

## Module 4

# Facilitating and assessing learning

## Where are you in the process?

**MODULE 1:**  
**The context of Education, Training and Development Practices**

**MODULE 2:**  
**Training Needs Assessment**

**MODULE 3:**  
**Planning and Design of Outcomes-based Learning**

**MODULE 4:**  
**Facilitating and assessing learning**

**MODULE 5:**  
**Methods, media and technology in facilitating learning**

**MODULE 6:**  
**Management and Evaluation of ETD practices**

**MODULE 7:**  
**Continuous occupational expertise development**

# Module 4: Contents

<b>Learning outcomes</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Aim of the module</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Facilitating learning – What is facilitation?</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Adopting an approach to facilitation</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Distinguishing between an approach and methods and techniques.....	10
Approaches to training.....	10
Learning and teaching theories.....	12
How does one choose an approach?.....	14
<i>Activity 4.1: What learning/teaching theory are you most comfortable with?</i> .....	16
<b>Implementing the approach to facilitation</b> .....	<b>17</b>
The role of the facilitator.....	17
Facilitation skills.....	19
Some general observations on facilitation.....	21
<b>Choosing methods</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<i>Activity 4.2: An exercise in presentation and discussion</i> .....	24
<b>Presentation skills</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Guidelines for presentations.....	25
Presentation evaluation form.....	28
<b>The use of questions</b> .....	<b>33</b>
When to use questions.....	33
<i>Activity 4.3: Using questions</i> .....	35
Techniques to consider when using questions.....	37
How does one handle the answers to questions?.....	38
<i>Activity 4.4: Handling responses to questions</i> .....	42
<i>Activity 4.5: Creating a positive learning environment</i> .....	46
<b>Creating the learning environment</b> .....	<b>47</b>

Good communication with learners about the training programme and what follows it.	47
Preparing the venue so that it is functioning at its best.....	48
<i>Activity 4.6: Your experience of training environments.....</i>	49
<i>Activity 4.7: Creating a learning environment.....</i>	50
<i>Activity 4.8: Controlling the factors that affect learning.....</i>	51
<b>Transfer of learning.....</b>	<b>52</b>
Conditions for effective transfer of learning.....	52
Barriers to the application of learning.....	53
Facilitating transfer of learning.....	54
Minimising barriers to applying learning.....	54
Reflecting on learning experiences during training.....	55
Summarising key learning points at course closure.....	56
<i>Activity 4.9: What prevents learning?.....</i>	58
<b>General didactic principles.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Communication.....</b>	<b>64</b>
Some principles of effective communication.....	65
<i>Activity 4.10: The trainer's physical presence.....</i>	66
The art of listening in communication.....	69
<i>Activity 4.11: Questionnaire on listening skills.....</i>	70
<b>Guiding group dynamics.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Characteristics of an effective learning group.....	75
<i>Activity 4.12: Evaluating the effectiveness of a group you have         been in .....</i>	79
<i>Activity 4.13: Phases of group life.....</i>	80
Handling difficult situations and group members.....	84
<i>Activity 4.14: Handling problems in a group.....</i>	85
<b>Ethical considerations in training and development.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Assessing the learners.....</b>	<b>88</b>
What is assessments	
What is the difference between assessment and evaluation?.....	88
How does assessment influence how participants learn from an event or course?.....	89
What problems with assessment do trainers have to take special account of?.....	89
<i>Activity 4.15: Your experience of being assessed.....</i>	90
What are different purposes for assessment?.....	91
What are some important steps in planning assessment.....	92
Some assessment methods.....	93
<i>Activity 4.16: Review of Module 4.....</i>	98

<i>Activity 4.17: Group discussion on applying your learnings</i> .....	99
<i>Checklist for competencies</i> .....	100
<i>Evaluation of Module 4</i> .....	101
<b>References</b> .....	<b>102</b>

# Learning outcomes

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- ◆ Consider what it is to be an effective facilitator of learning
- ◆ Adopt and use an approach to facilitation
- ◆ Distinguish between educational approaches, methods and techniques
- ◆ Choose methods to facilitate learning
- ◆ Use some basic presentation skills
- ◆ Use a variety of questioning techniques
- ◆ Prepare the learners and learning environment
- ◆ Understand issues relating to the transfer of learning
- ◆ Describe some basic didactic principles
- ◆ Create communication and support strategies within groups
- ◆ Guide learning groups and manage their dynamics
- ◆ Consider ethical considerations in training
- ◆ Assess learners purposefully using a variety of appropriate methods.

# Aim of the module

**Module 4** aims to provide you with the opportunity to look at effective facilitation and assessment skills in the presentation of outcomes-based learning programmes. We will explore various schools of thought on learning and training, examine some basic presentation skills, questioning, and group skills as well as considering the ethical dimensions of facilitation.

# Introduction

Normally the planning and design of a course will have resulted in a curriculum (however small the learning event) which will include having looked at the profile of the learners, set objectives/ outcomes, outlined the steps and sequence of the event, decided on what is to be assessed and decided on who will run and administer the course.

It is at this stage that the actual facilitation of the course has to be decided on. It is the teacher/trainer/instructor/facilitator/developer who now has to implement what was only a plan, a design. This implementation in itself requires some practical planning and decision making. This normally involves:

- ◆ Adopting an approach
- ◆ Concretising that approach through a choice of methods and techniques
- ◆ Preparing presentations and materials (or procuring or adapting them)
- ◆ Preparing the specific assessment activities and instruments.

All this has to be done in the consciousness that one is about to engage with real people who have special needs, advantages and problems. Implementing training is therefore a multi-faceted, complex process that includes many areas. Training adults requires total commitment to excellence and a genuine belief that all people have the capacity to learn. Values, beliefs, and self-esteem are constantly being challenged and learners are being encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Learning can be seen as the gateway of opportunity that will help individuals to cope with the challenges, stress, change and ambiguities that cross their way.

# Facilitating learning – What is facilitation?

Nowadays many trainers and educators prefer to use the term **facilitation** for what they do, rather than the term **teaching** or **training**. What does this word facilitation really mean? The word **facilitate** is not a term restricted to education and training. It simply means to make things easy. So a facilitator is somebody who makes things easier, or helps, or enables something to happen. The reason many trainers want to be called facilitators is that they do not want to be thought of as authoritarian and content-centred. They wanted to be learner, rather than teacher, centred. However, teaching and training are perfectly respectable terms for the work that such practitioners do to help others learn in a planned way. So it is unhelpful to make a sharp distinction between teaching or training (thought of as bad) and facilitation (which is seen as good). A good trainer is necessarily a good facilitator. Therefore, in this Module we will use the term facilitation in the broad sense of making education or training happen in a way that effectively and efficiently leads to learning through the sensible and appropriate use of training approaches, methods and techniques.

In exploring the discourse on facilitation it is useful to consider the influence of writers such as Malcolm Knowles from the United States of America. Knowles was a formative influence on modern adult education and training throughout the world.

Knowles' ideas	In simpler language
<i>A good facilitator:</i>	
<b>Exposes learners to new possibilities for self-fulfilment:</b>	The facilitator gives learners chances and opportunities to practise and make the most of what they have learnt and what they can do.
<b>Helps learners clarify their own aspirations:</b>	Helps learners make their own hopes and ambitions clear to themselves and others.
<b>Helps learners diagnose:</b>	Helps learners examine or analyse problems to work out exactly what needs to be done. This could be with their own learning problems or with any other problem they have to solve.
<b>Helps learners identify life-problems resulting from their learning needs:</b>	Helps learners see and understand the problems they have in their lives from not knowing things they need to know, and not being able to do the things they need to be able to do.
<b>Provides physical conditions conducive to adult learning:</b>	The facilitator makes sure the place where learners learn is comfortable and easy to learn in – no noise, comfortable furniture, good light and so on.
<b>Accepts and treats learners as persons:</b>	Gives learners the respect that adults deserve.
<b>Seeks to build relationships of trust and cooperation between learners:</b>	Tries to make sure that learners get on well with each other, and that they work together well and trust one another.

**AMDIN public sector capacity development: training of trainers programme**

<b>Becomes a co-learner in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives:</b>	The facilitator is also a learner and learns things with and from the learners – doesn't pretend to know everything, and is willing to try to find out new things that learners need to know together with them.
<b>Shares with learners potential methods to achieve these objectives:</b>	Tells learners about different ways they could learn what they need to know.
<b>Helps learners to organise themselves to undertake their tasks:</b>	Gives learners chances to get themselves organised in ways that are good for doing the things they need to, in order to learn.
<b>Helps learners exploit their own experiences of learning resources:</b>	Helps learners use what they already know about where they can get things that will help them learn. For example: They might know where the library is.
<b>Gears presentation of his or her own resources to the levels of learners' experiences:</b>	Offers learners things to help them learn that they are able to use. For example: The facilitator does not tell them to use computers if they don't yet know how to; does not give them things to read that they cannot understand and so on. But also challenges them by not making things too easy.
<b>Helps learners integrate new learning with their own experiences:</b>	Helps learners to fit new things that they learn in with what they know from experience, or to change how they have understood things in the past if they need to.
<b>Involves learners in devising criteria and methods to measure progress:</b>	Works together with the learners in deciding on what kinds of tests and other forms of assessment they should have.
<b>Helps learners develop and apply self-evaluation procedures:</b>	Helps learners to think of and use ways of testing their own learning for themselves. In this way, she or he helps them be more independent.

It is clear from this list that a facilitator of learning needs to be multi-skilled and highly experienced. This list can be extended for another full page or two. What can you contribute to this from your own abilities and experience as facilitators?

With all this in mind, it is the responsibility of the trainer practitioner to select programme material, instructional strategies and instructional media that will suit the learning character of the adult learner. You will learn more about instructional media Module 5.

Presenting a training programme successfully requires resourcefulness on the part of the facilitator. As you have seen from the previous Module, there are a number of possible ways (and, of course, combinations of them) to present a training programme. It is also a matter of "practice makes perfect".

# Adopting an approach to facilitation

## *Distinguishing between an approach and methods and techniques*

For facilitation purposes it is important to distinguish between approaches, methods and techniques. What are the distinctions between these three things?

An **approach** is the general, overall way in which we set about our education and training activities. It is influenced by what we believe about learning, about human beings, and about the purposes of education and training. For example outcomes-based education is a general approach to education and training that believes that the educator should concentrate on the final results of learning (outcomes) and focus on what learners can do as well as learning of content.

A **method** is a practical way in which we implement our training. A method should be an effective way of achieving the educational purpose and should fit in with the general approach. Discussion in small groups is a method. Lecturing is a method.

A **technique** is a very specific method or part of a method. For example there are various techniques for running discussions in small groups.

Do remember that different books and authors may use different terms to these but the general pattern will be the same.

## *Approaches to training*

There are many, many approaches to education and training. Each one of them has its own foundations of belief about what education is for and what human beings are like, generally and as learners. These foundations are very important and it is important to think about what are the belief foundations of the training approaches you use.

To give a simple example. Some people believe that human beings are naturally good and eager to learn (though they may have been damaged by bad educational practices). Other people believe that human beings are not naturally good (and that indeed they may have a tendency towards sin and idleness) and that society has to help control and guide them to be good and to learn. As you can imagine, the educational approaches based upon these two sets of beliefs will be very different. (And, of course, it is not easy to say one set of beliefs is right and the other wrong because evidence can be produced in support of both.)

The approaches usually combine a theory of learning and a set of beliefs about teaching/instruction/facilitation which may be based more upon ideology and habitual practice than upon scientific evidence of effectiveness. Approaches can, at their most general, be categorised as conventional, progressive or radical.

**Conventional** approaches at their best encourage people to learn from and *conform* to the best practice of the past. Hence they are often conservative. They often have a somewhat *pessimistic view of human nature* (which they believe needs to be controlled) and do not believe that radically changing society or institutions will change people. Learning is not fun and *discipline* is needed to help encourage self-control and responsibility. They usually use *traditional teaching and training methods*. The curriculum is set by the institution, not the learners. This is a teacher-centred approach. Traditional universities are a good example of conventional approaches to education practice. Particularly negative sides of conventional approaches to education and training are authoritarianism, paternalism, and elitism.

**Progressive** approaches encourage people to reach their full natural *potential* and change their behaviour to fit in with a changing society. They generally have a very *optimistic view of human nature and society* and think that society can be reformed through democracy without revolutionary change. Their education and training methods are often *innovative*. They generally think of learning as natural and fun. People are responsible and can be independent. Learners can help create their own curriculum. This is usually a learner-centred approach. Good examples are alternative schools and pre-schools in rich middle-class communities. Particularly negative sides of progressive education are naivety, paternalism and hidden elitism (that is, the approach tends to favour the already advantaged and better educated and may in fact produce worse results for the disadvantaged than conventional approaches).

**Radical or liberatory** approaches believe that people's *potential* is harmed by *unjust and unequal societies* and that education and training should help people to change and transform their societies in a radical or revolutionary way. They believe that society is a place of conflict and clashes between classes and interest groups. Teaching methods may be quite conventional though some may reflect progressive methods. Often in practice a teacher-centred approach is adopted in spite of use of 'progressive' learner-centred methods. Particularly negative sides of radical approaches may be authoritarianism and propaganda.

Most types of education and methods of education fit under one or other of these approaches. The dividing lines between the approaches are not totally fixed and often ideas from the different approaches will be mixed together.

## ***Learning and teaching theories***

Learning theories generally underly most approaches to learning. In talking about learning theories one has to be clear whether one is restricting the term to genuine theories (supposedly based upon scientific evidence) on how those long-lasting changes in memory and behaviour that we call learning occur. This caution is needed because many so-called learning theories are really prescriptions for instruction based upon a mix of learning theory and ideological presuppositions. Hence it may be more helpful to talk about schools of thought on **learning and teaching**.

Learning occurs in many ways, but is often only partial and not always productive. As a trainer, you need to have some idea about the theories of how learning happens. You need to train in a way that fits in with what is known about how people learn. Unfortunately, it is common knowledge that there is no universally accepted theory of learning. There is no single theory that represents the “absolute truth” about learning, though modern cognitive psychology is increasingly developing our knowledge about this enormously complex phenomenon.

## **Schools of thought on learning and teaching**

### **Behaviourism**

Behaviourist theory argues that learning is a response to a stimulus. A stimulus can be associated with reward or punishment. Thus if you put your hand in a fire it is very painful and you rapidly learn not to put your hand near a fire. Learning is thus a trial-and-error process and can also be reinforced by repetition. The learner in a learning experience would thus be rewarded for correct responses and reprimanded for failures. If the learner has an enjoyable (or painful) experience, the learning process will be reinforced and remembered. If this is not the case the learner will forget the experience. Advances in cognitive psychology have led to a decline in support for Behaviourist theories of learning.

