). **Step 3: Pair:** allow participants to share their answers in pairs and discuss possible strategies (10 mins). **Step 4: Share:** let the groups present top insights to the whole room (15 mins).Optional: Collect suggested solutions on the flipchart.
Lunch break: (12:30-13:30)	

Slot 3.: (13:30-14:30)	In this slot, learners will learn how the theoretical knowledge can be transformed into practice.
Recommended teaching methods	**Mini lecture** on how the theory of organic farming works in practice (Suggested topics for presentation can be: soil fertility, biodiversity, animal husbandry, water management, nature pollution, etc.) E.g., a lecture on biodiversity can include crop rotation, native breeds, mixed cultures, wide flower rows, reduced tillage, etc.
Coffee break: (14:30-15:00)	
Slot 4.: (14:30-15:30)	In this slot, learners will get acquainted with the experiences of a farmer.
Recommended teaching methods	**Organic conversion in practice**. The organic farmer who has successfully converted a farm will explain his motivation, process, challenges and overcoming hurdles based on structured questions: **Step 1: Decision and Goal Setting** What was the driving force to switch? What helped to make the final decision? What were their information sources? **Step 2: Soil Health and Input Changes** How did the farmer handle soil fertility and changes in the inputs? What impact did this have on farm management, soil quality, yield etc? **Step 3: Diversification and Crop Planning** What was the farmer's diversification plan? How did diversification help change the structure of the farm? **Step 4: Livestock Integration** How was the livestock integration process? How did this affect or change the farm profile? **Step 5: Certification**

	Why is the certification important? Does this have an advantage? What kind of challenges does the certification process reveal?
Slot 4.: (15:30-16:00	In this slot, the learners will check if they got answers for their questions that came up during the course.
Recommended teaching methods	Guided Reflection: At the end of the course day, the group checks together the questions and answers that were listed on the flipchart.

Figure 13. Silent walk on a farm (Source: Apolka Ujj 2023).

Figure 14. Observations and questions collected on Flipchat (Source: Apolka Ujj 2023).

17. Non-Chemical Weed Management in Organic Systems

- ➔ Exemplary Module Course for module 2: "Converting technological Practices" of the Curriculum conversion to organic farming in higher education.
- ➔ Associated educational material for this course is published in the "Pathway to Organic Farming. Selected topics to facilitate conversion" Chapter 2: Weed management

Content Description

This one-day educational course aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for non-chemical weed control methods, which are essential and effective during and after the conversion period. Replacing herbicides requires changes throughout the entire cropping system. Therefore, both preventive and cultural approaches, as well as direct weed control methods, will be presented.

Main topics:

- Causes of excessive weed infestation in cultivated soils
- Preventive and cultural weed control methods
- Non-chemical weed control in densely sown crops
- Non-chemical weed control in row crops.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, learners will be able to:

- understand the methods and approaches to weed management in an organic system.
- gain the ability to manage weed regulation in specific environments and apply creative approaches to various non-chemical methods.
- apply the latest developments in the field to practical situations.
- able to communicate their knowledge and conclusions and formulate reasoned judgments in a course
- teaching methods will encourage collaboration, creativity, and teamwork among learners.

One-Day Module Course Structure

Site location and description	Classroom environment
Ideal season	At any time of the year
Slot 1.: (9:00-10:30)	Introduction to weed management, causes of excessive weed infestation in arable land, and preventive and cultural methods.
Recommended teaching methods	1. **Introduction (15 min.)** The teacher introduces the goals of the module course, the teaching methods, and the course schedule. 2. **Think-Pair-Share Method (15–20 min)**The teacher poses a question such as, "What strategies and weed control methods could replace chemical approaches?"A step-by-step procedure is applied as described in the “Pedagogical Guide”, Steps 2,3,4. 3. **Short Lecture by the Teacher (40 min)** Lecture topics: Causes of Excessive Weed Infestation in Arable Soils and Preventive and Cultural Weed Control Methods (PowerPoint presentation). **Jigsaw Educational Method** The teacher follows Steps 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the method as described in the “Pedagogical Guide”.Assumption: 4 learners in each jigsaw and expert group.Assigned Content:Main topic: *Preventive, indirect methods of weed managementSubtopics:* • *Application of crop rotations, cover crops for weed suppression* • *Approaches in soil tillage practices* • *Use of mulching and grazing* • *Optimization of crop spacing, timely planting, and mowing*
Coffee Break: (10:30-11:00)	
Slot 2.: (11:00-12:30)	**Jigsaw method - continues**

