

SABONA – Tools for handling conflicts

Competence in building relations, anti bullying, conflict handling competence – all central concepts in the school – and in our everyday life. Knowledge on these areas is highly valued in the family, in the school, and in the workplace. Uncountable projects, programs and tests have been created to enhance understanding and knowledge on this.

What if we take the United Nations program for handling conflicts – accepted to be one of the best ways to learn about and deal with conflict – and make the concepts accessible for people by and large?

This is just what we have set out to do in the project named Sabona: to develop concepts and maps on handling conflicts that are so convincing and understandable that it becomes natural responses from an early age. We want to see conflict hygiene as an everyday competence on people's most important arenas.

Sabona is developed in cooperation between the Sabona Core Group (Aase Marie and Synove Faldalen, Vigdis and Lars Thyholdt), Melvaer&Lien – The Idea Entrepreneur, Transcend, and professor Galtung as our consultant. He is also the author of one of UNs conflict handling programs: "Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means".



It all started autumn 2005 at Sander school. And here is where the project manager of Sabona school program – Lars Thyholdt – is working. The teachers frequently reports on the good results. In addition to reduction in bullying, less time spent on disruption in the class room, and more sustainable solutions to conflicts – they also rapport on better climate to reach the "silent" pupils. They can also inform us that the focus on creativity spills over to the other subjects, and to other situations.

Sabona is met with interest from many areas:

- The Sabona Core Group is invited to give a workshop at WPA (World Peace Academy) in Switzerland, spring 2010 - former EPU (European Peace University) in Austria where we had our first lecture in April 2007, and then in December 2007 and March 2008.
- Through the Transcend network we have had inquiries from Spain, the Middle East, Germany, Japan and USA.
- Since we are cooperating with the world's first professor in peace studies, and he actively promotes the tools we have developed, we have a unique possibility to reach out in a global scale.
- We are in dialogue with a publishing house in order to write a introductory book on Sabona.
- In addition to the school arena, we develop the Sabona program for the family and the workplace.

In spring 2007 Hafersfjord school became a Sabona school as the first one in Rogaland. All the teachers and people in the administration have attended three workshops. In the class rooms and corridors you can hear words like: "SortingMat", "Conflictus", and "Steps to Solution". The children have developed a framework to understand conflicts, and a map for ideas to help come up with good solutions. They know that conflicts means colliding goals; that it is ok to have goals, and that it is important to be good at handling conflicts in order to be able to find creative solutions.



Sabona – Conflict and School

I see you. So what did we see? The amazing effects of embracing children with an understanding of goals and means as different areas in action when there were conflicts, misunderstandings or bad behaviour. An example: "I saw you hitting someone when entering the class room this morning. You know this is not allowed, no one should come to school and be afraid of being hurt by others during the day. But I would like to talk to you about what happened before you hit, and what you wanted to express. It seemed to me that something happened that was very important to you". Beautiful things start to happen when we are sending messages about both goals and means each time there is trouble. Step by step the children picked up on the understanding that these two things were different: Even though he or she did something that was considered "bad behaviour", the goal behind the action might be good – or legitimate. When encouraging the children every day to express their goals, dreams and wishes became a part of the school culture, the focus in conflicts was changed from stopping and sanctioning violence to finding effective and positive means to reach the goals – and develop creativity to be able to include other people's goals in the processes/ solutions as well.

What a change of focus! What a wonderful way to meet a child searching for her or his own voice; eager to learn how the world works!

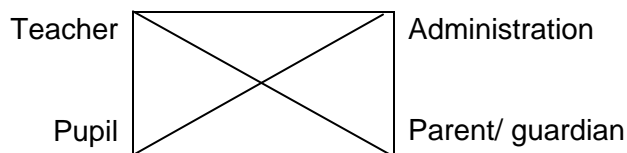
So we were unable to keep this knowledge and results to ourselves. In deep gratitude to the person who put these theories forward in the first place – Professor Johan Galtung – we now invite you to take part in this groundbreaking experience! The Sabona Core Group consists of Vigdis and Lars Thyholdt, Aase Marie and Synove Faldalen, and we focus on the three pillars: Family, School and Workplace.

The school is the unit

When we started Sabona in School autumn 2005, we focused on one class level only, and planned to develop the concept for that level. We soon found that Sabona is very much about attitude – of the grown ups – and the kind of conflict hygiene that develops between teachers and between teacher and the pupils. When the children are met with a "Sabona attitude" from all the grown ups at school – wonderful things start to happen. Therefore – we are only working with whole schools.