### **Humanistic theory**

The humanistic theorists regard the training practitioner and learner as unique and the learning process as an interactive one. They believe that the training practitioner should act as a facilitator and the learner should be involved in self-discovery and become self-directed. The training practitioner is responsible for creating a climate conducive to learning and evaluating learning outputs. Self-discovery and self-directed training are therefore encouraged by this school of thought – in other words, the trainer and the trainee discuss and both participate in designing the training programme. As you can see this approach is largely a set of beliefs about training practice. Recent research has tended to be sceptical about the actual effectiveness of such practice in achieving training outcomes. There are a number of learning/instructional theories that are really variants of the Humanistic one.

## **Gestalt theory**

According to this theory, learning is a more complex process than merely an enjoyable experience. Learning occurs by looking first at the whole (Gestalt is the German word for whole). In other words, it helps to see the whole, to have an overall view, to see the general pattern, before one can make sense of the details. Learning involves your whole personality. Learning takes place by means of the learner gaining understanding of wholes. A knowledge or cognitive chart is built up, patterns and relationships are seen, before one can know. One notes that many skills can only be exercised as a whole – the individual components of the skills so not work on their own. Gestalt theory believes that learning takes place through assimilation and revision of the learner's world and occurs by means of integration and perception of the learner's world.

## **Experimental theory**

This theory argues that the focus of learning must be on the emotional and intellectual sides of unique individuals as well as on real problems. Simple models cannot explain the complex learning process and trainers should therefore not distance themselves from their subjects by making use of models. They should rather use authentic case studies that focus on both the emotional and intellectual sides of the learner.

## **Meta-learning**

This theory basically argues that learners need to understand that they are learning and it is precisely this ability to think and strategise about how one learns that leads to learning success. If the success of instruction depends on the learner's learning strategy then it is in the interests of the learner to become critically conscious of his or her own learning strategy. Armed with this skill one can become a more effective lifelong learner.

## **Cooperative learning (working with others)**

The cooperative learning theory also focuses on learning how to learn rather on learning content but argues specifically for the creation of a cooperative learning experience, for example, you will find it easier to learn something if you have discussed it with peers.

## **Action learning**

Action learning stresses the asking of appropriate questions related to real life issues in conditions of risk, rather than to find the answers to questions that have already been precisely defined by others – and that do not allow for ambiguous responses because the trainers and examiners have all the approved answers. Action learning argues for a process of reflection and action, aimed at improving effectiveness of action where learning is an important outcome. The approach involves testing out ideas and then modifying the respective ideas as a consequence. Action learning is a form of learning by doing, i.e., focusing on learning and implementing pragmatic solutions with others. The action learning approach suggests that people learn best about work, at work and through work. Action learning works best when the participants have already internalised and made their own all the basic knowledge and skills appropriate to the context. Where this is not the case the approach may be counter-productive and leave participants lost and bewildered.

## **Constructivism**

This learning theory proposes that learners need to build their own understanding of new ideas. It is largely based upon the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. In the Constructivist approach the educator or trainer provides an appropriate supportive learning environment and the materials (and maybe some ideas) but does not lecture or guide. The learners are expected to learn from materials used in the environment. This approach is often linked to educational strategies such as discovery learning and a firm rejection of memorization. The learners are meant to construct their own individual meaning from the information and activities presented. The learner has to actively engage and explore the information and then manipulate it, explaining, elaborating and evaluating in order to learn. Constructivism became an immensely fashionable progressive theory but is increasingly criticised in the light of new developments in cognitive psychology and because of its lack of effectiveness, particular with the educationally disadvantaged.

## **Direct Instruction**

Direct instruction is the direct opposite of constructivism and it originated from analyses of the products of teaching. Direct instruction is a highly structured teaching approach that favours highly scripted lesson plans, fast-paced instruction, detailed teaching of individual skill components, and a sequence of skills based on extensive research and field-testing. The method focuses on small units and on frequent evaluation of achievement. Though it has drawn criticism from opponents who find it too detail-minded and teacher-directed it has been shown to be every effective.

## **Eclectic approaches**

In practice most trainers use a range of approaches (ranging from direct instruction through to constructivist discovery learning) and choose training methods that will fit in with them. Whatever the logical incompatibilities, various approaches and methods are often blended together to provide effective training intervention

## ***How does one choose an approach?***

Often the approach used to facilitating a learning event is not consciously chosen – it is simply the normal habitual approach the trainers use. Ideally this is not the case. Trainers should above all be consciously aware of everything they do and why they are doing them. Usually the default approach is modified by the contextual and practical realities. These include:

- ◆ The outcomes: What are you trying to accomplish, and which approach seems most likely to help achieve that?
- ◆ Your competencies as trainer: Some of the approaches and methods will be ones you are familiar and comfortable with.
- ◆ The costs: Some options are more cost-effective than others, but don't be overly

fooled by this variable. Cheap, mismatched training is just that.

- ◆ The confidence level of the learners: Many approaches and methods will be highly frustrating to a brand-new learner. At the same time, some methods would bore a more advanced learner. The less confidence learners have, the more supportive an environment you may want to choose.
- ◆ Access and comfort with technology: Many of the e-learning methods require a fairly high comfort with technology. They also may work better under certain technical conditions. Match your technical comfort and availability to the method.
- ◆ The degree of comfort with independent learning: This can be one of the most overlooked issues. Many learners are unused to learning independently. That's not to say they can't, but you need to know their current limits. Motivation is one of the most powerful drivers of learning. Highly independent learning solutions require a highly motivated and focused learner. Keep this in mind when choosing approaches and methods.



**Activity 4.1:** *What learning/teaching theory are you most comfortable with?*

Decide which learning theory or school of thought best matches your past good learning experience (from Module 1, Activity 1.6 on pages 44 and 45), and say why.

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# Implementing the approach to facilitation

Generally all approaches to learning and teaching will agree that the following are important for effective learning:

- ◆ The learner must be involved in the instructional process.
- ◆ Learners must assume responsibility for their own learning.
- ◆ The trainer must give feedback on the learner's progress.

This therefore suggests that key things that have to be done when you facilitate learning are:

- ◆ Involve the learners as actively as possible through participation in discussions, problem solving exercises and sharing their own opinions and experiences.
- ◆ Encourage the learners themselves to take responsibility for finding and mastering the necessary knowledge and competences with the guided help and support of the facilitator.
- ◆ Encourage the trainees to experiment, judge, and find solutions for problems.
- ◆ Encourage the learners to share the responsibility for learning with you. Both the trainer and the group are responsible for the success or failure of the training event.
- ◆ Give regular and constant feedback through formative assessment, back up by appropriate development planning counseling.
- ◆ Stress that the learner learning (achieving the learning outcomes) and applying new skills is what is important (not the trainer training).
- ◆ Cater for the learners' needs, aspirations and abilities. Both learners and the trainer should know what is expected of them and any unrealistic or unclear expectations are clarified beforehand.

## ***The role of the facilitator***

In conventional training the emphasis is on the trainer. The trainer is considered as a competent person who has superior knowledge and skills and he or she is good at communicating this knowledge and transferring the skills to others. It is the trainer's task to convey the knowledge and skills to the learner while the learner has to pick up and master whatever the trainer can offer. Often this means that the trainer actively disseminates information while the learner is, for a great part, passive. In this approach the trainer is a presenter who is responsible and accountable for what the learners should learn, how and when they should learn it and if they have learned. This is not a very productive training approach. To maximise productivity, the traditional roles and relationships of the trainer and learner will have to change.

A more facilitative approach sees the learner become more of an active and vital component of the training process. Facilitation is, therefore, a strategy that deliberately involves the learners and maximises their input and importance. It is a strategy in which the learners take a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. This is a more balanced approach to the focus and responsibilities of training. It shifts the focus of training from the trainer to the learner's needs and skills (without diminishing the importance of the trainer). This approach has some important benefits:

- ◆ It uses the learner's knowledge, experience, and frame of reference as a valued and critical input of the learning process. The learner's knowledge and experience serve as a basis for further learning experience.
- ◆ Facilitation allows the learners to become active rather than passive partners with a vested interest in their training. Training success is shared with other learners and the trainer.
- ◆ It promotes experiential learning which relevant to every-day life and the workplace, significant and meaningful, and likely to last beyond the immediate training sessions.

The *facilitative trainer* emphasises learning that takes place and not on him or herself. The trainer and the group share the responsibility for the training that takes place. As a facilitative trainer, you will state the required objectives and give the necessary background knowledge by means of a lecture, a case study or any other appropriate method. The learners have an important role in identifying possible problems, discussing them and trying to solve them. Your task is to act as resource person, to monitor the discussion and to make additional, guiding comments, where necessary.

The role of the trainer, as with all education and training practitioners, can vary from one extreme, in which the trainer assumes all responsibility for directing the learning experiences, through an area of shared responsibility, to the other extreme, where the group has the ultimate authority and the trainer is sub-ordinate to the group.

The spectrum of responsibility			
Role	Trainer has authority and responsibility	Trainer and group share responsibility	Group has authority and responsibility
Main function	Instructor	Facilitative trainer	Facilitator
Typical methods	Lectures Presentations	Experiential methods and techniques	Discussion Problem solving tasks
Typical assessment methods	Formal methods including exams and tests to assess learner progress	Some formal assessment Reflection on learning	Self-assessment Group products

At the extreme left of the above range of opposites the facilitator assumes the learners' needs, pre-plans and then imposes a learning structure on learners. The trainer's view of what is relevant, significant and meaningful takes precedence over that of the learners. At the extreme right the group process itself becomes the main agenda. Learning activities and outcomes are determined on an on-the-spot basis. Interaction between group members suggests the directions for the group to move in.

As a facilitative trainer you are not likely to revert to the very extreme positions. You will not be totally excluded from the group learning activity. You will, to some extent, control and direct the learning process for your learners, decide on the direction that their learning should take, the activities they should participate in as well as the level and manner in which they should interact with you and with each other.

It is very important, however, that you establish accurately what degree of freedom and autonomy your learners should be granted and what the degree and level of your own inputs will be. Another important aspect is that you must regularly and critically reflect on the effect that your facilitation approach and style has on your learners and their learning.

## ***Facilitation skills***

Facilitation, in general, requires competencies in the skills of relationship building, needs assessment, involving learners in planning, linking learners to learning resources and encouraging creative behaviour and learner initiative.

Facilitation is not one skill, but is a package of many skills, attitudes, beliefs and traits.  
(Fishman, 1989)

Facilitation is an interactive transactional process in which you the facilitator interact with the learners in a guiding and leadership capacity, helping them to learn and making it easier for them to learn. As an effective facilitator you play many roles within the facilitation process, including role model, counsellor, resource person, learning guide and programme planner. This requires a diverse range of skills and abilities from you as facilitator.

Five main skills categories can be distinguished:

- ◆ subject matter expertise
- ◆ personality characteristics
- ◆ interpersonal and human relations skills
- ◆ instructional design skills
- ◆ learning transaction skills

These are the central characteristics and skills necessary to your success as facilitator as well as to the inherent process of helping adults and making it easier for them to learn.

## **Subject matter expertise**

A facilitator must be a subject matter expert. You must be proficient in the theoretical, technical and practical aspects of the particular discipline or content area in which you are training. You must also show a keen interest in the subject area and the subject matter as such.

## **Personality characteristics**

A facilitator must possess personality characteristics that show care, trust, respect and encouragement. Your personality must suggest a sense of self-confidence, enthusiasm, responsiveness and creativity. As a facilitator of learning you must have understanding, flexibility, patience and humour.

## **Interpersonal and human relations skills**

Developing and maintaining good interpersonal and human relationship skills is vital to the facilitator of adult learning. The critical element in your role as facilitator of learning is the personal relationship between yourself and the learner. This requires you to show an attitude of caring, trust, respect, empathy, and overall genuineness. You also be a person who is not jealous of the successes of others and particularly of your trainees.

You need to be a sensitive and accurate listener. By listening to the learners' answers and reactions to discussions you can determine how they think. It is not only the answers that are important but also the attitude and emotions with which they are given as well as the ways in which the learners arrive at the answers.

Recognising that caring, listening, and passion are powerful elements and the capacity to provide emotional support when it is needed are hallmarks of a good facilitator of adult learning.  
(Galbraith, 1989)

The facilitator must have knowledge of learners and their needs and skill in working with them. Show interest in the learners. Be objective in presenting subject matter and in dealing with learners.

The facilitator must have knowledge of and skills in group processes and group dynamics and be skilled in handling conflict in groups. You have to observe group carefully and try to determine the mood or emotional pulse of the group. Knowledge of why the group or individuals in the group behave in specific ways is very important. Gauge the attitudes and anticipations of the group and act accordingly.

## Instructional design skills

Any facilitator must be proficient in planning and administrating facilitative instructional programmes and interventions according to the most effective methods and techniques.

## Learning transaction skills

A facilitator must understand how learning takes place and how the learner can be helped to make learning easier. You must have the ability to make subject matter and learning content interesting.

You need good questioning skills. Good questioning is very important in facilitation. Ask questions that reflect the learners' opinion and feelings as well as questions that lead to problem solving and interpretation of information. Open questions that require learners to analyse, synthesize and evaluate and which may have more than one correct answer are very important to evoke discussion

You need to be able to provide appropriate and timely feedback to learners. The ability to summarise and interpret and to convey your interpretation of the individual or group's performance is a very important set of skills. At critical and convenient moments during discussions important information, opinions and conclusions must be summarised and shared with the group. This gives recognition to what was said and achieved and forms the basis for further discussion.

You have to be flexible. A good facilitator is not rigid but flexible and open minded. You must be able to adjust, act and react according to the circumstances of the group and the group procedures. Be provocative, supportive, serious, light-hearted as the occasion requires but always be in command of the situation.

You also have to be a good time manager. Facilitation must not deteriorate into lengthy, haphazard and inefficient discussions. The ability to use and manage time in such a way that the group can finish its learning tasks effectively is crucial in facilitation.

## ***Some general observations on facilitation***

Finally, some tips for effective facilitation given by Cusimano (1996:32):

- Focus on learners, setting aside your ego. The purpose of training is to change behaviour, not to make the presenter look good.
- Be a coach, not an authority figure or expert. The idea is to guide learners to insight and understanding, not give all the answers. If learners see you as an authority figure, they may not be honest. They may try to look good rather than learn.