	Independent work of learners in expert groups. Learners collaborate and conduct a deep investigation of the assigned subtopics. They use the provided "Teaching Material", as well as online resources such as the internet, YouTube, AI tools, or any other relevant sources.
Recommended teaching methods	**Jigsaw method – expert group sharing, Step 5,6** Learners regroup into Jigsaw groups where each member presents findings from their expert group. Together, they synthesize knowledge and complete the assigned worksheet.
Lunch break: (12:30-13:30)	
Slot 3.: (13:30-15:00)	**Jigsaw method continues with Steps 7 and 8 (13:30 – 14:00).**
Recommended teaching methods	**2 Lectures (14:00 – 15:30)** **Topics:** Non-chemical weed control in densely sown crops; Non-chemical weed control in row crops. (PowerPoint presentations, films, internet sources, YouTube presentations, see Teaching material) 15:30 – 15:45 Break **1 Group activity of learners (15:45 – 16:30)** In groups, learners design a weed control strategy for a selected crop in an organic system. The strategy should include both preventive and direct methods. Each group presents its solution.
Coffee break: (15:00-15:30)	
Slot 4.: (15:30-17:00)	**Conclusion**
Recommended teaching methods	• Summary and reflection • Teacher-led discussion using guiding questions • Learners fill out an evaluation form **Additional Recommendations:** It is recommended that learners in expert groups choose a leader to coordinate group work and assign specific tasks. Learners may

	work on their subtopics over an extended period, depending on the complexity of the topics. ● **Use Structured Guidelines:** Provide learners with a structured framework, including key questions or guiding points, to help them focus on the most important aspects of their subtopics. ● **Encourage Visual Aids:** Experts should be encouraged to use visual aids (diagrams, charts, infographics) when presenting their subtopics to enhance understanding. ● **Incorporate Peer Feedback:** After each expert presentation, group members can provide constructive feedback to ensure clarity and engagement. ● **Use a Rotating Expert System:** In larger classes, experts can rotate between different groups to ensure diverse perspectives and reinforce learning. ● **Implement Assessment Strategies:** Use quizzes, reflection questions, or group summaries to assess the effectiveness of the method and ensure that all learners have grasped the content. ● **Promote Active Engagement:** Encourage interactive activities, such as role-playing, debates, or problem-solving exercises, related to the subtopics. ● **Consider a Digital Collaboration Space:** If learners are working on subtopics over an extended period, using online collaboration tools, it can facilitate teamwork and resource sharing.

18. Economic Aspects of Conversion to Organic Farming

- ➔ Exemplary Module Course for module 3: "Mastering Economics in Conversion and Beyond" of the Curriculum conversion to organic farming in higher education.
- ➔ Associated educational material for this course is published in "The Path to Organic Farming. Selected topics to facilitate conversion:" Chapter 3: Economic Aspects of Conversion to Organic Farming.

Content Description

This one-day module course explores key financial and economic considerations involved in transitioning from conventional to organic farming. It focuses on core concepts of farm management, such as strategic planning, resource allocation, and risk management. Participants will also be guided through the development of a sustainable business model canvas tailored to a farm converting to organic farming. They will learn how to design a marketing plan that aligns with organic principles and consumer expectations.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

- apply systems thinking to cope with the complexity of running a business
- set up clear business objectives for the farm,
- visualize ideas and interrelations between the elements of the farm
- identify and formulate the mission of the enterprise/farm
- develop a business model focusing on both efficiency and value (social and environmental) creation,
- draft a simple, actionable marketing plan
- work (think, create, and present) as a team member,
- cooperate and network.

