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## **Non-Formal Education Trainer's Manual**

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## **Foreword**

The name of this developed under GRUNDTVIG program for adult education Project “A New Chance. Training of educators for non-formal education” indicates clearly one of the Project’s objectives: elaboration of a model for training of educators in the field of the fastly growing non-formal education as well as applying this model in the process of work with the participants from trade union organizations from Slovakia, Cyprus and Bulgaria.

During the Project two years the basic elements of this model has been elaborated and applied and the results are presented into this manual. Its main objective is to describe the basics of the work of the trainer in the field of non-formal education: the elements of the preparation for work, the essence and use of interactive methods, the foundations of the group work which is a cornerstone in the new paradigm of education. We tried to define the trainer's key activities, the problems emerging in the educational process, the work with difficult participants and in difficult situations, the planning and the infrastructure necessary for the work of the trainer.

This manual is a result of the co-operation between representatives of the participating in the Project organizations: Anna Pilavaki from DEOK – Cyprus; Lubica Cerna from NKOS- Slovakia and Rumén Valchev from Open Education centre – Bulgaria. This co-operation suggests the more and more universal character of the trainer's activities and is a modest contribution to the general process of elaborating of a common educational language under the United Europe.

## **Principles of adult learning**

Adult learning could be based on different theories of learning – behaviorist, humanist, cognitive, constructivist. What we observe today is that practitioners in the field base their work on premises from different theories. Among adult educators in Europe there is agreement on the basic principles of adult learning. We could note the following principles:

- active involvement of the learner in own education - realizing the subjectivity of learning;
- encouragement and nurturing of self-directedness;
- inside-out approach and self-discovery;

- provision for discovery of personal meaning for ideas and events;
- respect and acceptance for the learner valuing differences and toleration of ambiguity;
- openness and trust;
- permission for confrontation;
- assistance at the point of need. **/1/**

We could add : use of different active methods of learning; providing of variety of activities to learn; use of the group work and project work as a basis of the learning process.

Thus the non-formal education becomes more and more full fledged process of learning and training based on sound principles, more and more structured, requiring the preparation on behalf of the educators and trainers. Non-formal education is becoming not only legitimate part of the education nowadays but as well is a more and more codified field where the role of the educator is well defined and where systems for pre-service and in-service training are elaborated.

### **Interactive methods and their use when working in non-formal education**

Interactive are methods based on simultaneously acquiring knowledge, forming of skills and dispositions through putting learners in situations where they can interact and afterwards discuss what they have experienced.

Interactive methods aim at more and better interactions between trainer and trainees, educator and those who are being educated, among the learners themselves.

They support personal development of the participants based on mutual experience, dialogue, joint problem solving (analysis, searching for alternatives,

decision-making). Interactive methods mean constant interaction and feedback, constant involvement of participants and looking for decisions.

Interactive methods provide opportunities for joint construction of the object of education, pedagogic reality so that everybody can share the responsibility for the educational process. Interactive methods suggest a **common educational language**, which is easily internalized by the participants because it is based on their experience and involvement in the process of exploring reality.

In this sense interactive methods give the shape of contemporary educational process and also reflect its essence – forming a new educational reality based on joint searching, dialogue, discussing and decision-making.

In the broad sense of the term, interactive methods are not concrete techniques and algorithms, **but the whole process of interaction between educational actors**, where education from static and hierarchic turns into a process, interaction, constant breaking of forms. They lead to joint activities and set the limits of this activities, define the possibilities for action and freedom of educational actors.

Participation in the group requires special approach connected with motivating the participants to work together, to involve them in different group activities like problems solving, discussions and analysis, developing action plans, talking about personal experience within the group.

All this is a logical result from the contemporary educational situation which can be defined by four factors:

- Individual “I” of the participant, including motivation, interests, personal experience and level of involvement of individual participants
- “We” or the group with its relations, dynamic and types of cooperation
- “It” or the theme, which is the object and contents of education
- “The globe” – metaphoric definition for the educational environment from the immediate environment of the society to the global environment of modern world.

Interactive methods place the participants in a situation of permanent discussion, give the opportunity for expressing of personal opinion and involve the availability and use of constant feedback. After all, interactive methods by involving participants in discussing concrete problems, experience and with the possibility for feedback allow them to devise behaviour strategies. /2/

### **Group work in the model of non-formal education**

Group work is main democratic dimension in education. If modern understanding of democracy means not only giving power to political actors for implementing public policy and development, but the ambition to give power to every citizen in order to participate in the political process, this should be realized as well in the field of education. Adult learners as members of the democratic society could contribute for the success of the democratic project in education. In this sense non-formal education should be based on the same principles of participation, free learning, co-operation, equality. /3/

The non-formal education group of learners is the basis of democratic environment where participants co-operate, respect each other, work together, look for support and provide support in the learning process, establish rules of behaviour and learning, form a democratic learning community. There is a possibility to try out strategies for democratic behaviour in safe conditions and among participants they know, who are facing the same learning and often life and social problems.

Group work creates conditions for:

- involvement of the participants during the whole period of learning ;
- mastering the mechanisms of cooperation;
- developing high level of communication skills in the participants;
- stressing on cooperation and not on the competitive character of human relations;

- mutual assistance and also mutual stimulation for advance in the process of learning;
- teaching the participants to express and stand for they rights as individual learners and also to share responsibilities in a group of learners;
- much more effective and well-timed feedback for more natural exploration of the effectiveness of used methods of learning;
- building a model of social awareness and involvement; /4/

The main rules of group work are based on the universal norms for effective communication:

**Sincerity** - Creation of conditions for free expression of feelings and problems concerning the participant as well as facing the feelings, and problems of the other participants;

**Concreteness and genuineness** - The group works on concrete learning problems, people give specific feedback and share concrete experiences which not only bring the participants together but also help them build a practice attitude towards social reality.

**Activeness and initiative** – In order to receive information about how he/she is accepted and seen by the other learners, a participant should do the most natural – participate in team work, be active e.g. share experience, look for explanations for events, be part of a process. Thus, through cooperation, is formed an active attitude toward events and learners do take more responsibility for their behaviour.

**Emphasising the learner's strengths**, which creates an atmosphere of friendliness really important for the participants' learning, performance and forming of an adequate self-assessment ability.

**Group norms and personal responsibility** – Participants become more responsible for their actions by interacting, perceiving others, looking for and receiving information for themselves.

**Privacy** – Nothing in the group happens at the expense of the individual learner. This way the necessary atmosphere of security of the learning process is provided and participants can look for self-expression and recognition.

**Freedom of expression** – While working, the group participants constantly look for a balance between freedom of expression and individual privacy, which contributes for modifying an assertive but not aggressive behaviour and does not allow the privacy of the individual to be violated.

**Support** – in the group participants need and receive support: they understand that others also do face the same learning / sometime professional and social / problems, support which help them solve problems and also assist their future development as learners . /5/

This way group work and joint activities define the character of non-formal education.

## **Preparation for work**

### **Complexity of the task**

It is important to mention that interactive methods are not a set of techniques. They reflect the nature of contemporary education, the connection between educational actors; they are not for decoration but lay in the base of the learning process. Non-formal education is joint searching and problem solving, dialogue and partnership with the rest of the participants. It is an area where you can not only gain knowledge but also give a meaning of the world, prepare for an active social life. And, most importantly, the participants are actually a group which develops, solves problems and undergoes changes. Interactive methods and

group work from this point of view present a way of establishing of relationships, organizing the environment, leading the participants in it and putting them into interactive situations.

This can be done through cooperative methods, dialogue, ways of solving problems, sharing and mutual support.

Generally, **the learning model based on group work and interactive methods** can be defined by the following steps:

- **experiencing** - participants are involved in some kind of activity and the experience gained out of it is essential for the whole process.
- **announcing** – the participant shares or expresses his/her reactions and observations in front of the rest of other participant who have experienced or observed the same type of activity.
- **group process** – all dynamic actions which occur during the activity are studied, discussed and evaluated by all participants.
- **summarizing** – it helps participants to define, change or develop the things they have learnt as a result of participation and discussion of a problem situation.
- **application** – planning how to apply the things learnt from the activities and the gained experience.

This way **the six levels of knowledge** are connected in the process:

- **realization** – to recollect, admit and realize the existence of a certain process or problem;
- **understanding** – to transfer the information received from one to another form of knowledge;
- **application** – to apply and use the information in a new situation;
- **analysis** – to explore the situation by dividing it into constituent parts;
- **synthesis** – arranging the information in a new way
- **evaluation** – to make an evaluation based on explicit criteria

The learning model is a set of consequent steps beginning in the participant with the occurrence of a problem, piece of information or experience, which do not match his/her expectations and causes change in attitude, emotions and personal orientation. Change of attitude is a cause for new behavior, which is a source of information for the rest of the participants and this way it changes their consciousness. These changes in their consciousness cause changes in their attitudes and so on. When this process is performed in a group, everybody can participate in consequent stages of the following one another cycles.

On the basis of structural experience of discussing and sharing, of problem situations every participant has the chance to build own model and understanding, to give a meaning to the discussed processes and problem situations, to prepare in its own way for the role of a citizen.

Main psycho-pedagogic tasks in a certain problem situation are:

- self-awareness of the person who is being educated;
- becoming aware of the wholeness of the one's socio-psychological nature; the emotional knowledge of group-dynamic occurrences in the situation;
- correction and forming of socio-psychological skills and habits; using the problem situation as a source for learning how to communicate.
- In this learning model the participants
- encounter problems occurring in an actual situation in which they take part with the leader;
- undertake various actions in order to solve the problems trough experimenting, searching, guesses, inventing;
- give mutual feedback about the consequences of concrete types of behavior and attitude which allows them to evaluate the way they behave and the reactions from the others;

- together with the trainer they try to summarize the things they have gone through and the gained experience, formulate hypotheses, check by concrete actions in the group and this way move forward and face new challenges and explore and solve new problems;

Main source of motivation and energy for studying in the group are the occurring problems as well as the intensive experience among the participants in the group and the intensive relations between them and the trainer or other educational and public actors. /6/

Marian Diamond describes the characteristics of an enriched learning environment that:

- Includes a steady source of positive emotional support;
- Stimulates all the senses (but not necessarily all at once!);
- Has an atmosphere free of undue pressure and stress but suffused with a degree of pleasurable intensity;
- Presents a series of novel challenges that are neither too easy nor too difficult for the learner at his or her stage of development;
- Allows for social interaction for a significant percentage of activities;
- Promotes the development of a broad range of skills and interests that are mental, physical, aesthetic, social, and emotional;
- Gives the learner an opportunity to choose many of his or her own activities;
- Gives the learner a chance to assess the results of his or her efforts and to modify them;
- Offers an enjoyable atmosphere that promotes exploration and the fun of learning;
- Above all, allows the learner to be an active participant rather than a passive observer.

As we move toward a global learning society, it is important to consider, at all ages, individual differences in perception, (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic); different kinds of intelligence (Gardner's theory including verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist); and differences in world view (field sensitive/perceiving the whole picture first or field independent /perceiving the details first). In these differences lie our strengths as learners and the tools we need to learn and develop our abilities, as well as dealing with our disabilities. Opportunities to learn in different modalities and understand our own unique characteristics play an important role in successful learning.

## **The Group. Processes. Roles. Motivation.**

**Adult learners' group** in the field of non-formal education is a special type of group and in order to understand it we have to clarify some notions.

### **Adult learners**

Starting work in the field of non-formal education we have to be clear what are the characteristics of the adult learners which will be essential for our work.

At first adult learners have **years of experience and are knowledgeable** about a wide variety of things. They have **established values, beliefs and opinions** and what is natural they expect everyone else / including us - the trainers/ to respect their differing ideas regarding beliefs, religions, value systems and lifestyles. If we agree with this we should understand and show respect the adults' pride and self-esteem and we must give them the freedom to express what they do not understand, their ignorance, their fears, their biases and their difference of opinions.

As we already know all adults have different styles and paces of learning. What is true is that an adult's reaction and speed of learning may be slow, but her/his learning capacity should not be underestimated. The big advantage for

the adult learners is their ability **to relate new knowledge and information to previously acquired information and experiences.**

Everyone of us is a problem solver but this is rather natural characteristic of every adult struggling to survive and to function in such a complex and problem posing world. That's why we do not have to forget that our adult learners tend to approach learning in a problem solving way. They want to see how they could apply new information or skills to current problems or situations.

Just in a slightly different framing Speck notes that the following important points of adult learning theory should be considered when professional development activities are designed for educators: Adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. Application in the 'real world' is important and relevant to the adult learner's personal and professional needs. Adults want to be the origin of their own learning and will resist learning activities they believe are an attack on their competence. Thus, professional development needs to give participants some control over the what, who, how, why, when, and where of their learning. Adult learners need to see that the professional development learning and their day-to-day activities are related and relevant. Adult learners need direct, concrete experiences in which they apply the learning in real work. Adult learning has ego involved. Professional development must be structured to provide support from peers and to reduce the fear of judgment during learning. Adults need to receive feedback on how they are doing and the results of their efforts. Opportunities must be built into professional development activities that allow the learner to practice the learning and receive structured, helpful feedback. Adults need to participate in small-group activities during the learning to move them beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Small-group activities provide an opportunity to share, reflect, and generalize their learning experiences. Adult learners come to learning with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, self-direction, interests, and competencies.

This diversity must be accommodated in the professional development planning. Transfer of learning for adults is not automatic and must be facilitated. Coaching and other kinds of follow-up support are needed to help adult learners transfer learning into daily practice so that it is sustained.

We do not have to forget that adult learners independently who there are usually do have common concerns as: meaningful and financially lucrative work; personal and family health; keeping current in their jobs ; building or developing effective interpersonal relations. Understanding all these characteristics and circumstances will help us better to answer questions like why our adult learners want to learn; why they will need to learn experientially; why is best to approach the topic as problem-solving; why we need repeatedly to emphasize the relevance of the topic; why we have to involve the adult in the planning, learning, and evaluation and why they need time to process and reflect

If we will expect to accomplish results in the field of learning we have to facilitate and support the development of this group of adult participants into an effective group of learners.

**The main characteristics of the effective group are:**

- its members understand and share its goals;
- an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is built;
- the participants feel satisfied because they belong to the group;
- communication is open and everybody is encouraged to take part in discussions and whenever possible in the process of decision-taking;
- a sense of group pride exists;
- there are few conflicts in the group and when one arises techniques are used for its constructive solution;
- members are encouraged to cooperate with each other;
- group decision making and problem solving is common practice;

- the group is learning to work together in a free, liberating way;
- group recognition for good work is given freely to everybody.

With trainers as well as participants the main motivating orientations or ways for achieving the aim or ways of feeling important within the group are four: **altruistic-nurturing; assertive – directive; analytical – autonomising; flexible-uniting (a harbor)**

With group work we have to become familiar with the fact that group characteristics, norms and rules apply to everybody including ourselves. We are trainers, facilitators but in the same time we are members of this group, we are not above it as judges or objective observers.

Every participant who takes active part in the activities of the group represents a blend of these four motivations. Their inclination to express one or another motivation in different moments shows how often they prefer to use certain motivation.

A participant has a strong presence in the group of non-formal education when showing behavior in a way which supports and develops his/her own importance and the importance of the other participants.

Here comes a short description of different motivation styles which can help us diagnose better the participants' behavior.

### **Altruistic-nurturing style**

Participants using this style cherish values like openness and responsibility for the needs of others. They look for helping them and making their lives easier. They also try not to be a burden for others and constantly make sure that other participants show their potential and skills as well as make them understand they are respected and can always expect their rights to be protected.