- Keep on track and stay organised. Everything in the training programme should meet its goals. Nice stories and other tangents are likely to confuse learners.
- Maintain a positive atmosphere. Ignore errors and praise success. Ensure that content is practical and utilitarian. It must relate directly to learners' objectives.
- Open participants' minds by identifying a need for the instruction. They must see a personal need for the learning.
- Imbue the material with energy and passion. Convey those to the learners.
- Encourage participation and build trust. It is critical for participants to practice the skills they are learning. Many people fear performing poorly and being embarrassed.
- Be an effective questioner and listener. The goal must always be to maneuver participants into finding the right answers for themselves. Giving answers is a last resort.

In order to create training miracles every trainer should (according to Rylatt and Lohan) have the following mindsets as a starting point:

- Trainers and learners need to discover and contribute in partnership.
- Training is much more than just a series of courses and activities. It is a daily, never ending, life-long process.
- Training miracles are generated from unconditional support based on trust, integrity, tolerance, generosity, and mutual respect.
- When miracles are not occurring, something needs fixing or resolving.
- True miracles strengthen both the resolve and the capabilities of the learner and the trainer.
- Miracles smash and reform the thoughts, fears, and beliefs into a higher level of understanding and consciousness.
- The trainer and the learner must be both prepared to give and receive if miracles are to occur. Part and parcel of this mindset is an acceptance that *every* person is a multi intelligent, unique, and precious individual with unlimited capacity to learn.
- A wonderful trainer believes in the capacity and intention of the learner as well as accepting that he or she, as a trainer, will have a message to convey. If the trainer look after the learner, the learning will look after itself.
- Miracles enable people to learn from the past, acknowledge the present, and release the future.
- The trainer must be prepared to honour, support and embrace change and learning themselves before expecting others to do the same.

# Choosing methods

Once the facilitation approach is adopted, that approach has to be concretised in the selection of methods and techniques (backed up where appropriate with materials and media and technology support). Methods and media are looked at in detail in Module 5, but a brief introduction is given here.

Usually training happens in three main habitats: the classroom, the board or committee room, and at the desk (with or without a computer on it). In practice these habitats tend to have a large impact on the methods chosen (sometimes with unfortunate results).

## ***Classroom training***

Classroom training is used in a training or development intervention and usually the methods chosen involve a lot of trainer talk and presenting (modified as it may be by questions, case studies, role plays, etc.). In this environment lectures (often decorated by PowerPoint presentations, video clips and suchlike) are an efficient way to present a large amount of information to a large number of employees. One of the disadvantages of the classroom lecture is that it puts the learners in a position of passive listening. To overcome this the lecture content and presentation need to be interesting and stimulating and different types of lecture formats may be used. Case studies and role plays are also good ways to encourage participation and interest.

## ***Small group training***

The small group being trained in a small venue allows many possibilities for interactivity and participation through a large range of methods from small group discussions to seminars and tutorials. Its great strength is the possibility of immediate feedback to all on how the learning is progressing. Because of the high degree of interactivity the more affective side of learning can also be addressed more directly and attitudinal change is best effected in such a learning environment. Though the actual methods may involve less formal presentation by the trainer it does not mean that the trainer does not have to plan and prepare. This actually means that he or she must be so in control of the material that he or she can go in any direction that the learners' discussion or investigation takes.

## ***Individual learning***

Sometimes learning is best done by the individual studying the course material (whether in printed workbook or manual or electronically on computer or the Internet) on their own (even if they are in a large classroom or computer laboratory). Usually here the challenge is on the design of the materials and in keeping the solitary learner motivated.



environment that also responds to some of their findings and issues. You will also have to think of appropriate ways to incorporate what the groups found in their investigation into your presentation.

A combination of various methods and types of presentation makes training an exiting experience and creates a healthy environment (full of action and feedback) in which learning can take place.

## Presentation skills

### *Guidelines for presentations*

#### **Presentations need to be structured**

A presentation, whether it is a lecture, case study, a brief input or a multi-media production should have structure. The standard simple format of introduction, body and conclusion is often the most appropriate. In your introduction, you need to communicate the topic to the learners. This introduction can include something about the learning environment, a statement of the outcomes you wish to achieve, an indication of the relevance of these outcomes for their training needs, and something that will motivate the learners to participate. The body of the presentation contains the substance of what has to be learned, broken down into smaller units that can be comprehended and remembered by the learners. The conclusion acts as a summary of everything presented and may provide a link to training still to come.

#### **Motivate your learners to pay attention**

Gain the interest of your learners. Attract their attention right from the start through relevant exercises, examples, vivid images and even jokes that relate to the training content or topic. But avoid adding anything to your presentation that does not serve the main purpose, namely to achieve learner outcomes.

Attention may be gained by explaining to the trainees the intended outcome and the nature of the training course and what is expected and required from them. However, the dry recital of lists of decontextualised outcome statements is usually unhelpful.

#### **Assist the learners to understand and remember**

Material should be presented within a clear structured framework (and one that corresponds as closely as possible to the mental structure and categories the learners' prior knowledge of the topic will have set up). Links with prior knowledge should be made explicit. New principles and fundamental concepts need to be concretised with

examples.

The content should be broken up into small but meaningful chunks.

The relevance of the subject matter should be made as explicit as possible as understanding is enhanced if the training content appears to be relevant to the problem of gap that the learner has experienced and which is the reason for undergoing training. The language level needs to be appropriate (neither too technical nor too simplistic). Sensible repetition and reinforcement (not rote repetition) can be done through asking questions and rephrasing points in a variety of different ways.

The more memorable the more likely something is to be remembered. We are also more likely to remember things at the beginning or near the end of an event

Practice is essential. Little gets learned unless it is reinforced through rehearsal or practice as soon as possible. You must provide opportunities for practice. Provide opportunities for learners to review and translate information into their own words through question and answer time, discussion opportunities and personal reflection. This also means providing pauses and breaks every now and then to allow this processing of new information to take place.

## **The importance of questions**

Build your presentation around questions. Ask the trainees questions and encourage them to ask their own questions. There is scientific evidence that learner remember more when they listen to question or read texts after being asked or reading questions. We will look at questions in more detail later.

## **Ensure that the learning environment is optimal**

The learning environment will help make or break a presentation. As a presenter you need to consider both the physical and social aspects of the environment. There are obvious things in the physical environment that will impact on a presentation – audibility, visibility, temperature, comfort – most of which you can do something about through careful planning and the checking out of venues. The social climate can be influenced by your behaviour and rapport with the learners but will also be influenced by the institution and what is affecting the learners outside and inside the class. Reducing stress is something you may have to do. You may need, insofar as you can, to get them to relax and assure them that other obstacles will be removed.

## **Involve the learners**

Involve learners in the learning experience. The more involved the learners are the more they are likely to remember and learn. Some of the participation can be done by the intelligent choice of methods and of a variety of methods. Even within methods such as lectures where the learner is relatively passive, involvement can be enhanced by requiring notetaking or breaking up the lecture with buzz group discussions and so forth. Assessment are another way of stimulating conscious participation.

Activating learners is often helped by asking them to introduce themselves before the training starts. Ask one or two of them to recall all the other's names after this introduction. If something interesting is mentioned ask them to elaborate on it, like a surname or a place of origin that you specifically relate to. If it is a manageable group you should learn the names of all the trainees and call them by their names when addressing them.

Start the presentation with an activity, such as asking the trainees to write down in five minutes what they know about the topic to be discussed in the presentation. Get feedback from a few of them. This will help you to learn what they know about the subject material. Now you would know which part of the topic they do know something about and which parts they know nothing about. Structure your lecture around this information.

## **Develop rapport**

Learners are more likely to learn from what you say and do if you have developed a positive rapport with them. There are many ways of doing this. Talk naturally to the trainees as if you were talking to someone you know very well. If the venue allows it (a huge auditorium will not work) sit down at times (especially while learners are giving feedback) or change your position and go and stand at the back of the classroom, for instance. This will create the perception that you are also learning from the learners.

## **Keep in mind the principles of adult learning**

According to most experts in the field, the conditions that need to exist if you want people to learn effectively are as follow (Malouf, 1999:12-15):

- Learners must feel the need to learn.
- The learning environment must be mentally and socially safe.
- Learners must set their own learning goals.
- Learners must participate actively in the learning process.
- Learning must build on, and use the learner's experience.
- Learners must see that their learning has been successful.
- Learning is a two-way communication.

- Factors contributing to learning.
- Learners must reflect on own learning progress toward learning outcomes.

All presentations need to be made with a clear consciousness of these important principles.

Presentation evaluation form			
Name:	Completed		Remarks
Criteria/observable outcomes	Yes	No	
1. Introduction Did the trainer introduce him/herself? Was he/she self-confident?			
2. Appearance Neat? Untidy? Identify with audience?			
3. Prepare a learning environment that is appropriate for effective learning Was the event structured to ensure individual or group learning? Was attention held throughout the presentation?			
4. Outcomes explained Clarify outcomes of the learning activity by, e.g. stating the outcomes clearly? Was it clear, relevant, meaningful? Did the outcomes comply with all the requirements?			
5. Structure of Introduction Did the trainer link previous knowledge with new knowledge? Did the trainer give the advantages and value of the lesson in order to motivate the trainees?			
6. Structure of main/middle Was the presentation/content logical and systematic? Did the trainer use examples/anecdotes to illustrate the learning content? Did the trainer emphasise/repeat important facts?			
7. Definitions/abbreviations/factually correct/language level Did the trainer explain abbreviations? Did the trainees understand all definitions? Was the information valid and reliable? Did the trainer use language applicable to the level of the trainees?			
8. Instructions Were the instructions given clearly?			

Presentation evaluation form			
Name:	Completed		
Criteria/observable outcomes	Yes	No	Remarks
9. Eye contact Did the trainer make eye contact with all the trainees in the class?			
10. Voice projection Could everybody hear the trainer? Was the articulation and intonation satisfactory? Was the tempo acceptable?			
11. Gestures/body language Did the trainer have self-confidence? Did the trainer use facial expressions/ gestures to enhance the content? Did he/she move around/			
12. Habits Were there any disturbing/irritating habits/mannerisms?			
13. Understanding/knowledge Does the trainer know his/her subject? Did the trainer convey the content in such a way that the trainees understood it?			
14. Encourage dialogue Between learners and learners; and learners and practitioner. Did the trainer involve all the trainees? Were the trainees involved actively enough?			
15. Reinforcement/repetition Did the trainer repeat/emphasise important facts? Did the trainer reinforce the content by repetition, tone of voice, gestures, etc.?			
16. Association Did the trainer give examples from the real world?			
17. Training methods and aids Did the trainer use various training methods? Were they used correctly? Did the trainer apply training methods creatively? Were the training aids appropriate? Were they used correctly?			

Presentation evaluation form			
Name:	Completed		
Criteria/observable outcomes	Yes	No	Remarks
18. Implement the learning activities Setting the tasks and activities for individual and/or group learning; encouraging an open, interactive and participatory approach within the learning situation; monitoring the learners' progress; managing the learning activity; and creating opportunities to apply new knowledge.			
19. Enthusiasm Was the trainer lively and interesting?			
20. Questioning techniques Were the questions clear? Formulated correctly? Properly timed and spaced? Well aimed? Was opportunity provided for answers? Did the trainer handle the answers effectively?			
21. Assess the learning Were the objectives/aims achieved? Were the objectives tested?			
22. Structure of Conclusion Did the trainer summarise the content? Did the trainer restate and test the objectives? Did the trainer give opportunities for questions? Did he/she repeat all the important facts?			
23. Consolidate the learning activity Encouraging learners to provide feedback and reinforcing learning through activities such as summarising and reaching consensus. Did the trainer evaluate continuously? Did the trainer give feedback to the trainees? Did the trainee get the opportunity to give feedback to the trainer?			
24. Preparation Was a lesson plan drawn up? Was the trainer creative? Was he/she well-prepared?			
25. Use of time Did the trainer keep to the allocated time?			

Overall impression of trainer:

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Overall assessment:

Competent: \_\_\_\_\_ Not yet competent: \_\_\_\_\_

Successful presentation of training is the result of practice and hard work. If you feel that you are not competent and confident enough to do it yet, you can start by planning your presentation and discussing it with a colleague or friend. Someone listening to you explaining what you plan to do will help a lot. You can go one step further by observing a competent trainer presenting his or her work or part of it. Finally, arranging with this trainer to allow you to do a part of the programme (on some topic that you feel comfortable with). Discuss your performance afterwards and try to improve the next time.

# The use of questions

The trainer who is skilled in using and handling questions offers the learners the opportunity to learn through discovery, and he himself will also continue to learn each day from his own and others' experiences.

An adult learning climate is characterised by dialogue, i.e. two-way communication. The asking of questions by both learners and trainers is the most effective instrument for establishing, promoting and maintaining this positive climate. Therefore, if a trainer wishes to establish effective communication in a learning situation, he or she should be skillful in using and handling questions during both individual-oriented training and group training. He or she should know when, why and how questions may be used and also how to handle the answers to the questions. By mastering the art of questioning, trainers can stimulate learning.

## ***When to use questions***

Questions can be used in virtually every part of training.

**When training needs are determined, e.g.:**

- ◆ What are the needs of the organisation, the occupational class and the individual?
- ◆ How will information be obtained? - By asking questions, observation or studying?
- ◆ Which techniques will be used? - Questionnaires, interviews or group techniques?

**When planning the curriculum of the course, e.g.:**

- ◆ What are the aims and objectives?
- ◆ What is the logical sequence?
- ◆ What content should be covered?
- ◆ What training methods should be used?
- ◆ What resources are required?
- ◆ How will evaluation be done?

**During the development and implementation of the course, e.g.:**

- ◆ Is material for self-study required?
- ◆ What handouts should be developed?
- ◆ Will a workbook be used?
- ◆ What information should be contained in the lesson plan?

- ◆ Which information should the resources contain?
- ◆ What should the evaluation form look like?
- ◆ To whom and how will reports be submitted?

**During the facilitation of the course when presentations are made, e.g.:**

At the beginning:

- ◆ How do I get their attention?
- ◆ How do I set learners at ease and break the ice?
- ◆ What prior knowledge do they have?

Throughout:

- ◆ How do I determine attitudes?
- ◆ How can I reinforce learning?
- ◆ What use can I make of their existing skills and knowledge?

At the end:

- ◆ How to revise?
- ◆ To evaluate?
- ◆ To draw up action plans?

