The Johari Window: A Model of Feedback and Selfdisclosure in Training

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The feedback process is one of the most important concepts in the training process. It offers the possibility for those involved in the training process to perceive themselves through verbal and non-verbal communication. The information provided by a person gives the others clues about the effects their behaviour has on them, about how they feel and how they perceive the others (feedback and Selfdisclosure). At the same time, feedback is a reaction of the others put in terms of emotions and perceptions indicating the way a person's behaviour influences those around (receiving feedback).

One of the most efficient ways of giving and receiving feedback is the "Johari Window", which will be presented next.

1. Introduction

The training of military personnel requires a different approach from that of the classical pedagogy, an approach focused on adult training (initially called andragogy). Although it may appear as a simple terminology change, it encloses consistent differences: all those who have participated in at least one *training session* (the term used by the Human resources departments of the best organizations) knows that leadership skills and problem solving skills are not developed through classes, practical sessions or seminaries, but through training.

Students are not taught by the instructor, but they collaborate with him/her, as adults need to be **active participants** in the learning process. Adults come with an **experience** package which needs to be taken into consideration. It is highly unlikely for an officer taking part in an advanced training to never have fulfilled the obligations of his commander, even if for a brief period of time. Furthermore, choosing a certain specialization training goes to prove the officer is interested in the specific field. It is from this perspective that the instructor needs to ensure a basis for the **self guidance and continuous learning** of the students.

The graduate professional model (the social demand), indeed,

represents a standard for all the personnel involved in the training process, but it is a necessity to take into account that each requirement imposed by the model already exists within the trainees background at an incipient level.

In addition, after finishing the training the students will fill hierarchically equivalent yet different positions, which mean that the training program needs **to be correlated with the training needs** of the participants and the **availability** to partake in the training. The training needs of the students will be used as a motivation, as instructors need to overcome student resistance (it is triggered by trainings which come as an external imposition).

Achieving these goals can be optimally done by placing adult training within the framework of experiential training and by using the group as a training environment.

The first condition requires ensuring ht conditions for the individual to critically analyze the ongoing activity, to extract the necessary information and to apply it. There are five stages to this: experiencing, discussing individual experiences, processing these experiences, the generalization and applying the results.

Using the group as a training environment offers emotional support to the students and encourages analytical attitudes, experiencing new concepts, obtaining feedback regarding reactions to the new ideas.

Giving and receiving feedback is a critical dimension of small group training. Feedback increases awareness about the way the others perceive us. It is obviously not an easy process. It involves several essential elements: trust, acceptance, openness and concern about the needs of the others. Giving feedback is a skill which can be learned and improved.

2. Description of the Model

The "Johari Window" illustrates the process of giving and receiving feedback. Psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham developed the model in the 1950's in order to use it in their own group training program.

The model was named by combining the names of its creators (Joseph and Harry), that is why it was initially written in the publications of the time as JoHari.

At present the Johari Window is important especially because of its efficiency in the development of the so called soft skills: empathy, cooperation, inter-group relations, and personal development.

The starting point of the model was the assumption that as teams mature and communication within ht group is developed, performances grow and less energy is used to solve internal problems, thus allowing for

