Framework for observation of processes by advisers themselves

WP3 – Improve the methods - Outcome n°09

Karl Heinz KOLB – Ann-Kathrin SPIEGEL (P4)
in collaboration with all project partners

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Coordinateur

P10   Chambre d'agriculture de Loire Atlantique (Nantes – France)

IMPORTANT MENTION

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SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT

English

In order to give value to the tests of the tools transferred within the New Advisers Leonardo project and in order to gather experience from agronomic advisers and trainers, we organised a workshop in each country.

The facilitation method presented in this paper for this type of workshop could be transferred and adapted in other various situations, particularly to start a collective approach to training within a team or network, to raise awareness of the diversity of skills necessary for efficient and innovative agronomic advice and to prepare an effective training plan.

French

Afin de valoriser au maximum les tests de transferts d'outils du projet Leonardo New Advisers, et de recueillir l'expérience acquise par les conseillers et formateurs en agronomie, nous avons organisé un atelier dans chaque pays.

La méthode d'animation présentée dans ce document pourra être reprise et adaptée dans des situations variées, en particulier pour démarrer une démarche collective de formation, au sein d'une équipe ou d'un réseau, pour sensibiliser les participants à la diversité des compétences nécessaires à un conseil agronomique performant et innovant, et pour se donner un plan de formation suffisamment ambitieux.

German

Um die Tests der Beratungswerkzeuge weiter aufzuwerten und um die Erfahrungen von landwirtschaftlichen Beratern und Ausbildern zu sammeln, organisierten wir einen Workshop in jedem Partnerland des New Advisers Leonardo Projekts.

Die in diesem Papier beschriebene Moderationsmethode kann in verschiedenen Situationen angewandt und entsprechend angepasst werden, insbesondere um eine gemeinsame Fortbildung im Beraterteam oder in einem entsprechenden Netzwerk zu initiieren, um das Bewusstsein der Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer für die verschiedenen Fähigkeiten zu erhöhen, die für eine effiziente und innovative landwirtschaftliche Beratung notwendig sind, und um einen bedürfnisangepassten Fortbildungsplan auszuarbeiten.

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Introduction

After completing the transfer test tools in different countries, we wanted to learn more about the skills and competencies of advisers and trainers. Therefore, we decided to take the experiences resulting from the tool tests as a basis to further discuss general skills and competencies with advisers in a workshop within the "New Advisers Leonardo project".

This paper presents the "how-to-implement" a workshop. This methodology can be easily transferred and adapted to other audiences, groups already established or constituted for the occasion, with the 2 goals: expression of experience and awareness of the various aspects of professional competence, including in particular the 'soft skills'.

I - Goals of the workshop

Allow to a group of advisors, trainers, managers, within a half-day or one-day workshop to:

- Describe the nature and role of the skills mobilized in agronomic advising

- Express from experience the place and importance of this skills, including with a view of jobs in evolution

- Become aware of some more subtle skills (=soft skills), useful to facilitate technical innovation and change of cropping practices.

Participants are proposed to reflect and discuss issues such as:

- *Which relational/attitude skills and competencies are useful for the daily work: what is already applied, what is required, what is lacking?*

- *Which kind of relational/attitude skills and competencies they do/could use in which contexts*

- *Which external aspects set limits to advisory (structure of work, regulations etc.) and how can these influences be reduced?*

- *What kind of training would be helpful to handle daily and future challenges (personalised for every participating adviser)?*

II - Structure of the workshop

1. Introduction [30 min.]

2. Discussion on relational skills and competencies (S&C) in general, guided by a set of questions (see guideline questions below) which refer to daily advisory situations to find out about needs, limits, definition of own role in advisory processes, impact of personal skills, training requirements etc. [120 – 180 min.]

3. Filling of questionnaires to get the new insights and ideas structured and to set own goals for skill development [30 min.]