**When evaluating the effectiveness of training, e.g.:**

What was learned?:

- ◆ Questions on questionnaires
- ◆ Verbal questions

What was the whole course like?:

- ◆ Questions on questionnaires
- ◆ Questions in interviews

What was the impact?:

- ◆ Questions on questionnaires
- ◆ Questions during interviews
- ◆ Questions in opinion polls

Using questions during the actual training is probably the most difficult of all five the above phases. This demands special skills, and the dynamic interaction between learners, and between learners and trainers, sets high standards for every trainer. Effective questioning is a skill that requires good planning, hard work and lots of practice. A good question leads to a good answer and it promotes learning. For this reason, we look in some detail at question use during the facilitation of the course.



### **Activity 4.3: Using questions**

1. What are the characteristics of a good question?

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2. It is always good to use a combination of different types of questions during training. Give examples of each of the following questions:

**Open and Closed questions:**

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**Rhetorical questions:**

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**Direct and Indirect questions:**

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**Probing questions:**

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**Reflective probing question:**

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**Comparisons:**

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## ***Techniques to consider when asking questions***

### **Time to think**

After asking question, the trainer should give the learners enough time to interpret the question and formulate an answer. This pause should last several seconds (at least three!).

According to Morgan et al (1991: 82) this is precisely two seconds longer than most trainers wait for an answer! Those three seconds have the positive effect of letting the learners thinking actively and seriously. The trainer that uses the three-second pause will be rewarded with better answers.

### **Distribution of questions to all participants**

Questions should be distributed equally within the group. This will ensure that the whole group remains involved. Pay attention to the following:

- ◆ Some trainers have a 'blind spot', and unconsciously exclude learners sitting in front on the left or right.
- ◆ Questions should never be asked 'going down the row'; when a specific person had a turn, he or she immediately stops thinking and becomes uninvolved.
- ◆ Good or poor achievers should never be singled out – for example, by asking men or women in any specific sub-group more questions. Everyone should be treated equally.
- ◆ If a question is directed at a specific person or group, this should be done with a well-planned purpose in mind. Respect, trust and confidence of the whole group must be maintained.

### **When are questions inappropriate?**

Although asking questions offer a very effective opportunity for the promoting dialogue, there are several situations where questions are inappropriate:

- ◆ When learners do not have sufficient knowledge or experience, incorrect information is often exchanged and incorrect ideas are reinforced. In this situation rather encourage the learners to ask more questions.
- ◆ During group discussions, task groups or individual exercises, learners experience interruptions as being very disturbing, especially when they are busy working productively on the assignment or problem. Too many questions such as: 'Are you managing?' or 'Are there any problems?' can influence the group dynamics negatively. Rather observe from the sidelines and intervene when problems or uncertainty are observed.

- ◆ A big mistake made by many trainers is to ask a learner who seems to be experiencing a problem: 'John, what's the problem?' or 'Is everything all right?'. A more subtle approach – for example, 'You're very quiet today', is more appropriate. In this way interest or concern is shown, and if the person feels so inclined, he can react (without any pressure). The trainer should then listen actively and make a suitable response (Morgan, et al, 1991:94).

## **Vary the questions**

Vary types of questions. Ask open questions, closed questions, rhetorical questions, direct questions and indirect questions.

## **Make sure the question is clearly heard and understood**

It may be helpful to write up or project the question, particularly if it is a complex one.

## **Do not answer your own questions**

Try not to answer your own questions. It makes learners lazy and passive.

## **Personalise questions when appropriate**

Personalise questions at times using 'you' and 'we' when appropriate.

## ***How does one handle the answers to questions?***

A well-planned, well-formulated question could result in various responses, for example, correct, incorrect, partly correct answers or even no answers. Each situation must be handled tactfully.

## **Reinforcing answers**

By reinforcing learners' answers, they experience success and participation is encouraged. Answers may be reinforced verbally and non-verbally:

## Handling various responses

Every answer should be handled tactfully.

### *When are questions handled?*

When questions are handled, dialogue is encouraged and learners are inspired to take part in discussions. It is important that there are regular opportunities for questions. The trainer must ensure that everyone has mastered the learning point before continuing with the next point.

We have probably all heard trainers ask: 'I suppose there are no questions?' This discourages participation. Ask instead: 'Are there any questions?' The trainer must be sincere through the way he uses his voice, in the choice of words, and 'open' body language.

### *How are questions handled?*

The way in which questions are handled can encourage or discourage further participation by the learners. Each question should therefore be handled with great care. The guidelines below can contribute to the successful handling of learners' questions:

- Never interrupt a questioner! - even if you know what he wishes to ask. Treat the learner with respect.
- Ensure that the question is audible to the whole group. Avoid repeating every question asked.
- Give recognition to the questioner by saying: 'Thank you for the question' or 'Helen has just asked an important question' or 'Most people wonder about that'. This encourages shy learners in particular to participate more.
- Ensure that you (and the group) understand the question correctly. If the question is not clear, or is put ambiguously, it may be reformulated or paraphrased by the trainer.
- If time allows, the trainer should always put the question to the group. It is the facilitator's role to lead group discussions and not answer all questions him or herself. In this way learners are encouraged to find solutions to their problems themselves. After the members of the group have made their contributions the trainer must always provide a summary of the group's answers.
- If the learners cannot answer the question, the trainer may act as the source of information and answer the question.
- Irrelevant questions must be handled with tact. Never say directly that something is irrelevant. Answer briefly and invite the questioner to discuss it with you later (for example, at tea time). Make sure you do so!
- If a learner at the beginning of a session asks a question that will be answered

later, this can be handled in one of two ways. Put it to the questioner that the matter will be dealt with later and ask if he or she will be content to wait for a while. It can even be written on a special list on a flipchart to ensure that it will indeed be dealt with later. However, if it is so important to the learner that he or she will not be able to pay attention to the lesson contents for the remainder of the lesson, the trainer may deal with it briefly and undertake to discuss it in greater detail later.

- Questions on content that were covered earlier may be an indication that one or more learners have not yet mastered it. Ask whether there are other people who are also unsure or doubtful. If not, answer briefly and invite the person to discuss it with you later. If others are also unsure, the question should be dealt with before proceeding with the rest of the lesson.
- Make sure the learner's question has been answered properly. For example: 'Does that answer your question? In this way you avoid having to deal with the matter again later.
- If you do not know the answer, acknowledge it! This will strengthen your credibility more than if you provide a wrong or partly correct answer. Ask if anyone in the group can help. If the questioner cannot be satisfied, the trainer must promise to find out - and keep his word.
- Avoid manipulating answers by non-verbal signs such as frowning, smiling, drumming fingers, or a tone of voice that may sound sarcastic. This can damage the climate and discourage trust and dialogue.
- Do not make conclusions. Allow learners to draw their own conclusions through a probing or open question.
- Avoid 'Yes, but ...' or 'Yes, and ...'. Rather ask probing questions and give the group an opportunity to respond.
- Verbal reactions, such as 'Good', 'Excellent', 'Beautiful', 'Well done', etc, are not necessary every time. This may focus too much attention on the trainer instead of on the learning taking place. Short verbal and/or non-verbal reactions are often sufficient.
- Try to avoid reinforcing prejudices. Also, do not over-react to answers that reflect prejudice.
- Do not repeat each answer. Only important or unclear answers or parts thereof should be repeated.
- Avoid answering your own questions. Learners become lazy and the hard-workers are frustrated.
- Avoid 'rapid-fire' questions. Allow enough time in your planning for comprehensive answering of a question, preferably by more than one person. If questions follow each other too rapidly the learning opportunity is not utilised properly.
- If the correct answer to a closed question is obtained, time is wasted if the question is again put to someone else. Acknowledge the answer and carry on, otherwise everyone starts to doubt you and time is wasted.
- Do not keep on waiting and listening until a right answer is obtained. Follow up answers and guide/lead learners by means of probing questions towards

knowledge.

- Questions must not be formulated in such a way as to prescribe the answer or manipulate the learner. For example: 'I don't think that will work - what do you think?'
- Do not hear only what you want to hear when questions are answered. This will negate the value of questioning.
- Avoid giving unearned praise. Learners will stop thinking critically and formulating answers clearly. Unearned praise renders well-earned praise worthless - after all, everything and everyone is rewarded, not so?
- When a learner wastes time with rambling and/or incoherent answers, he should be given enough time to formulate an answer. Thereafter he may be interrupted (courteously!) and his thoughts summarised by the trainer. For example: 'Ina, if I understand you correctly, you feel...'. The trainer may even ask: 'Is there someone in the group that would like to summarise Ina's answer?'. The learner may also be interrupted with: 'I would like to hear what a few others have to say about this' (Parry 1991: 19). Never appear to be impatient or abrupt.
- If you do not understand the learner's answer, say so! If necessary, reformulate his/her answer, or ask the group to help. The trainer must not pretend to understand.

These important guidelines give examples of common errors during the handling of answers. However, the trainer should also master the other side of the coin, namely, handling the questions of the learners.



**Activity 4.4: Handling responses to questions**

1. In groups discuss how you would handle the following responses:

**Correct answer**

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**Incorrect answer**

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**Partly correct**

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**No answer**

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3. Many trainers regard the learners' questions as a big threat. A trainer who understands his/her role as facilitator will realise that nobody expects him/her to have all the right answers all the time. By following the guidelines below, questions can be handled with greater self-confidence. The handling of questions has many important advantages for both trainer and learner. Discuss in buzz groups what the advantages are for the trainer and the learner when handling questions.

Advantages for Trainer	Advantages for Learner

The trainer uses questions during needs assessment, planning, development, presentation and evaluation of training. Questions are used because they require answers, and put the instructor in control and provide information. Questions force learners to accept responsibility for their own problems and help the trainer to determine what and how learners feel about a specific matter.

A trainer should never ask a question just for the sake of a question. Questions must be related to the training objectives and should be formulated unambiguously. The level of the learners must be taken into consideration, but questions may sometimes contain an element of surprise to stimulate learners. Providing answers to questions should always be a challenge to the learner. When a question is asked the trainer's use of voice and body language should support the intention of the question.

Every trainer should try to ask more open than closed questions. Rhetorical questions can be used to good advantage during the introduction, body or conclusion of a presentation. Learners must be given at least three seconds to think after each question; this will result in better answers. To ensure that all learners think about an answer together, questions should first be put indirectly, and after a three-second pause someone can be nominated. Questions should always be distributed evenly throughout the group to ensure everyone's involvement.

As encouragement, learners' answers to questions should be reinforced verbally and non-verbally. Acknowledge correct answers and respond tactfully to incorrect answers. Guide learners towards knowledge by asking probing questions if an answer is partly correct. If no one answers questions, someone may be nominated.

When a trainer handles a learner's questions, he should not only provide answers, but use it as an opportunity to facilitate meaningful discussion and problem solving by the learners themselves.

The handling of questions gives trainers the opportunity to evaluate training, and gives learners the chance to clear up anything they are uncertain about. Opportunity to ask questions must be available throughout the training session, and questions must be handled with great care. Questions should be clear and understandable for everyone, they should often be put to the group, and always be answered. Irrelevant questions must be handled tactfully. The trainer should rather admit to not knowing the answer than to give an incorrect or partly correct answer. Nobody expects that he will always know the correct answer.

Through the use and handling of questions the trainer can create and maintain a participative learning environment. Learners' experience can be used in actively searching for solutions to their own problems. Learning takes place through a cross-pollination of ideas in the group, and the trainer also develops his own knowledge. This is a skill that requires very thorough planning and conscientious practice by the trainer.



**ACTIVITY 4.5: *Creating a positive learning environment***

How would you go about creating an environment for the trainees you work with? How will you let them know that they have been offered a learning opportunity to meet their training needs? What venue would you choose? How would you present the content that you have selected for this programme?

In order to make this activity more practical, do the following:

- ◆ Relook at what you wrote in Activity 4.2 on page 23 where you described how you would combine a lecture and group discussion.
- ◆ Indicate clearly what you would do to (1) get the learners to pay attention at the outset (start) of your presentation, and (2) encourage them to participate actively in the activities you plan in the presentation.
- ◆ Then say what you would do or have done to ensure that the physical and social environment was optimal for this session.

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# Creating the learning environment

The learning environment refers to the overall climate in which learning takes place. Different things contribute to this learning climate (be it a positive or negative climate) and this includes the social (the people who participate in the training (trainees and trainers) and the influence of the insitutional climate in which the training takes place and from which the trainees come) and the physical (the training venue and training facilities).

## ***Good communication with learners about the training programme and what follows it***

Trainees need to know as much about the training programme, its pre-requisites and what opportunities follow from it. This requires good communication and often information documentation. Well informed trainees are likely to be more satisfied than those who do not.

The trainer should notify prospective learners to create an awareness of the training and to inform them about the training programme that is about to take place. This action can be related to the training needs assessment. Those employees who have indicated that they are experiencing a training need have to be selected for your programme and informed about it. You as trainer can convey this to their direct supervisor who will arrange for them to undergo the training (whatever form it will take, as we will see shortly). Informing the employees well in advance will create an awareness amongst them and will prevent a situation in which they are surprised by information stating that they have to undergo training in, say, two days' time.

Learners may have to prepare for the training programme (possibly do some prescribed reading or activity, like writing a short life history of themselves beforehand). This strategy will encourage dialogue between trainees even before the training programme has started. Learners will be sensitised to different viewpoints on aspects of the programme. Sharing these viewpoints once the programme has started will inform the facilitator about learner's prior knowledge of aspects of the programme.

Preparing learners beforehand will even help them to arrange their work programme in such a way that they can concentrate on their training and not on any unfinished business lying on their desks.

A formal invitation from the human resources department will contribute to their motivation and positive attitude. An outline of the programme outcomes, content, as well as a short description of their instructional strategies involved, will serve the purpose of a motivator to help people to start looking forward to the training.

### ***Preparing the venue so that it is functioning at its best***

The physical comfort of a venue is vital. Are learners going to be able to see, hear, sit, and move easily and comfortably. Will they be too hot or cold. A trainer must check in advance whether all the venue is suitable and all the equipment and resources required for the programme are available, connected up, and working. Trying to use equipment and embarrassing for the trainer and time wasting and irritating for the learners. Arrange everything in the way you have planned it (one can include this type of planning in your selection of instructional methods and media). Make arrangements for drinking water to be placed on the tables if you are using a classroom strategy for learning.

