
UNIT 1 ADULT LEARNING

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first Unit of the Block aims to provide you with the necessary information to understand different approaches in acquiring knowledge, developing skills and competencies in the case of adult learners. It will also make clear the importance of the liberation approach in training as it ensures attitudinal change. A major focus of attention is also on the principles and conditions of adult learning because you as a trainer will be continuously dealing with adult women (and men). In order to ensure maximum learning you need to understand them well.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the need to train adults and describe various approaches to acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies;
- review the critical importance of training in initiating a process of social change;
- explain the meaning of participatory training;
- summarize the principles of adult learning and
- describe the importance of individual differences and how to cope with them.

1.2 NEED FOR TRAINING ADULTS

It was earlier believed that learning happens only during childhood. It was felt that adults cannot learn. This thinking has changed and it is now believed that learning is a continuous process and everyone can learn at any age of her/his life. However, the purpose of learning for adults may be different from that of children.

It is very important to understand why we want to train adults. As mentioned in the introduction, women are often victims of exploitation and poverty. We are fighting against the gender, class and caste divisions within the society. People who are not organized lack the strength to demand their basic rights. We as trainers want to develop knowledge, skills and competencies which can improve their quality of life especially the life options available to women. The knowledge and skill we provide should be useful in life and should help to achieve their basic needs. We also want to train adults to bring gender equality in the society so that women can enjoy equal status at the family, society and state levels. We need to remember that men can and should be partners in this important endeavour.

As trainers, we must also know that adults are also not one homogenous group. There are different groups of adults, who have different needs for which they need to be trained. For example, women farmers are a group of adults who need to be trained on different aspects of agriculture. They also need to be told about research findings which may be useful in improving the yield, or harvesting technique. We need to make sure that they are trained to use new technology. For example, pesticides are widely used in almost all villages of India, but the way they are handled is harmful to the health of the farmers. There is no systematic mechanism of informing these farmers about the harmful effects of pesticides. The warning aspects may be written in English which the farmer may not be able to read or understand.

Looking at another example, you may be aware that in India, about 96 percent of women are working in the unorganized sector where they are being exploited. Being women they are overloaded with household work, poor in nutritional and health status, under paid for the work they do on work sites and so on. We, as trainers, need to understand the problem of this group of adults and train them to get organized and empower themselves to be free of exploitation. We need to improve their working conditions.

A woman must understand that in the family, eating last may be alright but eating least and only left over food is not beneficial for her health. She should realize that during stress periods like pregnancy and lactation, she needs more nutrition. Also, she and the society do not value household work. This work is not visible and hence her work is not recognized by the society. In other words through training we need to address these and many other social and cultural aspects which lead to discrimination against women.

Apart from these groups, there is a great need to train the adults who are in powerful positions as heads of non-governmental organizations, corporate sector or politicians. Very often they are opinion leaders and policy makers. They need to be sensitized about the realities of life so as to take decisions in favour of poor women who live in poverty and who are being exploited all the time.

1.3 PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

We have heard that learning is a continuous, lifelong process. Still many of us wonder how adults can learn, especially when their formal education is already over. Why is it that they learn certain things and not others? We need to examine the principles of Adult Learning to know more.

PRINCIPLE 1

People control what and how they learn. When people learn, they get to see and hear many things but retain only that part which they are familiar with and use in their life. Teachers and trainers can only help people to learn and cannot directly increase knowledge and skills in them.

Example: Vidya lives in a village. A village health worker tells her about eating iron-folic acid tablets. She is not familiar with these terms. She shows her a picture of the foods she should eat. However, she has never seen the foods in the picture so she rejects the advice. Then she sees a poster in the health clinic. The poster shows her familiar foods so she decides to take the advice seriously.

PRINCIPLE 2

Learning is the process of finding new meaning and ideas. If the facts are relevant and useful the learner will understand quickly.

Example: During a training programme, Sheela is introduced to the concept of gender. She does not understand very well till she is told how gender is constructed in her community especially the difference in roles performed by men and women.

PRINCIPLE 3

Learning (behavioural change) results from experience. For effective learning, people should go through an experience.

Example: Jamuna learnt the principle in generating business ideas by actually going to the nearby city and finding out what items are in demand. This experience taught her to generate business ideas.