4 Parties

All institutions have their own infrastructure, framework and parties. The four parties in the school system are: teachers, children, parents and administration. The four parties might have the same goals, but more often there might be conflicts along these lines. It is important to recognise the different parties' goals – in order to be able to work constructively with everyone involved. The conflict lines are not necessarily the problem, but how we deal with them, and how good we are at finding creative and constructive solutions. Some examples may clarify the kind of conflicts that arise from the school system: twenty-five children competing for the attention of one teacher. Teachers ask parents/ guardians to participate – but get frustrated when they become too busy. Staff would sometimes like to have a quiet working place – children are not likely to be quiet. The school system put restraints, demands and limitations on a child's life. Children did not ask for this in the first place.



The figure shows the parties in the school, and how they are interrelated. Knowing this will help us reduce/ overcome structural violence, and give ideas on how to plan for positive circles and constructive actions.

3 phases



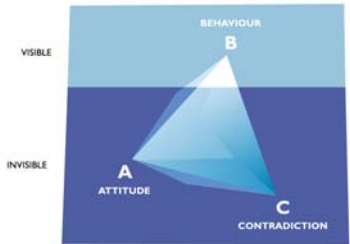
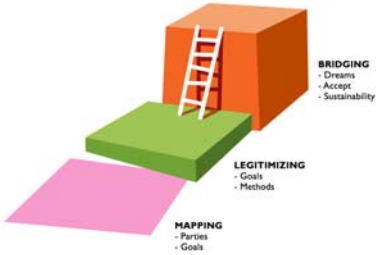

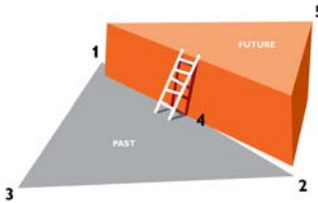

The venture of introducing SABONA to schools happens in three phases:

Learning: Firstly, teachers and staff need to gain an understanding of SABONA and make it their own.

Teaching: Pupils will acquire knowledge of SABONA as a part of social practice and school norms.

Applying: When teachers and students have internalised the conflict tools, it can be applied actively in conflicts that arise in the classroom or at the playground. The knowledge enters as a part of the schools culture – and as a part of everyday language.

Sabona – an Introduction to the Concepts

 	<p>Sabona – I see you "I see you", "I acknowledge your existence", "I take you in". This is how they say hello in the Zulu culture. Seeing a person, and seeing beyond behaviour is the essence of the concept. Grownups with skills in conflict hygiene give children possibilities to develop their own identity, personality and skills in building relations. Everything that lives has goals. In order to achieve our goals we employ a wide range of means. Goals and means – children need adults to see both. Grownups that are able to distinguish between goals and means, and help children develop empathetic and effective means are vital. This is how children understand which goals are OK to have. A part of growing up is to discover my own goals, and trying out different means to obtain the goals. Sometimes a positive goal is pursued by negative means. When the grownups acknowledge the positive goal, it is easier for a child to accept the need to find better means to achieve what they want.</p>
	<p>ABC Triangle Conflicts can be defined as incompatible goals, rather than incompatible persons, countries etc. When goals collide, a contradiction is born. Something has happened <i>between</i> people and leads to negative feelings and thoughts <i>inside</i> the involved persons. The body's reaction to blocked goals is to release adrenalin and noradrenalin so as to increase strength to be able to overcome the obstruction. A frustrated attitude is followed by action – verbal and nonverbal – and this is what we can see from <i>outside</i>. Though the action is easy to see, the objective might not be. We usually treat the reaction – "the smoke" so to speak - as if it was the fire. The ABC triangle is a diagram that can help us separate means from ends; behaviour from thoughts/ feelings. Moreover, it can help identify the point where goals collide.</p>
	<p>TRANSCEND method Mapping, legitimising, bridging. The first two steps are based on one-on-one dialogues, doing the bridging process together. Mapping is the process of identifying all the parties involved as well as their different goals. Legitimising is to evaluate means and ends to see if they are okay. By "OK" we mean that they do not violate other peoples basic needs. When the legitimate goals are found we come together and start bridging a solution anchored in the future. Creativity and dialogue are required to see which future can hold/ accommodate/ host the legitimate goals.</p>
	<p>SortingMat ® The SortingMat is used in the mapping dialogues. In one-on-one dialogues with the teacher/ conflict worker each and every party has a chance to explore their feelings, thoughts and experiences in different frames. Future, past, good, bad – the concept is built on basics that can be acknowledged by everyone. Respect is basic in the situation, and the problems are shared with, but not overtaken by the dialogue partner. Focus is on developing a future that can hold all the legitimate goals.</p>
	<p>5'er Scheme 5'er Scheme helps sort out and analyse the different solutions that are suggested in the process. Position one and two represent winning or losing. Three is withdrawal, and four is all kinds of compromises between the different claims/ goals involved. Five is the outcome where all parties are seen and heard, and where the solution is to create a new reality that can hold all the legitimate goals of all the parties.</p>
	<p>The ACC Principle – what does a good apology look like? Misunderstandings or wrong doing have a tendency to knot up the relation between people. Experiences have shown that the following three elements constitute a useful tool to untie the relation knot. Acknowledge: I did something that had better been undone. Concretizing: This is what was said/ done – leaving the other parties the possibility to enter into a dialogue about the facts. Changing: Wrongdoings are easier to carry when people have reasons to believe it will not happen again.</p>