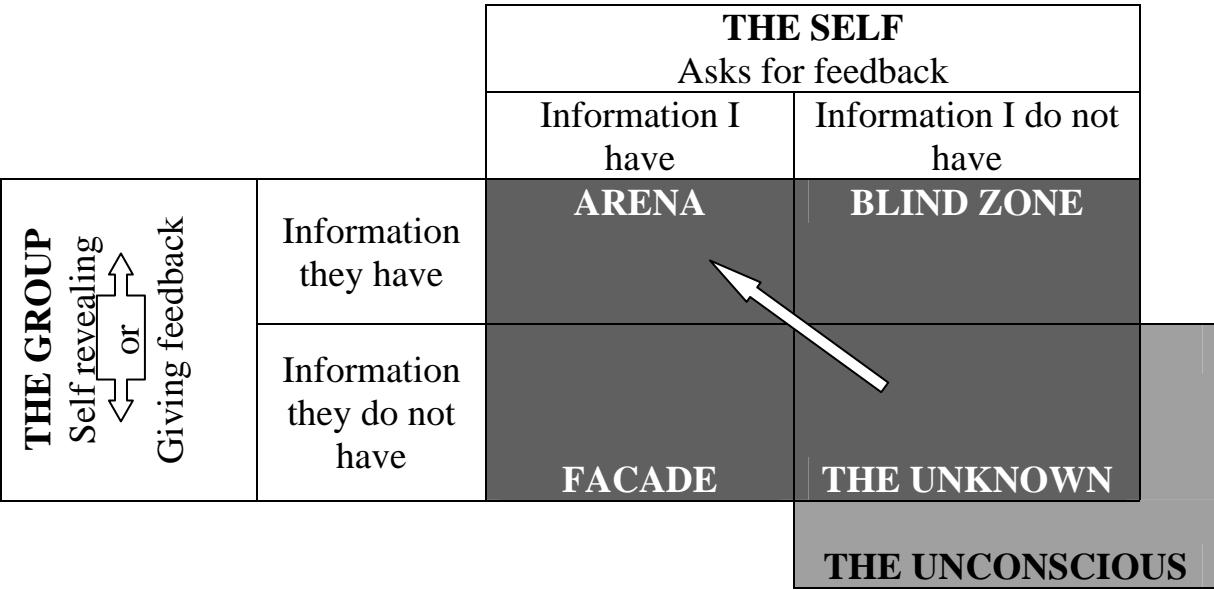more energy to be used in order to fulfil the goals of the groups and in order to generate productive results.

		THE SELF Asks for feedback	
		Information I have	Information I do not have
THE GROUP Self revealing or Giving feedback	Information they have	**ARENA**	**BLIND ZONE**
	Information they do not have	**FACADE**	**THE UNKNOWN** **THE UNCONSCIOUS**

Fig. no 1 Johari Window

The Johari Window has to be regarded as a communication window through which we provide and receive information both about ourselves and the others.

As illustrated by figure no. 1, the Johari Window is made up by panels, which appear as a result of the intersection of the rows and columns representing the known and unknown information an individual has about himself (the columns) and the same information available in the group he activates in (the rows).

The data in the rows and columns changes position from one panel to another as the level of mutual trust and feedback exchanges vary within the group. These position changes determine the variation of the dimension and shape of the Window panels.

The first panel – the "Arena" – contains information about the respective individual, known both by himself as well as the group. Characterized by open and sincere information exchanges between the individual and the group, this behavior is public and accessible to all members. The "Arena" grows significantly as the level of trust within the group grows, as individuals share ever more information, especially self related information.

The second panel, the "Blind Zone", contains information the individual may not know about himself, but which may be available to the group. It is information unconsciously offered by the individual in the communication process (avoiding eye contact, stalling), but which is noticed by the group.

The third panel, called the "Façade" or the "Hidden Area", contains information known to the individual, but unavailable to the group. It is information the individual withholds for fear that his/her emotions, perceptions, opinions regarding the group or certain members he/she would be rejected, attacked or hurt. Therefore, these data are kept secret.

Before taking the risk of sharing certain information with the group, the individual needs to be sure of the support of the group, which involves receiving a positive reaction then exposing feelings, reasonings, and reactions. In order to test this, the individual needs to reveal certain aspects of his/her own personality. On the other hand, certain pieces of information can be kept secret with the purpose of manipulating or controlling the others.

The last panel, the "Unknown", contains information regarding the personality of the individual unknown both to the individual in question and to the group. It is possible for the subject to never access information deep in his/her unconscious. Nevertheless, both the group and the subject can receive many other pieces of information through the feedback exchange. This unknown area contains elements connected to an intrapersonal dynamic, memories from the early childhood, latent capabilities and unknown resources. The limits of this panel vary depending on the volume of feedback wanted and accepted. It is highly unlikely for the individual to be aware of all the aspects of his/her own personality, and the content of the "unknown" panel is the information that will remain inaccessible (the unconscious, as Freud put it).