PRINCIPLE 4

Adults learn when they act and discuss together in groups. Through group action people learn to define goals, plan, discuss and solve problems.

Example: The Sarini Women's Self Help Group meets to discuss how they should conduct their savings and credit operations. As they discuss, they learn more from experienced members in the group and the facilitators from the NGO which is helping them out. They set their own goals and plan their savings schemes.

PRINCIPLE 5

Learning occurs over a period of time – it is an evolutionary process. The process requires free and open communication, active and personal involvement, freedom from threat, and trust in oneself. This happens when the trainer's facilitation is non-judgmental.

Example: Nandini is preparing and selling lime pickle. Initially she thought that making good pickle is enough for good trading. So, she first learnt the best way to make the pickle. But then she realized the importance of proper packaging and marketing. She went for a discussion with the NGO facilitator who helped to train her to acquire skills in packaging and marketing. Consequently she was able to improve the packaging of the pickle and promote its sale.

PRINCIPLE 6

Learning is sometimes painful. It is not easy to unlearn old ways and adopt new ways of behaving. Some old behavioural patterns/habits have to change when new learning takes place. Changing old behaviour is painful. If learning is to take place, pain is often necessary.

Example: Jayashree has been told to change the way in which she gives food to her son and daughter. She learns the painful truth that her traditional practices needed to be changed drastically because they were causing enough harm to her health. Unlearning involved giving her daughter more food and giving her needs special attention by serving her more nutritious food. So she has to undergo the painful process of doing away with her old habits and learning new practices. She has also to undergo resistance from family members in changing old practices.

PRINCIPLE 7

The learner brings knowledge and experience which are valuable resources. When the learner opens up and draws upon his/her personal information and shares it with others, learning takes place.

Example: Ganga is an expert in her community on the products that can be gathered or made from the nearby forest. The local women's group takes her advice and gains from her traditional wisdom.

PRINCIPLE 8

People also can learn from feelings. If people feel good, they learn better. In order to create good conditions for learning to occur in a group, the people themselves must be taken care of first. If they are physically comfortable and emotionally satisfied they will be more motivated to learn. It is only when people's problems are dealt with that they become open to learning.

Example: The Mandakini Women's Self help Group had an intense discussion on the problems they are facing and also on the possible solutions to their problems. They feel good because they have found strength in being together. Acting together can solve their problems better than when they try alone. They then try to develop an appropriate action plan together and help each other in finding alternate solutions.

PRINCIPLE 9

Each person has his/her own way of learning. The trainers should help people recognize the learner's own style of learning and help her to learn accordingly. Trainers can also try out alternative styles and modify the learning process.

Example: Savitri and Rama have very different learning styles. Savitri likes to take time to read carefully, study related materials and discuss with other learners/ experts before she is satisfied. Rama believes in quickly going through the material provided and memorizing important points. Do you notice the difference in the two styles? Do you realize that Savitri's learning is thorough while Rama's is casual?

1.4 CONDITIONS WHICH FACILITATE ADULT LEARNING

We have examined some principles of adult learning in the preceding paragraphs. How to induce the adult to learn is the question that the trainer has to ask himself/herself. In order to succeed in an adult learning situation, the trainer should create the conditions and environment that the trainees find conducive to learning.

Condition 1

People should be active while learning. The trainer should make the atmosphere lively and ensure that everyone is involved.

Example: Mani creates a very lively atmosphere in her training sessions. She makes a presentation of the main points but encourages participants to ask questions, share experiences and contribute appropriate examples.

Condition 2

The goals of training should reflect the needs of the learners.

Example: Maitrayee encourages participants in the training sessions to think about, explore and find out their own training needs. She then collects the information from all the participants and develops a list of training needs. She then develops the training programme to meet these needs.

Condition 3

The trainer should recognize that each person has a different style of learning. The trainer should create an atmosphere which provides an opportunity for everyone to use their own style. In such a situation, people feel that their own contributions and their value as people are really appreciated.

Example: Fatima lets her trainees proceed at their own pace and use their own styles of learning. The fast learners are encouraged to work with the slow learners in small groups. She also gives trainees plenty of time to reflect, think and absorb new information and repeat important points again and again. She lets them contribute to the discussion.