III - Moderation guideline

The action of a moderator is a key-element in a co-construction process. This process is sometimes spontaneously adopted by groups of people wishing to leave a restricted view of the situation they are involved in. Co-construction process is used to find an outcome on which

everyone can agree and a way to develop that can be followed (not necessarily the same for everyone, even all the ways relate to each other).

As the moderator of this workshop, please keep in mind that we want to get at the core of the skills and competencies which are non-technical but essential to the work of an adviser. Every participant in your workshop comes from a different starting point in many aspects: his personality, his job profile, his organisation, his training and personal experiences, his preferences, his strengths and weaknesses. We want an open and reflected discussion on the S&C every single participant has uses, lacks, wants to develop and considers to become important in the future. Therefore, there is no wrong and right when it comes to answers and ideas. The workshop just aims at identifying and collecting S&C which are required to be a competent adviser and to sensitize the participation advisers for their strengths and weaknesses in this broad field.

The moderation will follow the idea of Metaplan moderation to be able to document the results of the workshops in a simple way. The Metaplan moderation is a good tool to visualise contributions and make them visible for the whole group and for documentation. As the contributions can be ordered and organised, new points of view and relationships between them will become visible. This moderation technique allows for a clear structure and for the inclusion of all participants.

IV - Logistics for the workshop

What you need:

- A room quite spacious so that participants can make small groups, circulate around the pin boards, come stick their own cards they wrote, etc.

- 2 pin boards (front and back side)

- Large sheets of paper to cover the pin boards (if available)

- Marker pens in different colours

- Moderation cards (rectangular, round and oval in different colours)

Note: The moderation cards will be used by every participant to write down statements on S&C. Each statement should be written on a separate card in about 4 to 7 words (not just one keyword, as this is too imprecise and give too much room for own interpretations). Statements on used S&C can be written on blue cards, statements on required/lacking S&C on red ones (this is just an idea, you don't necessarily have to distinguish). The statements are pinned on the board and then the moderator (with the help of the group) pins them together in groups. Caution: There might be statement which can't be grouped and should better stand alone. Once the cards are put in the right clusters, relationships between the statements can be shown by marking them with pens on cover paper on the board. For more information on material, card statements and the moderation process with cards, see references [1]

Documentation of the results

- Questionnaire for every participant

- Results of Metaplan-Moderation (take pictures of every step)

V – Supports for facilitation

Introduction: The starting question should help to make the advisers think and speak about their job and their role in a situation in which they feel confident. We therefore propose to start with the question: In relation with your work as an adviser, what are you proud of? (You can start with any other question to warm up the group and make them feel comfortable and ready to discuss as well.)

Discussion on S&C in general: Discuss S&C with the help of about 5 practical situations (see guideline questions), group them into S&C used (blue cards) and S&C needed (red cards). Put cards on Metaplan wall. Afterwards, introduce the different categories of attitude skills (ability to change, networking ability and holistic ability, others if needed) and group the collected S&C into these categories (new categories may be created if reasonable).

Dissolve the separation into the different practical situations. Collect future scenarios (round cards) which will influence advisory work and group the collected skills to the according scenarios. One skill can be relevant for several scenarios and should thus be copied and placed to every scenario for which it is relevant. Deduce training requirements for the scenarios.

Discussion on tested tools	
Positive (present)	Negative (missing)
Technical competencies	Technical competencies
Social competencies and attitude	Social competencies and attitude

Fig 1: First mapping of S&C

Please arrange the technical skills and competencies as well as the social competencies in the four corresponding fields.

Discussion on S&C in general Collection and grouping of S&C with the help of discussion on practical situation				
Situation1	Situation2	Situation3	Situation4	Situation5
	Step 1 : S&C used on blue cards, S&C required on red cards, general collection			
Holistic ability				
Ability to change				
Networking ability		Step 2 : Grouping of S&C		
Open category				

Fig 2: Types of S&C

A   Please introduce different advisory situations and try to find out:

-   Which S&C do the members of the workshop actually use in this situation?
-   Which S&C are required (are needed) for this situation (proposals of the members)?
-   Are there general abilities needed (proposals of the members)?