In a group made up with the purpose of training or personal development, each member can make efforts to reach an individual objective, and the group objective at the same time. Let us assume, for example, that we are aiming to reduce the size of the "Blind Zone" (BZ), which involves moving the vertical limit separating the panels to the right. The "Arena" (A) and the "Façade" (F) will gain more space, while the BZ and the "Unknown" (U) will be reduced. The only way to take advantage of the information contained in the BZ is to ask for feedback from the group. Provided the individual constantly asks for feedback and is open to what he/she receives, the dimensions of the BZ will decrease (figure no. 2).
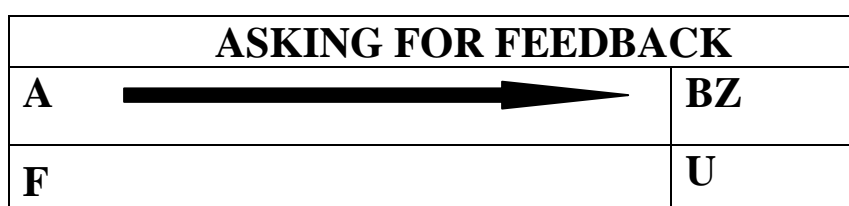
ASKING FOR FEEDBACK	
A $\longrightarrow$	BZ
F	U

Fig. no 2 Reducing the dimensions of the BZ

Let us assume we intend to reduce the F panel, which is to move the horizontal separating line lower. This can be done by publicly expressing one's own perceptions, emotions, and opinions regarding specific aspects of the group and its members. This type of feedback indicates the exact position of the individual to the group. The other participants no longer need to guess the meaning of the individual's actions. As the subject reveals more and more about his/her own personality, the F panel's dimensions will decrease (figure no. 3).
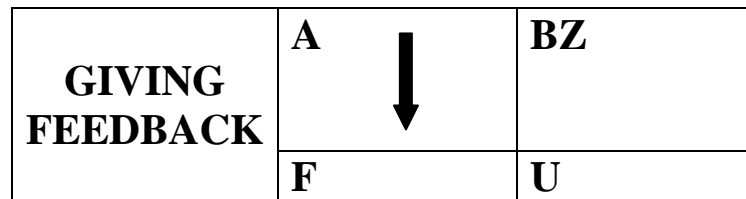
GIVING FEEDBACK	A ↓	BZ
	F	U

Fig. no 3 Reducing the dimensions of the F

The panels of the Johari Window are interdependent. Changing the dimensions of one panel will influence the dimensions of the corresponding ones. For example, reducing the dimensions of the BZ or of the F we increased the dimensions of the A.

In the process of giving and receiving feedback we will unavoidably pay more attention to one of the two aspects. This will create unbalances between the supply and demand of feedback; which my affect the efficiency of the individual within the group and the reactions of the group members to the subject's behaviour. The volume and the pace at which we provide and receive feedback influence the dimension and the shape of the A.

3. Types of Windows

Because of group dynamics, the weights of giving and receiving feedback are disproportionate, and they correspond to four types of training participant profiles: the ideal participant, the interrogator, the arrogant, and the secretive (figure no 4).
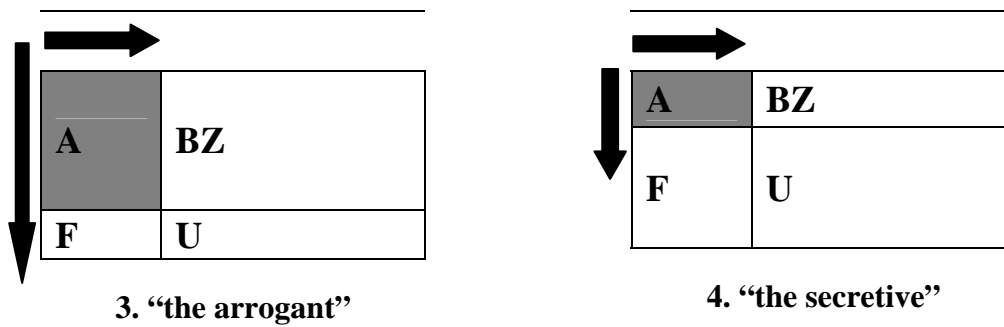
1. "the ideal participant"   **2. "the interrogator"**