Condition 4

Learning is best in an atmosphere in which differences are encouraged. Different ideas should be heard and discussed to improve learning.

Example: The local mahila mandal is having a heated discussion on dealing with alcoholism and liquor vendors. There are sharply differing points of view on this. The facilitator /trainer encourages the women to talk freely and openly to come to an agreed action plan.

Condition 5

People learn from mistakes too. Hence, they should be given the chance to face new situations and ideas without being punished for mistakes. (One who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything.) The trainer should not focus on the ‘correct’ ways and the ‘right’ things to do. The trainer should also be patient with uncertainty in the classroom.

Example: Ambica is focussing on training women to prepare financial records. They try to do the tasks and make mistakes. She does not criticize them – just shows them the right way to do it. She encourages them to prepare their own symbols and signs for various types of financial tasks.

Condition 6

The trainer should let learners evaluate their performance. They should be encouraged to set their own goals for performance. They should be encouraged to monitor their progress. This will make learners become responsible for their own progress.

Example: Jaya encourages participants to set their own training goals. Then she lets them judge whether they have achieved the learning objectives of each training session. She also encourages them to give suggestions on what would help them at each stage.

Condition 7

Learning is better in an open atmosphere that permits people to be free and frank. The trainer should help people to be free and open.

Example: Gina lets the women express their views openly in her training session. She accepts their criticism also in a positive manner. She helps the women who are hostile to the practices she is recommending to see that there can be other experiences and other points of view.

Condition 8

Learning is best in an atmosphere in which people are encouraged to trust themselves as well as others. When people begin to draw ideas from themselves and others (rather than relying on the teacher), learning takes place faster.

Example: Jai Ram wants the women to work together in small groups. He encourages them to choose their team leader and in this small group discuss all the points. He asks them to present their findings to the rest of the groups irrespective of the fact that there are differences as well as agreements in thinking between the different groups.

Condition 9

Respect each member and be sensitive to their personal needs.

A genuine expression of care on the part of the trainer (leader) and a warm emotional climate generates a good atmosphere for learning which is also free of threat.

Example: Shaila finds that two of the women in her trainees’ groups don’t know how to arrange for the care of their children while they are attending the training sessions. She arranges for the care of children by other women in the

local anganwadi. The trainees thus could pay total attention and gain from the training programme.

What are the lessons for the trainer from the principles and conditions of adult learning?

- Use interactive methods in which both trainer and learners participate equally.
- Use examples and samples which would explain ideas.
- Be non-threatening and non-judgmental.
- Don't preach.
- Treat learners with respect. Accept the different values and learning styles that people bring forth.
- Use mistakes to bring in new lessons rather than for finding fault with people.
- Show the relevance of new ideas and events to the learners and enable them to draw conclusions.
- Allow space for the learners to think and express their views.
- Behavioural change comes from attitudinal change and therefore it is important to provide chances during the training to reflect on their own attitudes and help them see the need for changing.
- Do not prescribe the 'one correct way' of doing anything.
- Listen to everyone. Make sure that people see that you are attentive when they talk.
- Conduct the training in such a place and ambience which is suited to the trainees rather than the trainers.

1.5 HELPING ADULTS TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Paulo Freire's (a social educationist from Latin America) statement is very appropriate to be mentioned here before we proceed to discuss the approaches to education. He said that,

“No Education is ever neutral.”

This means that education is either designed to maintain the existing situation, imposing the values and culture of the dominant class on the lower classes or education is designed to liberate people, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of the society.

You can help adults to acquire knowledge and develop skills and competencies for lifelong learning. There are several approaches to do that but keep Paulo Freire's statement in view while we discuss the three educational approaches

generally adopted to build up knowledge, skills and competencies.

The Conventional Approach to Education

The conventional approach to education views the learner as a passive acceptor who receives knowledge and memorizes the facts. The assumption is that the teacher knows everything, the learner knows nothing. The learners are allowed to ask a few questions but on the whole the process of learning is didactic. Much of our school/college education, some of the religious institutions may fall in this category. The conventional educational approach aims to resist change, keep the social order stable. It teaches people to accept and fit in to the social situation without changing its basic structure. It emphasizes adjustment without disturbance.