Such participants receive in return an atmosphere characterized with openness, friendship, help, trust, social awareness, sincerity, loyalty, sympathy, respect. They feel depressed when surrounded by criticism, sarcasm, disloyalty, underestimation, egoism, dominance, unawareness, neglect.

### **Assertive – directive style**

Members of the group with similar style believe in values like competing for power, responsibility and trainership positions. They are usually quite persuasive, take opportunities for presentation, insist on their right to receive prizes, perceive risks and challenges as necessary and desired, demonstrate their competitive nature all the time.

A rewarding environment for them is one filled with novelties, changes, stimuli, opportunities for development, potential for winning prizes as well as potential for personal development.

The type of environment which stops their developments is one without challenges, with apathy, resignation, passivity, reactivity, small possibility for controlling the things happening within the organization and for competition, with small chances for personal development or exercising positive influence, environment where loyalty is not appreciated enough.

### **Analytical – autonomous style**

Participants with similar style could be characterized with values like objectivity and frankness, adherence to principles, emotions' control, practicality, honesty, firmness, seriousness, careful thinking before acting, self-evaluation based on own actions.

Good environment for them is characterized with clarity, logic, exactness, opportunities for making economy, utility, stability, effective use of resources, individual decisions making as well as clear authentic criteria for these decisions, reliability, good organization and time to study the possibilities.

They find it difficult in a group where things are unclear, participants have to be pushed all the time, where the chances of failure when performing actions are high due to not enough organization familiarity, negligence, dependence and constant need to report to the others due to bureaucratic procedures.

### **Flexible-uniting style**

This style is typical for participants who are interested in the thoughts and feelings of others, with an open mind and ability to adapt easily, people who experiment with different kinds of behavior. They are proud to be members of the group, like knowing a lot of people and are famous for their flexibility.

For them the atmosphere in a good organization is friendly and involves all members, supports interactions, is democratic, people listen to each other and express their empathy to the feelings of others.

They do not feel well in an environment where there is no flexibility and adaptability, where they face disloyalty, harsh procedures, ineffective trainership and management of resources, coldness, lack of emotions and social unawareness.

In the non-formal education group we are all equal but at the same time within group action and development people perform different roles. Understanding of these roles will give us the possibility not only to get into the function and development mechanisms of the group but to form relationships with the participants.

This is a classification of group roles which can help us understand better internal relations and dynamics of their development.

**Applier** – turns concepts and plans into practically working procedures and executes accepted plans systematically and efficiently.

*Typical features* – conservative, predictable, performing one's duties.

*Strengths* – organizing abilities, practical common sense, self-discipline, hard-working.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – lack of flexibility, not open to new ideas.

**Coordinator** – controls the way the groups moves towards achieving the group goals by using the available resources in the best way: recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the participants and uses their potential in the most successful way.

*Typical features* – calm, self-confident, self-controlling, dominating, extrovert.

*Strengths* – the ability to accept every potential contribution on the basis of its value and without prejudice. Highly developed sense for purpose.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – no intellectual and creative abilities above average.

**Former** – forms the ways used by the group: directs their attention usually towards laying goals and developing priorities; tries to impose some rules or restrictions on group discussions and the results of group work.

*Typical features* – dynamic, dominant, anxious.

*Strengths* – motivates people, ready to oppose inertia, inefficiency, self-content or self-delusion.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – reacts to provocations, impatient and irritable.

**Discoverer** – gives new ideas and strategies with special attention to key problems, tries to initiate progress in approaches of the group towards the problems they encounter.

*Typical features* – individualist, serious, unorthodox, dominant, intelligent, introvert.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – sometimes have their heads in the clouds, tends not to pay attention practical details or protocol requirements.

**Resource seeker** – studies and reports on ideas, developments and resources outside the group; makes external contacts which can be useful; conducts the ensuing negotiations.

*Typical features* – extrovert, curious, sociable, enthusiastic, stable, dominant.

*Strengths* – ability for contacts with people and studying of everything new. Good at reacting to challenges.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – tends to lose interest when the initial attraction wares off.

**Observer- evaluator** – analyses problems and evaluates ideas and guesses in such a way that the group can take more balanced decisions.

*Typical features* - intelligent, stable, introvert, sober, unemotional, sensible.

*Strengths* – gives points, discretion, hard-headed.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – lack inspiration to motivate others.

**Team worker** – supports the strengths of the group members (develops their suggestions), helps them when they are wrong and improves the communication within the group by raising the team spirit.

*Typical features* - stable, extrovert, non-dominant, socially directed, sensitive and mild.

*Strengths* – ability to answer people and react well in situations as well as to keep the team spirit.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – indecision in moments of crisis

**Rounding-off person** – does one's best so that the group does not make mistakes (which can be done while doing or missing something); actively looks for aspects of the work which need special attention; keeps the alertness of the group.

*Typical features* – introvert, apprehensive, tidy, conscientious.

*Strengths* – capacity for realizing follow-ups of the task, perfectionist.

*Acceptable weaknesses* – tendency to worry about insignificant details, unwillingness to let things just happen.

**Several things do follow from this role list.**

Every person from the group performs different roles and can be useful in its own way. For the group of adult learners is important to be aware of the existence of such roles and their significance for its development: it needs people who give ideas as well as others who express doubt and criticize them. People who try not to lose the direction of action are important as well as people who insist on following the adopted rules.

Each role has its strengths but its restrictions as well. There is another important thing – we all do not identify with one single role, in one moment or another we perform different roles and we can contribute to the group in different ways in order to achieve its goals.

Within the group participants take roles which usually stop the development of the group – hesitating, monopolizing discussions, constantly putting stress on their experience, arguing all the time (often without reason), ignoring the ideas of others, not-paying attention, complaining, refuting the ideas of the others, opinionated, hostile, not accepting, angry, striving to stand out, making the group laugh (participant-clown).

Our role as trainers is, using the potential of the group, to encourage or to oppose constructively to certain roles' displays and developments by using feedback, group discussions, an atmosphere of openness, sharing, good will and stability.

In order to make better diagnosis of the participants in our non-formal education group we could use the following classification of types of adult learners. This classification is based on **several important assumptions**: the adult learner's self-concept moves from dependency to self-direction; adult learner accumulates a growing reservoir of experiences that become a resource for learning; learning readiness becomes increasingly oriented to the tasks of his/her various social roles; time perspective changes from one of postponed knowledge application to one of immediate application; usually orientation shifts from subject-centred to problem-centred; adult learning is in relation to congruence with goals; most of the time stress increases the desire for learning; single topic has more appeal than a survey.

At the far left on the continuum we could find **novice adult learners**. For them learning is a highly emotional event, they do have some fears and anxiety, and sometimes they feel the tension physically - upset stomach, sweating, fear, anxiety. On the other side learning for them learning is a challenge. As we said these newcomers have a need for reflective speculation, need time to process, think things over, and decide where the new fits in terms of their experience. What is extremely important for us such learners have a need for support,

especially of their peers. And if they are so lost in the beginning of the learning process they need to feel confident in us.

On the opposite side are the **experienced adult learners**: they are rather autonomous, experience-laden, goal-seeking, "now"- oriented, problem-centred, they are prepared for the learning process in the sense that they do have variety of orientations: goals, interests, experiences, they behave and function in the learning group in a rather participatory way and are

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### **Stages of group development**

The adult learners group is alike any other group – not only with its roles, aims, division of responsibilities and activities but also with the stages of its development. /7/

The first stage from the existence of every group is the **stage of forming**: The aims of the group are still not very clear to all participants, the work roles are ready but have not been internalized by the group yet. At this stage participants demonstrate conformist behavior – they do not know clearly the aims, they do not understand completely the meaning of action and know little about mechanisms of participation in similar kinds of group activity.

We should take into consideration that in this period common lack of knowledge and uncertainty make participants worried and behave less freely. Most of them join participants they know better, make pairs - something quite natural when seeking support in this environment of insecurity and lack of confidence.

At this stage we often encounter with a tendency from some participants for biding their time, lack of initiative as well as their opposites – great enthusiasm, desire for work. That is way it is really important to organize the activity of the group, to clarify and specify the goals and especially learning goals and at the

same time to give the participants the chance to get to know each other and overcome the feeling of insecurity.

Our behavior should mould the desired behavior, set the pace of group discussions, follow the principles of equality and encourage participants.

It is necessary to show clearly that we are going to follow the rules in terms of time, participation and reminding the group about their existence.

Participants have to receive the necessary feedback, get used to it and as trainers we should ask them to also give back feedback all the time. For this reason after a certain activity we should ask everybody in the circle to give their opinion.

The second stage of a group development is often defined as **storming**. The first moments of enthusiasm, new experience, of fascination with the unknown are over. At this period begin the first doubts in group work, seriousness of discussions and the accepted model of sharing.

The unusual way of running the group sessions is still difficult to be understood by some of the participants – some take it as a source of entertainment, not as serious as examining. Participants with more authority start giving opinions, forming groups around themselves and opposing it.

The routine work also starts – session after session and for most of them the trainer as well as the participants have to do some preparation work in advance. The work model within the group repeats – action, sharing, discussion and the time is not always enough. We as trainers begin to identify single participants, see the difference in their motivation and desire to work.

This is a period of re-evaluation and even confusion for some participants. Having in mind all these facts we should not jump to conclusions at this stage. When sometimes things are not working we tend to blame ourselves when actually this is a normal group reaction.

We need more patience, to turn to the rules more often, to try out various ways of running the sessions, constructive opposition of trainers within the rules. If necessary we could give the participants some time to discuss their doubts (if

such have been formulated). We should know that sometimes “storming” period is not clearly expressed. Generally the group works together and only some participants have doubts and problems or oppose the others. We should try to help them - mainly through traditional mechanisms of group work like setting tasks, paying more attention by asking more questions, appointing them for trainers in certain activities, supplying feedback from the rests of the participants about their actions.

It is important that the group do not lose their action rhythm and we should not spend too much time on problem situations. Participants should have the feeling that they are moving forward, cover topics, discuss problems successfully, get to know each other better and can expect help and support from the other in the work process.

If manage to overcome these problems, the adult learners group will unnoticeably reach the building stage of its development – the **stage of norming**. This is the stage when participants start to understand the structure of the group and the way it functions, the way the learning is realized. Norms of group work become leading and our interference when the group is working is becoming less and less. There are people in each group who start to watch the rules and appeal to the others to abide by them. Role divisions in the group are more and more obvious for the participants and it is necessary to spare some time discussing them.

On this basis we can talk about the participants’ personal responsibility, performance of duties, relationships in the group, risk problems can be shared or discussed, e.g. the existence of divisions within the group, rivalry, displays of trainership in the group. It is important to discuss group problems calmly and in a constructive manner, to answer questions as well as participants’ needs, to reinforce group rules.

Giving feedback becomes something natural as well as expressing feelings.

As the development of mechanisms for problem solving, giving feedback and expressing emotions takes time and the group wants to follow them, normal sessions are usually not enough.

In any case we will reach the moment of **second forming** of the group. It is not a question of fundamental change of our activity. On the contrary – with our actions during the first three stages we have provided conditions so that the group can function relatively smoothly.

Despite that, sooner or later comes the moment (starting activity in the community, arrival of new participants, presenting the achievements of the group to other people) when we have to rethink and reformulate the main principles which our activity is based on.

Even if everything is all right, it is a good idea after some time to go back to the aims, to the main principles of work organization and to discuss them in terms of gained experience , to explain the to the new members. It is also important to discuss our activity, point out our strengths of the group and of single members, to explore how successfully we perform our roles in the group. All these actions lead to development of the group as a team of people sharing the same views, predetermine the success of its actions. We have to say again **the period of norming** is not an extraordinary thing in the group's life. It is just a period of balance and re-evaluation based on the gained experience. If we have acted as a real non-formal group from the very beginning we have already implemented the evaluation of our actions and the period of second forming will be a part of our everyday work.

The next “higher” stage of the group development is **performance**. In a nutshell, this is the period of a well-acting group of adult learners. The aims are clear, the responsibilities have already been taken, participation and sharing responsibilities are typical qualities of the group participants. Everybody knows their place in the group when executing one task or another. Knowing each other

well allows the forming of different teams with different team leaders for the performance of various tasks.

This is the period of a **successful group** – not only in terms of accomplishing goals and performing important activities but also in terms of good relations within the group for achieving an atmosphere of openness, trust and stability, of mutual support and shared responsibility.

In an effective group we could find a good balance between individual needs and aims from one side and those of the group from another. At this stage the participants are proud to belong to the group, feel motivated, ready to study and achieve more in order to strengthen their positions as members of the group.

There are **four main processes** connected with learning. In order to **motivate** the adult learners, to make them feel important we have to set a friendly and open atmosphere, to set an appropriate level of concern and stress in the classroom because high level stress can become a barrier to learning; to set an appropriate level of difficulty, to challenge and reward the students; to provide feedback and to provide relevance.

**Retention.** In order to benefit from learning, adult learners must retain information. The amount of retention is directly related to how well a participant learns the information initially. Practice is the key to ensuring retention. The next process is **reinforcement**. It ensures that trainers encourage appropriate behavior and performance in the classroom. We have to use both positive and negative reinforcement when trying to change behaviors and old practices. And the last process is **transference**. It describes the ability to transfer or apply learning as a result of training. Transference tends to occur when: learners can **associate** the new information with something they already know; they could find **similarities** between the new information and something they already know; learners have a high degree of **original learning and** need to learn this information for a **critical reason**.

In the end let's mention the **main principles** which serve as the basis of interactive methods in group work:

- Group work is a natural process for undergoing personality changes. It represents the democratic nature of society, developing processes of cooperation, mutual dependence and assistance. The group is the natural social environment for non-formal education.
- Group work is for socialization and integration and more precisely, the main socializing model which reflects democratic culture of society and education.
- Group members are the key factor for its success. There are two main goals – individual growth of each participant and the development of the group as a whole. This means that the group we lead should have clearly formulated and understandable aims accepted by the participants and that in every moment of group development the participants should be clear about group actions, tasks, the state of the group as well as their own place and position in the group. In other words, every participant has the right to be in the centre of group attention without breaking the principles of equality and respecting the rights of young people.
- Participants in group work contribute to its success. Their values and actions become part of the group mission.
- That is why it is important to evaluate and discuss individual actions and group development; this is the reason why group reflectivity is an essential.
- Group work actually represents alternation between actions and reflections and this way the participants learn practical skills and develop their awareness when it comes to analyzing social reality and their own actions as part of it.

- Of utmost importance for group work is our attitude as trainers, our opinion about the participants, the nature of the group process, the aims of individual and group development. As in group work the participants and the trainer are involved as whole personalities, as trainers we cannot isolate parts our personality like in the traditional process of lecture-education. That is why our genuineness and positive approach can be easily sensed, and have great influence on the participants. In this sense as trainers we are the strongest role-models in the group and constantly in the focus of attention and subjected to critical evaluation by the participants.
- The group is led by structured rules which impose on everybody (including the trainers) certain norms of behavior. The faster these rules are internalized, the better the group works. They are based on the main human rights and represent forms of effective communication. This is the learning potential of the group - rules and norms of the group outline the frame of human relations where participants develop their personality and gain experience.
- Group work provides the opportunity for creating an atmosphere of cooperation, stability and learning based on the strengths and abilities of the participants.
- There is not only one “correct way” of group work, everything depends to a great extend on our personality, the way we communicate, our knowledge in different areas, the environment where we perform our activities, the length of the group meetings, on the time perspective as well as on the perspective of the participants.
- By no means, leading factors in the group work process are positive attitude towards the participants, the acceptance of main principles of group work, following certain work rules; the atmosphere of cooperation, trust and mutual support; democratization of the relations within the group

and the exploration of democratic dimensions of the world around the group.