Never feel that you have to use the only training facility your institution has, namely a classroom or a boardroom. Select a facility that suits your choice of instructional strategy. If your instructional strategy requires learners to work individually or in groups, make sure that your venue allows for this. The most frustrating experience is when a trainer suggests that we as a group work in teams, but then they realise that the chairs and tables are attached to the floor, making it difficult to form a discussion group. See to it that the venue has enough light and that it can be controlled for the purpose of showing slides or videos. Ventilation also plays an important part in the success of your training programme. A poorly ventilated venue will soon lead to drowsiness amongst learners. This will limit their receptiveness to gaining new knowledge and participating in activities.

Additional factors regarding the facilities include: acoustics (if the room has an echo effect, you will have to speak softly), parking and accommodation for trainees (if training takes place away from trainees' homes, investigate possible accommodation close to the training centre, as well as prices, and give out this information to them before the training starts), the physical location of the venue (is it close to centres of transport, is it safe and secure, are emergency services, like doctors, pharmacies and hospitals available?).



### **Activity 4.6: Your experience of training environments**

Think back to some of the training sessions you have attended in your life.

Were you impressed with the training environment that was created for you to learn?

What impressed you the most?

What did not impress you at all?

What did you feel like complaining about?

Make a list of each of these issues in order to answer the questions.

#### **An experience by Jane**

Allow me to reflect on a training programme I once had to facilitate. This may not be the same scenario as yours in the activity, in which you were one of the trainees, but it aims to show you what can go wrong if planning is not done properly.

I had planned all my instructional strategies for the training which included background music to create a relaxed atmosphere, overhead transparencies to summarise the lecture content, whiteboard pens of different colours to activate learners' senses, and activities for the group work. I had visited the very same venue once before and knew exactly what to include in my planning and what to take along. To play it safe I took along a data projector, because I knew that the venue did not have one. What I did not know was that the department for whom I had to do the training had changed the venue because of a double booking.

The moment I arrived at the new venue the whole training programme collapsed before my eyes. There was no electricity, so the music and slide scenarios were out of the question. Since there was no overhead projector the transparencies were useless. The board was not a whiteboard, but a green chalkboard. There was chalk, one piece of red chalk and red chalk does not really work on a green background! My world was shattered and I felt like going home. It is at times like these that a trainer must be resourceful to save the situation for the sake of successful learning.

Well, I decided not to become caught up in disappointment and negative thoughts. I realised that I had not much to rely on in terms of instructional methods. The lecture seemed to be the only way out of my dilemma, but realising that it had its limitations I had to add some value to the lecture as an instructional method. So I combined the lecture with small group activities. At times the group of learners even stepped outside of the classroom and explored some aspects of the information.

What would you have done in this situation? What type of creative combinations would you have come up with?



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### ***Activity 4.8: Controlling the factors that affect learning***

Discuss how trainers can control the following factors to encourage learning:

#### **The physical environment**

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#### **The psychological environment**

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#### **Qualities of the trainer**

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#### **Opening session**

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# Transfer of learning

Transfer of learning is one of the most contentious issues in training. How often have we heard complaints that employees may have the right qualifications and have received lots of training but that they cannot transfer what they have studied or learned into their work activities.

Transfer of learning takes place when:

- ◆ the learning of one task facilitates the learning of another task, that is, when prior learning affects new learning at approximately the same level or at a higher level; and
- ◆ with on-the-job practice, the performance level with which the required learning is applied increases beyond the level demonstrated at the end of the training intervention.

Transfer of learning, therefore, refers to the ability to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes gained during training and after training effectively in the job situation.

From the employer's point of view training is a waste of time if the learner cannot properly transfer the training received to the work situation. Training must ultimately be of value to the learner in the world outside the training situation. However, even if learners attend a training course with every intention of applying what they have learnt, and even if they leave the course with this intention, if they cannot apply or transfer that learning to their work practice there is a major problem.

The stress on outcomes-based education and training is very much a response to this problem and outcomes-based training requires learners to apply all they have learned in training, on a continuous basis, to their jobs or elsewhere, at least as well as they could demonstrate those competences at the end of the facilitated training intervention.

## ***Conditions for effective transfer of learning***

From the above, it is obvious that as a facilitator you are not only a facilitator of learning but also of the transfer of learning. The effectiveness and actual impact of learning achieved through training depends on its subsequent application to work-life situations.

Learning must be transferred from the formal training situation, where it was initially identified and addressed in a safe and secure way, to the everyday contexts and situations in which it arises in unpredictable and varied formats. This does not mean that transfer problems arising after training are beyond your control and somebody else's concern. On the contrary, they must be addressed during the training if training is to be seen as an effective way of encouraging lasting learning and developing useful skills.

To be able to address this effectively, the facilitator must

- ◆ develop and apply creative ways to improve the transfer of learning to the workplace and elsewhere, plan and conduct facilitation so that a high degree of positive transfer will result wherever appropriate;
- ◆ encourage learners to establish commitment to and to develop realistic and achievable strategies for putting into practice what they have learned on the course;
- ◆ generate realistic ideas and strategies for individual learners and for the group to identify and use available support systems for transfer of learning; and
- ◆ remove known barriers to the application of learning.

### ***Barriers to the application of learning***

There are number of reasons for learners failing to transfer effectively to the workplace the learning achieved in the training setting. These will now be discussed according to Spinks and Clements (1993:163-166). Learners may choose not to apply learning achieved on a training course or, alternatively, may find their efforts to do so frustrated or hindered for one of the following reasons:

***Training takes place in artificial conditions:*** One of the difficulties experienced in achieving transfer of learning is that the training takes place in conditions which cannot accurately reflect the reality of the job situation or any other situation where learning will be applied. Because the training setting is usually a safe and controlled learning environment learners are able to disclose and exchange ideas free from cynicism or personal attacks. Conflict and, poor interpersonal skills are mediated by the facilitator as they become apparent. Training allows for mistakes and failure, for practice and development. This is in sharp contrast to the real-life situations in which the learner lives and works. Their mistakes often have immediate, detrimental, consequences and there is often very little opportunity to try again. Irrespective of how much the facilitator tries to recreate the actual situation through scenarios, role-play or simulations, the training venue, the participants, the learning tasks and many other variables will be different.

***Learners were not really committed:*** Learners may not be totally committed to the ideas and strategies developed on the course and may quickly forget them, slipping back into the old way of doing things. This is particularly so if no mechanisms exist for reviewing learning and its applications at a later stage.

***There is a lack of opportunity to practice acquired skills:*** If, in addition, the learners do not have the opportunity to immediately or concurrently practice the application of the acquired learning in the job situation, they will find it difficult to relate the training to the real-life situation. As a result matters discussed and problems solved with enthusiasm and commitment at the training venue will lose viability once the learners encounter the realities and problems of everyday situations.

***There is no direct support for the transfer of learning:*** The opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills may not arise immediately at the workplace. Learners' efforts may be unsupported by managers, friends or colleagues. Others, who have not had similar training, may remain bogged down in old ways of thinking and may hamper the progress. If the job situation does not provide direct support for the transfer of learning, transfer problems may not be identified promptly and appropriate corrective actions may never be taken in an organised way.

## ***Facilitating transfer of learning***

Four broad categories of strategies to facilitate transfer of learnings can be suggested:

- minimizing barriers to applying learning;
- allow for self-assessment and reflection on learning experiences during training;
- summarising key learning points at course closure; and
- Conduct formative assessments with feedback and frequent development.

## **Minimising barriers to applying learning**

Facilitation that is geared towards application in the workplace world requires that strategies, ideas, solutions and new ways of thinking should be tested as they arise during problem solving or other types of learning events. The following types of questions could be asked:

- ◆ *Are they realistic, achievable, useful and usable?* Do they account for the realities of the situation or problem? The ideas, strategies and ways of looking at and resolving problems that were developed on the course may be found to be unrealistic and unachievable in the workplace.
- ◆ *How does the learner feel about the prospect of tackling the issue or problem in the suggested way?* There is a real difference between agreeing about strategies and new ways of acting, in the safety of the training setting, and putting these ideas into practice in the work situation with its accompanying challenges and vulnerability. Encourage learners to think about these issues and to be honest and open if they feel that ideas being suggested by the group are overly ambitious or naive.
- ◆ *How do work colleagues and other people feel about the learner tackling the issue or problem in the suggested way?* Colleagues and other people close to the learner may frustrate the attempts of the learner who displays new skills, or tackles old problems in new ways, to carry learning forward into everyday life. Others may be unprepared for change resulting from the course and don't know how to react to it. A means of exposing learner fears and expectations about the

reactions of colleagues in such circumstances might be to brainstorm, role-play or use similar scenarios of difficult behaviour that might result, allowing the group, to consider consequences and coping and resolution strategies for each.

- ◆ *How committed is the learner to tackling the issues?* The learners may get carried away with the enthusiasm and energy typical of an effective learning group. As a result they may often express strong commitment to applying things learnt on the course. They may, however, lose sight of the many pressures that will test their commitment. Ask learners why they are committed to applying the new learning, what motivates them to carry the learning forward and how they envisage that commitment will be tested in the weeks and months ahead. Identifying and clarifying the source of their own commitment can become a strength they can draw upon when that commitment is tested.
- ◆ *Will other people's lack of skill frustrate the learners' intentions?* Have they been taken into account? Usually learners return to an environment where others have not had the benefits of such training and, accordingly, will not have developed the same skills and problem solving abilities. They also return to an environment where communication and interpersonal problems must be resolved by the parties themselves. This places an onus on the returning learner to account for the feelings, problems and lack of expertise of others. The extension of sensitivity and empathy can be vital ways of addressing such issues.
- ◆ *What support is available to the learner?* Encourage learners to speak openly and honestly about their need for support. Let them talk about the availability and characteristics of support people. Open a discussion on the support mechanisms of the organisation. What responsibilities do managers have in this area? Will they answer any call for support? Are there procedures and systems in place that are designed to support staff?

## Reflecting on learning experiences during training

Learners need to take individual ownership of the outcomes of group learning processes. This ownership and the contributions and learning experiences of each learner during the group learning process must be acknowledged and properly recorded. Learning requires the individual to reflect on the experiences that have occurred during training. The meaning and significance of these experiences must be captured. This helps the learner to continue to reflect on and apply what they have learned.

One way of assisting this ongoing reflective process is to provide learners with a written copy of their course work, structured in a comprehensive and accessible format. This may include the learners' ideas and suggestions as they were recorded on flipchart. Learners should also be involved in self-assessment learning activities to evaluate their learning progress.

## Summarising key learning points at course closure

Group members must be encouraged to consolidate their learning. This is a vital part of the facilitator's role as the course nears its close. At that stage the need to establish and maximise commitment to future action and necessary change increases:

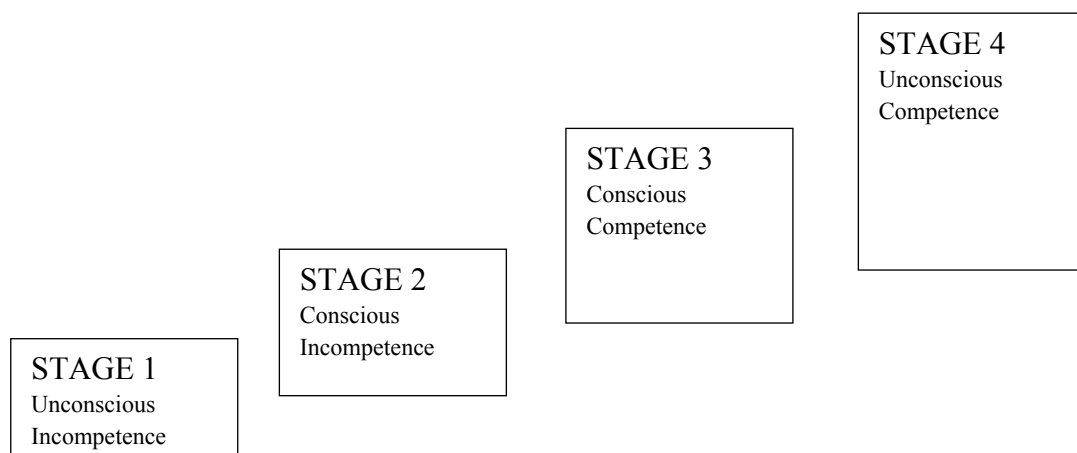
- ◆ Remind learners of just how much they have achieved. Tell them just how far their individual and group thinking has developed as a result of the training they have undertaken. Encourage them to carry this learning forward into the real world.
- ◆ Conducts formal formative assessments throughout the course at regular intervals to provide feedback to learners on their learning progress. Provide development guidance and support.
- ◆ Help learners to understand how earlier parts of the course, which may initially have appeared unconnected or less relevant, eventually integrate to form a larger picture.
- ◆ Give a formal summary of key learning points as part of course closure. This will offer learners a structured opportunity to review important learning.
- ◆ Review both the learners' and your own notes and reflect on significant phases and events.
- ◆ Help prompt recall of significant learning achievements of the group by asking questions such as the following and letting the learners supply specific examples of achievements:
  - What was the course aim? Has it been realised?
  - What were the planned learning outcomes? Have these been achieved?
  - Were all group process problems and conflicts resolved? What learning came out of this?
  - What key learning issues, problems and experiences were identified at the outset as being pressing and significant to the group?
  - To what extent were the real-life consequences of such problems, issues and experiences identified?
  - How successful were strategies, ideas and ways of thinking about and addressing such issues, experiences and problems developed? Are they realistic, useful and achievable?
  - Were potential barriers to applying the things learnt on the course successfully identified? Were strategies for overcoming or resisting such barriers developed?
  - What real improvements are likely should learners fully apply things they have learnt on the course to their work situation or elsewhere?

- ◆ Ask for closing remarks and statements of commitment from the individual learners, to take their learning from the training environment into their everyday life. Give the learners free rein and receive their remarks without further comment. The final learning activity could include challenging questions such as:
  - What has been the most important learning on the course for you?
  - What parts of the course will be particularly useful to you in your job situation?
  - How do you plan to make use of the thing you have learnt?
  - What new skills did you acquire on this course? How will they be of use to you?
  - How will you ensure that the hard work you have invested- in this course doesn't go to waste?
  - Has the course challenged or changed your view on the issues that were worked through on the course? If so, will this change affect your future behaviour?

It is clear from the above that summarising key learning points is an important aspect of course closure. It is also clear that it should ideally be a two-way process. It should give both the facilitator and the learners the opportunity to share their views of and feelings about the effectiveness of the course with the group. More important, to share what they feel has been achieved at a personal level. As with any other learning phase, the closing part of the course should be active and should be appropriately structured so as to allow sufficient opportunity for necessary personal and group reflection.