Progressive Approach to Education

The progressive approach to education views learners as irresponsible, they need to be cared for and watched closely. Though the teachers are friendly they believe that they know the best. The teacher does encourage the learner to participate but she /he decides what is right. In this approach, memorizing is still the basic element of the learning process. Many schools which are reformed have adopted this approach where students may get a friendly environment for learning but the basic principles are still like the conventional approach to education. Many new development organizations who have adopted this approach to education fall into this category.

The progressive approach to education tries to change the people to meet the needs of the society. It tries to work for certain improvements without questioning the unjust aspects of our society. It tends to be supportive but it does resist change.

For example, education provided on use of bio-gas stoves emphasizes that it will provide additional facilities to women to speed up the cooking. By doing so, it perpetuates gender stereotypes whereas the need is to bring about real change in the patriarchal structure of the society, to bring gender equality in the family where work gets distributed among both men and women.

Liberating Approach to Education

The liberating approach to education views learners as active participants who take their own responsibility for learning. The teacher plays the role of the facilitator who helps everyone to get the answer by sharing of information and experiences. This ends up in everyone teaching everyone else rather than one person teaching everyone.

The liberating approach to education aims to change the society to meet people's needs. It actively opposes social injustice and works for basic change. This is based on humanitarian, democratic and supportive principles which facilitate the process of people finding their own ways to gain control over their own life.

Example: Peer tutoring – college students meeting teenage girls in an urban slum for providing education life skills is a good example of such an approach. Interacting with friends of the same age and sharing related life experiences offers lot of freedom to learners and makes learning an enjoyable experience.

Here learning is neither dictation nor memorization but a relevant and meaningful activity based on active involvement and freedom.

1.6 PROMOTING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE THROUGH TRAINING

Attitudinal change is very essential for initiating social change. It can be ensured through participatory training, as it is based on the fundamental principle of liberating people to achieve social change. However, it is important to note here that training is a continuous process and it should not be seen as a one time event. So attitude change must be built in gradually over the duration of training. Sudden changes can bring about conflict.

In order to bring attitudinal change through participatory training it needs to follow certain ground rules. Training needs must be met. We have to focus on learning needs of participants. The process of learning may start from creating awareness of problems in life and proceeding to encourage participants to think about solutions keeping the complexity of the situation in view. Training then helps to build up skills to bring about changes. This whole cycle of learning by involving people promotes participatory training and thus helps the participants to become future change makers for other individuals of the society.

For example, when we want to bring attitudinal change in the society regarding society’s perception of women, we have to understand the complexity of the situation. It is very easy to sensitize women about their lower status in the society and the injustices they are facing. But to work only with them is not the answer as it may lead to conflict because the attitude of men towards women has not changed. Therefore, it is equally important to bring about attitudinal change in men too. During one of CHETNA’s gender sensitization training programmes, both women and men were participating and action plans were developed by the participants. They planned to bring about the change at family level mainly in the aspects of division of labour. After execution of these plans over three months, the participants shared their experiences. It was observed, that the men had become a laughing stock because of their action in sharing of household work with other family members and the women had to make special efforts to face the conflict when they proposed that the male members share household work.

A few of the following statements of Paulo Freire will give you an idea of the strength of participatory training for attitudinal change.

Transformation is only valid if it is carried out with the people, not for them...

The person who encourages is a new person, no longer oppressor or oppressed, but a person in the process of achieving freedom.....

It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Quote one new example for each principle of learning.

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2) Name the different educational approaches.

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3) List four strengths of the liberating approach of education.

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1.7 ADULT LEARNING AND PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

Till now we have discussed the various educational approaches, the importance of the liberating approach and its use in participatory training. Very often your learners will be adults who cannot be taught like children. Hence it is very important for us to link characteristics of adults and understand the principles of adult learning and the participatory training approach to learning. In the following discussion you will see how the principles of adult learning can be linked with participatory training.

- 1) **Adults’ self concept plays a major role in learning:** *During training facilitate the process so that the participants build up their own self concept and become open to learning.*

Since we are dealing with training in the field of women’s development, in our training we will be addressing the needs of poor, disadvantaged women of the society. These women have been struggling for years for their own survival. It is possible that in this never ending struggle they may have lost faith in their own capabilities. They might have low self esteem. They may have lost trust in their own self as well as in people around them. They may have their apprehensions that nothing can ever change, because they might not have seen change in the last few decades.