- The realization of effective group work involves taking a number of decisions every moment – in terms of work conditions, aims, participants and our personal role.
- Conducting group work is a conscious process of making choices in constantly situations – it requires good reflexes, constant involvement and assessment, looking for feedback, self-education.
- Group work is a process of solving one problem after another. This means that a key skill of the trainer is leading the group towards solving problems and knowing the process in detail. Group work teaches the participants to accept challenges as problem situations and to look for suitable ways for solving them within certain relations of cooperation and support as well as to feel interdependent.
- Group work is based on joined actions as well as on joined solutions. Consensus decisions are built on a number of agreements reached on every step of the process of problem-solving. Joined decisions are a prerequisite for future actions.

Group work gives a chance to:

- define problems which the group and the participant are facing, as trainers to perform our diagnostic activity;
- solve problems and make decisions;
- improve communication and to increase the cooperation among participants;
- increase the involvement of the participants, their responsibilities in connection with the taken decisions;
- solve occurring conflicts and reduce pressure;
- plan actions and set goals;

- share information and teach the group;
- improve the productivity and effectiveness of the group. /8/

Group work is an interaction among all participants who share the responsibility about the way it is run. Essential for the success of a group work session is the participation of all members at every stage. Group work is unity of content, relations or ways of performing these relations and a process. Very important for the success is also constantly to maintain the harmony among these three sides – offering of important contents, watching the processes, resulting from the contents and interactions among the participants and between them and the trainer.

This requires:

- both sides of the group process of education to be active;
- open relations among participants involved in the educational process;
- the topics covered should be treated like problems. Participants should explore them, look for concrete solutions and try them out in conditions as similar to the real ones as possible;
- participants' evaluation should be based on clear criteria and good feedback;
- different methods are applied in order to achieve these results. The choice of methodology and the way it is established depends on the group we work with.

Non-formal education groups are usually small – the interactions there are direct, face to face.

This type of group:

- provides simple and relatively easy inclusion in the work;
- allows high participation and low risk;
- provides the opportunity the participant to learn from each other as well as to try out their ideas and behavior strategies in a relatively safe atmosphere;

- is flexible and allows constant re-arrangement and forming of new, smaller groups;
- helps to take into considerations the individual needs and differences among participants;
- provides the chance to express different views which is important when solving problems;
- develops the sense of support and provides great possibilities for getting to know each other and understanding of motives and behavior.

## **I start work**

Group work with adult learners is something very complex in several aspects:

- it is difficult to work with 15 – 20 representatives sometimes from different cultures, representatives of different generations, with different learning experience and different learning styles;
- it is difficult to provide the necessary conditions;
- it is difficult to sustain such a different form of education for a long period of time;
- It is difficult to foresee all the things which could happen during group work because it is open towards outer reality and its problems / working place, community and cet./ ;

When we prepare ourselves to start leading a non-formal education group we always face a dilemma.

On one hand our aim is to present a certain quantity of knowledge through structured situations, to achieve certain attitudes and behavior and learning outcomes, to facilitate group development. As the situation in the group changes constantly we should do our own planning, to evaluate the situation, to divide the time according to the participants' needs.

On the other hand we have a firmly fixed programme, the schedule of topics we have to cover in the usually not enough number of sessions.

The process of preparation for group work actually helps us to solve this dilemma to a certain extent, to design a programme which meets the requirements of educational programs and the needs of the group.

Despite all preliminary requirements, we have to perform **an evaluation of the group needs** which includes:

- organizational analysis of the **study background** where we are going to work with the group - analysis of the direct background of the group and every participant, of their previous professional, social experience and interactions;
- **analysis of the participants and their needs of the proposed type of non-formal education.** This analysis usually shows the situation in the group which we are going to work, what the expectations and interests of its participants are, what they need (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes) in order to satisfied;
- **analysis of tasks**, which should be completed so that the group accomplishes its goals. Exactly here we will give a concrete form of our program and the big number of topics by formulating concrete tasks and the ways which will help us to perform them or the learning situations we have to create in order to perform these tasks. /9/

We have to do this need analysis seriously and to make a design of our own way of collecting information.

We are interested in the participants themselves as well in the environment they work or live, in their relationships there.

The key preliminary meeting is the one with the **participants**. Main aims of the meeting are familiarizing them with the type of work, presenting us as trainers, receiving the first information about them. It is important that on this

meeting we mould the future work, give them an idea of its character. This means to structure carefully the meeting, to rethink its elements, and at the same time to have a natural conversation which creates a sense of freedom in the adult learners. It is important to put emphasis on the things they will get within the learning process as gaining experience, professional expertise, acquiring new skills. We should clarify that participation in a non-formal education requires extra effort and time as well as different relations – of equality, participation of everybody, different ways of evaluation. Another important thing is our role as a trainer which is different from the traditional role of the teacher they only know.

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For introductory activities we could use the so called “**ice breakers**”. /10/ With them we initiate activities, demonstrate what they are going to be like, appoint those who are going to be responsible for the things happening, direct them towards the connection with future topics. As we will see, there are a big number of all kinds of exercises and our choice speaks about the type of trainer we are – open-minded, dynamic, flexible, with a sense of humor.

These exercises have several uses:

- for introducing participants and giving them the chance to get to know each other. Although they probably have met before we provide the possibility to become interested and learn different things about the others, to go beyond the normal borders, to take a role.
- for breaking the ice; for stirring with quick results, unexpected information and self-revelation; for seeing familiar people in a new light thus building trust, creating a positive atmosphere and team building.
- set a model of co-operation in an informal atmosphere;

These introductory exercises are spontaneous but also relaxing, they give inertia to the group before the real programme begins, make the group more energetic through movements, amusing elements, laughter, new things and

stimulate them to participate. These exercises can activate everybody instantly and in this form represent the magic of group work. However, we should be careful with this amusing style and quick change of activities and make sure they do not dominate the other important topics.

We as trainers and to a greater extent the participants learn an amazing quantity of information about the group resources – from introductions, interviews, sharing. The group profile changes and the participants look different even because they decide how to be called within the group, what to share from the things they consider important about themselves.

Generally, in these first exercises jokes and importance interweave and this gives them charm, but also shows that from the very beginning the trainer is responsible for the learning process and for what is going to happen during these group sessions.

Introducing activities help the group to start building trust towards us, lessen the anxieties about the way the group is going to accept us, about overcoming barriers. Something more, these activities help us to understand the participants much better and to get an idea how they can contribute to the development of the group. When choosing the icebreakers we should take into consideration the members of the group, their expectations, the nature of the programme and time available. With a several days training, it is a good idea to prepare at least two hours of ice breakers, in a case of a year-long group work we can have a couple of sessions.

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### **Getting to know each other exercises-**

They are the most natural in the beginning and are usually problematic neither for the group nor for the trainer. People today are more interested in getting new information, ready for something unexpected and at the same time they want to find out more about the other people close to them or in the same life or professional situation.

While doing these exercises we have to precise carefully the dose of self-revelation and do not allow the discussion of information the participants do not want to share and also to make sure that everybody has time to introduce him/her self. We should not spend too much time for these activities apart from some which require longer involvement of the participants (e.g. interviews in pairs and presentations in front of the group).

### **Name**

Every participant shares with the group (or in a pair) what they know about their name - its meaning, who were they named after, how they want to be called, what other names they have in the family, what other names they like, funny stories connected with the name...

### **Remember the name**

Everybody tells their name and what they like, the next repeats the information about the previous and so on till the circle is closed.

### **Name and participle**

Everybody chooses three participles together with their name and presents themselves to the group.

### **Acronym name**

Everybody writes their name and every letter is the first of an adjective which describes their character.

### **Favorite object, animal, plant, color...**

Participants write their favorite object, animal, plant, colour (quality, singer...) on a sheet of paper, attach it to their chest, walk around the room and introduce themselves to other participants.

### **Three things I like / dislike**

This exercise is a variation of the previous one. We can change it by asking the participant to find somebody similar to them.

### **Business card**

Everybody should prepare a business card about themselves with a free text. If we want we can set some parameters – e.g. a business card with civil characteristics.

### **Interview**

Participants interview each other in pairs and then present the other person in front of the group. The group is given the chance to ask question the person who is being presented.

### **Let's find a place on the line**

We tell the participants that an imaginary line crosses the room and enumerate different pairs of opposite qualities and ask the participants to find their places on the line. At one end of the line is the full possession of certain quality, at the other end - of the opposite quality. Participants decide themselves where to stand. It is better to start with more neutral qualities (get up early – have a lie – in, like folk – dislike folk music) and to continue with more personal ones (talkative – quiet, focused – unfocused) The participants also can suggest ideas for qualities.

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### **Expectations, misgivings, questions**

First meetings give participants and the trainer the chance to share their expectations, possible misgivings, to clarify the way of work in this non-formal education group.

Expectations are usually connected with the participants' social and professional experience. We could suggest that participants share their experience and expectations in small groups. Within their group participants share ideas about what they expect to learn by formulating questions. One of them writes the questions down and the names of the people who have asked them and then presents them to the whole group.

Commenting the expectations is our main task as trainers and involves their clarification, structuring, combining and connecting them with the wide topic of

our future work. At the same time work on expectations is also our first activity on the topic with the group - from getting acquainted and stirring activities we move to the issues we are going to work on.

Our aim is to presents briefly, graphically and concretely the topics we are going to do during the group meetings.

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### **Introductory motivating exercises**

Generally every successful exercise is also motivating but at the beginning and while working we use special activities directed at developing participants' interest, improving group solidarity, providing opportunities for self-expression, joined participation.

In the very beginning these activities should be more general, not too personal, should involve all participants, should be entertaining and at the same time should lead to visible results. This way we set the group going, develop relations of cooperation and trust, create a nice working climate, attract participants' attention.

### **Methods for collecting information**

All these introducing activities are the first direct source for collecting information about the participants – we see them in action for the first time, learn new things about them, watch their reactions, the way they are accepted in the group. On this basis we can do the first assessment of each participant – strengths, place in the group, ways of expression, communicative skills, personal strengths and assets which could support the group's development and better cooperation.

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### **Development of communicative skills**

With these initial introducing activities we also mould the ways for communication in the group.

Our role is extremely important at this stage – the way we lead the activities and address participants, ask questions, find out information, providing support for sharing experience, processing information and giving summaries.

These initial activities are mainly games but because through it the participants share too much personal information it is a good chance for us to introduce the feedback model and start teaching the group that the time after the activity is the most important and conversations, sharing and feedback are something natural.

We should try to develop this process to a stage when the group considers an activity as incomplete if the information and experiences have not been processed.

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## **Ways of evaluation the group needs**

### **The group mood scale**

The moods of the group can be identified in different ways.

- **Through senator voting: I feel really good** – both hands up; **quite good** – one hand up; **can't define** – no hands up or down ; **rather bad** -one hands thumb down; **I feel really bad** – both hands thumbs down.
- **Through lining up an imaginary line** – at one end we have “I feel really good”, at the other end – “I feel really bad”.
- **Through a mark from 1 to 10.** (1 – very good; 10 – very bad)

Participants not only should get used to sharing their feelings but also to express their needs. It is necessary to put blank poster on the wall or provide a box where they can write their needs. It is our aim to try and direct the expression of needs so that it is connected with the better functioning of the participants as group members and of the group as a whole. This will make participants get used to discuss their needs and formulate them in a more social aspect.

### **Scale of relations**

Everybody draws a circle and divides it in as many sections as the number of participants in the group. In each section they write down a name of a

participant and define a percentage which represents the development of their relation with this person (0% - no relation whatsoever in the work process; 100% - excellent relation).

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### **Establishing rules of work**

This is necessary activity which brings participants together and is also the first norm building activity of the group. Establishing rules directs participants towards the work model, towards exploration and discussion of working relations; it gives them a frame within which they will interact. That is why this activity should be given special attention. It has to be accompanied by a big group of exercise which will lead to the idea of the necessity of rules when working together.

Another way of doing this is to ask participants to suggest some rules which they consider important so that the group works successfully and the relations are good.

Participants could work individually, in pairs or in groups of three. We could identify rules through brainstorming, interviewing and discussions of previous activities. It is important for us that participants not only give more suggestions but also try to suggest more rules in two main areas – relationship rules and rules for accomplishing tasks.

#### **Exemplary relationship rules:**

- Listening to each other
- Mutual respect
- Everybody's ideas are important (everybody is important)
- Not to talk at the same time

#### **Exemplary task accomplishing rules:**

- Everybody works actively
- Ask for help when having problems

- Ask our parents and relatives for support
- Work as a group
- Help each other

Once they are written down on a poster, all suggestions should be carefully discussed and clarified. We aim to involve all participants in this process so that they are familiar with the meaning of every rule.

These rules not only give the work frame but they are also our future assistant – when somebody behaves in an inappropriate or ineffective way we turn to the rules we all have accepted.

We should reconsider the rules periodically, look for examples for their following or braking and if necessary to change them.

The rules accepted by the group make our work as trainers easier, but they are above all group constitution, they regulate its life and interactions and have to be written on a poster and be in front of the eyes of participants during the work.

## **The group works**

Henry Ford once said "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

In group work we always have three key points (they can be presented as the three points of a triangle): the people who take part; the result they are trying to achieve; the procedures and ways they use in order to achieve it.

It is obvious that as trainer we should not concentrate on only one of these sides although the nature of group work can sometimes led us in only one of these directions.

The group is a real **fortune as an environment for participant's development**, for expanding and making sense of its interactions. As trainers we are often so engrossed in the things happening among participants, so overwhelmed by their obvious involvement and desire to communicate, share,

express themselves, that we leave the final result in the background and forget about the necessary procedures.

**Group work is structured one** – different topics are presented in the form of scripts for a certain period of time. Very often planned activities and time restrictions make us leave sharing, personal development or the result we are looking for in the background. We follow the programme exercise after exercise hoping that the aims we have set will be fulfilled somehow.

The building of a team within the organizational psychology means an organized effort to improve its effectiveness. This way we try to make a special team from the group of adult learners, one with a more special task. Sometimes they can develop projects, take part in socially useful activities, make lessons more interesting. As a whole this team is important because they should work together on the given topic – to discuss, share, look for solutions, put single people in the centre of attention. The group is a model of social interaction, a stage where the participant can perform, a point for comparison, a structure providing support.

The team and team work are a fact when the group defines and clarifies its goals, develops rules and work procedures, looks for different ways for creativity and getting more information, improves communication processes, decision-making, delegating, planning activities, assists the development of relations among participants and their connections with the environment.

It is a long process where our role as group trainers is essential.

That is why, from the very beginning we should define group development, look for handicaps and overcome them, set goals, go beyond the programme restrictions, to use and channel the participants' energy, to recognize and point out their achievements, to direct them when interacting in the environment.