3. "the arrogant"   4. "the secretive"
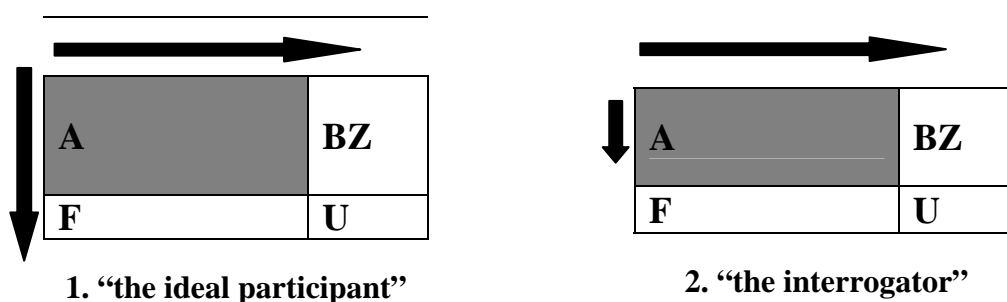
Fig. no 4 Types of training participants

3.1. The ideal participant

In the first example, the ideal participant reflects a high degree of trust awarded to the group and to all the significant relations. In this window the dimensions of the A are large because of the high degree of confidence shown to the group. Inner group rules regarding the giving and receiving of feedback facilitate such exchanges. The huge dimensions of the A suggest that a large part of the individual's behaviour is accessible to the group, thus reducing the risk of misinterpretations and misunderstandings. All members understand the subject's actions and ideas, and are aware of his/her high availability in giving and receiving feedback.

A super sized Arena is not appropriate in all relational situations. Occasional acquaintances may perceive such openness as inappropriate and dangerous. The more a person manifests his/her openness in the relations with the others, the fewer games will be played.

3.2. The interrogator

The second example suggests a window specific to those subjects who participate in the group mainly by asking questions, but who do not offer any feedback. The dimension of the F is related to the volume of information provided to the other members. It is possible for the individual to react to the rule regarding the minimal participation in the group activity by asking for information. These subjects will come up with questions like: "What do you think about this?", "What would you have done in my place?", "How do you feel about what I just said?", "How do you feel about the group?". The subject described by this window has the tendency to check other people's opinions before expressing his/her own. Expressing their own point of view is seldom done by them, which makes group perception more difficult. At a certain moment the "interrogators" were required by other members to answer questions like: "You're always asking how I feel about what is happening, but you never tell me how you

feel". The specific style of the "interrogator" may eventually trigger irritation; mistrust and reserves.

3.3. The arrogant

The third example above suggests a person who participates in group activities mainly by giving feedback, while at the same time having a very low demand for it. These subjects openly express their opinions, their own feelings regarding group activities and their position on debate topics.

These subjects may excessively criticize other members or the entire groups and expect such actions to be taken as open and appropriate. This is why they may be regarded as insensitive to the feedback received, or even as ignoring it. These subjects are either poor listeners, or they have such a manner of responding that causes the others to withhold information in the future. The latter become frustrated, complain and may even threaten to leave the training. The Arrogant are not aware of the way they relate to the others or of the impact their own behaviour has on the group's members. If these behavioural patterns are not corrected, they will be perceived as evasive, false and inaccessible. They will continue to act inefficiently because of their unilateral communication style (from the arrogant to the others). As these subjects are not open to accepting the indications and suggestions of the group, they are not able to identify the elements that need to be changed.

3.4. The secretive

The fourth window illustrates a person who participates in group activities by merely observing. These subjects do not have much information on themselves, nor does the group. They are the silent members of the group, who do not provide nor require any feedback. The members of the group encounter difficulties in identifying a way to relate to them. The "Turtle" is a mysterious person. These persons appear to be surrounded by a shell,, isolating them from the rest of the group. When criticized for the lack of participation, they argue that they "learn better by listening". Although they perceive active participation as very tiresome, it is highly recommendable as it is mush more constructive than maintaining a passive attitude. The shell specific to these subjects prevents any attempt of external influence and at the same time blocks any expression of their own ideas. Those in this category make considerable efforts to maintain this closed system because of the high pressure put on their own behaviour by the group rules.