“I do not know.” “I cannot do.” These are some of the common expressions you will hear from adults who have a low self concept. But this is not only a feeling expressed. It is the manifestation of years of resultless struggle to achieve something. It is a pity that people like us who are well informed, in our own

ignorance start believing that poor people don't know anything and therefore change is not possible. Many people who are working in the field of development have developed this kind of notion and have completely failed to bring about social change.

Let us do away with this kind of wrong notion. Help the women to overcome their low self-esteem and make them recognize that they are capable and have something to contribute. This will help them to open up for the learning process and become active partners in learning.

Let us read an example of one of the training programmes of village women as health workers. Since the women had not gone through any formal educational process, during the first few days there was active resistance. "We cannot become health workers". "We cannot read and write". "Health is a very technical subject and it is difficult for us to learn." These were a few common feelings they shared.

In order to overcome this, we initiated a discussion on the role they play as health care providers in their families. Simple questions were asked such as: What do you do when your child gets fever? Which remedies do you suggest when one of the family members is suffering from common cough and cold? Which remedies do you use for small injuries? These questions brought to light a wealth of knowledge before the group members. The process of discussion brought out a strong feeling that "We can also contribute." "We also know a lot about health care." This enables a readiness to enter the process of new learning.

Similarly, an unrealistic high self concept may also block learning. This is a condition which might typically happen if the trainees are formally more educated, or more in age. To take one example, when CHETNA organized a training programme for supervisory staff, they often saw a resistance to learning from postgraduates. They were taught to think about one aspect and they assumed that they know more than the rest of the group. In the process they failed to learn from the other's experiences and did not fully contribute to the entire process of learning. Their learning remained at the level which they had entered with before training. Their theoretical learning was never transferred to experiential learning. In such a situation the facilitator has to play an important role to make them perceive the narrowness of their thinking. As trainers, we have to try to link their theoretical learning with the experiential learning generated by others during training. It will help them to participate meaningfully in the main processes of learning.

2) **Adults learn what interests them:** *Always plan the training programme based on the need of the learners.*

Think about yourself. When did you learn the most? It must be an issue or subject of your own interest. If you are interested in one area and asked to study another, you would resist. This is true for all the adult learners. Forced learning doesn't work with adults. They like to direct their own learning rather than the trainer directing them.

Therefore, before organizing any training programme, always try to assess what interests the adults whom you are going to invite to your training programme. One way to understand their interest is to involve them in planning and

monitoring of their own learning. Through meetings or correspondence, you could know their expectations from the training and accordingly plan the training programme.

- 3) **Adults learn what is relevant and useful to their lives:** *Never plan a training programme which may not be relevant and useful for the life of the participants.*

Let us understand this through a situation. For instance, if you go to a village to impart training to women on prevention of HIV/AIDS, you may find that the disease may not be perceived as their immediate problem. Their problem may be the diarrhoea epidemic. Do you think the women will be receptive to your messages on HIV/AIDS? Instead if you organize training on how to treat and prevent diarrhoea, many of them will readily come forward because they feel that they can use their learning immediately in their day-to-day life. This training may then lead to training on HIV/AIDS in subsequent sessions.

- 4) **Adults learn based on their past experience:** *During the training always value, respect and use the experiences of learners to make the learning more meaningful and interesting. Build up new knowledge on the existing knowledge of the participants.*

When adults come forward for learning, all of them bring the wealth of knowledge based on their life experiences. As a trainer you need to tap it and relate it to what you need to teach.

During one of the health training programmes for women health workers, the trainer had to discuss about respiratory tract infections, beginning with a discussion on the respiratory system with a group of participants who never had any formal education. It was assumed that they would not have any theoretical knowledge about the human body, structure and function.

With all her enthusiasm, the trainer developed various charts to explain the body structure, but was restless during the training. The women could sense the restlessness and started giggling. This gave a clue to the trainer that there was some problem which was hindering the learning process. The trainer stopped and tried to understand the situation. A discussion was initiated. One of the participants then mentioned that they had actually seen lungs before.