SABONA – Idea and theoretical foundation

I see you

"Sabona" means: "I see you" and is anchored in the Zulu culture where reconciliation is a fundamental element for progression as a person and as a society.

Conflicts arise because we have different, and very often contradictory, desires or goals; because we use sometimes good and sometimes not so good means for achieving what we want; and because we in general lack words/ a good language for managing situations where differing goals or destructive means are revealed. One could say that whether situations lead to conflict or peaceful coexistence, they are still made of the same thing – the will. People *want* things. When people have goals that don't collide, a round of wills is not likely to be problematic. What create conflicts are incompatible goals, or goals that negate each other. "Conflict" is for most of us a negatively charged word. It is generally related to unpleasantness, violence, hurt feelings, broken relations, and deadlocked situations. Yet, "collisions of wills" are a natural part of life, an everyday occurrence, and aren't necessarily a problem unless we lack useful concepts for understanding what is happening, or lack training in creative and future-oriented conflict transformation. *Sabona* is training in conflict transformation, a form of conflict hygiene; by practicing simple steps that become our natural routine, we are better prepared to meet conflicts, large and small.

Sabona builds theoretically and methodologically on TRANSCENDs (see below) conflict transformation concept, developed by Professor Johan Galtung, in light of his experience with international conflict transformation over many years, in many countries, and many different cultures. *Sabona* helps us to see that all conflicts are at a basic level the same, whether large or small, personal or global. *Sabona* builds upon our deep humanity– with a starting point in the nature of human beings. From that point of departure, a framework for understanding and a set of tools for interacting have been developed. *Sabona* builds on fundamental respect – both for 'self' and for 'the others'– and provides language and methods for meeting conflict in a creative, solutions-oriented and innovative way. *Sabona* includes tools that can be learned quickly, are easy to use, and which are reinforcing because they give a rapid "payback". The tools provided in *Sabona* make active participation in conflict transformation processes possible, even for children and youth, resulting in the development of feelings of responsibility, solidarity, and empowerment.

The task we set for ourselves was to develop a basic toolkit for handling conflicts. Facilitated with pedagogic tools and a program for implementing the concepts in school. From professor Galtung's huge material we have chosen six concepts as a basic introduction. These concepts are: Sabona – to see beyond the means, ABC-triangle, the Transcend-method, the Sorting-Mat, Steps to Solutions, and the ACC-principle. This is what we call Sabona.

TRANSCEND

TRANSCEND is an international network for peace and development, with their headquarters on the Internet, www.transcend.org. Professor Johan Galtung is the founder and co-director of TRANSCEND, which has around 400 members and several centres around the world. Their main tasks include mediation, conciliation, peace building, peace journalism, and peace education, carried out partly through direct efforts in the field, and partly through training. TRANSCEND Peace University, the world's largest Internet University in Peace Studies, plays an important role, together with trainers from Transcend centres. In addition, widespread information about peaceful means for achieving peace is disseminated through media and literature. Many books are available, in 20 languages, including the central United Nations manual, [Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means: The TRANSCEND Method](#).

Professor Johan Galtung has worked with conflict transformation for over 50 years, at all levels of society and in all parts of the world. He has written more than 140 books; is the father of modern peace research, and the origin of the concept of "structural violence". His extensive experience and competence has given him a unique insight in conflict work, and forms the fundament for a way of meeting people in conflict situations that opens new possibilities and gives hope for the future.

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