One-Day Module Course Structure

Site location and description	Classroom
Ideal season	At any time of the year
Slot 1.: (9:00-10:30)	Business Model Canvas (BMC) and Sustainable Business Model Canvas – concept presentation

Recommended teaching methods	An expert's lecture in the morning slot will briefly present the concept of business strategy and modelling, as well as the 9 blocks of Business Model Canvas (BMC) and the two additional blocks that transform the BMC into a Sustainable Business Model Canvas. 1. **Course expectation exercise (20 min.)** This exercise serves as a simple icebreaker that encourages the openness of participants. ● All participants first individually write down three expectations they have for the module course. ● The participants, divided into small groups (3-5 people), discuss the individual answers. Based on the discussion, the groups list their top 3-5 expectations. ● Each group reports to others. 2. **Lecture** ● An expert/trainer presents first the concept of business strategy and modelling, then introduces the BMC. To ensure the learner's understanding of the concept, reflective questions should be asked during the lecture. **(ppt slides, 50 min.)** ● After that, practical examples are presented (**ppt slides and videos/short films, 20 min.)**
Coffee Break: (10:30-11:00)	
Slot 2.: (11:00-12:30)	Group work on generation of business ideas related to farming applying organic practices.
Recommended teaching methods	1. **Group work/workshop (60 min.)** 2. After the concept presentation the participants start working in small groups (3-5 persons). ● The group work begins with a brainstorming session aimed at defining the profile of a sample farm which is in conversion to organic farming.

	• After generating the business ideas, the groups develop step by step the Business Model Canvas for the sample farm. • The group work continues with the discussion and extension of the BCM to Sustainable BMC by adding two more blocks (social and environmental costs and benefits). **3. Facilitated discussion (30 min.)** • Each group presents the developed business model canvas in front of all participants. The presentations are followed by a facilitated discussion on designed Sustainable BMCs. (max.5 groups/5 min.)
Lunch break: (12:30-13:30)	
Slot 3.: (13:30-15:00)	Marketing plan explained
Recommended teaching methods	**Lecture** • An expert/trainer presents the importance of the marketing plan and its structure. She/he also explains the difference between a marketing plan on the one hand and a market strategy, or a business plan on the other hand. **(ppt slides, 60 min.)** • Case study **(30 min.)** Successful local example (photos, packaging, websites)
Coffee Break: (15:00-15:30)	
Slot 4.: (15:30-17:00)	Group work on the creation of a simple marketing plan
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Group work/Workshop** • Task: defining your ideal customer - build a basic customer persona **(15 min.)** • Task: branding and storytelling – write a short brand story or tagline for your organic farm **(15 min.)** • Task: choosing marketing channels - pick two priority marketing channels and explain why **(15 min.)**

	• Task: complete a simple marketing plan worksheet (including goals, audience, channels, pricing, next steps) **(25 min.)** **2. Facilitated discussion (20 min.)** • Each group presents its mini marketing plan in front of all participants. The presentations are followed by a facilitated discussion on the designed marketing plans

19. Communication in Change Processes and Advocating for Organic Farming

→ Exemplary Module Course for module 4: "Communication and Cooperation for Organic Farmers" of the Curriculum conversion to organic farming in higher education.

→ Associated educational material for this course is published in "The Path to Organic Farming. Selected topics to facilitate conversion, Chapter 4: Communication.

Content Description

This course aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to address challenging interpersonal situations that may arise during a conversion process. The first part provides insights into the field of change communication and includes a practical exercise on target-group-specific communication. The second part on advocating for organic farming introduces and practices the technique of storytelling.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

- comprehend conversion as a change process and be aware of the corresponding psychological implications.
- develop sensitivity towards human needs in communication
- understand the importance of target-group-specific communication
- consciously prepare for different communication situations
- to utilise the power of stories in their careers.