This information was new for the trainer. The trainer had never thought that the participants may have seen the organ in goats. This information made the other training sessions related to the human body easy and interesting. Following this incident the women brought the organs of a goat during the training. They compared these with charts of human organs and this enabled learning. The problem of teaching them about the body structure and function was completely solved.

After this experience, the trainer always tried to assess the information available with the participants. In several later training situations, the trainer found that women had information about the human body.

- 5) **For Adults, learning can become an emotional experience:** *Learning is not only picking up facts or principles. It is also about responding emotionally.*

For some adults, in certain situations, new learning becomes an emotional experience. In certain other situations, learning occurs through emotional experiences. It is very important for a trainer to be sensitive and handle the situation carefully. You should provide a learning situation which enhances both cognitive as well as emotional learning.

You, as an adult, may have experienced that feelings are important for learning. They can promote as well as can become a major block for learning. We are sure you sometimes avoid situations which make you angry or frighten you although you are eager to discover and learn new things. This is a natural phenomenon and, therefore, as a trainer, you need to deal with the emotional aspects also to facilitate learning among adults.

Sometimes learning leads to anxiety, frustration and helplessness. It is a part of the learning process. For example, we organize training programmes on “gender sensitivity” for women. As women, many participants have been exploited at different stages of their lives due to the patriarchal nature of the society and they may or may not have realized it. Through various training/learning situations they relate to their secondary status in the society. At the cognitive level, these aspects are easily accepted but it takes time to get convinced at the emotional level. This leads to anxiety and frustration. As a trainer, you need to handle this situation very carefully by explaining the patriarchal structure of the society and the gender inequalities.

A supportive environment is required till there is a balance between participants’ learning at the emotional as well as cognitive level. After that, the adult is capable of facing the realities.

These are the key principles of adult learning as well as participatory training which need to be completely interwoven in any participatory training.

Apart from these, one major element of participatory training is:

Behaviour and values of trainers influence the training and learning processes.

In participatory training, since you are aiming at social change, your own behaviour and values as a trainer are very important. It needs to be congruent with the aim and values of the training. If they are not, they can become a major hindering force in the process of learning. Adult participants are very sensitive to the trainer’s behaviour and values. Your values can reflect even through your clothing, the way you talk or sit with the participants or even what you eat.

You cannot talk of something during the training and behave differently in your real life situation. Let us take an example of conducting a training session on gender biases in intra-family distribution of food for adolescents. If the trainer in her real life shows a bias towards feeding her adolescent son nutritious foods and not her daughter the effect of the training will be completely lost. Their knowledge may improve but they will be unable to put it into practice. This is not true learning.

Try to reflect on your own behaviour with the participants. You should not behave like a boss or a supervisor. Be a facilitator who would take the learning process ahead. Be open to new ideas and be ready to change accordingly. Respect the participants and acknowledge them as sources of information. These behaviours will ensure active participation of the learners and also learning.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) List points about the linkage of adult learning with participatory training.
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 - b)
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- c)
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- d)
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- e)
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- 2) How do values and attitude of the trainer influence the learning process?
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1.8 ACCOUNTING FOR INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Each person has her own style of learning, her own attitudes and interests. As a trainer we need to acknowledge these differences. Training needs to provide them an opportunity to generate new learning from these differences. The important way to achieve this is to create an environment where these differences get importance and work toward creative learning. This environment can be developed by the trainer along with learners.

Some of the characteristics of a facilitative learning environment which may help you to generate learning based on individual differences are mentioned in the following discussion.

Always value the experience of the learners

In every training programme, it is very important to develop a conceptual understanding of the participants. But this is possible only if participants are able to relate concepts with real life experiences which are different for different individuals. Therefore, encourage sharing of experiences among the learners. You, as a trainer, can take a lead and start sharing your own experiences. The participants will surely follow you and share their experiences. This will also develop a feeling among the learners that they are being heard and they are contributing something to the learning process.

Always remember that in participatory training learners are equally responsible for their own learning.

Create an enabling, non-threatening and supportive environment where every one has a right to make mistakes.