We should not only remember but also mould principles of successful team work knowing that they should be internalized and followed by everybody:

- The group can work successfully **if every member wants to work;**

- Find time to **discuss main approaches and ideas, to evaluate the work** and to give **feedback to the group**;
- **Everybody** in the group **bears responsibility for the things that happen**;
- We act on the basis of **common principles and values**;
- **I accept myself and the others**;
- **I am responsible** for my actions and behavior;
- **I believe** in my abilities **and support everybody's actions**;
- **I respect personal dignity and space**;
- **I am ready to take a risk**, do something new, take a challenge;
- **Take mistakes as a chance for learning**;
- Today's problems are tomorrow's solutions;
- Thinking is **directed at the processes within the group**: aims are important but the process is also important. The group develops by exploring its procedures and practices.
- I suggest procedures for analyzing of situations and problem-solving;
- I take **emotions as part of the work process**;
- I look for balance between **effectiveness and quality of interactions** – the group will be successful and discussions will be useful if they are focused, involve the participant and develop civil competence;
- **I am proud of** the group achievements;
- Group work **is also for fun**, if it is not something is wrong.

It is important not to turn relations into a topic for conversation, only in really difficult moments. The trainer has to decide when such discussions will be held – sometimes he is forced by the circumstances or by the problems arising in the group. From time to time topics can be the following things – work rules and the way we observe them, roles in the group, achievements, relations among members, interaction with the environment. Every discussed topic is a step

forward in group development and a guarantee that the group is making progress.

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## **Ways of learning**

**The modern learning is** based on several principles:

### **Learning needs to match the way in which the brain works**

Effective learning includes the logical, linear thinking of the left brain and the creative, global thinking of the right brain. The brain processes many things simultaneously, not one thing at a time. Effective learning therefore engages learners on many levels at once. Effective learning has an emotional content and is stress-free. Loads of ideas are actually demonstrated to assist our own learning: “I really didn’t notice how much I was learning till afterwards.”

### **Learning needs to be presented in a variety of ways**

We each have distinct preferences for receiving information and a range of eight intelligences for processing it. A rich assortment of learning options means that each learner can benefit to the fullest from the teaching.

### **Successful learning applies the principles of memory**

Multi-sensory learning is highly memorable. Pictures and images are far easier to recall than words, especially if they are coloured. We remember that which is unique and different and easily forget the dull and boring. We recall through association and remember things in groups and families. Short sessions of 15–20 minutes are more memorable, and information reviewed at certain critical times goes into the long-term memory.

### **Successful learning is an active experience totally involving the learner**

Learning is actively created by the learners for themselves - it is not the passive absorption of someone else's learning. True learning is a whole body, whole-mind experience and involves the learner mentally, emotionally and physically. Learning comes from doing something, in context, and receiving feedback. Learners learn from what they do, not from what the teacher does.

### **Learners learn what they want to learn**

Without a personal learning goal there is no learning. Learners need to know what's in it for them and how the learning will benefit them both personally and professionally.

### **Learning thrives in a positive physical and emotional climate**

A relaxing, stimulating environment that feels safe for the learner is essential. Learning is dependent on positive expectations of success and a healthy level of self-esteem. Laughter and enjoyment are number one prerequisites for a successful learning!

### **Learning is a social experience**

Collaboration accelerates learning while competition impedes it. Bringing learners out of isolation and into a learning community reduces stress and increases learning. The best learning often takes place in the interaction between the learners. Successful teachers and trainers are more concerned with building positive, caring relationships with learners than they are with using any new tip, tool or technique.

**The modern learning is a discovery learning.** The main idea behind discovery learning is 'learn by doing'. Discovery learning takes place in problem-solving situations where the learner draws on his own experience and prior knowledge and is a method of instruction through which learners interact with their environment by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments. Discovery learning encourages active engagement, promotes motivation, autonomy, responsibility, independence, develops creativity and problem-solving skills. /11/

### **The modern learning is based on Praxis**

Praxis is a Greek word for defining action with reflection. The idea of doing while learning is a widely recommended approach to teaching adults. Adults returning to the learning process want to see how theory relates to practical

application, and one way to 'do' while learning is to set skills in the context of problem solving. Another way is to provide experiences for learners and allow them to construct their own knowledge.

The praxis model for adult education places lifelong learning and the adult learner in a societal context and recognizes that learners and knowledge are embedded in context. Praxis places attention on three essential tasks of the learner: consciousness, practice, and reflection on practice.

Within the process of praxis intervention, adults would first listen to experts' opinions, explanations and demonstrations of the phenomenon under discussion or of the competence to be developed. In the next phase, they would carry out experiments and exercises relevant to the topic or to the domain, conducted individually, collectively and collaboratively, under the expert's guidance. The results of this phase should be discussed and clarified with each other and also with the expert.

**The objectives of Praxis as a training technique are:**

- Help students gain a large quantity of quality knowledge within short periods of time.
- Explore learners' potential to reflexively work on their respective mentalities and attitudes.
- Produce within learners a moment of dialectic change, guiding them through an exploration process of ideas and beliefs with the tools of rationality.

A specificity of the praxis method is that learners are gaining knowledge through a process of creative appropriation rather than indoctrination or authoritarian transmission. We as adult educators have, in this context, the role of a learning facilitators rather than that of a teachers or knowledge transmitters.

**The modern learning is a co-operative learning**

The group works and develops on the basis of interaction and cooperation of its members and it becomes stronger in the process of problem-solving.

Non-formal education group is a problem-solving group. That is why the working problems and tasks we offer are not only leading but should also be well chosen. They should be important, meaningful to attract the participant's attention, to imply joined exploration, not to lead to quick unequivocal answers, to provide the opportunity for critical thinking and personal involvement in the process of their solving. When participants look into problems they see not only themselves but also the community they live in.

**Cooperation** is essential for problem-solving and we use a lot of different techniques and methods in order to teach cooperation.

We can start with the simplest **joined work (turning to the partner)**- in every moment of group work this technique leads to quick cooperation, feedback, stirs or activates the group.

Another possibility is **the reading group**. During the sessions we often use texts and it is important to involve the whole group and read aloud. Everybody in the circle can read a paragraph or a sentence and this way we increase attention and involve everybody in the process unlike when we treat the text individually.

Cooperative learning provides possibilities for different ways of grouping the participants when working with a certain text. One variation is to divide participants into several groups and each of them to work with a different part of the text. Afterwards we form new groups where there is a member presenting each part of the text. Another variation is everybody to prepare a part of the text and then the analysis can be done in small groups or with the whole group. With this interactive method the main ideas are interdependence, need of cooperation, dividing the text into small bits, putting the participants on more equal terms than when working individually.

**A group for tasks.** We divide the group into small groups working on different tasks. This way we not only give them a chance to contribute more but also help participants to be together in many different combinations and to

expand their cooperation experience. The division can be done according to indices chosen by us but can also be based on diagnostics aiming to create flexible, competitive or helping within the group teams. We should not forget that in our work the competitive element is subordinate to the idea of cooperation. Even when we offer the group some kind of competition following certain rules, when discussing the event we stress on the experiences, and the results and not so much on the dominance of the other team. That is why it is necessary to constantly change the people in the groups, which helps avoiding the creation of firm group divisions, pressure and competitiveness. /12/

### **In the end the modern learning is an active learning**

**Active learning** is an umbrella term that refers to several models of instruction that focus the responsibility of learning on learners. This strategy allows learners to teach the new content to each other. Of course, they must be accurately guided by trainers. "Learning by teaching" is the integration of behaviorism and cognitivism, and provides a coherent framework for theory and practice.

### **Our constructive role as trainers in terms of cooperation is as follows:**

- to motivate participants for a responsible and involved participation;
- to notice, write down and validate participants' efforts and ideas;
- checking the level of understanding of what is happening in the group;
- providing a good working atmosphere;
- making sure the rules are observed;
- sticking to the task given to the group.

We could point out many **concrete ways of achieving participation in the non-formal education group**

- participants could work in pairs;
- participants could share their experience;
- everybody should express their opinion;

- distribute questionnaires for filling in;
- everybody should write a sentence;
- put a chair in the middle and the person sitting on it will be in the center of attention;
- change the members and the number of groups;
- give tasks to different people;
- every time let a different person to present the work within the small groups;
- give the floor at random;
- distribute different roles to different people;
- when necessary ask participants to share their thoughts in written form and anonymously;
- encourage expression of opinion by positive feedback;
- do not question but praise statements;
- do not attack as well as do not allow personal attacks against participants;
- use the power of associations and metaphors;
- give more activating and creative exercises, the group is not only a place for talking;
- use the various types of intelligence of the participants – visual, audio, kinesthetic.

## **Group activities**

In the basis of work in the Non-formal education group is structured are different activities or exercises. These activities and exercises **model reality**, present its important elements, provide a possibility for its exploration and usually includes the participants' experience (implicitly or explicitly). Exercises **enrich the existing experience** with new things and require sharing and

recycling of the received information. This way we reach the paradox of group work – small structure units (exercises) are in the basis of its dynamics.

Participants' personality, their perceptions, emotions, thoughts are fully involved by the exercises. Through the exercises they connect to the other participants in a meaningful way, in and through them they are equal – gain experience, have mutual basis for communication thanks to the experiences and are also equal in the process of discussion because they have gone through the same thing (although in different ways).

Not less important is the meaning of the **exercise as a possibility to try out skills and behavior, to check hypothesis** as its structure creates safe conditions for such actions.

According to new theories – with elements of sharing, their stimulating character and the relatively safe environment where they are held as well as in many cases the fact that they are new, exercises develop participants' mind and are a basis for personal and professional development.

#### **Exercises can be:**

- simple or many-sided;
- short or long, lasting from several minutes to several hours or a whole day.
- connected with the civic education topic or not;
- directed at studying something concrete (exercise for listening to each other) or with a broader learning results;
- suggesting or excluding physical activity;
- with or without observers;
- led by a trainer or by the group itself or by a combination between a trainer and a group;
- directed at the individual participant or towards the group;

- relying only on participation of members of the group or involving outer contribution (experts, trainers, lecturers)
- prepared by the trainer or just chosen from the trainers repertoire;

Despite the numerous existing standardized exercises and their successful use by the trainer in all kinds of situations we should always ask ourselves several inevitable questions:

- Why do I want to use exactly this exercise? Is it the best way to achieve the desired result from studying at this stage of group development?
- Is it realistic or too theoretical?
- Are the offered procedures clear to the participants?
- What is my role as a trainer in the exercise and is it clear to everybody?
- Are the time limits I have set realistic?
- Are we going to use observers and what exactly is their role going to be?
- When the exercise is over how will I understand that the participants have learned what I wanted? **/13/**

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### **Work in small groups**

Dividing into small groups is a main technique in group work, providing more possibilities for cooperation, interaction, sharing, brainstorming, pointing out different points of view, making the traditional lecturing activity more interesting as well as the interaction in the group.

The natural difficulty for us as trainers is the much bigger necessity for structuring and directing of interactions in the small groups and the fact that we cannot be at several places at the same time. This means that we should always give very clear instructions about the activities of the small groups, to explain the reasons why we do certain divisions, to define exact time limits and the expected product of group work as well as the way we are going to use in order to tell the whole group about the thing that has happened.

It is a good idea to assign the role of person responsible for the interactions in the group to somebody if the group consists of three people and if it is bigger we should try role division - an observer, members, a rule guard.

Starting working in small groups from the very beginning makes this activity quite natural and they internalize the main requirements for effectiveness of interactions within these groups.

Finally, we should remember that, regardless of the number of people in the group, our instructions should be perfectly clear and we should make sure all groups have understood them; set time limit for the task completion taking into account the number of members in the group; keep an eye on the interactions development within the groups, whether they follow the instructions, perform their roles and follow the task they have been given.

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## **Discussion**

Discussion is a main work model in non-formal education. With every topic the main aim is to teach them something new, arouse participants' interest so that they can be stimulated to begin discussing and analyzing the problem.

Moreover, discussion is an important step when solving problems. It is the stage where the points of view are clarified, hypothesis are formulated, certain opinions are evaluated and decisions are taken.

Methods of discussion are very different but regardless of the one we choose we should always follow the main rules:

- To explain well the rules and the steps in the process of discussion;
- To think about the way the group is going to be divided or the roles are going to be assigned in the process of discussion.
- To choose the most suitable method of discussion – it can be “field analysis”( exploration of the positive and the negative influences on the problem ); “tree of solutions” (suggesting alternative solutions and exploration of positive and negative consequences); “SWOT analysis”

(exploration of strengths, weaknesses, threats and alternatives for the development of a certain process); using preliminary expert evaluation as a beginning of a group discussion, as expert could be members who have prepared themselves in advance; preparation of key questions which the experts are going to answer; preparation of elements from the discussed problem by different groups; to conduct a debate on the issue; exploration of the problem from different points of view; dividing the group into people who discuss and observers;

- The way of setting the groups is also important, we should take into consideration the nature of the problem as well as the abilities of the group;
- In the end of each discussion we have to conduct “discussion of the discussion”, to share emotions and opinions about the quality and the benefits from joined action.

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### **Asking questions**

Asking questions is not an interactive method but an essential element of every interactive method.

The ability to ask questions defines to a great extent our attitude towards problems, the possibility to explore these problems, the formation of our attitude towards the world. Asking questions is also an indicator of our ability to communicate, make contacts with other people, cooperate with them and try to understand them and find our place among them. It shows our active civic and personal position.

The ability to ask questions can be built and that is why we should purposefully help participants to master this activity.

The best way to do this is by modeling the asking of questions and if we spend enough time asking and answering different questions.

Participants should get used to **clarifying** questions which are a constant element of every communication- “What happened, tell me something more, where did this happen...”.Through these questions the participant has the chance to collect more information about the events as he/she is still not able to deduce it from the small number of facts and tendencies.

Other questions are connected with clarifying reasons and relations, with the discovery of triggers of certain action, the interests – “Why, how did this happen...’Participants should get used to asking this sort of questions when exploring whatever type of human activity, institution or community.

In order to involve them in discussions and make them active participants we should use **the questions for finding out opinion** (“What do you think and how do you feel about this issue?”) as well as encouraging questions ( What you say is important and interesting , can you continue?”)

It is important to teach participants to ask enough questions about how they feel in a particular situation, because at this age we can show them how to differentiate between feelings and thinking and stress on the role of the emotions in their actions.

Part of the questions should be **summarizing**, taking into account what the participants have said- “So, did you say this and that?”

Other questions are connected with **looking for opinion** or with our desire to summarize everybody’s agreement on certain problem. “Do we all agree on...?” In fact all these open questions “open” reality in front of the members of the group, give them the chance to express their opinion and to participate actively.

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## **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a method which gives the possibility to generate a big number of ideas for a short period of time in order to solve a problem. The main idea behind brainstorming is to separate the moment of suggesting and creating ideas from the moment of their evaluation.

Brainstorming has several stages. In the first the trainer set the task that should be solved in a clear, brief and attracting the participants' attention way.

Afterwards the **rules** of brainstorming should be clarified:

- we do not comment and criticize suggestions made by the others;
- the important thing is the quality, not the quantity of the suggestions;
- we try to use and further develop the suggestions of other people;
- all suggestions are written down in the way they were initially made;
- we start talking after the trainer has told us;
- the time limit for suggestions is strictly defined (usually no more than several minutes)

After all the suggestions are written down begins the stage of their clarification. We go through them one by one and if there is something unclear the person who has made the suggestion explains to the rest of the group.

At the end we analyze the suggestions in terms of the aim we have chosen. Realistic suggestions can be separated from the unrealistic ones; suggestions can be compiled in several groups; the best solutions to the problem are chosen and then the group starts working on them.

In non-formal education work we can use brainstorming all the time and that is why we should know that there are different ways of doing it. Instead of all participants suggesting together, everybody can write down suggestions on pieces of paper, then all the pieces are put on the wall and into groups. The advantage is that everybody can give more ideas and the participants who prefer giving written suggestions are more active. Another way is when every participant chooses one of their suggestions and presents it to the group.