One-Day Module Course Structure

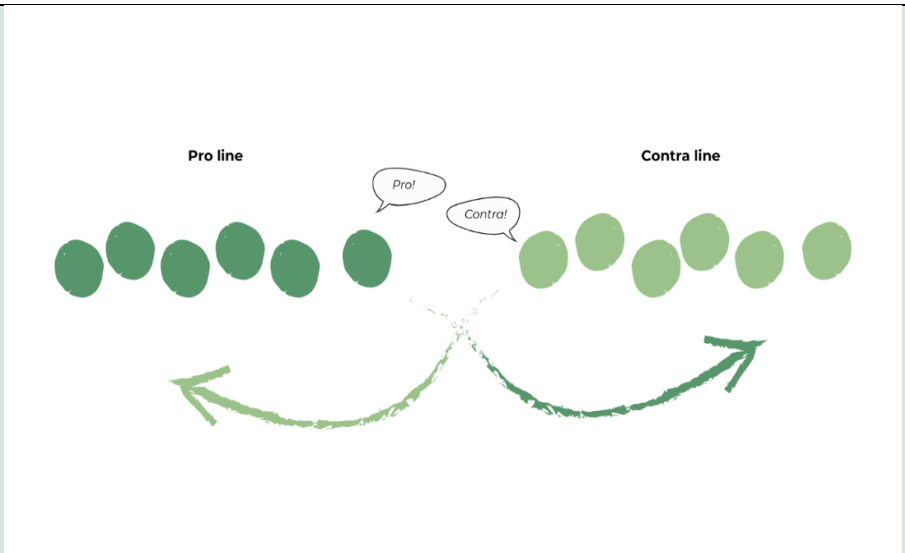
Site location and description	Classroom
Ideal season	At any time of the year
Slot 1.: (9:00-10:30)	In this unit, the basics of change communication are presented, and a practice on target group-specific communication is introduced.

Recommended teaching methods	**1. Reflective questions around change. (15 min.)** To start the day, invite learners to note some reflective thoughts about priorly experienced change processes. Invite 2-3 learners to share their thoughts. You may pose the following questions: • Remember a change you have experienced: What were the reasons? What was positive? What was difficult? What helped? **2. Lecture on the basics of change communication with activating elements. (60 min.)** The lecture may be based on the associated educational material for this course and include: • Phases of a change process according to Kurt Lewin (unfreeze, change, freeze) • Resistance to change as fear of loss • Helpful approaches for successful change communication • Target group-specific communication Recommendations for activating elements during the lecture: • Use reflective questions multiple times during the lecture to allow learners to have their own thoughts and make the theoretical part more engaging. • Practice active listening as a crucial skill for successful communication: In this exercise, learners work in pairs. One partner speaks for 2–3 minutes about something they find annoying (but not too personal to share in this context). Afterwards, the other partner provides feedback only on what they understood—without judging or expressing their own opinion. After the exercise, learners are invited to share how they felt during the experience. 3. **Beginning of practice on target group specific communication. (15 min.)** Learners are divided into three groups: The task is to develop an announcement for employees (group 1), family

	members (group 2) or customers (group 3), addressing the plan to convert to organic. Here is a possible scenario:
	You are working as a farm manager on a family-owned farm. It is your vision to ensure that the farm is equipped for the future. You want to do your part to protect the soil, the climate and biodiversity. You also think that converting to organic farming will have long-term economic benefits due to higher prices and subsidies. The farm includes 4 permanent employees and 3-4 seasonal workers that manage 150 ha of arable farming, grassland and animal husbandry. Your parents opened a small farm shop seven years ago that opens one day per week.
	Tasks for learners:
	• Fill out a target group analyses table that collects the wins and losses a conversion would bring for your group (see an example in the associated educational material for this course)
	• Choose a suitable communication channel/situation to approach your target group, e.g. staff meeting, family dinner, flyer, etc.
	• Develop an announcement for one chosen communication channel that addresses the relevant factors of your target group. Address for example:
	  • Background and urgency of the change
	  • Vision, goals and rough strategy
	  • Realistic outlook
	  • Existing capabilities and resources

Coffee Break: (10:30-11:00)	
Slot 2.: (11:00-12:30)	Practice on target group specific communication
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Group work. (30 min.)** Continue the group work. **2. Presentations to class. (40 min.)** Invite the groups to present and discuss their target group analyses and announcements.