Many times due to different life experiences, learning style and cultural differences, all the participants may not openly discuss their views on the problems. Never undermine the learners and their experiences. Provide them the opportunities to share experiences and express views freely. If the learner has a fear or inhibition in sharing views in a group, it would stop further learning.

Always pay attention when the learner is sharing views and experiences. Never laugh, even if the views are irrelevant or inappropriate. You can always mention in a friendly way that, "This information is not directly relevant here, we can discuss it later." Encourage them while they are trying to share their views. Pose some encouraging questions to the learners which would help them to share their views further. Being judgmental or evaluative will lead to withdrawal. Learners might think that for every statement they might be branded "good" or "bad", so better be quiet. In order to ensure learning from differences, a non-threatening environment is essential where the participants have a right to make mistakes.

Apart from this you have to create a supportive environment where the participants can elicit each other's support and the trainer's support during and after the training sessions to continue the learning process. For this, as a trainer you should always be available and approachable even after the training session to clarify any doubts. If during the training you feel that certain learners need further clarification to strengthen their learning, give more examples or approach them after the training and give them extra time.

As mentioned earlier, learning is an emotional experience for many adults. If the emotional situation arises in terms of anxiety and frustration, try to support them. Remember that your words and body language both should convey how supportive you are. Learning is "de-organizing for re-organizing" and when you are de-organizing, it becomes painful and requires support.

Make the environment challenging.

By now you must have realized that the learners are not passive acceptors. You have to create challenges for the learners by provoking and stimulating them. Let them analyze and ask questions on the issues being discussed. This will make the training interesting as well as stimulating. It will provide the participants an opportunity to use their analytical mental faculties.

Synchronize the pace of training with the pace of participant’s learning.

As we are aware, participatory training is learner-centered and, therefore, it is very important that we keep a track of the pace of participants’ learning. Accordingly, we can make necessary alterations in our training programme. Our experience shows that trainers many times fail to keep track of the learning of all the participants. It may happen that the pace of training gets fixed based on the pace of learning of a few vocal participants. As a trainer who promotes participatory learning, you need to keep this point in view. If necessary you can change your training methods too. For example, in one of CHETNA’s training programmes, we introduced the concept of a tutorial group, which means that during the training the participants who have not understood certain aspects get together after training and sit with the trainer to clarify their doubts.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) List three main characteristics of a supportive and enabling environment to handle differences among the learners.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

1.9 CASE STUDIES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

This section describes two learning activities which you may use while training to facilitate the learning of your participants. Both these experiences are quoted from the Training of Trainers organized by CHETNA, Ahmedabad. It was a successful experience and got repeated in many of the similar trainings of CHETNA and other NGOs.

Activity 1: Draw Your Own Reality: Group Discussion and Plenary Presentation

Participants

Participants for this training were the trainers from NGOs of Gujarat and Rajasthan. It was a mixed group of men and women. They were responsible for organizing health training at grassroots in their respective NGOs.

Objective

To sensitize participants to women’s work in society and help them to understand the reality of their society and urgent need to change it.

Steps involved to carry out the activities

- 1) Divide the participants into small groups. Each group may consist of a maximum of 5-7 members.
- 2) Ask them to discuss about women's work in the society in which they live. Ask them to start their discussion by listing positive and negative points by giving their own life experiences.
- 3) At the end of the discussion ask them to draw a symbolic picture of the society they have discussed in their group.
- 4) Let each group present their symbolic representation in a plenary discussion. Other group members can ask questions if they do not understand.
- 5) At the end, you as a trainer, summarize the presentation and discussion. Your summary should give clarity on need for social change. Further build up the discussion on role of participatory training and trainers in social change. Ensure active participation of learners.

Activity 2: Role Play*Participants*

Participants for this training were the trainers from NGOs of Gujarat and Rajasthan. It was a mixed group of men and women. They were responsible for organizing health training at grassroots in their respective NGOs.

Objective

To make the participants understand principles of adult learning and participatory training.