The goal of asking for feedback and of self revealing is shifting information from and F panels to the A panel, where everyone can see it.

The process of asking for and giving feedback also causes information shifts from the U panel to the A area. It is important to relate a personal experience to an event taking place in the group: it provides understanding and inspiration.

Providing non-threatening, constructive feedback takes exercise. We need to open ourselves to the others' needs and to be able to see the world through their eyes. In order for the feedback that we provide to be valuable to the group we need to manifest acceptance in the relations with the group members and with ourselves.

4. Training and Personal Development Methods
4.1. Evaluation grid

There are as many ways to use the model of Ingham and Luft as there are in the case of better known models: the basic needs pyramid (Maslow), the stages of group development (Tuckman), transactional analysis, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).
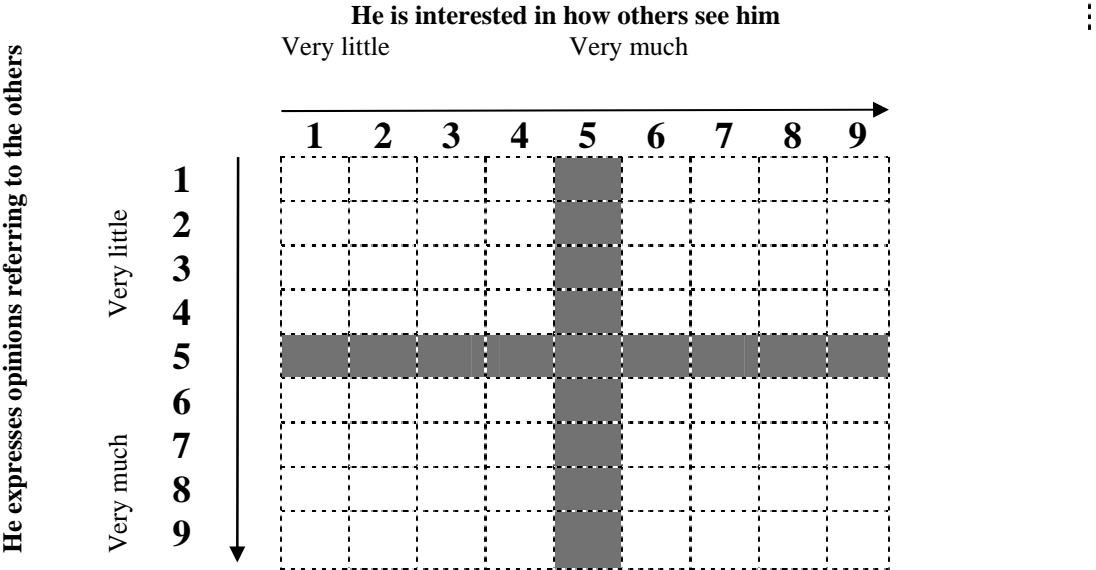

Fig. no. 5 The Johari Window: evaluation grid
(*the grid may be filled in by a student or a trainer*)

4.2. Qualifier evaluation grid

Among other instruments developed from the theory of the two authors, qualifier evaluation grids can be applied to the training process. There are two types of such instrument, one asking for six string points to be marked, the other for six weak spots, as presented in figure no. 6 and 7.

In both cases, first the subject makes the choice, then his/her colleagues do. The differences are analyzed. The two forms are equivalent, and they can be used in repeated evaluations.

able	accepting	adaptable	bold	Brave
calm	caring	cheerful	daring	Complex
confident	dependable	dignified	energetic	extroverted
friendly	giving	happy	helpful	idealistic
independent	ingenious	intelligent	introverted	kind
knowledgeable	logical	loving	mature	modest
nervous	observant	organized	patient	powerful
proud	quiet	reflective	relaxed	religious
responsive	searching	self assertive	self-conscious	sensible
sentimental	shy	silly	spontaneous	sympathetic
tense	trustworthy	warm	wise	witty