In conclusion of this section it can be said that successful transfer of learning depends not so much on the actual process of applying learning as on designing training in such a way that the transfer is facilitated. The training experience itself should mirror the realities of the situation in which it will be applied as much as possible.

### *Four stages in the development of competence*





### ***Activity 4.9: What prevents learning?***

How can a trainer and a learner actually prevent learning from taking place?

<b>Learner</b>	<b>Trainer</b>

# General didactic principles

Didactic principles are principles of learning that may serve as guidelines for every trainer during the design, presentation, evaluation and improvement of training programmes. The application of these didactic principles will contribute towards the provision of more effective and efficient training.

Cawood, Muller & Swartz (1982: 14) formulated the following ten principles on the basis of observation and analysis of what happens when learning does take place and when learning does not take place:

- ◆ Purposefulness
- ◆ Methodicalness
- ◆ Motivation
- ◆ Individualisation
- ◆ Socialisation
- ◆ Self-activity
- ◆ Lived experience
- ◆ Totality
- ◆ Mastering
- ◆ Assessment and Evaluation

Each of these principles is related to the other principles, and not one of them should be seen in isolation.

## ***Purposefulness***

The purposeful striving after a specific objective or goal is an important prerequisite for successful training in any situation. This is important not only in the design stage when the curriculum's overall objectives are set, but in each and every lesson of a course or workshop session.

The advantage of having objectives or outcomes diminishes if the trainer is the only person who is aware of the aim of each training session. For this reason the learners should be informed of the aim during the introduction to each lecture (or any other instructional method).

If the trainer and the learner are aware of the aim of the training both are able to strive systematically towards the attainment of it. This means that unnecessary or irrelevant subject matter may be avoided, and the learner is more motivated to learn.

## ***Methodicalness***

As soon as the learner knows the objectives, he needs to be sure that a plan exists that will lead to their attainment. This plan should systematically set out the steps and their sequence, so that he knows when his objective has been reached (Drotsky 1992: 9).

Methodicalness is also apparent in the extent to which the trainer establishes an adult learning climate, and the extent to which he or she plans, the layout of the venue and the lesson contents, so that a variety of training methods is used.

## ***Motivation***

Being motivated to learn means that the learner should freely apply himself to the task of learning in a consistent and committed way, even if he or she finds it uninteresting (Cawood, et al, 1982:88). In order to encourage the learner to want to learn by himself or herself in a motivated manner, the trainer should gain the learner's interest during the introduction to his lecture. The trainer should also recognise the motivational values of play, competition, reward and recognition (Cawood, et al, 1982:88).

The trainer should continuously stress the relevance of the subject matter. He or she should communicate effectively, set realistic challenges and feel an affinity with the learner's everyday world (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy, 1990:59).

## ***Individualisation***

According to Fraser, et al, (1990:60), we have to recognise that people differ from each other, and these differences should be taken into consideration during the planning and execution of all training. Individuals differ in respect of intellectual characteristics, personality characteristics and investigative skills. The trainer should constantly take these differences into consideration.

Some people learn better by listening to a lecture, and others by working out a case study themselves, or carrying out an assignment in a working group, or solving a problem in a group discussion. In planning and designing any training programme, the trainer should therefore provide for this by varying his training methods.

## ***Socialisation***

No individual functions in isolation, and therefore any learning situation is necessarily a social situation in which individuals react as social beings (Cawood, et al, 1982:20). Hence the trainer has to take seriously the human relations and teamwork in the learning situation.

The trainer acts as the leader of the group of trainees, and he should therefore be thoroughly conversant with group dynamics and the role played by the trainer in every phase of group development.

The delicate balance between individualisation and socialisation should be maintained throughout. Apart from sufficient opportunity for group work (within the context of large and small groups), there should also be enough opportunity for individual work, achievement and recognition of achievement.

### ***Self-activity***

Fraser, et al (1990:65) argue that the learner him or herself should have the opportunity to be active, physically and emotionally in the learning session. The learner must identify and solve problems, experiment and actively take part in discussion and practice skills.

Learners should be able to use and develop their creative abilities. Individual differences should be acknowledged, and activities should take place in a social climate. Methods such as role-plays, case studies, task groups, brainstorming sessions and many others may profitably be used to encourage learners in self-activity. The objective should continually be kept in mind, however, because activity for the sake of activity is senseless and a waste of time.

### ***Lived experience***

Learning is not a purely intellectual (cognitive) matter. During any learning session it is important to reach the total person. For this reason his mind, his body and his emotions (affective) should be actively involved in learning.

Bodily involvement may be obtained by involving as many senses as possible. The use of training media should be thoroughly planned to this end.

Emotional or affective experience means that the learner should feel something. Curiosity, expectation, surprise or even disapproval should be roused. When bodily involvement is accompanied by emotional experience the discovery is much greater and learning is more effective (Cawood, et al, 1982:173). Role-plays and videos may relate to the feelings of the learner. The use of colour and sound also influences a learner's emotional life (Fraser, et al, 1990:69).

### ***Totality***

Training is more successful if the learners understand how the different subsections of the curriculum mesh and relate to each other. It is also important for them to understand how

the subsections relate to the greater whole and to that which has already been learnt and that which is still going to be learnt.

Presenting a framework of the lecture or other learning method to the learners beforehand will give them a better totality of vision. Each lecture should also refer to the previous lecture or situation and the following one, and the connections should be pointed out.

Totality is closely connected with the other didactic principles. Methodicalness results in structure, which in turn results in a better totality of vision. Two-way communication, or dialogue, promotes socialisation, but also leads to a better totality of vision. The systematic mastering of the subsections and continuous evaluation and feedback are also essential for a good totality of vision.

## ***Mastering***

The learning process has been concluded when the learner not only knows the theoretical content, but is also able to apply it in practice.

Sometimes the trainer and the learner are under the false impression that the practical application will follow naturally once the theory of the subject matter has been covered. For this reason many training situations fail, unless sufficient practice takes place by means of repetition, revision and application (Drotsky, 1992:14).

Sufficient opportunity for mastering should be incorporated into a training programme while it is still in the planning stage. Periodically, during the training, there should be an opportunity for the trainer to evaluate whether knowledge has indeed been acquired, whether the subject matter is adequately understood, and whether application of the subject matter has been mastered within the training situation. However, the mastering of the required knowledge, skills and attitudes should also be applied in practice and integrated in the work situation after the conclusion of the training. It is, after all, the final aim of the training to effect a change of conduct within the learner's work situation.

The learner and his manager should therefore both be involved in this continuous mastering of subject matter. The trainer should perform follow-up evaluation in actual practice, and provide follow-up training in response to this where necessary, in order to ensure that the correct conduct is manifested.

The trainer should not test mastering only once at the end of the training; mastering of subsections should be evaluated regularly, and evaluations should be performed in practice.

Mastering is therefore closely related to the tenth didactic principle, namely, evaluation, and can be applied only when all eight previous principles have been fulfilled. This is, in fact, a prerequisite for the successful mastering of subject matter by the learner.

## ***Assessment and evaluation***

Assessment and evaluation takes us back to the first didactic principle of purposefulness. Learning outcomes should be formulated in such a way, following an analysis of the situation, that the subject matter is geared towards meeting the training needs of the learners and enabling learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. It is therefore necessary to assess the achievement of learning outcomes and to evaluate the attainment of training needs objectives, in order to determine whether these needs have been addressed accurately and satisfactorily. Assessment and evaluation takes place, therefore, on the basis of the learning outcomes and the training needs objectives.

A once-only evaluation at the conclusion of the training is not sufficient. Evaluation should take place periodically and continuously, so that both the trainer and the learner are constantly able to determine whether mastering has taken place, and are able to strive for the attainment of the goal in a systematic way. Feedback about the evaluation results should also be given to the learner continuously, so that he is able to monitor his own progress.

However, the principle of evaluation goes further than the mere evaluation of the success of the programme or course. It includes self-evaluation by the trainer.

The trainer should evaluate him or herself and the effectiveness of the training that he or she provides in terms of the extent to which learning objectives are attained at the conclusion of the learning session. This implies that the trainer should be willing to undergo self-examination and self-criticism. The trainer should improve himself constantly and make adjustments to his lessons, presentation techniques and presentation skills. Feedback from learners, colleagues, management, line-function and co-trainers may provide valuable information to any trainer. It is important for the trainer to be *very* development-minded in order to ensure that he keeps abreast of new developments within the line-function as well as in the fields of training and development.

# Communication

We are all public speakers. We are always sharing our thoughts, ideas and feelings with other people. Although we have been communicating all our life, we haven't given much thought whether other people really understand what we want to say.

Good communication is the lifeblood of organisations. It takes many forms, such as speaking, writing, and listening, though its purpose is always to convey a message to recipients.

Of all the knowledge and skills you have, those concerning communication are among the most important and useful. Communicating clearly to your boss, employers, delegates, co-workers, friends, children, and spouse - is a critical part of your success and your ability to improve the conditions you live and work in.

Communicating is a skill and it is learnable. It takes work, but the results are worth it. Good communication skills will increase your professional effectiveness.

## The art of communication – a story

*A living, breathing resume –*

Pam Maepa is a trainer who had been with the Institute for Whole Person Development for over five years. She first called me on the phone when the company was only a couple of years old and quite a bit leaner than it is today. "We're really not hiring new trainers right now but go ahead and send your resume," I said. "We're always looking for good people."

*I was working in my office the next day when my receptionist, Marianne, brought her resume in. "I told her you wouldn't be able to talk to her, without an appointment," said Marianne, "but she insists on seeing you in person." I quickly scanned through the resume and saw it was good, but nothing spectacular. I thought this was a little pushy, but figured I ought to at least be friendly, so I walked down the hall. I found Pam to be much more impressive than her resume.*

What really struck me was her certainty - a lot of energy in her voice and manner, great posture, an authentic smile. She radiated confidence and competence. I learned more of what I needed to know about Pam within the first thirty seconds after we shook hands than from her entire resume.

We ended up talking for half an hour. Two months later, she was hired.

## ***Some principles of effective communication***

### **Believability**

If the training event participants do not believe in you, your communications and presentations will not be a success. No matter what is being said, it is not going to make much difference in the mind of the listener unless the person is credible and believed. There can be no action where there is not belief and agreement. Remember that you are presenting your ideas, yourself and your work to the participants.

### **Verbal and visual messages**

In your face to face communication with others there is normally a mix of verbal and visual messages. The verbal messages include both the message itself (what the words mean) and the way in which it is said (the intonation, projection and resonance of the voice that carries those words). The visual messages include the features of your face and body, how they move, and how they are dressed.

If you combine both the verbal and the visual effectively *you* will make a great impact on your trainees.

### ***Verbal communication***

The voice is the primary vehicle to carry your message and it is important to speak clearly and confidently. Sometimes it helps to record yourself to listen to your characteristic way of speaking and to decide on which characteristics, if any, to try and change. You may try to increase your resonance and better project your voice, as well as modify your pace.

### **Posture when speaking**

The posture when you speak only helps you project your voice well and feel confident. You should stand straight with your feet slightly apart and your weight on the “balls” of the feet. Tighten your abdominal muscles and tilt your pelvis slightly forward. Your weight should be evenly distributed and should be standing square, relaxed and slightly forward. Avoid situations where a too short or long lectern or microphone stand leads you to stand in an uncomfortable position.

Before you start speaking start breathing from the diaphragm. Relax your head and neck, your shoulders, your face and your lips.

## *Non-verbal communication (mainly visual)*



### **Activity 4.10:** *The trainer's physical presence*

1. Discuss the impact body language can have
2. What should a trainer keep in mind concerning his/her physical appearance?

#### **Body language**



## Dress and appearance



3. Discuss what each of the following non-verbal actions might indicate:

Non-verbal response	What it may indicate
Bouncing your leg	
Raising an eyebrow	
Nodding your head	
Leaning forward	
Remaining silent	
Frowning	
Looking away	
Arms folded on chest	
Hand on hips	
Rubbing chin	
Restlessness	
Gestures with fists	
Hand-to-face gestures	
Hands in pockets	
Bite fingernails	
Pulling ear	

## Some tips for good communication

Tips	The Ineffective Communicator	The Effective Communicator
Find areas of interest	Tunes out 'boring' subject	Seeks opportunities; asks, "What is in it for me?"
Judge content, not delivery	Tunes out if delivery is poor	Judges content; skips over delivery errors
Hold your fire	Tends to interrupt or argue	Withholds judgment until comprehension is complete
Work at listening	Shows no energy output; attention is "faked"	Works hard; exhibits active body state
Resist distractions	Distracted easily	Fights or avoids distractions; Tolerates bad habits; knows how to concentrate
Exercise your mind	Resists difficult material; Seeks light, recreational material	Uses heavier material as an exercise for the mind
Keep on open mind	Reacts to emotional words	Interprets "colourful" words - does not get hung up on them
Capitalise on the fact that thought is faster than speech	Tends to daydream with slow speakers	Mentally sums up; weighs evidence; challenges; listens "between the lines"

### ***The art of listening in communication***

Without listening, there can be no communication. Most of us assume that listening is a natural human ability: certainly, hearing is inborn, but effective listening is not – it has to be developed.

Developing listening skills may be more important than we realise. Studies have shown how much of a person's time is spent listening. For instance: one study concluded that the average businessman spends 40% of his working time listening. The figure for executives is closer to 80%.

Think about it. Many of the world's most important affairs are settled around conference tables. In these conferences, when one person talks, it is extremely important that all the others listen. A decision based on a misunderstood statement could affect millions of lives.

It is equally important that you learn to become an effective listener. Your decisions may not affect millions of people, but they certainly affect the person you are with most often - yourself!



### **Activity 4.11: Questionnaire on listening skills**

Complete the questionnaire on listening skills:

To discover your listening skills, you can do the following exercise. If a sentence describes how you listen or behave, mark **Yes**, and if not, mark **No** - be honest.