	3. Reflection of the learning unit. (20 min.) Take some time to ask reflective questions about the learning unit, e.g.: • What has been interesting about this unit? • What was new? • What will you take home?
Lunch break: (12:30-13:30)	
Slot 3.: (13:30-15:00)	In this unit, an overview of the pros and cons of organic farming is elaborated in a playful way, and storytelling as a communication technique is introduced.
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Line of controversy (30 min.).** To start the afternoon, line of controversy is a dynamic game to quickly collect all the pro and contra arguments a group has at hand on a specific topic. For this unit, we want learners to name pros and cons on conversion to organic farming. Here is how it is done: • The group forms two rows where the ones first in line from both rows face each other. One row is the pro side while the other is the contra side. • Now the first person in the pro line starts by stating a pro argument on the topic. When done successfully, they leave their position and get to the end of the contra line. (So next time they have their turn, they will have to state an argument from the other perspective.) Now the first person of the contra line has their turn to state a contra argument and, when done so successfully, they leave their position and again get to the end of the opposite line. Then the next person of the pro line has their turn and so on. • Whenever a person does not know another argument, they simply leave the lines and sit down. The game ends when there is only one person left.



2. Lecture on the concept and theory of storytelling. (50 min.)

Tackle the following:

- Start with a reflection and discussion about conversations around organic farming practices that learners experienced in the past
- The impactfulness of storytelling due to the evolutionary imprint of the human brain
- Include an exemplary story (organic farming related) and ask learners for their experience listening to it
- Basics on story crafting for advocacy

3. Introduction to storytelling practice and beginning of practice (10 min.). Learners work in groups of two. They are invited to choose one of the following scenarios or to create their own scenario.

Scenarios:

1. *You are at a family dinner and your uncle states that organic farming is nothing but fraud to pull money from naïve idealists.*
2. *You are a student who specialises in organic farming practises. A fellow student is dismissive about it, explaining to you that organic will not feed the world.*

	3. *You are at a job interview for a management position on a farm that partially operates organically. The interviewer asks you if you think expanding the organic branch is a good idea and why.*
	4. *You have been thinking about conversion to organic farming for a while now. At lunch with your employees, you finally address the topic. After one moment of silence, an employee asks you why you are considering this.*
	5. *As a farmer who started conversion one year ago, you are invited to attend a panel discussion that discusses the topic of conversion to organic farming. The moderator asks you what brought you to the decision to convert to organic despite of economic challenges.*
	Tasks
	• Elaborate a reply to the given situation using an argument presented with the help of storytelling. Therefore:
	  • Find a suitable factual argument.
	  • Built it into a story tailored to the given situation.

Coffee break: (15:00-15:30)	
Slot 4.: (15:30-17:00)	In this slot, the practice of storytelling is continued, and short role plays are performed. The last 15 minutes are reserved for reflection.
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Continue practicing storytelling. (35 min.)** **2. Presentation of stories/roleplay. (40 min.)** A few stories should be presented to the class. Ideally, use a roleplay setting where one person plays the other party (uncle, fellow student, interviewer, employee, or moderator) while the other person answers using the previously elaborated story. The audience is invited to take notes on how the stories affect them and share a few thoughts after each presentation. **3. Reflective discussion. (15 min.)** Let learners reflect and discuss their experience during the course. Ask them to share 1-2 things that they will take home from the day.

