Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

TASC

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

PROBLEM TREE

MAIN FEATURES

Strengthened skills (TASC Cluster)	AIMS, FOCUSING ON SOLUTIONS
Suitable for	Teachers, Students
Difficulty level	Low
Individual setting	No
Group setup	Yes
Minimum number of participants	3 or more
Average duration	60 - 120 minutes
Special Equipment	No
Online version	Yes

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. OVERVIEW (THIS PART APPEARS IMMEDIATELY WHEN YOU OPEN THE EXERCISE)

This small-group exercise helps you explore and understand how situations and events arose and how they are a complex reality.

The problem tree is a three-step methodology for identifying major challenges and problems, along with their causes and effects. It is a type of diagram that allows group members to analyze the causes and effects of a particular challenge and how they relate to each other.

Built around a focal issue/challenge/problem, the causes of that problem are traced below, and the effects are mentioned above.

A problem tree has three parts: a trunk, roots and branches. The trunk is the main problem, challenge or problem. The roots represent the causes of the main issue, challenge or problem while the branches represent its effects.

Problem trees do more than just identify the root causes of the problem. They provide a visual breakdown of problems, challenges or problems in their manifestations and causes, and also create a visual output that can be understood by anyone. The process can be a useful method to build an individual's or group's awareness of the problem, how they and others contribute to the problem, and how it affects their lives.

2. OBJECTIVE / BENEFITS

The main advantage is that it allows participants to analyze the causes and effects of a particular problem, or challenge.

**Teachers And Students Improve School
Climate Together**

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The problem or challenge is divided into manageable and definable parts in the problem tree. This allows factors to be prioritised and helps to focus objectives and define them better.

It allows generating an ever deeper understanding of the problem, problem or challenge in question, and its causes, which are often interconnected and sometimes even contradictory. This also helps to establish who the actors involved are and what processes are at play.

Working on a problem tree in a group helps create a shared sense of understanding and create a basis for a common purpose and action to resolve related causes. It also creates and generates conversations (significative) about a particular problem, both during discussions in groups and during the final stages and debriefing of the activity.

3. Related SKILLS CLUSTERS

Problem trees are designed to identify the root causes of a problem, or challenge and to define the consequences as such are related to clusters that focus on identifying and defining problems, and challenges. It is related to defining objectives, as they can be used to analyze the consequences of the causes of even hypothetical problems (and therefore work on hypotheses).

They are also useful as a starting point, to analyse the current state of a specific situation or circumstances, identifying and contextualising the problems and problems that participants face at a given time. It can therefore form the basis for other activities, not just the goal tree, but any exercise related to the future goal or orientation, which would benefit from a problem analysis as a first step.

Objective trees are designed to identify potential solutions to a problem, problem or challenge as such are directly related to the cluster of focus on solutions and to both related skills, namely the Solution-Focused Approach and Problem-Solving with respect to the Solution Building mentality. Goal trees are goal-oriented, express goals or objectives, and as such also concern the identification of goals, and in particular, the goal-oriented approach and the future-oriented approach.

4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Step 1 / Preparation:
(MANDATORY to explain how to prepare and present the exercise to the participant)

A problem tree analysis can be performed in 2 ways:
1. The coordinator defines the problem or problem.
2. Participants define the problem.

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

In case 1, the coordinator introduces the problem that will be the topic or the topic of the problem tree. He/she may use additional context material to explain this, e.g. newspaper clippings. The coordinator explains the exercise to the participants.

In case 2, the session begins with a brainstorming activity in which participants identify the problem, challenge, or problem they want to address in the problem tree analysis. Under the guidance of the coordinator, the participants reach a consensus on the problem, challenge or problem to be addressed, and the coordinator then explains the exercise to the participants.

The main problem or challenge should be formulated from the point of view of the target group, should take the form of a negative statement and should be sufficiently specific. The problem should try to identify who are the affected people (i.e. the group of people or community concerned) and the focus period, in most cases a current or real problem. However, the exercise was also used to reflect on past problems, to hold conversations about the past, and to analyze solutions from hindsight to extract lessons learned (e.g. in history lessons).

Don't worry if it sounds like a broad topic because the problem tree will help break it down. For example, "high levels of unemployment among young people" is negative, but perhaps not specific enough. Significantly better would be: "After graduating from secondary school, young people cannot find an apprenticeship."

Step 2
Participantsare provided with a "problem tree" template (see examples below).