1.	I am interested in many subjects and do not shut myself off from information that sounds boring.	
2.	I listen attentively to hear a speaker's ideas and points.	
3.	I take notes during meetings to note the points.	
4.	I am not easily distracted.	
5.	I keep my feelings under control.	
6.	I concentrate properly and do not pretend to be paying attention.	
7.	I wait until the speaker has finished before I evaluate the message.	
8.	I answer with a smile, nod, or friendly word while the speaker is speaking.	
9.	I am aware of mannerisms that can distract the speaker and keep mine under control.	
10.	I understand my assumptions and prejudices and keep them under control when I listen.	
11.	I do not interrupt the speaker continually.	
12.	I value looking someone in the eye and mostly try to do it.	
13.	I often repeat what the speaker has said to ensure that I have understood him correctly.	
14.	I listen to understand the speaker's emotional meaning as well as the contents of the subject.	
15.	I ask questions to clarify it for myself.	
16.	I do not complete other people's sentences, except when they ask me to do it.	
17.	When I listen over the telephone, I keep one hand free to take notes.	
18.	I try to see myself as less important and concentrate on the speaker.	
19.	I am careful to evaluate the message rather than the speaker.	
20.	I am mostly a patient listener.	

The following will help you to evaluate your level of listening skills at this stage on the basis of your attitudes and behaviour:

1 – 5 “No” answers:

You are an excellent listener. Keep it up!

6 –10 “No” answers:

You are a good listener, but can improve.

11–15 “No” answers:

Through practice you can become a much better listener in your business and personal relations.

16 – 20 “No” answers:

Please do listen!

## Some skills to help attentive listening

### Attend: Signal and demonstrate your interest

- Incline forward leaning toward the speaker
- Steady eye contact with speaker
- Open body language
- Nodding approvingly
- Resist external distractions

### Follow and support: Evaluate the message

- The words
- The feelings behind them
- Why the speaker is saying them
- Don't interrupt
- Encourage ... "Oh!", "I see", "Mmmm"

### Respond and reflect: Show you've listened

- Restate the ideas
- Summarise and reflect
- Check for understanding (listener has 51 % responsibility)
- Use open questions
- Think ... then reply

## Restating and paraphrasing

This technique helps you to understand exactly what the other person is saying, and identifies you as a careful listener. Use it regularly, and you'll avoid having to later clarify points you thought you understood at the time.

Examples	Advantages	Tips for use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "As I understand it ..."</li> <li>• "What you're saying ..."</li> <li>• "If I could summarise ..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows that you are listening intently to the message</li> <li>• Clarifies the sender's "true" message</li> <li>• Helps you to understand the message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen intently</li> <li>• Paraphrase fairly often</li> <li>• May interrupt to do so</li> </ul>

## Reflect the implications

When you reflect the implications of a message, you're going beyond merely understanding the words themselves. You're reading between the lines, thinking ahead and showing that communication is a two-way channel. Just be careful that you don't come across as being superior or aggressive if you misunderstood the message.

Examples	Advantages	Tips for use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "Would that mean that ..."</li> <li>◆ "Are you saying that ..."</li> <li>◆ "Would that help with ..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Communicates "genuine interest in the message"</li> <li>◆ Exhibits understanding of the message or issue being communicated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Allow speaker to be in control</li> <li>◆ Avoid trying to persuade</li> <li>◆ Avoid "one-upmanship"</li> </ul>

## Invite contributions

It allows you to show interest and to follow-up on a good thought. It can encourage a shy speaker to continue explaining an idea, or communicate openness when you don't necessarily agree with the speaker.

Examples	Advantages	Tips for use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What happened then?"</li> <li>• "Can you give me an example?"</li> <li>• "Tell me more about ..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates a desire to hear more about the topic</li> <li>• Allows time for the sender and receiver to understand the message</li> <li>• Promotes openness</li> <li>• Helps you to keep an open mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should not be used exclusively</li> <li>• Should follow paraphrasing and reflecting. Avoid "over-exposing" the speaker</li> </ul>

## Reflect underlying feeling

This is especially effective when the content of a message is emotional. It shows that you're a sensitive listener, able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes.

Examples	Advantages	Tips for use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "If that happened to me, I'd be upset ..."</li> <li>• "How did that make you feel?"</li> <li>• "I suppose that must make you feel annoyed."</li> <li>• "That must have been satisfying."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates a "genuine" understanding of the message and its implications.</li> <li>• Helps the receiver in empathising with the sender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid telling the speaker how they "ought" to feel</li> <li>• Avoid pressing for information.</li> <li>• Avoid evaluating the speaker.</li> </ul>

# Guiding group dynamics

Most trainers are also involved in group training. Some instructors provide training in a group context almost on a daily basis, while other instructors are only faced with this challenge occasionally.

Training in a group context has many advantages. A cross-pollination of ideas can take place within the group. This encourages creative problem solving and leads to better decision-making. Members of the group can also support and encourage each other. They can have a sense of belonging and security. The group may build up esteem. All this may result in improved performance of the group compared to individual performance. Unique individuals make unique contributions within a group in terms of their own knowledge, insight, skills, personalities, creativity, etc. Members therefore complement each other, and the group performs better than an individual would have done. But groups also have their disadvantages. They may encourage a kind of 'stultifying' 'group think' and recycle ignorance.

The instructor should plan and facilitate each training occasion in such a way as to utilise these advantages optimally and discourage the disadvantages. In an a group learning climate the instructor not only acts as a source of information; his or her main role is that of facilitator. This role requires specialised knowledge and skills. Trainers need to know and understand the characteristics of an effective learning group, so that in their handling of groups of trainees they can create the opportunity for the group to display the behaviour of an effective learning group.

## ***Characteristics of an effective learning group***

According to Johnson (1987:360) an effective learning group must have the following characteristics:

- A clear structure of objectives for co-operation
- Successful two-way communication between group members
- Active participation by all group members
- Leadership diffused throughout the group members
- Consensus in formulating answers; solutions and decisions
- Power and influence based on expertise and the availability of information; and not on authority
- Regular occurrence of differences or points of dispute
- Open confrontation and negotiated handling of conflict between group members and the instructor
- High group cohesion
- A large measure of mutual trust

- A climate of acceptance and support between members respectively and between members and the instructor
- Group norms that encourage individual responsibility and accountability
- Good interpersonal skills and group skills between members

Different groups will, of course, interact in different ways, depending on the context and the purpose of the group. Individuals are usually members of a large number of groups and the particular role that an individual may play in a group may differ considerably depending on which group he or she is in and what his or her own objectives are (which may well differ from those of the group as a whole).

When a measure of weakness exists in the group in respect of one or more of these characteristics of an effective learning group, the group, possibly guided by the trainer, needs to identify why the group is ineffective and what is causing the weakness. Several factors affecting the functioning of groups have to be looked at.

## Group leadership

One of the major keys to the success of the group is the kind of leadership it receives. Therefore, the group leader (if there is one) has an important function, namely to lead the group towards achieving their common objective.

## The history of the group

The historic background of the group influences the way it functions, the nature of the interaction between the members and the way they do their work.

*A temporary group* formed on the spur of the moment will usually not immediately comply with the requirements for an effective group:

- it takes time for members to get to know and trust one another;
- build a sound mutual communication pattern; and
- to develop clear guidelines and norms for decision-making.

*A well-established group* on the other hand:

- already had sufficient time to develop a specific climate or group culture; and
- since the members know one another's weaknesses and merits, they have clearer guidelines for decision-making.

The history of the group will therefore have a definite effect on its functioning.

## Interaction within the group

The activities are the actual tasks the members should perform. In so far as the group members perform these activities and interchange expected of them, other activities and interchanges apart from those expected of them, come forward.

## Group norms

The interaction within the group will eventually lead to the development of group norms. When people come together in groups, they have as part of their socialised personalities a general knowledge of how people behave towards one another. In the group itself, during the process of interaction, standards and conduct codes develop which are characteristic of the group. These indicate what is proper in terms of values, views, feelings and conduct. A norm is such a generally accepted standard of conduct each group member is supposed to maintain. The strongest norms pertain to the conduct norms the group members regard as most important.

These norms (whether informally understood or formally decided upon and written down) direct the conduct of the group members and they have the important function of enabling the group to reach group objectives. Norms for interaction provide the ground rules for members of the group diagnosing their own group process problems and improving group functioning

When a group member objects to the norms of the group or only accepts some of them, he or she will experience much pressure to conform, since significant nonconformity constitutes a threat to the standards, stability and existence of the group. This pressure may be very strong.

## Group solidarity

The concept of solidarity refers to how members stick together and act as a unit instead of individuals. Group coherence obviously has a great influence on group performance and may increase the attractiveness of the group to its members and aid their sense of belonging and satisfaction.

## Phases of group development

It is important to remember that all groups are unique, dynamic, complex and ever changing systems because they are made up of individuals. Yet, as with individuals, there are predictable phases of development that all groups go through. These phases of development indicate what the needs of the group are in a specific stage. The trainer can do a lot to guide the group through the different phases. Any changes in or outside the group – for example, another trainer, absence of group members or new group members – will influence the functioning of the group and its progress through these phases.

During the **beginning phase** the members orientate themselves and seek acceptance. The leader must establish an adult learning climate and provide structure.

The **conflict phase** is characterised by subgroup formation, the setting of rules, and competition. During this important phase the leader must answer questions, stimulate participation and handle conflict constructively.

The group will then move towards the **cohesion phase**. Subgroups disband, conflict is solved and a feeling of solidarity is experienced. The leader may start withdrawing gradually during this phase, but still provide support and set challenges for the group.

The **production phase** is the apex of the group process. The group is task oriented and good co-operation and high morale and loyalty characterise this phase. The trainer should try to keep the group in this phase as long as possible by playing a smaller role and by rotating roles and functions.

The **conclusion phase** should not commence too early or carry on too long. However, the trainer must provide the opportunity to conclude tasks and dissolve relationships.

During each phase resistance from group members may be experienced. Handling this may require initiative and creativity from the trainer. Difficult members may damage the group process and must be handled tactfully. The trainer must try, with the assistance of the group, and by setting a good example him or herself to handle difficult group members correctly in an adult learning climate. Dominating, leader-takeover, aggressive, superior or withdrawing behaviour or discussions in an undertone may occur. Learners that exhibit this behaviour must still be treated with respect and confidence as adults, in order to improve the functioning of the group.

The trainer who masters these skills will be able to fulfill his role as facilitator during group training effectively.



**Activity 4.12:** *Evaluating the effectiveness of a group you have been in*

An effective learning group shows certain characteristics. Evaluate the effectiveness of the last learning group you have been in. Make a **X** in the appropriate boxes to indicate which characteristics the group displayed:

A clear structure of objectives for co-operation	
Successful two-way communication between group members	
Active participation by all group members	
Leadership diffused throughout the group members	
Consensus in formulating answers, solutions and decisions	
Power and influence based on expertise and the availability of information, and not on authority	
Regular occurrence of differences or points of dispute	
Open confrontation and negotiated handling of conflict between group members and the instructor	
High group cohesion	
A large measure of mutual trust	
A climate of acceptance and support between members respectively and between members and the instructor	
Good interpersonal skills and group skills between members	

Was it an effective learning group, in your opinion?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_\_



### **Activity 4.13: Phases of group life**

Name the five phases of group development:

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In each of the following 13 situations the group finds itself in a specific phase. Identify the phase and describe what actions you, as facilitator, would take to promote the learning process.

- (a) The group is divided in two sub-groups. They constantly attack and criticise each other.

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- (b) The group is working hard and continuously. It is the third day of a five day course. They regularly ask for the names of books on the subject.

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(c) It is the Thursday afternoon of a weeklong course. The group believes they are the best group you have ever had. You get the idea that they think they know it all.

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(d) The group consists of experts. They do not participate. If they do contribute, it is to criticise you. Every person believes his situation is unique.

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(e) It is the first day of the course. The learners know each other but are uncertain of what is expected of them. They do not participate as spontaneously and actively as you expected.

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- - (f) Everybody in the group participates actively. They even thought out a name and slogan for the group. Their performance is average and they are eager to help each other.
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- (g) The group is uncertain and anxious. Each member is concerned only with his own promotion. They all try to impress you with their words and actions.

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- (h) Each member of the group participates actively in his own way. They all air their views and there is debate on the practical application of the theory.

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- (i) Though you are senior official the group consists entirely of even more senior officials who all know each other. You feel excluded.

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- (j) During an introductory icebreaker the group realises that they all attended a course presented by the same trainers recently. Discussions and conversation are dominated by comments and jokes about some bad presentations they experienced.

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- (k) All the members of the group work in the same division. Their annual end of year party was held the previous night. They are all in high spirits.

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- (l) It is the day the course commences and the participants are not known to each other. Even though it is 10 o'clock all the participants have not arrived. Those who have arrived react negatively to why their time is being wasted in waiting for the late arrivals. These feelings are strengthened by the fact that they were forced to attend and the extent of their work load.

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- (m) It is the last day of a three-day course, 9 o'clock in the morning. Everybody is in high spirits. They brought refreshments, are relieved to put the hard work behind them and exchange telephone numbers.

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## ***Handling difficult situations and group members***

Many problems may come to the fore in group work, and the instructor should be able to recognise signs of trouble and know what to do about it.

Three aspects affect a group, just like a machine, namely:

- It must do something or accomplish something (task).
- It must be kept in good working condition (maintenance).
- It needs to be driven or steered (leadership).

All these these aspects require constant attention and to be kept in balance. In most groups, the first aspect – the specific task, objectives and activities – is not a problem. Group members easily establish which procedures should be followed and who should do what. When this does not happen leadership is very important to correct the problem. The maintenance aspect, namely, to keep the group in good working order, is very easily neglected, because it is considered to be obvious. The difference between a group and a machine is that a machine works well at the beginning of its life, while a group really functions well only during the later phases of its life.

Attention should therefore be given specifically to the maintenance of the group at the start of its existence. The trainer should encourage the group to carry out these functions by itself.



### ***Activity 4.14: Handling problems in a group***

Discuss in groups and list your actions briefly how you would handle the following:

**Resistance:**

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**Overactive talker:**

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**Aggressive, critical behaviour:**

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**Isolated, quiet person:**

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# Ethical considerations in training and development

## ***What are the key ethical values in training?***

The key values underlying ethical training practice are:

- honesty;
- openness;
- voluntary participation;
- integrity;
- confidentiality;
- the development of people;
- the development of practitioner expertise;
- high standards; and
- self-awareness.

The practitioner should respect people's right to choose what they do and do not learn, should uphold the principle of clear and open contracting, should err on the side of confidentiality when in doubt, and should never abuse a position of power, particularly with regard to assessment practices.

## ***What are common ethical concerns in training and development practice?***

Ethical concerns of training and development practitioners include:

***Misrepresentation of the practitioner's skills:*** This occurs when training practitioners distort or misrepresent their background, training, competencies or experience in curriculum vitae, in advertising or in conversation.