We can have **negative brainstorming**. In this case we try to identify factors which hamper the solution of a certain problem or some disadvantages. For example, when exploring discipline we can have brainstorming on 'How to increase the noise in the neighborhood?'

Another idea for developing brainstorming is every participant to write down their suggestions. Afterwards two people presents their ideas and the others try to combine them into one decision. A third participant reads out his/her idea and the others try to incorporate it into the decision they already have. We go on like that till all ides are combined.

**Role-attack** is a variation of brainstorming. We assign different roles to the participants in the situation we want to solve (e.g. – pupil, parent, police officer, teacher, etc.) and they give suggestions from this point of view.

Sometimes we can **interrupt** traditional brainstorming in order to gain energy and then the group starts giving ideas again.

Another possibility is to give a sheet of paper to the circle of participants. The first writes down a suggestion and the next develops the idea of the previous participant.

Brainstorming is a method for fast generating, sharing and discussing ideas. Very often this way does not provide high quality of the ideas and, as we have seen in most variations, innovation and personal contribution are not recognized. The method is the most effective when the problem is simple, specific or limited.

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### **Concencitization**

One approach developed on the basis of methods like communication and dialogue is the one of Paulo Freire, called Concencitization. The focus of this method is to raise the consciousness of the learner, who begins to question and inquire a certain context or problem through dialogue, self-awareness and communication with the facilitator and with the other participants. Applied in literacy programs, the concencitization method has four stages, the first consisting in the identification by the adult educator of those factors that act as limitations for the adults' literacy skills and capacities, as well as of those elements that can constitute “generative themes” for the group. The adult

educator selects contradictory elements of the context, defines a thematic content for those elements and uses such elements in the next stage, where learners, through reflection and dialogue, are helped to perceive their own role in the contradiction. In the last stage, themes are converted into teaching/learning strategies, adapted to the learners' needs. The entire process is conducted through dialogue and communication between adult educator and learners, as well as among learners themselves.

The so-called **Living library**, a kind of educational activity using testimonials of people about their experiences, living and learning conditions, represents another example of the use of dialogue and communication. This approach developed on the basis of the more known and used method of the invited-expert, an individual with a special competence who is called to freely enter a dialogue with learners, responding in this way to their specific needs for information. The innovative character of the **living library** method is that the application field is moved to tackle social and cultural problems, considering as experts the very people who are dealing with those problems: immigrants, people with social, physical or mental disabilities, people having faced discrimination or difficult circumstances, etc.

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### **Case study**

Case study can be compared to a written demonstration. You present the participants a description of a real or fictional situation and include enough information so that the group can analyze the problems involved.

The main advantage of case study is that abstract information is presented in a concrete way and a high level of involvement of the participants is achieved; the group energy is directed at exploring the situation given and the possibilities for understanding of the situation and drawing conclusions at a personal level increase.

This is a very personal method: participants become too active; they are put in group situation, reveal relationships and enrich their social experience. Case study gives the participants a chance to experience themselves some of the most important social lessons – to feel the differences in social perception; to understand that life situations do not have only one possible answer, to see the diversity of human behavior, to develop their skills for social comments, to decrease their prejudice.

Case study requires a lot of time – for presenting circumstances, for discussing and taking decisions. In some variations we prepare the case by outlining possible solutions and the participants have to decide which of them is better in the given situation. We can suggest that participants themselves look for interesting stories on the topics we are going to use.

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### **Problem solving**

Group work is one with problems. Participants develop and learn in the process of solving different problems from public reality, life of the group, their families, the community, the state.

#### Problems solving

- opens the world in front of the group and helps the participant to become a part of this world;
- represents a learning model;
- lets participants acquire social knowledge in a natural way;
- puts participants in an equal situation;
- develops logical and critical thinking;
- develops the necessary civic competences;
- consolidates the value of joined efforts in the social sphere;
- develops a practically directed value system. **/14/**

The whole non-formal education program is built on problem solving situations so the mastering of problem solving skills is essential for the program's success.

A possibility for learning the algorithm of problems solving is to present the main rules for problem solving in the process of solving a concrete problem and with every other problem to add new techniques and ways and to practise and consolidate the already studied elements.

The other possibility is in the course of several sessions to practise step by step the whole model for problem solving, to explain and discuss with the group calmly the meaning of each step and technique so that every participant can build their own attitude towards the process and to be able to use it consciously in different situations.

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### **Steps of the problem-solving process**

1. The first phase is **problem definition**– i.e. to describe the state of the problem, to find out how participants see the problem and its dimensions.

Social reality is usually complex, especially for young people, and in cases where we see the problems clearly due to our experience, it is difficult for adolescents to identify them.

That is why the first action when solving problems is their identification.

**Phase of perception.** Our aim as trainers in this phase is to reach an agreement in the group work on the problem which means: to accept that there is nothing wrong in discussing it (i.e. to make it legitimate); to show different perceptions, connected with the problem's existence; to hear different points of view and to avoid "a perception's war".

It is important to make the problem legitimate – the group should accept its importance, which is a source of work motivation. The second aim when sharing perceptions is to give participants a chance to express their feelings and attitudes towards the problem. Some possible interventions are 'How would you feel if

you encountered this problem every day?’ It is important for us to be able to check how strong and engaged the participants’ feelings are, because this will be a serious stimulus for their involvement when working on the problem.

Next comes the **problem definition**. It is important to do this after sharing perceptions using the question ‘how’. Defining the problem means not only to explore and share our perceptions but also try to describe the aim we want to achieve – what the situation will be when the problem is solved. This way, participants will feel **motivated** to continue looking for solutions of the problem. In a word, sharing, looking into, defining the problem together and getting into depth turn into a democratic process in which everybody takes part, appreciate their own and the opinion of the others, help each other in this joined exploration.

## 2. The second phase is **an analysis of the problem causes**.

After we have clarified our perceptions, have defined the problem and the group is motivated to work on it, it is time for the next phase of analysis.

Our aim is to achieve agreement about why the problem exists, to gather maximum information about the causes, to make a list, evaluate them, put them in order of importance and to decide which of them we are going to work on.

We try to explore the causes of the problem together, to encourage participants to listen and understand each other, to use the experience and knowledge of each of them.

## 3. **Identifying possible solutions. Generating alternatives.**

Once we have shared the problem and explored its causes we have enough material and ideas in order to continue with the next step – the identification of possible solutions of the problem. The most important thing, though, is all participants to participate actively in the process of giving suggestions and to be able to note down all of them. This is the only way to make everybody feel that their idea is taken into consideration at this stage of the problem-solving.

The next step is to clarify the suggestions made. One by one we check all of them and the unclear ones are explained by the participant who made them. It is possible to combine some of them into groups. We can ask some participants to group the suggestions in advance if we leave this activity for the next session. We should only be careful not to group them in a way that they become too general. We need concrete ideas in order to solve the problem.

#### **4. Choosing the best suggestions.**

After we have clarified the suggestions given and have grouped some of them we should choose the ones which will help us solve the problem. At this stage it is important to reach an agreement about the evaluation criteria. They could be as follows: conformity with the law, economic effectiveness, time, mutual benefit, etc. After we have agreed on this we evaluate each suggested solution. These suggestions which match all criteria will be the basis of our decision.

**Another possibility is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of every suggested solution.** This way of evaluation gives a better chance to pick the suggestions which the group likes and supports. Similar is the variation when we ask the participants to **share their opinion about what they like and do not like about each suggestion.**

#### **5. Decision making**

The whole work model connected with problem solving requires a consensus in order to make a decision. The group has worked together during the whole time - they have together discussed the problem, looked for and clarified the causes, given suggestions and defined the evaluation criteria.

**Reaching an agreement within the group.** We all know that we can talk about consensus when everybody supports a decision or practice, when the decision is taken without voting. We should point out that it is not a case of unanimity where everybody likes the decision to the same degree or all participants are equally connected with it. A consensus agreement is when the group agrees that the best decision for all participants has been taken. In the

worst case the consensus is compromise, in the best – a better decision for everybody involved. The strong sides in the process of reaching a consensus are the flexibility when satisfying different interests and needs of the group participants; increasing the information flow and the discussed possibilities; emphasizing on the process of making decisions which make all participants satisfied; their bigger involvement with the decision taken. In order to achieve consensus, participants work together in various small groups and this way apart from the greater satisfaction the group effectiveness is also increased.

## **6. Working out a plan of action**

The aim of this phase is reducing the decisions to concrete steps, to an action plan. Important points that should be discussed – steps, people in charge, time, expenses. Working out an action plan for solving the problem is a key moment whose underestimation can turn all the efforts made so far into something pointless. That is why we need enough time in order to achieve this aim. If necessary, it is a good idea the plan to be worked out by volunteers and to be presented for approval on the next session. If there is more time, it would be useful for everybody to take part in the plan development.

The plan should be **realistic** (to take into consideration our abilities for solving the problem), to be **concrete** (to offer time limits, steps, people in charge), to be **flexible** enough, so that it can react if conditions change suddenly.

## **7. Applying the decision and evaluation of the things achieved.**

The application of the plan has to be discussed if the group continues with the accomplishment of a project. Then it is important to evaluate the plan from time to time within the whole group. As all participants have worked on its development and are connected to the solving of the problem, all of them are interested in watching how it is performed. That is why a special programme for evaluating the solution of the problem should be prepared, which will provide information when and how the evaluation will be performed, who the person in charge will be and under what circumstances the plan will have to be changed.

Summarized key moments for the solution of the problem are:

- The problem solving is a process which gives the group members the chance to work together and look for creating new possibilities. The consensus at the end is a proof that effective group work can be looked at as a multitude of agreements achieved in the process.
- The problems which have more than one possible solution are solved most effectively in a heuristic way – i.e. using flexible, constructive, linear methodology. However, we should remember the main principle – to constantly involve all the members.
- The idea that problem-solving is a process and the development of a set of strategies and instruments make the group members more confident, flexible and productive.
- In order to solve a problem successfully we should make sure that the group works on one and the same problem, in the same phase, using the same methods at the same time.

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### **The group ‘experiences’ and shares**

With traditional studying a big part of the main activities in fact distract from the learning process: sitting and listening; taking notes; the high level of formalization of pedagogical interaction; the abundance of theoretical knowledge.

From this angle, interactive methods are actually a part of the new paradigm of learning based on participants’ experience, educational dialogue and group work.

In the new learning paradigm studying is a process in which activities give participants the chance to experience it and not only to be taught what to learn.

### **The aims of learning based on experience are:**

- **affective:** creating a chance for change in feelings, attitudes, values as a result of an intensive situation or learning event (experience);

- **emphatic:** learning about how people feel in the place of somebody else;
- **interactive:** learning cannot be on a cognitive level when interactive skills are mastered, e.g. interviewing, listening, advising. Through a special structuring done by the trainer, participants can experience and accept interaction from the point of view of the both sides – listening-speaking, teacher – student, parent-child, executive-subordinate;
- development of **cognitive skills** at a high level: the ability for analysis, evaluation and synthesis; the constant feedback towards the learner guarantees that the skill will be effective in real world. **/15/**

Learning based on real experiences is learning based on personal experience but also learning in situations structured or prepared by the trainer.

It characterizes with the following steps:

**Go through** – participants take part in one or several structured experiences;

**Share** – participants share their perceptions, feelings and reactions;

**Discuss** – participants discuss models and dynamics of the experience;

**Summarize** – on the basis of experience participants summarize principle valid in the real world;

**Apply** – participants plan more effective behavior in real life situations at school, family, community.

For example, the exploration of feedback goes through the following activities:

**Ask** the participants about what they appreciate when receiving feedback;

**Divide** participants in small groups in which they can discuss a material containing the characteristics of a good feedback;

**Ask** participants to evaluate themselves as people giving feedback;

**Prepare exercises** for developing skills for each of the characteristics of good feedback;

**Do a role-play** where each participant practices giving feedback to a classmate with whom they do not have a friendly relationship and then the rest of the group give them feedback for the performance.

**Plan** with participants who they are going to give feedback to in the future.

The **main principles** we should follow when developing programmes for this type of learning are:

- **involvement** – participants should be involved all the time;
- **consistency** – learning should be based on previous activities;
- **content** – learning should be connected with the activities of the group;
- **processing of experience** – it is important not to ‘produce’ more facts than the participants can actually process;
- **speed and rhythm** – we should look for suitable speed and rhythm for group work, appropriate for the participants’ needs and the dynamics of group development;
- **voluntary participation** – experience requires self-revelation and sharing. In school conditions this means voluntary participation in the activities as well as in the process of sharing;
- **data** – group work always provides enough data, things happen all the time and there is always a considerable amount of things which are not fully expressed. For this reason it is not necessary to offer new activities and experiences, but to concentrate and help participants to work better on things which have already happened.
- **flexibility** – despite the steps mentioned when processing experience, studying in this context requires flexibility, taking circumstances into consideration and even a change of the conditions if necessary.

**Things we must do** when processing experience:

- to know exactly what we are going to work on, what our aims are with certain activity, to develop a “map” of the exercise procedure;

- to learn well the character of the offered activity so that we can present it to the group with clear instructions, to allay misgivings occurring and in the work process to make changes only with the group's consent;
- to assign clearly the roles among participants so that there is effective processing of experience – participants, observers, presenters of the small group's activity;
- to prepare an emergency plan, which means to have experience with the activity offered, to be familiar with possible difficulties when performing it as well as possible misgivings and questions of the participants;
- while working to give the participants a chance to share their concern, and building up pressure which also means to provide enough time for certain activities.
- to support participants' active participation – to express freely our feelings and emotions; if they have played a role to give them enough time to get out of it; to express their impressions before drawing conclusions; to be able to form hypotheses about the things which have happened.
- as activities have special purposes we should stress on their practical results. For the participants each activity is a road to themselves and to the world.
- before offering certain activity we should have a clear idea about our role in its accomplishment, how involved we are going to be in the work of the group.

**We should not:**

- leave participants to plan activities if they do not have enough experience,
- to present too many details in certain activity – they only confuse participants and do not help for a high-grade performance and a learning effect;
- offer more activities and exercises than the participants are able to absorb;

- be at a big distance from the group;
- use too often the same activities and exercises;
- include activities we do not like for some reason or we do not find very useful;
- deprive participants of enough time for discussion.

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## **Role-playing**

Role-playing is an essential interactive method through which we involve participants in dramatization of a problem from the reality we are studying, as they perform different roles within the learning situation.

Role-playing provides participants with information concerning the problems discussed. It helps for the mastering of certain ways and principles for solving problems and conflicts, giving support, certain types of behavior typical for social actors and to enrich and develop their communicative skills.

At the same time role-playing reveals participants' attitudes towards other people and help to change certain attitudes – e.g. prejudice.

Role-playing resembles a mirror – participants can look themselves in the things others do. In role-playing participants teach the other how to think and feel and have the chance to identify with them when playing a role.

We use role-playing in order to prepare participants for performing different social roles and at the same time this type of game is a specific reality test, which shows how participants would manage with various social roles in different situations.

Role-playing can be planned in advance but can also appear spontaneously as a result of group work.

### **Objectives of the role-playing as a learning technique are:**

- It helps understanding how to handle a particular situation
- It helps improving interpersonal relationship

- It helps providing an insight to understanding others' behavioral patterns.
- It helps anticipating the other party's reaction
- It helps developing a better understanding of the issue, and conducts to a better decision-making
- It helps developing a better understanding of the job
- It helps developing communication, management development and trainership quality.