Fig. no. 6 The Johari Window (adapted from http://kevan.org/johari)

incompetent	intolerant	inflexible	timid	cowardly
violent	aloof	glum	stupid	simple
insecure	irresponsible	vulgar	lethargic	withdrawn
hostile	selfish	unhappy	unhelpful	cynical
needy	unimaginative	inane	brash	cruel
ignorant	irrational	distant	childish	boastful
blasè	imperceptive	chaotic	impatient	weak
embarrassed	loud	vacuous	panicky	unethical
insensitive	self-satisfied	passive	smug	rash
dispassionate	over-dramatic	dull	predictable	callous
inattentive	unloyal	cold	foolish	humourless

Fig. no. 7 The Nohari Window (adapted from http://kevan.org/nohari)

4.3. As independent training activity

The methods of giving and receiving feedback may constitute independent training sessions, with a duration of approximately 2h 30 min.

The number of participants can range between 8 and 12, with the following materials being necessary: pens, worksheets containing the Johari Window, flipcharts or projectors for each subgroup.

Objectives:

– describing a closed/open behaviours using Johari Window qualifiers;

– identifying facilitators ad inhibitors of the feedback process

– encouraging and developing open group behaviour by facilitating feedback.

Activity description:

a) The instructor presents the theory of giving and receiving feedback according to the Johari Window Model;

b) Each participant positions him/herself in a certain panel of the Johari Window and interprets the results;

c) The instructor asks the participants to evaluate for how long after the last group training session they felt the need to provide feedback to their colleagues or to insist on certain issues discussed there;

d) The group is divided in subgroups of 3-4 persons who discuss for approximately 30 minutes the results of each participant: the results of each participant are compared with the perception of the group. Group factors facilitating and hindering the giving and receiving of feedback are then identified;

e) When the lists with the facilitating and hindering factors are ready, the groups will discuss for 15 minutes the way they fulfilled the task;

f) After approximately 45 minutes the participants are reunited and asked to discuss general information concerning each subgroup. Subgroups are asked to integrate their own lists in a final list of factors; and while doing this, to identify the steps that need to be taken by the group in order to increase the action of facilitating factors and decrease that of inhibiting factors. The instructor may ask the participants to make commitments to each other that they will increase the feedback exchange.

4.4. The "Know Me" Game

Elaborated by the *Freeman Institute (www.freemaninstitute.com)* on the basis of the Johari Window, "Know Me" is an application conceived in the shape of an interactive game meant to develop human resources in an organization by:
– *consolidating teams;*
– *management of change;*
– *efficient use of interpersonal differences;*
– *development of self-awareness and self-control;*
– *improving communication.*

Addressing individuals or groups of 4-6 persons, the game allows the participants to exchange information about themselves and the organization by answering soft generated questions. Thus participants develop individual or group problem solving skills.

At present the "Know Me" game is used by prestigious organizations such as the *Royal Bank of Canada, Defense Systems Management College, University of British Columbia, Deloitte and Touche* or *South African Peace Committees.*

5. Limits of the Johari Window

If the role of feedback in group activities is indisputable, we cannot say the same about self-revealing. Humanist psychologists appreciate that a certain degree of self-revealing benefits interpersonal relations, determines

an increase of self-esteem and a much more stable image of the self. In fact it is one of the most often used techniques in psychological counselling and in humanist psychotherapy.

A high capacity for self-revealing is regarded as an indicator of good mental functioning. It involves trust in the others and self-acceptance, reduces defensive positions and the potential for disruption of normal functioning. Self-revealing is a sign of self-confidence and is oftentimes mutual: when somebody reveals something about themselves, the other is encouraged to do the same.

At the same time there are limitations to the technique of self-revealing. For example, in the contemporary society (European and North American both) people in the high social strata seldom reveal themselves to those with a lower statute; women in general reveal themselves much easier to other women than to men. On the other hand, self-revealing does not have to be mistaken for giving up confidential information (personal or professional), in which case the person would cause him/herself major damage. As I mentioned earlier, self-revealing; just like feedback, refers to one's own emotions and perceptions.

In a training situation these limitations are insignificant, as the groups are homogeneous, and the feedback required refers explicitly to the educational situation.

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