Steps involved to carry out the activity

- 1) Ask the participants to divide themselves in two groups.
- 2) Ask them to select trainers from their group.
- 3) Talk to both the trainers separately. Ask one trainer to play the role of a trainer who is directive and does not listen to the participant's needs, interests and experiences. Ask the other trainer in the second group to play the role of a participatory trainer, who understands the learners' needs, ensures everyone's participation, creates a non-threatening environment and effectively plays the role of a facilitator.
- 4) Give a topic of discussion to both the trainers and ask them to carry out a training session for about 20 minutes as per the briefing given to them.
- 5) Call the groups in a plenary session and ask both groups about their experiences and feelings on the method of teaching adopted. Also ask them the reason for their feelings.
- 6) Tie up their responses with the principles of adult learning and participatory training as discussed in this Unit.

This is an effective way of internalizing the principles of adult learning and participatory training rather than explaining it in the form of a lecture.

We are completing our discussion on this Unit and will continue learning in depth about participatory training in the subsequent Units.

1.10 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have tried to give you a conceptual understanding of adult learning and participatory training which will become a base for your learning during your study of the next Units. Let us give you a bird's eye view of what we have learnt till now.

In order to use training for promoting attitudinal change and social change, participatory training has been seen as the most successful approach. The principles of participatory training are based on the liberating education approach. This approach views learners as active participants who take responsibility for their own learning. The trainer plays the role of a facilitator. Participatory training is based on the principles of adult learning. The basic principles of adult learning are:

- Adult self concept plays a major role in learning. During the training it facilitates the process. Hence try to build their self concept.
- Adults learn what interests them, therefore always plan the training programme based on the need of the learners.
- Adults learn what is relevant and useful to their lives. Never plan a training programme which may not be relevant and useful in life for the participants.
- Adults learn based on their past experience. Therefore value, respect, and use their experiences to make the learning meaningful and interesting.
- For adults, learning can become an emotional experience. Therefore it is very important for the trainer to be sensitive and handle any kind of emotional situation carefully.

Apart from this, for participatory training the values of the trainer play a very important role in learning. The behaviour and the values of the trainer need to be congruent with values to be developed through training.

Remember that each individual is different as she/he had gone through various processes of learning. It is important to value these differences and to use them in the learning process. These differences can be handled by creating enabling and supportive environments. Also remember the following points to create such an environment:

- Always value the experience of the learners. These will help to generate a pool of information which can be used to bring about change. Never discourage a learner from sharing their learning.
- Create an enabling environment where everyone has a right to share or make mistakes. This kind of environment will help the learners to clarify their doubts and strengthen their learning. Be approachable so that the learners can meet you even after the training and continue their learning.
- Provide them with a challenging environment to learn, where they can analyze and discuss about various issues of development. This will help them to develop their analytical capacities.

1.11 GLOSSARY

Congruent	: In agreement with; in line with
Hinder	: Prevent
Learning style	: Different people have different ways of learning, some focus on thinking, reflecting, gaining from other's experience - "deep" learning. Others focus on memorizing important points, facts and principles – "surface" learning.

1.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Answer based on your own experience/reading.
- 2)
 - a) The Conventional Approach to Education.
 - b) Progressive Approach to Education.
 - c) Liberating Approach to Education.
- 3)
 - a) The liberating approach to education views learners as active participants who take their own responsibility of learning.
 - b) The teacher plays the role of a facilitator. This ends up in everyone teaching everyone else rather than one person teaching everyone.
 - c) It is based on humanitarian, democratic and supportive principles.
 - d) Through this approach people find their own ways to gain control over their own life.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1)
 - a) Adults' self concept plays a major role in learning. During the training facilitate the process so that the participants build up their own self concept and become open to learning.
 - b) Adults learn what interests them: Always plan the training programme based on the need of the learners.
 - c) Adults learn what is relevant and useful to their lives: Never plan a training programme which may not be relevant and useful for the participants.
 - d) Adults learn based on their past experience: During the training always value, respect and use their experience to make the learning more meaningful and interesting. Build up the new knowledge on the existing knowledge of the participants.

The Process of Training

- e) For adults, learning can become an emotional experience: Apart from learning at cognitive level, learning at the emotional level equally plays a role in learning. Therefore, as a trainer you need to be sensitized about learning processes that take place during training.
- 2) Behaviour and values of trainers need to be in congruence with the aim and values of the training.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) a) Always value the experience of the learners.
- b) Create an enabling environment where everyone has a right to make mistakes.
- c) Make the environment challenging.