**We could point out the following features of the role-playing as learning method:**

- **Learning by doing** – Since the participant plays a role within given circumstance, s/he practically learns and understands the demand or requirement of skills required to resolve or get the task done.
- **Learning through imitation** – while playing the new or the expected role, the participant gets the feelings about the other person and tries his/her best to include and accrue all traits of the given role. Thus, s/he gets an opportunity to understand, analyze and reflect on the other person's perception and behavior.
- **Learning through observation and feedback** – This method helps with dual learning. Not only does the trainee learn and reinforce the concepts by self-learning, but s/he also develops an understanding about a new role. This approach helps building a good decision-making ability, management capacity and trainership overall.
- **Learning through analysis and conceptualization** – The role played by the trainee helps analyzing the various skills involved in the role as domain, conceptual, design or human skills are envisaged; thus, it helps designing a broader understanding of and a clear outlook on the task.

As trainers we should distribute different roles, to structure activities in time, to lead the game and the discussions afterwards, to summarize the things learned.

For a successful role-playing we have to observe the following rules:

- Identifying the learning aims - why we suggest the use of a certain game;
- Setting roles and the way they are going to be distributed;
- Setting signals which give the start and the end of the role-play;
- Preparing special script with a more specific or more general description of the roles;
- Preparing materials which will make easier the successful participation in the role-playing.

**The form of the role-playing** also can be different:

- it can spring from a group discussion;
- part of the participants play in front of the rest;
- the same game is played simultaneously by different participants in small groups;
- the role-playing can be repeated;
- the same role-playing is played by different participants one after another.

The problem we have when performing role-playing, especially at the beginning of our work is **the existing anxiety among some participants**. In order to deal with it:

- present these activities later in the programme;
- use volunteers for the main roles;
- remind the group the ways of giving feedback;
- try to involve all participants – even with small roles or as observers;
- if necessary we demonstrate the performance of certain roles;
- choose potentially threat-free situations;
- choose role-playing where it can be successful easily;

- let participants suggest their own cases;
- remind them that it is only a game after all in the safe group atmosphere and mistakes are not something serious.

The role-playing performance can **be set in time in the following way** (example):

- instructions given by the trainer - 3 minutes;
- participants preparation - 7 min.;
- performing the game - 15 min.;
- re-play of a concrete moment - 5 min.;
- discussion - 15 min.

When writing the **role-playing script** we should emphasize on the following elements:

- there should be overcoming of difficulties;
- personal values and beliefs should be tested;
- there should be chances for demonstrating and asserting concrete behavior;
- there should also be chances for expressing unconstructive or dysfunctional behavior;

When defining a key topic (topics) it is important to think from the point of the participants' reaction and to decide what is necessary in order to attract their interest.

In general it is better when the role-playing deals with one or maximum two problems. It is important that the situation suggested has a conflict moment, clash of behavior, positions and values. Once we have defined it, it is easier to describe the characters taking part and to give them names.

Good role-playings are short, understandable, realistic, general to a certain extent, so that participants have the freedom to enrich and develop their roles.

As different role-playings will be used all the time during the work of the non-formal education group, it is a good idea to use some activities for practicing skills for getting into and performing a role.

First of all, participants have the chance to practice in groups of three as they participate in typical pairs “teacher-student”, “parent-child”, “adult-adolescent”, “police officer-criminal” (one of the participants is an observer and the activity is repeated three times so that everybody can go through all the roles).

Another technique is the so called ‘**empty chair**’, when a participant playing a certain role talks to an imaginary person sitting on the chair. The group has the role of observer and gives feedback.

Talking independently is another preparatory activity where the participants present their role in front of the whole group and receive feedback. for individual preparation is recommended to work in front of a mirror or using a video recorder.

In the initial sessions with role-playings we have to talk to the group about the **observer’s role**, concrete types of behavior, writing down observations, developing criteria for sharing impressions and giving effective feedback.

## **I and the participants evaluate the activities of the group**

It is quite natural that evaluation is one of the problems of non-formal education, of this kind of studying based on experience and constant involvement in different activities.

**Evaluation is the feedback process in the group**, of institutionalized but also spontaneous feedback. This is the transmission among participant during the learning process of information necessary for the group existence and development in this aspect **evaluation is formalized and measurable feedback.**

That is why evaluation as a process is **implemented in group activity** and is an integral part of it. It is a group property, part of each activity and at the same time a process which has an observing character.

In the new learning paradigm evaluation as well as group work is a joined activity and the participants above all are responsible for it.

A good group **institutionalizes and makes the evaluation a natural process** and the role of a skillful trainer is to collect these marks, to direct them sometimes, to summarize them in the categories of learning, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Paradoxically, unlike the traditional method of evaluation, when evaluating within a group, the **competitive element is not that important** but the value of the achieved result and changes is not easy to be explained with the usual categories of classical standards for knowledge.

In the group and the activities of single participants there are turning points, top achievements, failures, but also outgrowing of the narrow world and all this remains undetectable for the standard ways of evaluation.

Evaluation in a group is also collective, it means well, but as a part of group experience it is **always subjective** and we should take this into consideration.

Evaluation expresses support, encouragement of good, subjective view about the group and individual contribution when solving a problem, opposing injustice and reacting to challenges. Non-formal education work is a group activity and **that is why to a certain extent the individual evaluation is something ambiguous**. The participant is strong and good, motivated and confident because he/she is part of a group, because he/she is under its influence - outside the group participants are subjected to different influences, they re-create models of behavior typical for the environment – that is why it is not methodologically easy to evaluate them outside the group.

As the evaluation is so complex, the challenges we face as trainers are great – in our desire to materialize something similar in the group without causing

disappointment and spoiling the group magic, without breaking the things the group is trying to achieve.

From this aspect, every attempt for formal evaluation is impoverishment, schematization, “robbing” of group experience.

That is why our evaluation strategy should be based on several principles:

- the learning process itself should be one of the priorities of evaluation;
- to point out the progress of every participant even if it is insignificant;
- to point out the efforts and achievements in the process of cooperation and to show them our support;
- constantly to make processes of giving feedback in the group easier by giving them regularly the chance to observe the group’s actions or to get familiar with the results of its work;
- to collect feedback proof – discussion recordings, posters, presentations of participants’ diaries. other types of group production, documentation accompanying the development and accomplishment of projects;
- to involve the group in this process so that it can perform self-evaluation all the time, to realize its progress, when it makes something positive and when it steps back;
- to encourage participants to perform self-evaluation which will help them to learn more about themselves and their own abilities and the areas requiring improvement (a feeling for self-value based on a real understanding of one’s personality);
- to set an example (to model) and to show participants our personal involvement in public activities;
- to formulate tasks and possibilities for action corresponding participants’ abilities – during the sessions and also when self-government and extracurricular, project activities;

- to turn local /professional/ community into a object of interest for the participants and to give them tasks which will make their relationship to go deeper.

It is a good idea to use forms for a structured evaluation – formulation of concrete questions or division of the work in groups. We should help participants increase their self – reflection by evaluating their own behavior, progress, in the light of other participants’ actions – e.g. to use as much as possible the richness of group differences.

As trainers we should model the feedback process, teach participants to describe the changes in their perception and skills, to notice new attitudes and values.

Sometimes we have to go “rewind the tape” of the exercise or the day, to list the important things and help participants concentrate on the events.

We should direct and support them during the evaluation - to separate, focus attention, paraphrase, summarize, re-formulate. This way daily discussions and evaluation can turn into a key part of the group work - it is expected from the group and the members learn how to evaluate confrontations and challenges, their essential relations with other participants, their own development in all these processes.

Another important duty of ours is to **suggest and consolidate a common frame which will serve for evaluating participants** – these are group rules, rules of effective communication.

In the process of constant evaluation we **emphasize on the positive, on possibilities for improvement and concentrate on failures.**

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We perform evaluation on **several levels:**

**Participants’ reaction is** watched directly – their involvement, the intensity of the experience, power of sharing, the expressed satisfaction from the activities, their wish to continue working with the group.

With good feedback as trainers we constantly watch participants' reactions. In cases we have reasons for doubts or misunderstanding, the most powerful way is questioning – asking, discussing behavior and activities in progress.

**Learning** is more difficult to be measured within evaluation. A big part of the desirable results are in the area of mastering new values, changing attitudes, expressing feelings. Concrete changes in knowledge can be measured in classical ways, but we should not forget that tests and exams of any kind have to be offered very carefully and the group should be prepared for the. Otherwise they contradict the principles of group work. Our main task as trainers is to prepare the group for this periodic assessment of knowledge by planning together the time and the way it is going to be done.

Learning shows mainly in the participant's behavior in the group and that is why it is necessary to **keep personal files for every participant**, where to write down our impressions and the main facts from the feedback received from the other participants about this member.

In terms of behavior we try to notice whether participants change it because of the things they have learned in the process of group work. Mastering feedback by all participants means that they are able to describe, distinguish and evaluate different types of behavior.

For us the **results** achieved are also important, showing in changes, behavior in the context of the group and the community.

The evaluation of the **work process** is something we constantly have to take care of. Again the filtration of the feedback from the participants is the most valuable source of information. Self-evaluation should find its place because this way we also teach participants how to increase the level of self-understanding and self-regulation of their behavior.

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## **The Trainer**

Before discussing the role of the trainer let's remind what are the condition when adults learn best:

- active involvement
- multiple-modality experiences
- meaning provided through organization and association hooks
- enough time for reflection [processing]
- effective practices and reviews
- opportunity for messing about [for familiarity] and logical action [for mastery]
- goal-seeking
- feedback, correction
- promotion of personal discovery
- inviting, risk-taking environment
- atmosphere of openness, trust, encouragement, respect, acceptance
- confrontation permitted
- tolerance of ambiguity
- difference/diversity is good and desirable
- learning is uniquely personal

That's why the first important advices for the trainer of adult learners should be

- Individuals bring multiple perspectives to a learning situation as a result of their religion, gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and/or physical abilities. Build a curriculum that acknowledges these perspectives.

- Reflect the experiences of learners, both as individuals and as members of particular social groups. Value these experiences and use them as a basis for learning and assessment. They are powerful
- additions to the curriculum.
- Acknowledge the power disparity between adults and their instructor/trainer/facilitator. Create an environment that allows adults to disagree with their instructor. Do not require that adults agree with a
- particular viewpoint or 'fact'.
- Be aware that participants are positioned differently in their relationships to each other and to the knowledge that is being acquired.
- All learners do not bring with them the same ability to think critically, analyze results, etc. If you plan to require these skills, build an opportunity to integrate them into the course.
- Define and develop active learning activities, such as for example performing and/or documenting different tasks and experiments, taking a test for measuring abilities, interests or attitudes.
- Define and use strategies for allowing learner control, as for example: create peer learning groups, allow for a periodical review of the learning goals and objectives, encourage and support collaborative
- Work for allowing adults to speak for themselves.

In the adult education field, there are an incredible number of variables: each adult is different, as are cognitive styles, learning styles, physiology, culture, and personality. However, adult education facilitators are prepared to listen to learners, they may find out what they need to know in order to become **learners centred. /16/**

The trainer is the basis of successful group work. We are part of the group and organize interactions, we create the program, we are responsible for the learning process, we make the necessary changes in the program, as well as organize the

interaction of the group with the rest of the non-formal education system and the local community or with the working place.

Our power is far from big, as it could seem from the things mentioned above but it imposes certain responsibilities, not typical for traditional model of performing a teacher's or lecturer's role.

That is why we should answer the following questions:

- Why do I want to be a trainer in this very special field of non-formal education?
- How does this role connect me to my personal and professional values?
- Am I aware that not only is the role inevitably public (as an organizer of so many interactions), but it is also necessary to be an example in a field where there are no set models of behavior, and also that my behavior and attitudes are an important learning resource for the participants in the group as well as for the rest of the educational actors?
- Do I think in the categories about the consequences of my behavior concerning the process and the participants?

The trainer in the field of non-formal education is a person who:

- continues learning for the rest of one's life;
- is dedicated to their own personal (professional) development;
- is dedicated to the personal development of the others;
- knows how to rule the risks for the participants in the process learning;
- shares their knowledge, skills and values with the others;
- can keep balance between closeness and distance in relation to participants;
- is self-critical and reflexive;
- is aware of participants' needs;
- uses content and processes in correspondence with their skills;
- builds a supportive learning environment.

The definition of the trainer as a **reflexive practitioner**, a person who really thinks about what really happens, subjects their functions to a reflection, and therefore the structure their beliefs which define the way of thinking and acting. Reflexive practitioners always seek for getting a process feedback about themselves and the group participants. They study and explore their own professional experience, postulates and suits achieved and make changes. From time to time they 'clean' their habits and destroy the ones becoming dangerous as well as rout: behavior. They constantly learn by using theoretical novelties and trying to apply them in their own learning strategies. They treat scientific knowledge as a fulcrum which does not restrict their actions but spires for building their own professionalism, unique unity of method techniques and actions, for creativity within common sense and in accordance with the value systems.

In this respect studying trainership is learning how to lead participants.

Effective dialogue is impossible if the trainers do not find joy in direct communication with the participants, if they are not ready to argue, search, admit their lack of knowledge, to express good **will**.

All these things are impossible without taking risks. This is the chances one takes when, together with a group of twenty other people, embarks on an exploration of a reality which is far from clear to him/ her; the risk of exposing ones beliefs, understanding and ideas in front of people who tend to criticize.

After all, a lot of **motivation and energy** is needed. On the one hand trainers have to expand their knowledge in many areas in order to get a better idea of the dimensions of contemporary non-formal education. Energy is needed to consolidate new examples of interaction because with them routine and sparing one's efforts are not acceptable.

When performing this role are needed skills which help the participants:

- the ability to see the problem from the participant's point of view, in correspondence with their preparation, age and level of education as well as the ability to judge impartially different perception and positions.
- the ability to notice, accept and respect similarities and differences between the trainer and the participants as well as among the participants themselves;
- respect of participants' rights and awareness of their needs and interests;
- the ability to deal with contradictory positions and to prevent ambiguous and complicated situations;
- the ability to see themselves and the participants as active individuals in the local or professional community;
- a belief that things can be better and that everybody is able to change something;
- the ability to summarize their own priorities in a frame of questions and values as well as to act in coordination with participants' decisions;

- readiness to admit their mistakes in front of the group and to learn from them;

The modern trainer in the field of non-formal education:

- causes processes;
- looks for possibilities;
- experiments and takes risks
- inspires for a common vision:
- foresees the future;
- includes the others in the vision;
- gives others the chance to act:
- encourages cooperation;
- supports participants;
- models the roads for development of the organization;
- sets example;
- plans small steps and victories on the road of success;
- encourages emotionally the rest of the members:
- acknowledges the individual contribution of every participant;
- celebrates everybody's achievements **/17/**

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After all the things we have mentioned it is obvious that **the role of a trainer** differs considerably from the traditional lecturer (teacher).

Everything in this model of interaction, of a dialogue between the trainer and the participants is more different.

We talk about **equality** not only among the participants but between them and the trainer.

