TOOL | THE FIE MODEL

How is the tool linked to Entrepreneurship PBL?

FIE can function both as a creativity-supporting process tool, a learning/formation process for students and a competence-building tool for entrepreneurship among students.

In other words, it can support the development of a new PBL project, where FIE becomes a preliminary study for the project itself. FIE may also be used in the project itself, where it can increase the likelihood that the project will create value for students as well as for the partners involved in the project through its innovative focus.

FIE is thus an innovation tool where a group, in close cooperation with others, experiment and explore a given problem or wonderment to find new ideas, new knowledge and new learning, which can be both economic, cultural and social in nature.

The group element is a key factor to FIE, which is based on the fundamental understanding that the success of a project, and hence the process as a whole, depends on the group's ability to collaborate and navigate in complexity and unpredictability circumstances, and on a groups willingness and ability collaborate and innovate.

What is the tool?

The name FIE is made up of the three initial letters of the Danish terms for the three phases of Connection (Forbindelse), Impression (Indtryk) and Emergence (Emergens), which are the three steps which particularly make FIE stand out from other innovative processes. FIE is a process framework — a social technology — that helps designers, educators and facilitators of unpredictable, non-linear and innovative processes navigate in creative, learning and/or transformational processes. This may be in an organisation or a teaching context, in which a group of people must work together to get a given task across the line.

In FIE, playing, experimenting, exploring and reflecting are done within an agreed framework or existing problem understanding. Through the process, traditional ideas, existing understandings and assumptions are challenged. The process always ends with a 'harvest', where the values the process has created are made explicit.

What can be achieved by using the 'FIE' model?

In the first instance, FIE is intended as a preject, i.e. a framework for exploration of an area or an issue before it becomes a project. Therefore, one can also speak of FIE as an innovation-supporting tool that can help a group
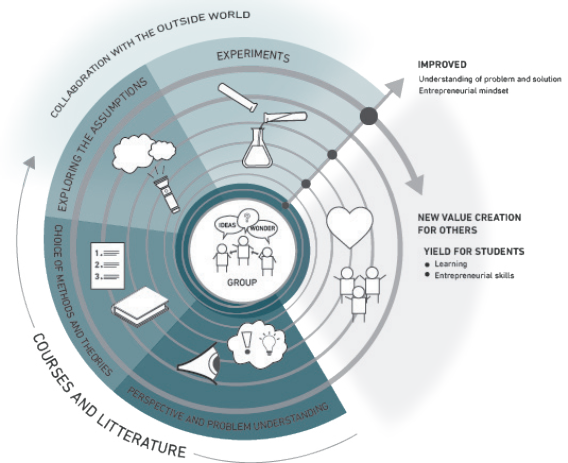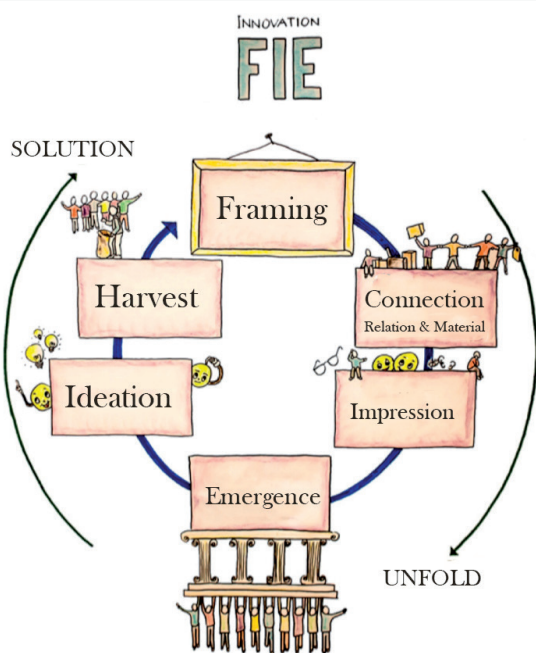

to create new ideas, thoughts and understandings. Thus, it makes up the scaffolding necessary to ensure that you get from a challenge (a learning objective) to new ideas or understandings.

Originally, playing and phenomenology were specified as two essential factors in the FIE, but the use of FIE can also be based on other scientific traditions. When play is singled out specifically, it is because play is an excellent way of breaking up our habitual ways of seeing and approaching the world, which is essential to thinking new, being innovative and getting a group to work together on a common solution.

You can read much more about play and FIE in the book Den Legende Organisation (The Playful Organisation) by Ann Charlotte Thorsted, who developed the FIE model. Ann Charlotte Thorsted is an associate professor at Aalborg University and head of Play Lab. The model is based on three years of research at LEGO, where Thorsted studied the significance of play. Here, it became apparent that in order for people to be able to navigate playfully and creatively in processes, a clear framework is required which they can lean on both during 1) the design of a process and 2) in relation to navigating in these often complex and highly unpredictable, creative and innovative processes.

How is it used?

The FIE model is shown below. The philosophy behind FIE is that in order for us to be able to solve anything at all, an unfolding is first needed, which is what we see marked on the right and left side of the model. In other words, before we start focusing more specifically on

feel comfortable with each other and thus become able to move into an unpredictable, creative and not clearly goal-driven process.

Next, it is also important to take the time to understand the problem from different perspectives and have an eye for our own and others' preconceptions that may hinder the emergence of the new. Therefore, the right side of the FIE model constitutes another form of slowness than that which typically characterises the majority of innovation processes, where attention is primarily aimed at developing a solution from the start. This part — idea generation — comes later in a FIE process and is located on the left side of the model.

The six different steps of the FIE must be considered as guiding steps to plan and navigate by at a general level in a FIE process. Often, there will be overlaps and jumps which in no way match a linear process. Linearity is not the intention of FIE.

Under the **Framework,** the direction is set for the process and practical matters are agreed on. It is important to the take the time to reach a common understanding of the challenge before you embark on the process. In practice, it has often been found that this may be the critical point, which is unfolded in much more detail in the book The Playful Organisation.

In the **Connection phase,** the focus is on the establishment of the necessary collaboration between group members, and to create a contact to the problem that is to be worked with.

During the **Impression phase**, the challenge is expanded and explored in more depth and different creative tools are used to open the way to a more attuned (vocative) and nuanced understanding. New impressions are added on, and the complexity increases as the different perspectives are unfolded.

The **Emergence phase** is 'the turning point' where something new emerges. Here, you are midway between the unfolding and the solution, which is also referred to as a last moment of deliberation. Here, more philosophical methods are often employed to question the assumptions underlying the impression and the first emerging ideas that have arisen along the way. Has something been overlooked, or is there something driving the group that may be problematic?

Ideation, as in other innovative processes, is where ideas gain altitude.

In the **Harvest** stage, it is ensured that something concrete comes out of the process which can be taken forward. This may be a concrete idea which is now brought into a project plan, a new problem formulation or a learning process for the development of entrepreneurship skills. But it may also be that this was just the first step in a project maturation process or a way to establish a new angle on a given issue.

Sources
Thorsted, A. C. (2013). Den legende organisation: Når livet leger med os. Copenhagen: LandR Business.

Thorsted, A. C. (2014). How play enhances creativity in problem-based learning. Academic Quarter, volume 09.

Thorsted, A. C and Schumann, K. (2018). Faciliteringskompasset. in: H. Alrø and F. T. Hansen (ed.), Dialogisk procesfacilitering. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Contact
Ann Charlotte Thorsted, Department of Communication and Psychology.