B   Please collect the answers (used and proposed S&C)

C   Try to group the S&C in the different fields

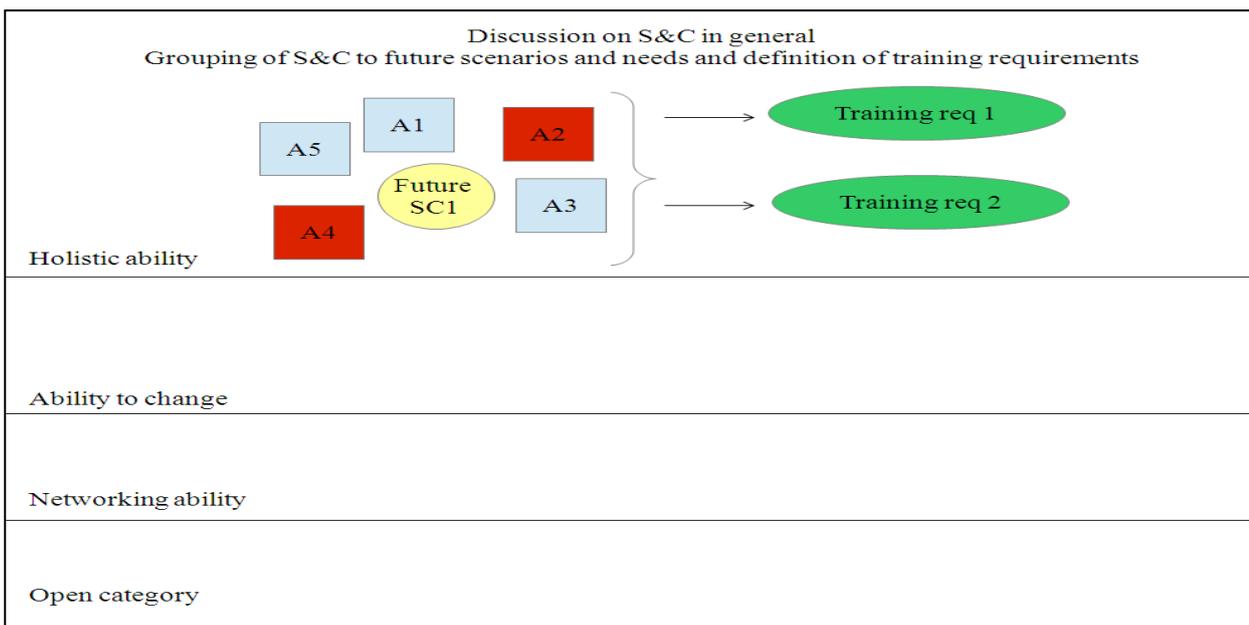
Fig 3: S&C and training requirements

A Please discuss future advisory scenarios and the needed S&C (collected above)

B Group the different S&C (A1 – Ax) for different scenarios

C Please try to derive the training requirements (T1 – Tx) for the different scenarios

VI - Guideline questions for the workshop (grouped by different aspects)

Please do not too much focus on these questions if your participants go into a lively discussion by themselves. These questions should just help you in case it is hard for the group to understand about which kinds of skills you want them to discuss):

Explore the S&C in agronomic and technical reasoning:

- o In advisory situations and discussions, do you sometimes have the impression that you are lacking the technical background to move forward/provide an answer to the question? If yes, how do you act?
- o Where do you seek/find information for advisory situations in which you don't feel well informed about the technical background?
- o When giving an advice do you explain which technical/scientific background is behind what you are recommending?