Working in a circle rather than in a traditionally arranged classroom means that the barriers between the trainer and the participants are removed and to some extent they are on the same footing regarding the:

- **critical thinking** - the ability to find out, analyze and collect information by using interdisciplinary knowledge, various skills and a critical approach; to take decisions based on proof and to change their view in cases of strong arguments;
- **constructive thinking** - to find new, unconventional ways for connecting facts when taking a decision, to avoid over-summarizing, prejudice and stereotypes;
- **social and public thinking** - the ability to analyze facts and situations and to decide in terms of the needs of others and the society as a whole, to overcome selfishness and ethnocentrism; to be open and ready to talk to the others and to collect experience from other experience;
- **future-oriented thinking** - readiness to detect problems and to evaluate decisions in the light of experience in order to build a fairer future.
- **culture of dialogue and communication** - communication is essential in every modern society. However, it has to be structured and organized, especially when the questions are controversial;
- **tolerance towards the others and the ability to make compromises**

- controversial issues require an exchange based on the readiness to make compromises.

In order to perform this complex and multi-component activity, the trainer of the Non-formal education group plays many roles.

First of all s/he is a **director** - the person who coordinates, directs, keeps up the morale and when necessary thinks over in detail the work of the group, the organization, the possible consequences.

The trainer is also a **leader** of the group - participants rely on him/her in a difficult moment, in cases of arguments or when they need assistance.

We are always ready for the roles of a **knowledgeable person, an expert, a source of valuable information**. We are a model for **behavior, attitude towards arising problems, an authority**.

We can also end up in the role of a **counsellor**, a person important to the participants. This role forces us not to use our authority for manipulating or superficial solving on the problems posed by the adolescents.

Sometimes we have to play the role of a **judge, an arbiter** when evaluating opinions in an argument or a problematic situation.

We can give opinions freely in one area and this is the role of the **group norm guard**.

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Here we could enumerate more concrete characteristics of the trainer which define his/her specific role in the group work process:

- Plans the whole process of group activities;
- Reaches agreement with the participants about the desired results and the sessions' agenda;
- Suggests different procedures and checks whether everybody in the group agrees;
- Provides conditions which give all participants the chance to participate in group activity;

- Provides order when discussions take place and makes sure they are in the right direction (the one the group has chosen to follow when accepting the agenda);
- Makes sure that participants follow the time limits for activities and is responsible for the taking the minutes;
- Sets restricting factors (time, participants, ways of work);
- Makes sure everybody can take part;
- Takes care of participants safety and protects them from personal attacks;
- Is an 'advocate' of the process - makes suggestions how to proceed;
- Makes sure everybody does the same thing, at the same time, in the same way (reaches agreement on the process);

After mentioning the main characteristics of the group trainer we should do the same about the **participant**.

- For **participants** the group is a place for studying, and personal development:
- Contributes with ideas to the group work;
- Listens to the ideas of the others;
- Expresses openly their misgivings;
- Takes responsibilities (express agreement, take actions which the group has already approved)
- Is ready to contribute to the group's success;
- Focuses on tasks and work according to his/her abilities;
- Listens to the others, treats other participants with politeness and respect;
- Has the right to disagree with other opinions but also should not attack verbally other participants;
- Shares his/her interests and asks about the interests of other participants;

- Looks for ways for taking decisions which would bring benefit to the whole group;
- Accepts the ideas of the other people and are unbiased;
- Tries not to assume defensive position if his/her ideas are attacked.

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Let's make these pieces of advice concrete with relation to the different phases and areas of activity of the trainer. It is extremely important to use well every beginning - of a session, of group work, of training outside the group. With it we set the pace to the whole activity, even when the participants are already convinced and know what to expect. "Take the best from the first 30 minutes of the training" that what experienced trainer says. We can also add - to take the best from the first five-ten minutes of each session. We should always start on time because we do not have much time anyway and participant should get used to a strict rhythm.

We should direct group's attention towards the concrete thing we are going to work on during the session and on the result we are going to achieve. When leading sessions we have to demonstrate competence and confidence without dominating the group. We should not pretend that we have answers to every question and remember that participants are our partners who often possess knowledge and skills when discussing and solving certain problems.

While working we should avoid the traditional relation teacher-student and be sincere and open. Let participants feel that open interaction is one of the main features of our common work.

From the very beginning we should try to achieve one of the most important things for group work and for a successful interactive method - **building an atmosphere of trust**. If the participants are not sure that the group is a place for sharing where confidentiality is appreciated, not only activity will not go well but sharing and discussions will be far from sincere.

In order to lead the group and win their trust we should create conditions where participants can express themselves openly, to stimulate everybody's participation through the methods we know, to encourage risk-taking.

We should not forget the feedback, take participants' question well, as an expression of their interest but also to gauge which of them we can answer straightaway.

Remember that a trainer of the group can be only a person who emphasizes on the **participants' strengths**, take them as they are, but also tries to notice and builds things within the group based on these strengths and their potential. Empathy and understanding, openness and sharing are very important qualities. Sharing things in common, feelings, future plans for group activities and projects - this part of the factors necessary for group development and for developing our relations with the group.

In terms of language and behavior we should use informal language, to look for and point out the strong and interesting as well as the unconventional points of view and sharing.

We should not give advice directly - remember that advising is a main barrier in communication and open advice-giving is usually painful or counterproductive.

To encourage the willingness to cooperate as well as expressing disagreement; not to conceal but to help the group explore tension and conflicts - this way of social learning is the most valuable for young people, the one that contributes most for the development of strong relations.

We should use humor but moderately as well as to accept jokes and expressions of humor which are within the limits of good manners and group rules. We should expand group participation when necessary but to protect participants when their physical or mental security is endangered.

**Our trainership should not turn into a battle with the group** - neither for a monopoly in communication nor for authority. We should not question but accept other opinion and try to clarify them. It is better not to reject them because behind

every disagreement or different opinion probably lies a personal or a group problem. To accept, legitimize certain behavior and give participants the chance to justify it - this is always better than ignoring, not listening, not paying attention to people or an open opposition.

In every action of ours, **group rules** are our and the group's assistant and ally and we should follow them, to direct towards them, to look for explanations through them. In order to run group processes we have constantly to form small groups in different ways, to mix teams and partners, to vary the number of people in certain activities. To involve participants in the activity we should keep the actions by structuring them, arrange in time, introduce an element of positive competitiveness.

We should also **alternate between mental and physical activities** - sometimes just standing up and moving around could be energizing. /18/

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### **Preventions and interventions**

One of our main roles as trainers is facilitation, making interactions within the group easier in the process of dealing with the tasks. That is why facilitating behaviors could be divided in two groups - **preventions and interventions or - preventing actions and interventions.**

**Prevention** (preventing actions) are facilitating behaviors performed before or during the session (group meeting) in order to prevent the group from diverting from the content or the work process.

**Interventions** are facilitating behaviors which are performed during the session in order to bring the group back to the content and to the work process.

Preventions are after all techniques and actions of the trainer which predetermine the character of the future group activity in terms of accomplishing the aims and tasks set. They can be divided in several groups:

- preventions directed at the conditions of running the session;

- preventions directed at structuring the session;
- preventions directed at the relations between the participants and the session.

We can put in the first group of preventions everything that we have already mentioned about the organization of sessions - preparation of the hall, necessary materials, informing the participants, negotiating with the school authorities the aims of the sessions, the whole program and the expected results.

As we will see a bit later, a detailed agenda means: who participates, the way of behavior of the group, methods for finding solutions if problems occur, decision-making methods and the trainer's activity to be clear every moment of the session. Such concrete agenda gives us the possibility as trainers to pre-play the main points of each session before its beginning, to become more confident, to anticipate the possible difficult moments and to develop strategies for intervention if necessary. A detailed agenda focuses the group attention, gives a clear idea about everybody's responsibilities of every participant during different working phases.

Preventions directed at the participants in the session, generally mean an attempt to structure the relations through preparing and accepting work regulations. It is important that, before sessions begin, every participants understands that they are run according certain rules, different stages and interpersonal relations. These rules help to achieve equality and release group energy but they are also a protection against trust betrayal, misuse of participants' time or the use of some participants for other purposes. The established group (work)rules (like 'we are all equal, let's show respect to each other, there is nothing wrong with disagreeing, let's listen to each other, everybody participates, nobody rules, let's follow the regulations for every activity) are extremely important for the work of the trainer. They are actually our support when somebody breaches the rules. At the same, time when difficulties arise, turning to the rules can be stimulating for the group. /19/

**Preventions** at the beginning of the session are related to: desired results; the agenda; participants' roles; the way of taking decisions; reminding the main rules.

**During the sessions preventive actions are also possible.**

Every session has a set agenda and goes through several stages, so as trainers we should be ready with preventive measures for each stage. Most of all these are motions for different stages - for actions and achieving agreement on a concrete issue but also preventive actions for good listening within the group, for modeling certain types of behavior (group's training); asking open questions; encouraging participation.

**Interventions** are the more problematic part of the trainer's activity. If we prepare a big part of the preventive actions ourselves and their effectiveness depends on how systematic and methodical we are, interventions are provoked by the behavior of the whole group or by the actions of single participants and we use them when we experience difficulties during the group work.

In this sense we can identify several moments in the act of intervention: - identifying the problematic action to analyze it and give answer for ourselves about the measures we should take. That is why intervention requires not only to constantly watch the processes happening in the group, but also to have enough practice as a trainer if we want it to be effective.

Here are some simple **intervention techniques**:

- **Boomerang** - we turn back the question directed at us to the person who asked it. This technique helps to keep the group working and not to transfer the responsibility for analysis or a decision on the trainer.
- **Maintain/turn the attention back to the discussed question.** During the whole time it is our duty to make sure that the group works at the same time on the same issue (unless we distribute tasks in small groups) That is why we should constantly not only check where the group is but also to direct their attention at the problem if people decide to do

something else. Usually this happens when participants take the group time in order to discuss issues which are not on the agenda or not related to the activity performed. As the agenda is accepted with common consent it gives the right to insist that the discussion on a certain issue continues unless the group has decided to do something else.

- **Note down what happens** - the most difficult part, especially for new trainers is to interpret what happens within the group, to try to put in order the signals they receive. The problem with such interpretation is that it is usually imprecise and incomplete and can make us take wrong decisions about how to lead the group. That is why the simple rule in this situation is as follows - **do not try to interpret the things happening in the group** - if you have problems with understanding, just ask the group or describe the behavior signs which worry you. This way you not only transfer the responsibility for the problematic behavior to the group but also could expect a concrete answer about the thing happening which will be better more precise than your guesses.
- **Avoid battle in the working process** - this is one of the most important rules for the trainer. **You do not argue with the group, let alone fight.** Our job is to assist the group in its movement towards solving their problem i.e. we are responsible for the process and for this reason we have prepared and coordinated with the group structure frames for process development and action rules. Generally, to fight with the group means to claim that it is not right. Even if this is so, we can only expect a negative reaction from the group, less trust and more problems.
- **Impose the execution of procedural agreements** in situations similar to the ones mentioned above, because they give you support in your work as a trainer and you should make sure that after coordinating them with the whole group, when it comes to observing them, you will be backed up by a considerable part of the participants. If everybody is

against the procedure agreements or the situation has changed a lot and the group wants something impossible from you, you should simply decide whether to continue working with it in the same way.

- **Accept (legitimize), discuss or yield** - it is important always to legitimize the actions of the group members apart from the cases when they do not breach the regulations. As a participant has posed a question it must be important to him/her; as another participant leaves the room temporarily he/she must have good reason to do this; as another one attacks you verbally - do not take it as something against you personally but as an opposition to some of your actions as a trainer. Discuss, yield, do not attack the group, admit the necessity of the behavior, let the participant take the responsibility for it, to develop their position, to express their wishes and if the group decides they can be discussed.
- **Do not assume a defensive position** - this is a logical continuation or the addition of the principle to not attack the group. Take it that if you are attacked, the group finds it difficult to solve the problem. Do not explain yourself but try to follow the agenda accepted by the group.
- **Use body language without overdoing it** - after all this is the time of the group, it is not yours. A smile, mild irony, looking for the funny side of some events brings you closer to the group, builds an atmosphere of mutual trust.
- Finally **protect participants from personal attacks, from undermining their authority and dignity**. You are a guard of the norms in front of everybody else and if you abandon this role will give such freedom to the group where some people will feel unprotected and others will do what they want.

We should remember that preventions and interventions as techniques refer not only to the trainer but to every other group member as well. When you use them

constantly in your group you will see that after some time almost a miracle happens - the group begins to apply and appreciate the application of these techniques, to interfere as a trainer at all times in group work.

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### **Difficult people and problem situations**

We could be aware of some typical problems when working with adult learners: unlearning , adjusting to class, training, inability to focus, poor study skills, unrealistic goals, time constraints, commitments, poor self image.

Very often especially in the beginning of our work with a non-formal education group we could face a lot of resistance which could take very different forms. Participants tend to focus on intellectual arguments and generalized, abstract discussions including a distinct lack of personal statements. They often criticize the structure and time frame of the seminar or exercise, including delayed and indirect criticism taking place during breaks (out of the relevant context, away from the relevant trainers etc.). They try to escape from the learning environment, either by constantly requesting breaks or another frame for the activity ("why can't we be more outside, the sun is shining"), or starting to talk while the trainer or other participants are presenting their points. Another important thing is that in non-formal education people are developing their emotional intelligence that so often is totally neglected in formal education.

Many participants will automatically resist getting in touch with these feelings. So first of all **a lot of resistance is merely a natural defence mechanism.**

It is an unconscious protection of the person against involving personal emotions and life experience in the learning process. The root of this type of resistance is fear of change, which is related to the break-down of the traditional pupil role (which typically takes place at seminars) and to fear of changing previous beliefs and identity, and fear of being manipulated. These fears are

usually unconscious for the participants and the shield against them is resistance against getting involved in certain activities.

Resistance among participants, whether it appears as passivity or maybe anger can start a vicious circle. For instance, some participants might express their dissatisfaction by stating that "there is not enough time for the discussion" and "we are wasting our time in the some activities. /20/

Difficult participants are something common a constant problem in the trainer's work, especially in so mixed non-formal education groups. When working with a group of adults our main aim is the work on specific content, making interaction among participants easier, assisting individual learning processes.

Difficult participants are a problem and should do our best so that the group work runs smoothly. Generally our interaction has time limits and we are not interested in the long-term effect of our preventive actions and interventions - we provide an environment and feedback which the participant has to use as a build-up personality for learning something new and for changing their behavior.

What problems does a difficult participant present to the group work trainer?

Difficult participants can **distract the group from the task they perform**, to mix the following of the agenda which in the conditions of time limits means mining the session completely. As trainers we concentrate a big part of our efforts on dealing with this person's behavior and as a result our effectiveness suffers. We often start a battle with such participants and this restricts considerably our role of trainers. We not only feel exhausted but also have not performed out main duties.

How can we deal with such situations? The main advice is as follows. Above all we should accept the difficult member's behavior as a fact - do not pretend you do not notice it because such strategy will not solve the problem.

By accepting the difficult member's behavior as a fact of the group reality we have two possibilities - deal with the person straight away or to postpone for later.

To deal with him/her means to try and solve their behavior as our or the group's problem, listen to them, oppose such behavior. To postpone the moment of dealing with such behavior means to take into account the participants demand and write it down in group memory (in order to go through it later) or to wait till the behavior is repeated and do not take a decision immediately.

It is important not to take the behavior of the difficult participant personally - before becoming a threat to us as trainers it is a threat to the group, group work and the performance of the group task. This is our starting point.

**Once we have changed the focus from personal to a group one** we feel freer to act. Our strategy is different - instead of protecting ourselves and justifying our actions we look at the behavior from the group's wellbeing point of view and want to achieve a group aim. In this situation our main ally is the group itself and then as additional support come the group rules we have all accepted and agreed to obey.