The problem, challenge or problem is written in the center of the model and becomes the "trunk" of the tree. This becomes the "focal problem" being analyzed. Although the understanding of what the problem is must be shared by the participants, the formulation of the problem in the "trunk" itself does not need to be written in the same way as the words for all groups, since the roots and branches will define it further.

Step 3
Thus, the group first identifies the causes of the focal problem, that is, the "roots" of the tree, and then secondly the consequences that become the branches. This can be done first individually with participants using sticky notes, then group notes and discuss with their peers, or start the discussion and reach an agreement among group members.

The heart of the exercise is the discussion, debate and dialogue that are generated when factors are organized and reorganized, often forming roots and branches that divide. Make sure the group takes its time to allow participants to explain their feelings and reasoning and record related ideas and points that emerge. If you recommend working with a single group, the coordinator to do so on a separate flip chart under headings such as solutions, concerns and decisions, if you are working with multiple subgroups, the coordinator should ask each of them to do for their ideas and emerging points during the discussion.

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The questions to be used in the discussion are:
- Does this represent the context?
- Are the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions of the problem(s) taken into account?
- Which causes and consequences are improving, which are getting worse, and which ones remain practically the same?
- What are the most severe consequences? Which are the most worrying? What criteria are essential for us when thinking of a way forward?
- What are the easiest / most difficult causes to deal with?
- What possible solutions or options could there be? Where could a change help address a cause or consequence or create a solution?
- What decisions have we taken and what actions have we agreed?

Final step / Conclusion:
(MANDATORY to explain what to do to conclude the exercise)

Participants then examine the flow of thought and the logic and reasons behind the relationships they have established between roots and branches. They also check the tree as a whole and make sure that in their opinion it is valid and complete. It is important to review the sequence of causes and effects to make sure they are clear and make logical sense (for example, this leads to this, or there is a missing step, and this is the effect of what happens). It is important to ensure that there is agreement between the participants.

The questions that should be asked here are: are these causes sufficient to explain why these consequences occur? If participants agree that the answer is yes, the tree diagram of the problem is considered definitive.

5. CLOSING

In the case of a breakdown into smaller groups, each group explains its own diagram and highlights how the discussion took place, explaining the main points and ideas leading to the content of the chart (and as indicated, they are recorded separately). First, participants in the other groups are asked to provide feedback. The coordinator then summarises the exercise, underlining the commonalities between the diagrams and highlighting any significant differences.

When working with a single group, the coordinator summarizes the result and also focuses on the discussion that took place during the exercise, using the main ideas and points collected in the separate card as a guideline.

The coordinator should be aware of the risks of bias, judgment, blame, etc., which are reflected explicitly or implicitly in the tree of challenges and/or may have emerged during discussions. In these cases, the coordinator can use them to start a conversation about these topics and ask participants when they emerged during the discussion and what happened when they did, how they feel about them, how they relate to their

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

context, etc. For more information on how to elaborate on these questions, refer to Chapter 2, where you can find many examples.

The coordinator should also ask the participants
- What happened during the exercise (with particular attention to the points of discussion and analysis of the causes of the failure to reach an agreement);
- Ask each participant to give feedback on the activity (how they felt before and after the problem, their group mates, etc.) and ask them to highlight a takeaway or lesson learned.
- Summarising the main conclusions and "take-away" based on the tree.

In addition, after the exercise, the problem tree can be converted into a goal tree by reformulating each of the problems into desirable positive outcomes, as if the problem had already been treated. In this way, root causes and consequencesare transformed into root solutions or goals for change.

An objective tree aims to
- Provide a clear overview of the desired future situation once problems have been identified and reformulate into objectives.
- Check the hierarchy of objectives.
- Illustrate the means-ends relationships in a diagram.

Once completed, the objective tree summarises a desired future situation, including indicative means by which the ends could be achieved. As with the problem tree, the goal tree can provide a simplified summary of reality. It can help support the analysis and presentation of ideas/goals.

The Goal Tree template has the same format as the Problem Tree template, the problem identified in the trunk remains the same. Still, by reformulating the causes (i.e. the "roots") of the problem tree into positive statements, these now represent "Means". Participants proceed in the same way with the effects (i.e. the "branches") of the Problem Tree, which are through reformulation transformed into ends or objectives.

The exercise proceeds in the same way as the problem tree. Rewording can be done first individually with participants using sticky notes, then group notes and discussion with their peers, or start a discussion and reach agreement among group members.