Explore the capability of keeping up to what is at stake

- o Do you remember a situation in which the farmer knew more about the technical/political background of the discussed issue than you did?
- o How much of your working time does it take to stay up to date regarding current pest problem, new pesticides and application techniques, revisions of statutes etc.? On which ways to you get that knowledge?
- o Do you feel at ease in discussion with farmers, when it comes to current topics?
- o During a farm visit, did you ever have the impression that what you tried to explain to the farmer was not relevant to him at the given time and in the given situation?

Access to resources:

- o How do you get to know the latest technical aspects?
- o How is knowledge on new aspects spread in your institution? Do you have to seek for new information actively or do you get it automatically? Are you satisfied with the way you get access to knowledge in your institution, what could be improved?
- o In an advisory situation in which you were not able to move forward, which options for support did you mobilise?
- o Does it take you long to prepare the background materials for you farm visits/group meetings? If yes, what could be improved?

Explore the holistic view and ability to carry on change:

Please recall a recent advisory situation:

- o Did the farmer move onto changes during the time you were working with him?
- o Did those changes have a broader impact than just the adaption of technical innovations?
- o Did this change include a change of mind with the farmer?

- o Do you understand the drivers which made the farmer come to the changes he made?
- o Did you speak about the change and its impacts with the farmer afterwards? Which kind of feedback did you get?
- o Was the core of the issue clear to you right from the beginning of the work with the farmer?

Explore the ability to listen to the farmer and to empower:

Please recall a recent advisory situation:

- o What was your role in analysing the farmer's system?
- o Did the farmer help you to identify solutions to change the system?
- o Do you have the feeling that you understood the full dimension of the issue and that the farmer understood the full dimension of your advice?
- o How will the change be implied?
- o What will be your/the farmer's role in implying the change?
- o Did you have the feeling that you had to push or pull the farmer to move on to the changes?
- o To what extend did the knowledge the farmer already had on the issue influence the way you were advising him?
- o Was this a "standard advisory situation" for you? How did (or would) you handle unexpected situations during advisory?

Explore the networking capabilities:

- o With whom can you talk about your advising experience, about what went well or not so good?
- o (How) Do you assess the impact of your advising for the farmer?
- o Do you get training?
- o What do you do when confronted with a difficult/impossible situation with the farmer?

Explore moderation capabilities in group advisory situations:

- o How do you make participants confident?
- o How do you feel yourself safe?
- o During your group advisory, do you consider your feelings, your impulses, irritations and hesitation? How?
- o During your group advisory, do you use synergy between verbal and non-verbal communication? How?
- o During your group advisory, how do you make sure that everyone can identify, qualify, say what he has to say without becoming intrusive to others?
- o How do you avoid imposing your own perspective, your own references?
- o How do you take into account the uniqueness of a situation or a person, an idea shifted?
- o How do you put the situation in a broader context (systemic approach?)
- o What are the outcomes of your group advisory? Do you prove solutions, ideas, come up with new problem which need a more detailed focus?
- o During your group advisory, do you refer to a professional ethical code?
- o Do you ask farmers for feedback on your facilitation? Do you ask them if they profit from the group advisory in their daily work?

Conclusion

Using this guideline, workshop facilitation will be easily performed in the different institutions, countries and contexts, under a careful preparation in the composition of audience and in logistics. Moreover, a key success factors lies into communication to the participants beforehand. The more accurate information given to the participants regarding objectives of the workshop, the more productive workshop will be.

Each time the participants are asked which new insights on their skills and competencies they gain, the answers clearly showed the value of the workshop.
This type of workshop could be used to sensitise advisers for the importance of various skills and to set up a road map, best together with the coach and the manager, which skills the advisers want to work on, which aims are behind and which aspects must be improved.