20. Adaptation to Climate Change in organic farming and alternative farming approaches

- ➔ Exemplary Module Course for module 5: Achieving sustainability despite Risks and Climate Change" of the Curriculum conversion to organic farming in higher education
- ➔ Associated educational material for this course is published in "Pathway to organic farming. Selected topics to facilitate conversion". Chapter 5: Adaptation to climate change and alternative farming approaches

Content Description

This one-day course aims to convey basic knowledge about climate change effects on agriculture and adaptation in organic farming. Climate change is one of the biggest risk factors for future life on Earth. Therefore, the course presents approaches on how to tackle climate change and best practice stories. Through interactive methods and group discussions, the learners will build their own opinions about the role of organic farming in adaptation to climate change and contributing to sustainability. Best practice examples and alternative farming approaches motivate the learners to strengthen sustainability in their later careers.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, learners will be able to:

- build an opinion about climate change's effects on agriculture and the challenges/obstacles of organic farming in this process.
- know about the potential of conversion to organic farming in tackling the challenges of climate change.
- play a significant role in contributing to a sustainable future through best practice examples and alternative/innovative farming approaches.

One-Day Module Course Structure

Site location and description	Classroom and/or farm with opportunity for presentations and facilitated discussions.
Ideal season	At any time of the year, depending on the availability of potential learners.

Slot 1.: *90 min.*	In the morning slot, the educator will briefly present the effects of climate change on agriculture and ask for the learners' perspectives on the topic.
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Introduction (30 min.)** The educator gives a short overview of the effects of climate change on agriculture and explains the relevance of the topic "adaptation to climate change in organic farming" (see teaching material). **2. Opinion barometer (20-30 min.)** The opinion barometer is a sociometric method to show different perspectives in a group of learners on a certain topic. The learners pick where they stand on the respective question (on a scale from "I fully agree" to "I disagree"). The educator can ask some learners about their placement to get a bit more detailed insights on their perspective. **Preparation:** The educator positions two DIN A4 sheets (sheet 1: I fully agree, sheet 2: I disagree) in the room with enough space between the scale questions. **Implementation:** Now, the educator states questions or statements, to which the participants are invited to position themselves on the scale. After everyone has found their position, the educator asks some learners why they chose their position (ideally at least two more extreme positions and one in the middle). Examples of questions according to the topic: 1. *Agriculture is one of the main contributors to human-made climate change.* The educator asks at least 3 people why they stand there. *2. Organic is the solution to building a resilient food system in times of climate change.*

	The educator asks at least 3 people why they think so. *3. "Europe needs to aim for 100% organic agriculture by 2060."* The educator asks at least 3 people why they stand there. *4. A truly sustainable agricultural practice (including climate resilience, positive ecological footprint, and animal welfare) can only be achieved by small-scale farms.* When everyone forms an opinion, the Educator asks what special effects organic farming has on the environment (water, soil, species). **Tips for educators:** Avoid evaluating or commenting on the answers and do not start a discussion among the learners! However, if there are incorrect answers, you can react and briefly share your experience. **3. Videos about climate change effects and climate adaptation in agriculture (30 min.):** The educator presents the map "EU farmland and climate change risks" of the AWA - AgriAdapt Webtool for Adaptation (https://awa.agriadapt.eu/de/) to give an overview of climate change risks in agriculture in Europe (see teaching material). The educator shows some of the following Videos and discusses with the learners the experience of the practical examples of climate adaptation and climate protection: • ClimateFarmDemo Project (6 min. English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev2zyF8l5W0 • Recognise and avoid heat stress of milk cows on the meadow) https://www.fibl.org/de/infothek/meldung/video-hitzestress-milch-kuehe-weide
Coffee Break	
Slot 2: 90 minutes	**Mitigation of Climate Change (see education material 1.2)** The educator presents how organic farming mitigates climate change and is more effective in climate protection than conventional