***Professional/technical ineptness:*** The potential for unethical behaviour stemming from lack of expertise is pervasive in training and often manifests itself in the form of two violations of ethical standards: using interventions and assessment methods that have a low probability of being helpful (and may even be harmful), and using interventions and assessment methods that exceed the training practitioner's expertise.

***Misuse of data:*** The need for absolute confidentiality in training and development is essential. Data can be used to punish or otherwise harm persons or groups, or data can be seriously distorted, thereby impacting negatively on learners as individuals and groups.

***Abuse of power:*** The power wielded by the trainer in a development intervention should not

be underestimated. Such an intervention may be viewed as a method of “getting at” certain individuals for practitioner or learner gain..

**Coercion:** It is unethical to force organisational members and learners into settings where they are, in effect, required to disclose information about themselves or their workplaces, which they prefer to keep private.

**Promising unrealistic outcomes:** The temptation for a practitioner to make promises for material gain or to gain popularity may be great, but the consequences may be the reduced credibility of the practitioner, of the training and development field in general, and of the training organisation.

**Deception and conflicting values:** Deception in any form is unethical and will destroy trust. Likewise, any manifestation of a conflict between the values of the training practitioner and the trainees or client organisation could possibly give rise to a conflict of interest, with possible negative repercussions for all parties involved, including trainees.

## **What are the ethical concerns of participants in learning programmes?**

Ethical concerns of participants in learning programmes most often include concerns regarding the following:

**Voluntary consent:** Trainers should not implicitly coerce unwilling or skeptical participants into assessment or physical activities, or into revealing personal issues.

**Discrimination:** Age, gender, ethnicity or handicaps should not be used as barriers in determining who receives training and who undergoes assessment of competencies.

**Cost-effectiveness:** Training activities should be based on demonstrated utility, demonstrated acquisition of applied competencies and demonstrated benefits with regards to costs. Training activities should not be undertaken simply to utilise a training budget.

**Accurate portrayal:** Claims regarding the benefits of training need to be accurate. Training should be consistent over time and among trainers, and training materials and assessment methodology should be appropriately depicted.

**Effectiveness of training:** Avoid teaching, learning facilitation and assessment methods that do not assist in accomplishing the goals of the training intervention.

**Value of the training:** Trainers should believe in the value of what they teach.

# Assessing the learners

## ***What is assessment?***

The assessment of learning is important and is an inevitable part of a training activity, whether it be done informally, non-formally or formally.

In assessment we ask:

- ◆ Has learning happened?
- ◆ Have objectives (outcomes) been reached?
- ◆ What activities shall we measure, how and why, to check that learning has happened?

Even if no formal assessment takes place – and there are no tests, assignments, examinations or performances – nearly all trainers informally check whether the participants in the class, workshop, course or programme are participating and learning.

## ***What is the difference between assessment and evaluation?***

Many educators often use the terms ‘assessment’ and ‘evaluation’ interchangeably, although they are two distinct concepts. Assessment refers to the measuring and judging the quality of student performance, while evaluation refers to the quality of a course or programme or of a whole system or institution.

Look at these two definitions:

### **assessment**

Assessment measures what learners have learned in an educational or training activity. It helps to determine the degree to which the aims and objectives of an educational activity are achieved, that is, it measures learning outcomes. The goal of assessment is to put a value on the achievement of students; its focus is on the achievement of learners, individually or in groups. This usually involves appraising or judging individuals (or, in some cases, groups) in relation to educational aims, objectives, standards or criteria. All assessment involves the making of comparisons.

(Note that in many books from North America what is here defined as ‘assessment’ is called ‘student evaluation’.)

### **evaluation**

The term *evaluation* is used in the judging of all the circumstances and systems that influence an educational course, programme, system or institution. The goal of evaluation, therefore is to put a value on the course, programme or larger system or institution. A broad evaluation will therefore look at student learning, educator behaviour, course and programme design, materials, administration, etc.

(Note that in many books from North America what is here defined as evaluation is often called 'programme evaluation'.)

### ***How does assessment influence how participants learn from an event or course?***

Assessment (especially when done with formal methods like examinations) often controls how we learn. In situations of formal assessment students usually learn “**for** the exam” and concentrate on those things that tend to be assessed in tests and exams (such as the easier to test knowledge or skills) rather than on those that are not (such as the harder to assess development of attitudes and values). This means that assessment must always be looked at very carefully in relation to the other parts of the course or programme.

### ***What problems with assessment do trainers have to take special account of?***

People are also strongly influenced by how they were assessed in their school days. Trainers working with adults need to be particularly conscious of how they respond to assessment methods. Adults often regress to schoolchild behaviour in assessment situations, revert to rote learning methods and may generally react badly in high threat assessment situations.

Hence trainers need to take assessment very seriously (even if they do not see assessment as a major focus of their particular training activity). They need to become more informed about the variety of assessment methods and how they are implemented.

If assessment is to take place it should be well planned and take into account learner attitudes to and fears of assessment.



**Activity 4.15: Your experience of being assessed**

Think about your own experience as a learner.

1. What has the word “assessment” meant to you?

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2. What has been your experience of assessment?

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3. What did the assessments usually test?

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4. What was the relationship between the course or programme and the assessment?

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***What are different purposes for assessment?***

Though the answer to this question may seem obvious – “To test learning!” – it is important to understand that assessment has a number of purposes.

The following purposes can be differentiated:

Purposes of assessment	
Diagnosis	To find out what is happening (at individual or group level) in response to training. This means finding out about the students’ strengths and weaknesses, and identifying their emerging needs and interests. May lead to remedial action if all is not well.
Evaluation	To provide evidence of the effects and effectiveness of the course or programme.
Guidance	To help learners make more relevant and appropriate choices, particularly in subject or career choice.
Grading	To assign to individuals a number or letter signifying the standard they have achieved. The standard may be based on objective criteria (mastery learning) or merely indicate a rank order (norm-referenced assessment). Grading methods need to be sensitive to the differences between individuals. But grading fails to assist learning if it is not seen by the learners as a useful form of feedback.
Selection	To choose individuals most suitable for and likely to benefit from participation in a training programme, a job, use of a scarce resource, etc. The other side of selection is rejection.
Prediction	To foretell how people are likely to behave in the future. Prediction usually aids selection.
Motivation	To encourage or force students into working (as prescribed) at learning.
Standard maintaining	To attempt to maintain quality control of both learning and teaching in an training programme and to retain the value of its certification.

Diagnosis is usually linked with Guidance  
 Grading “ ” “ ” Selection  
 Prediction “ ” “ ” Selection

Grading, Selection, Prediction and Standard maintaining are all purposes related to assessment aimed at student certification.

## ***What are some important steps in planning assessment?***

If formal or non-formal assessment is to take place it should be well planned. It can be argued that this should be done early in the design process rather than later. This is particularly the case in training events that are based on specified outcomes.

Here are some important steps in planning assessment:

<b>1. Why assess?</b>	Deciding why assessment is to be carried out; what effects or outcomes is it expected to produce. [See the table on the previous page.]
<b>2. What to assess?</b>	What are you going to look at or comment on? Will you look at knowledge, skills or attitudes and values or all these? If you look at knowledge, what kind of knowledge – recall of memorised facts, meaningful information, ability to analyse and put together, to apply knowledge to a situation, critical thinking?
<b>3. How to assess?</b>	What methods and techniques will you use? Will they give you accurate, reliable and fair results?
<b>4. How to interpret?</b>	How will you interpret the assessment results? What sense will you make of them?
<b>5. How to respond?</b>	How will you communicate the results to the students in a helpful, useful way?

## Some assessment methods

Assessment methods range from informal, almost unconscious, observation to formal examinations. All these methods involve the making of comparisons.

The methods can be placed into the three broad categories of:

- **Examinations** - traditional and alternative methods
- **Coursework**
- **Continuous assessment**

There are, of course, a range of general assessment methods appropriate to all the above settings.

Here is a table listing some of these methods and the strengths and weaknesses:

Method	For	Against
Examinations	<p>Good for testing knowledge of facts and understanding of fundamental concepts</p> <p>Passing exams is seen as a real sign of success and makes students feel secure that they have arrived at a particular level.</p> <p>Encourage or force students to learn and organize their knowledge. An end of course exam helps the student “put it all together”.</p> <p>Makes them focus on the important parts of the course</p>	<p>Assumptions by trainers about the students may distort how they mark exams.</p> <p>May not examine what are important parts of the course or parts that are hard to assess.</p>
Oral presentations	Useful for encouragement of creative ability and thinking systematically	Student may be under extra stress
Open book exams	Students are less stressed	Favour the better prepared more organised student

<p>Profiles</p>	<p>Detailed reports look at more than knowledge.</p>	<p>Developing criteria may be very time consuming.</p> <p>There may be a poor match between academic and practical work</p>
<p>Coursework (Usually includes assignments or tests with or without an end examination)</p>	<p>Less stressful for ordinary students</p> <p>May motivate students throughout course</p> <p>Enables student problems to be diagnosed early</p> <p>50% course and 50% examination shows a high correlation between the two marks</p>	<p>May assess in exactly the same way as examinations</p> <p>Students are as likely to overwork as to underwork.</p> <p>Increases the load on staff during the course.</p> <p>33% course and 67% examination may fail to provide strong stimulus to a class having low motivation and a pre-occupation with other important subjects to take the coursework seriously. The obverse is similar.</p>
<p>Continuous assessment (May include terminal examinations)</p>	<p>Very useful where the whole process of the course or programmes is important.</p> <p>Enables student problems to be diagnosed early.</p>	<p>Not particularly useful for outcomes-based education where the end outcomes are what is important</p> <p>In practice very seldom really “continuous” and is simply another name for coursework.</p> <p>Not fair unless students really understand what is expected of them.</p>

Whatever methods of assessment you choose you will need to develop a strategic plan on how you will use them in during the programme or course. On the next pages are examples of such plans.

Example of an assessment strategy (Adapted from Coetzee, 2002)

<b>Assessment Strategy</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Patterns of assessment</b>	<b>Activity being assessed</b>	<b>Methods of assessment</b>	<b>Recognition of prior learning opportunities</b>
1. Demonstrate knowledge and skills in conducting a development discussion and identifying employees with performance problems	7 times	Discussion groups Presentations Questionnaires Self-evaluation	<b>Group work</b> Discussion  <b>Individual</b> Presentations Questionnaires	As per company policy
2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills in coaching employees with performance problems	12 times	Game Discussion groups Role play Observation Presentations Self-evaluation Questionnaires	<b>Group work</b> Discussion Reports back Role-play  <b>Individual</b> Questionnaires Presentations	As per company policy
3. Demonstrate knowledge and skills in reviewing the performance of employee's with performance problems	11 times	Game Discussion groups Role play Observation Self-evaluation Questionnaires	<b>Group work</b> Discussion Reports back Role-play  <b>Individual</b> Questionnaires Presentations	As per company policy

You will note that the above assessment strategy will rely very heavily on the informal observation powers of a very experienced trainer to accurately and fairly assess achievement of outcomes through observing learner activity in discussions, role plays and games.

## Example of an assessment strategy and record sheet

(Adapted from Coetzee, 2002)

The strategy is completed, taking into account the specifications of the context in which the competence is applied. Assessment methods and instruments are evaluated in terms of their validity, reliability, fairness and practicability. Evidence is evaluated in terms of their practicability, sufficiency, currency and authenticity.

Specific Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment Method	Assessment	Type/Form of evidence
Learners can demonstrate a systemic understanding of the Performance Management Process	An explanation of the term “systems thinking” is given in the context of the organization.  <i>Range:</i>  The explanation could be conceptual in nature or a more practical description.	Oral questioning with questioner using checklist	Oral questions posed during workshop based on reflection question in Learner Manual.	Direct evidence based on the learners identification of key concepts and understanding of application

### Assessment Record Sheet

**Unit Standard Number:**

**Title: Demonstrate a systemic understanding of managing individual and team performance**

<b>Assessor:</b>		
Name & Surname:	Registration Number:	Employee Number:

<b>Learner:</b>		
Name & Surname:	Registration Number:	Employee Number:

Specific Outcomes & Assessment Criteria	Competence Demonstrated	Assessment Methods used: Observation = O	Date:
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		√	Written test = T Oral questioning = Q Evaluation of presentations = E			
<b>Specific Outcome 1:</b>						
1	Demonstrate a systemic understanding of Performance Management Process					
<b>Assessment Criteria</b>						
1.1	An explanation of the term “systems thinking” is given in the context of the organization			O	T	Q
1.2	An analysis is provided of the fundamental business processes which impact on the process of performance management			O	T	Q
1.3	The relationship between the business processes and the outcome of performance management are identified using appropriate visual presentation techniques.			O	E	Q
1.4	An integrated performance management framework is formulated, using the ecology of the organization as a case study.				T	Q

We, the undersigned declare that:

- The learner has demonstrated competence against the unit standard “Demonstrate a systemic understanding of managing individual and team performance”.
- This record is authentic and that the assessment has been done in a fair, valid and reliable manner.

\_\_\_\_\_

Learner



\_\_\_\_\_

Assessor

### **Activity 4.16: Review of Module 4**

Review what you have learned against the outcomes of the module.

What were the significant learnings) for you?

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What will you apply?

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How will the be the first practical steps you take in applying them?

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### ***Activity 4.17: Group discussion on applying your learnings***

In groups discuss how you will apply what you have learned in this module in your own training activities and workplace and what further actions you can take to increase your knowledge, understanding and skills regarding training needs assessment?

Actions I can take	Who can assist me?	When should I review my progress?	Comments
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## Checklist for Competencies

### *Module 4: Facilitating and assessing learning*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assess your own skills by indicating with a ✓ how you rate yourself on each aspect mentioned.

<i>I can ...</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Act as an effective facilitator of learning			
Consciously adopt and use an approach to facilitation			
Distinguish between educational approaches, methods and techniques			
Choose methods to facilitate learning			
Use some basic presentation and questioning skills			
Prepare the learners and learning environment			
Understand issues relating to the transfer of learning			
Describe some basic didactic principles			
Create communication and support strategies within groups			
Guide learning groups and manage their dynamics			
Consider ethical considerations in training			
Assess learners purposefully using a variety of appropriate methods.			



### ***Evaluation of Module 4***

What did you like about the module?

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What did you not like?

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What would you like to change?

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Any other comments

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# References

Cawood, Muller and Swartz 1982

Coetzee, M. (2002). *Getting and keeping your accreditation: The quality assurance and assessment guide for education, training and development practitioners*. Cape Town: Van Schaiks.

Coetzee, M. (2002). *Short course in Skills Development Facilitation*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Drotsky 1992

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