REFERENCES

[1] http://www.metaplan.de/downloads/pdf/Metaplan_Basiswissen_Englisch.pdf   pages 4/5, pages 4/5, 6 and 17 to 19.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

⇨ S&C: Skills and Competencies

APPENDIX: *Questionnaires*

<u>Questionnaire Adviser</u>

1. Are you: □ Adviser □ Teacher □ Other

2. Since how many years are you working in this position? _____ years

3. What are your main tasks? _____
_____

4. Which skills/competences do you consider essential for your daily work and why? _____
_____
_____

5. How important are non-technical skills in your opinion?

□ not important □ less important impo□ant

□ very important most□mportant

6. Are there situations both in organising your work and in contact with farmers/students, in which you reach limits? Could you describe such situations?
Can you imagine any skills which would help you to handle the situation?
_____
_____

7. Do/Did you get training to develop your skills in advising/teaching during the last five years?

If yes,
how often? _____

in which fields? _____

provided by whom (in-house or off-house)
_____

which skills did you work on?

□ technical s and c   □ non-technical (social) s and c
□ as well technical as social s and c

8. Do you think that the training helped you to improve your advising/teaching?
_____

Why/why not?
_____

9. In which fields would you require further training and how would you profit from such training in your daily work?

If no training needed:

Why not?

10. Are there fields in which you would like to have training? Which aspects would that include and which competencies would you like to improve with the training? How would that affect you daily work as an adviser/teacher?

11. Did you get new insights referring to social skills (s) and competencies (c) for daily advising and/or teaching during the workshop?

If yes, what did you learn? –

Specially referring to

- Holistic view and ability to carry on change
- Ability to listen and empower
- Networking and continuous progress ability

12. Do you use already some or all of the discussed s and c –

actually in your daily work?

13. Apart from technical and social skills, what do you think which aspects most importantly influence the way you work as an adviser? Please explain why. –

time management?

position in your company?

Job description-versus reality?

role of stakeholders?

advisory situation in general?

14. What skills and competencies do you think are most important for your current and future work besides the technical knowledge and skills?

Methodological skills
☐ 1. One-to-one situation (one-to-family)
☐ 2. Working with groups (group interaction)

Organizing process

☐ 3. Project management
☐ 4. Organizing networking

Personal development of the adviser
☐ 5. Self-reflection about his role in the advising process

☐ 6. Others

15. Please mark the following competencies with grades from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (most important) regarding your current advisory work?

☐ 7. Working in a team and guiding a team

☐ 8. Rhetoric, presentation

☐ 9. Self and time management

☐ 10. Project management / project advising

☐ 11. Design of advisory processes

☐ 12. Dealing with difficult situations in advising / change management

☐ 13. Moderation and management of meetings

☐ 14. Marketing / public relations

☐ 15. Management of education and events

☐ 16. Advising and accompanying groups

17.

16. Do you think that the profile will change in the future? If yes, do you think that the S&C will help you to cope?

If yes, please indicate the importance of the competencies as you anticipate:

☐ 18. Working in a team and guiding a team

☐ 19. Rhetoric, presentation

☐ 20. Self and time management

☐ 21. Project management / project advising

☐ 22. Design of advisory processes

☐ 23. Dealing with difficult situations in advising / change management

☐ 24. Moderation and management of meetings

☐ 25. Marketing / public relations

☐ 26. Management of education and events

☐ 27. Advising and accompanying groups

17. Are there important s and c you are missing to face the challenges of the future?

Questionnaire Moderator

1. Are you: ☐ Adviser   ☐ Teacher   ☐ Other

2. Since how many years are you working in this position?   years

3. What are your main tasks?

4. Do you have experience with the moderation/facilitation of workshops?

5. How many persons participate in the workshop?

6. What is your name (moderator of the workshop)?

7. Date and duration of the workshop?

8. During your workshop, did you spotted one or several dilemmas needing to be examined in more details?

9. Have the members of the workshop collaborated in the workshop?
     ☐ Yes   ☐ no   ☐ partial

10. How the members of the workshop cope with the workshop in general and the asked questions.

11. Do you think the members of the workshop get new ideas from the workshop?

12. Do you think the members of the workshop have reflected their advisory work and needs?

13. In which knowledge/skills/instruments/organisational aspects do you think the participants have further training or support needed to face the challenges in their professional work?