Here too, the heart of the exercise is the discussion, debate and dialogue generated by reformulating the elements included in the roots and branches.
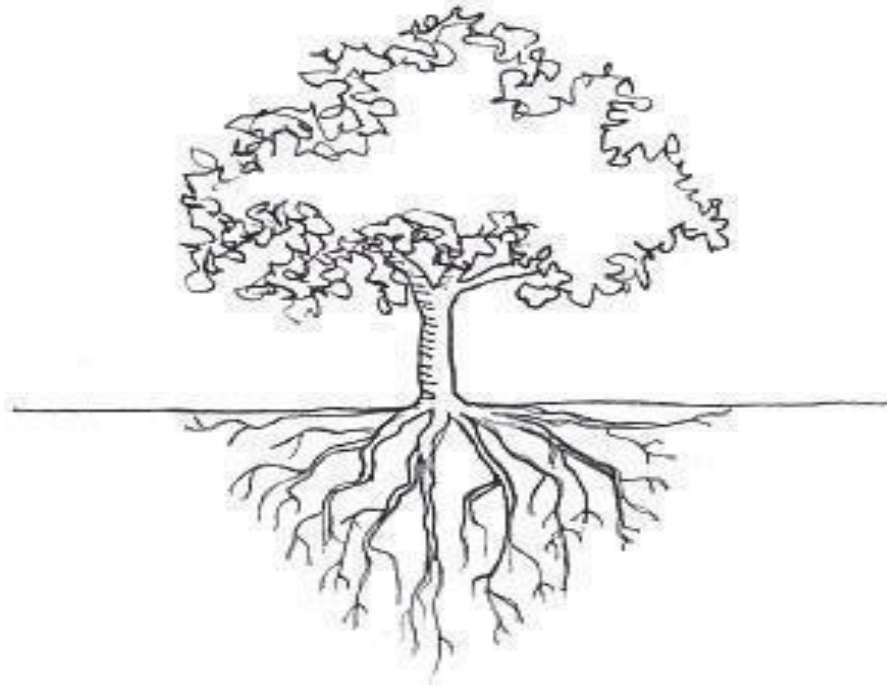

6. SPECIFIC SUBJECTS
You will need:
- Flipchart, blackboard or large paper
- Sticky notes or cards

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

- Tape or pins
- Pens, pencils, etc...

7. TIPS AND TRICKS
- Keep in mind that conducting an analysis of the problem tree requires facilitation and sufficient time (discussion in groups may take a long time, so make sure you have enough time planned for this).
- Writing each problem/cause/effect on a note or a separate post-it note during the brainstorming session allows you to (re)organize a cause-and-effect logic later.
- Where the causes or consequences are very similar, group them together to represent them all.
- Probably there will be more causes for each effect and more effects for each cause. Some causes (such as poverty) can be both root causes and main effects – in this case it can be present in both causes and consequences.
- Both for the problem free and for the goal tree, it is important that everyone feels comfortable putting forward their point of view. In some cases it may be useful to divide into smaller groups, each producing a separate tree,and then compare the results. This may be advisable, for example, when the group taking part in the exercise is large, or when there are participants who may be less vocal than others (e.g. native speakers with non-native counters; minorities, etc.).
- For the goal tree: the reformulation of problems into objectives must be done very carefully. If a statement doesn't make sense after rewording, write down a replacement goal, delete it, or leave the problem unchanged. It is important to review the objectives formulated and the resulting goal tree

Example of problem tree and goal tree template

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

8. ON-LINE VERSION

The exercise is not easily adaptable to an online context, although discussions can take place in an online environment using videoconferencing, this will not generate the same benefits as a face-to-face environment, since online communication is less rich in elements of non-verbal communication and their transmission. In any case, if necessary, it should only be done with a single group moderated by the coordinator (and not using smaller groups).

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY - SITOGRAPHY

Problem tree:

https://youtu.be/-j-_Y7D35H4

https://odi.org/en/publications/planning-tools-problem-tree-analysis/

https://engageplus.org/en/approche.asp?c=12

Teachers And Students Improve School Climate Together

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Analytical review of the application of problem tree analysis as a project design tool to improve the performance of the community based in Kenya. Authors; Wasike Wilberforce Walubengo, D. Kyalo, A. Mulwa. 2019. European Journal of Business and Management Research

Lens tree

Planning and management tools; Author; Liza Groenendijk; January 2003; ISBN: 9061642191. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258970220_Planning_and_Management_Tools

https://www.thegrassrootscollective.org/problem-objective-tree-development

https://www.slideshare.net/hairulanuarabdullah7/objective-tree-method

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/methodology-aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-200403_en.pdf