	farming. Furthermore, the benefits of organic farming compared to conventional farming are presented (e.g. humus build-up, stable and more resilient agroecosystems, reduced emissions by not using synthetic fertilizer) **Adaptation measures to climate change (see education material chapter 2)** In this slot, the educator presents adaptation measures to climate change in organic farming: ● Adapted water management ● Soil and nutrient management ● Direct sowing, mulch sowing and reduced tillage ● Crop diversification ● Utilisation of agroforestry systems and planting of shrubs ● Climate-adapted animal husbandry ● Measures against heat stress in grazing cows ● Adapted farm management practices If there is time left, the educator can introduce the instrument of the **farm carbon calculator**, which is a tool for measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of a farm: https://calculator.farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/ The tool of the farm carbon calculator can be tested in small groups on laptops. Afterwards, educators and learners can evaluate the tool.
Recommended teaching methods	**Group discussion in small groups (4 persons/group) (30 min.):** *"What measures does organic farming take to handle and mitigate climate change?"* The groups collect measures in organic farming that handle climate change and discuss answers. After 10 min. the educator asks the groups about their results and writes the collected measures on a flipchart or a board (10 min.).

	Afterwards, the educator gives an overview and presents on adaptation measures to climate change in organic farming to go more into detail or add some important facts (see education material chapter 2.)
Lunch	
Slot 3: 180 minutes incl. Coffee break	The afternoon focuses on practical experiences in adaptation to climate change. The topic will be deepened in a visit of a climate-friendly farm or a farm with interest/experience in adaptation measures to climate change. Also, students will apply the knowledge gathered during the morning session, as tasks will be assigned to them during the field trip.
Recommended teaching methods	**1. Visit a climate-friendly farm (90 min.)** A farm visit gives students the opportunity to see a practical example of farming in times of climate change. Ideally, the tour will be guided by the farm manager. The farm manager gives an impression of the challenges and climate adaptation measures on the farm. The learners are invited to discuss sustainability, risks, and chances of the approach. Guiding questions for learners: ● *Which structure has the farm?* ● *What does the farm cultivate or breed?* ● *How are the climatic conditions on the farm? Which obstacles does the farm have because of climate change?* ● *Collect important abiotic factors (e.g., precipitation, soil quality, slope...)!* ● *What climate adaptation/mitigation measures have been realized so far?* ● *What further measures could be useful for the farm?* **2. Climate adaptation plan for a farm (90 min.)** Learners use a template to create a basic climate adaptation plan for

	an organic farm, considering factors like water management, crop diversification, soil and nutrient management, and climate-adapted measures in arable farming/animal husbandry. After 60 min. of group work, each group presents their ideas.
Slot 4: 30 minutes	**Check-Out and Evaluation**
Recommended teaching methods	The educator invites the learners to share their opinions according to the following questions: ● *What did you learn about climate adaptation and alternative approaches in organic farming?* ● *Has your opinion of organic farming changed after this course? (see meaning barometer)* ● *In your opinion, how useful were the didactic methods in the course concerning the content taught?* ● *What did you miss in the course?*

Further inspiration to read about the learning process

In the past, other documents were created to support the educational process, and the creation of such materials would attract the attention of adult learners and motivate them to study further and enrich their practice. The first document is the Pedagogical Guide - Methodological material for effectively teaching social farming in the SoFarEDU project (grant no. 2017-1-DE01-KA203-003583). The inspiration for this Pedagogical Guide in the ETICOF project stems from the reflective aspect for educators, who consider educational goals, competencies, and learning outcomes to determine a strategy for planning course objectives. The second document is titled "The Methodological Guide to Introducing Agroecology to Farmers." It contains information about adult education, including who an adult learner is, how to consider the target group of adult learners, and the types of educators involved in this field. It teaches approaches to educational attitudes, introduces the European Qualifications Framework, and gives an example of a training model structure and learning styles. The development of the present Pedagogical Guide and the Exemplary Module Courses (EMC) builds upon earlier methodological contributions in the field, extending them with new pedagogical perspectives and practical models. Together, these two resources constitute a comprehensive and coherent package that combines conceptual reflection with practical application. While neither prescribes a fixed model, both offer a flexible and adaptable foundation that supports educators in designing effective and context-sensitive training. In this sense, the materials presented here represent both the consolidation of previous efforts and a platform for ongoing innovation in teaching and learning within agroecology and social farming.