This way the issue is put differently. Instead of discussing why we are attacked as trainers we discuss why we waste group time and deflect from the group task. When we put thing this way the argument is not between the difficult member and us (as he/she wants it to be) but between the participant and the group and thus he/she has very little chance to succeed.

**Legitimizing** behavior is a very strong move sometimes - in fact we do what the difficult participant does not expect. They provoke us on purpose and expect opposition. Our strategy is to note (describe) their behavior and if they treat us in a reproachful way we should take it as a natural need which can be shared. It is important let them to answer or to give the group the chance to answer. This way the participant receives an answer to their question or feedback from the group about their behavior and will find it very difficult to insist that others should pay attention to them.

Of course, **not every type of behavior should be accepted and tolerated.** If the participant's behavior affect physically another participant or offends their dignity we should oppose straightaway and stop such behavior.

Sometimes we have to interfere if participant's behavior is destructive (talking, doing something else in a demonstrative way, deflecting group's attention with repetitive disturbing behavior).

In such a situation our intervention is necessary and we can use **the 'ladder' of increasing interventions:**

- make eye contact;
- get up;
- approach the participant;
- go near the participant and make eye contact;
- ask them what they think;
- touch them and approach them directly;
- oppose them in the break in private;
- confront them in front of the whole group. **/21/**

The last intervention are used only when every thing else does not work, but we should not be afraid of using them when necessary.

In the end let's summarize several advices concerning the trainer's behavior in such difficult situation :

- Speak openly and directly what you see happening and analyze the process.
- Use small theory-inputs (e.g. from communication or conflict theory)
- Explain why a situation is difficult to handle. It can calm people to connect an intellectual explanation to the emotional experience of the situation. The feelings are then "normalized" – we have them in common.

- Use yourself as an example. Explain and visualize how you have learned to tackle a similar situation. In this way you make the participants understand that you have understood and accepted the situation.
- Agree with the criticism and clear the air. Form working groups to free participants from the pressure and powerlessness of some plenaries (you can also ask them to come up with 2-3 solutions to the alleged problem).
- Ask participants to make their own estimate of how much time they need for group work. Often they sense this better than you and your plan does.
- Stop focusing on the disappointed and resisting participants and base examples on the quiet and positive people.
- Be a dynamo and try pumping initiatives into the group when you sense resistance and fear of change (but be aware of your limitations, because this can be exhausting).

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**Taking minutes (writing down the most important)** is one of the features of group work. Its nature is to create group memory which during the working process is in front of the eyes of all participants. This way everybody from the group has written down the essential moments of group efforts for solving the problem and also the group can go back to previous discussions and conclusions any time. This process has a strongly motivating and directing participants efforts value, the group process is much more focused, there a fewer speculations and manipulations. With traditional group running the minutes become accessible to the group after the session and this does not always happen. Here any time participants can just point out a group decision or a work element are relevant to the present moment. This way taking minutes creates new group work dynamics, assists its transparency and openness and also develops responsible attitude in participants - everybody is much more careful when

expressing opinion when big parts of them are written down and are at participants' disposal all the time.

The information is usually presented on posters and it strengthens statements and discussions and increases the chance for remembering. It also helps those participants who take notes and or want to include part of the information in their diaries.

Of course taking minutes requires special predisposition and the participant who does this needs certain skills. Above all we should bear in mind that things cannot be written in their original form - exactly the way they were said during group work. This is physically impossible and not necessary. We should note down the main moments of group activity, thoughts and suggestions which set the directions of group action, all agreements and decisions important for solving problems or for group's movement forward.

It results from this that the participants taking the minutes (the record-keeper) reflects activities in their own way, that their notes are an attempt to present the main moments of the group work and at the same time is a subjective presentation of the events.

As trainers we try to restrict subjectivism of the record-keeper. This lies in the process itself - the person knows that he/she should note events without changing what people have said and that any moment participants can ask him/her to correct thoughts or statements which are not written correctly. Secondly, the participants themselves have a say in what exactly to be written down. In this respect our role is essential. In most cases we are the person who filters information, who decides and tells the participant responsible what to write down - we are responsible for reflecting the group's activity. In this aspect a good, experienced trainer means good group memory, and good group memory facilitates group interaction.

Taking minutes (keeping the record) is one of the most serious exercises in the area of developing critical thinking, skills for listening to the others but also of

interaction with other participants. That is why it needs to be practiced within the whole group and afterwards all participants should take the role of the record-keeper from time to time.

This of course does not mean that the role of record-keeper is only to put down what people have said. As trainers we are busy directing the group, watching participants' behavior and the way discussions are held, the record-keeper is has freedom when forming group memory.

That is why some concrete techniques and directions we should practise with the participants are really important for a successful work.

It is important to catch the nature of the main ideas expressed by the participants. Not every word should be written down - articles, prepositions and conjunctions can be omitted. We should apologize from the very beginning for possible spelling mistakes which can be made in the hurry. On the other hand good spelling is a qualifying condition for a record-keeper - no matter how good the participant are - a bad spelling will deflect their attention from the problem solving and their reactions will make the record-keeper feel embarrassed. The simplest rule for record-keeping is to use the words of the person speaking and here difficulties begin. It is important that the record-keeper tries to catch the main idea of the statement, to find really meaningful words which transfer the core meaning. A good record-keeper notes key formulas and moments of the statement and does not act as a recording device (for which the time is not enough). We should not worry when choosing key words ourselves - if we make a mistake the person talking will correct us immediately.

An important conditions is the effectiveness of the recording: record-keepers should write quickly, eligibly for all participants in the hall an that is why they should change the size of the record according to the number of people in the group and the distance from the posters; cold colors should be used - blue, green, brown, black and for underlining -to make whole words yellow or orange.

The most important thing in record-keeping and forming group memory is the noting of participants' ideas - that is why you should concentrate your attention on their recording. That is why the job of the record-keeper is extremely responsible and creative.

Separate ideas by circling titles and key words; circle and underline, change colors in order to distinguish statements and ideas, use symbols which are understandable to the group; leave some empty space if you want to point out something important; use arrows for connecting ideas and showing relations.

Use the paper effectively but do not worry about the quantity - its use is defined by the variety of expressed statements and thoughts. When the walls in the working room are not enough the trainer will tell you which posters can be taken down. In all cases it is necessary to number them and put titles on every page.

Do not forget to negotiate your role with the group at the beginning - if for you record taking turns into something obvious after several sessions remember that it could be a completely new experience to the participants and that they need time to get used to it and some explanations in order to understand its purpose.

Do not assume a defensive position at any moment of group work - remember that, as with the trainer, the group and participants are always right. The most important - even if you are part of the group -do not take sides, do not contribute ideas unless you have arranged this in advance. It is important for you to concentrate on the recording process which is not easy at all. The success of the group and the solution of the group task depend on the quality of your work. If the record-keeping is good you will notice that in the breaks participants study the posters, i.e. group memory becomes a natural part of the group efforts.

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### **Time limits in the work process**

Participants feel better when they have to work within precisely set time limits. This way they have the chance to control the amount of time they want to spend for a certain task. It is important to know that once set, time limits focus group efforts and begins to watch how time passes. One and the same activity could be performed for an hour or fir two hours - in the first cases the group is more organized and sets the work pace itself. Time should be divided in a way that gives participants a feeling of progress during the activity.

It is advisable that a participant plays the role of 'a time keeper' with more complex group activities. If the time allotted for a certain activity is over in any case the group has to decide whether to continue working at the activity and this case to re-arrange the time left (to reduce the time for other activities, to prolong the session if possible, to postpone some activities for the next session). They should not change the time limits themselves. Every action of this kind the agreement of the group is necessary.

The role of 'a time keeper' could be unpleasant but it is very important. It should be done in rotation. If we allow time to pass unnoticed, the end of a session often means a lot of important work which has not been done. This could create pressure and disappointment among group members. When participant realizes to a greater extent how to use time and become braver in their interactions, strict restrictions will not be that necessary.

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### **Preparation of a training program**

After we know almost everything about group work and interactive methods we can move to individual development of educational programs.

This means to give up the easy way we have got used to by following the steps in different educational manuals, where everything is given but unfortunately is not ours. In this creative activity the most important thing is we also take part in the creation of the program - then we will feel very confident in front of the participants.

In order to develop any program we need to follow several steps.

First of all we should clarify the frame and the aims of the training in question.

This means not to be satisfied with general statements in the manuals but to try and see what **the institutional context of non-formal education in our community is**, what the purposes which are going to be set in the basis of the context are.

The second thing is **our personal motivation** - what we want to achieve and why. Here comes the third and maybe most important element - the **motivation of the participants**, what they are; their needs, knowledge civic acts; **what background** would support them in the process of education.

The next step is the development of the **educational purposes** according to age, organizational conditions, educational context, educational requirements, the time we have, resources available and support of the program. It is meter to have more modest aims and deliberate restriction of our actions as trainers and the participants as well rather than accepting an ambitions and unachievable program.

When formulating the aims we should ask ourselves whether there is a common understanding of these aims among the participants.

We develop the **aims at three levels - cognitive, connected with behavior and affective**.

Cognitive aims reflect the lack of knowledge - **what participants do not know**. Aims connected with behavior reflect the lack of skills -**what participants cannot do** and affective aims reflect the lack of willingness - **what participants do not want**.

The next step is **the exploration of resources available** for accomplishing our aims - methodical, personal capacity; financial organizational; resources of the community, and the actors we explore individually. Resource exploration will give a lot of new ideas how to accomplish the program, how the increase the time for work, participants' motivation, the involvement of different actors.

We define the elements of the program, discuss them, clarify their content and then try to prioritize them and to answer the question which elements need more time.

After that we order different topics in time and start planning individual sessions.

When planning a lesson we should take into consideration:

- How to formulate aims so that they are achievable within the session limits;
- How to arrange the session considering its connection with the previous next sessions, what the introduction should be, what methods and activities to use;
- How to organize group interactions aiming at an optimal session - work in small groups, individual work, work in one group;
- How to organize the feedback processes and summarizing results.
- what would our criteria for evaluating activities in the session and How to present them to the participants;
- what materials will be needed;
- Will we need participants outside the group - experts, parents, colleagues, other students.

After we have prepared the design of certain activity we should ask ourselves several more questions:

- Does the design achieve the goal of the activity?
- What skills level does the design require from the participants?
- How much time will be needed?
- Is the speed of development of the activity slow or fast?
- Is the design suitable for the group's size?
- What skills are necessary in order to perform the design?

When creating a program with possibilities for studying we should take into consideration that it is believed that for the participants there are for zones and should try to include them in our program.

**Zone of comfort**, which does not present specific challenges for participants and studying there is comfortable

**Zone of movement (effort)**, where questions are raised, feedback is transferred, participants share and discuss and are vulnerable to a certain extent - but also learn in this situation

**Crisis zone**, where some touchy issues are discussed, things are not defined and participants feel really vulnerable;

**Zone of panic**, where participants block and studying is impossible.

Generally, group work is performed in the zone of movement and we should use our preventive measures and interventions to avoid reaching the zone of panic and reaching the crisis zone should be used for dealing with challenges, discussing problems and interactions and for moving the group towards the zone of reasonable efforts. Our aim as trainers is to prevent the group from staying often in the zone of comfort with standard activities, short sharing and games for the sake of the game. But for sure our aim cannot be constant exposure of some participants as well as the whole group to risks, existing threat of trust, confidentiality, freedom of expression and personal inviolability.

At the end we check once again that the whole program follows the **main principles of design**:

- Moderate level of content;
- Using participants experience fully;
- Inclusion of already learned concepts and knowledge;
- Using different learning methods;
- How design reflects the reality of the group – different learning styles, needs and speed of learning?
- What type of communication is stimulated in the group, how design helps the development of the group as well as what level of trust it suggests?
- Is the design suitable for the size of the group and age character?
- Are there real problem situations which participants will find interesting?
- Does this design allow planning of the next curriculum action?

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**Instead of a conclusion**

The most important feature of this type of teaching and learning under the frame of non-formal education is that the trainer and the participants feel good together, they are partners. In order to achieve this we have to learn well the interactive methods and the group work..

It is important to understand that learning through this method is a change and sometimes it could be inconvenient for us and for the participants and for the people beside them. That is why our success will depend not only on the mastering of interactive methods and the art of group work but also on our ability to change ourselves in the traditional educational environment and to change the environment.

In this way we as trainers and facilitators in the field of non-formal education will transform into the real leaders of the groups of our adult learners in the world of educational changes.

## **Standards for Non-Formal Educators**

### **Professional; values and practices**

#### **Non-formal educators value:**

- Learning as the foundation of the modern education and its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically
- Learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as conditions for effective learning process and for development of a learning community
- Reflection and evaluation and improving the quality of their own practice

- Collaboration with other non-formal education actors and local community and with organizations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of the learners
- The application of agreed Codes of practice and the maintenance of a safe environment
- Believe in non-formal education principles as in a effective and meaningful learning strategy and a challenging way toward own professional development and realization

### **The aims and purposes of non-formal education**

- Are aware how the scope of NFE knowledge and understanding is defined
- Why NFE is given enhanced prominence in the modern society
- What is the role of non-formal educators and non-formal education settings in these developments
- What are the opportunities and challenges for NFE what makes it different from formal education
- What are the key organizing concepts of NFE
- What does research in relation to NFE – nationally and in European Union

### **Non-formal educator as a teacher and trainer**

#### **Learning and Teaching**

- Maintaining an inclusive, equitable and motivating learning environment
- Applying and developing own professional skills to enable learners to achieve their goals
- Communicating effectively and appropriately with learners to enhance learning

- Collaborating with colleagues to support the needs of the learners
- Using a range of learning resources to support learners
- Use ICT sources effectively to develop learners NFE knowledge and skills
- Understanding and keeping up to date with current knowledge in respect of own specialist area
- Fulfilling the statutory responsibilities associated with own specialist area of teaching
- Presenting effectively own knowledge and skills in the light of the new educational paradigm
- Using the motivating and free atmosphere and climate of non-formal education for developing its own special training methods
- Incorporating NFE principles and practices into its own teaching
- Basing on experiential learning as a point of development of professional and life skills and for adaptation and for dealing with the main problems emerging in future realization of the learners

### **Establishing ground rules for a positive non-formal education ethos**

- Aim to enhance all learners potential to learn by maintaining high expectations for learners' behavior
- Take steps to establish positive individual relationships with learners, make an effort to listen to learners perspectives on their learning
- Can establish explicit classroom rules and routines, rewards and sanctions
- Encourage independent decision making, by creating opportunities for democratic decision making
- Understand a range of strategies at individual and group level to assist learners in managing their behavior better

- Referring to the 4 R's of Behavior management – the Rights of others , the need of Rules, the value of Routines, the need to accept personal Responsibility

### **Planning approaches methods and opportunities**

- Are able to choose and plan learning activities appropriate to be developed in different contexts of the process of NFE learning
- Know how to plan sequences of lessons in order to ensure progression of learning in the medium and longer term
- Are aware of students' previous knowledge and ways of thinking and feeling and knows how to plan strategies and questions students' prior knowledge
- Understand the current issues that concern the learners in their communities
- Planning to promote equality, support diversity and to meet the aims and learning needs of learners
- Encouraging learner participation in the planning of learning
- Evaluation of own effectiveness in planning learning

### **The strategies to challenge all forms of discrimination**

- Create inclusive learning environment in which the contribution of all learners is valued stereotypical views are challenged and learners learn to appreciate positively the differences in others
- Initiate projects to benefit from learners' diversity
- Show a practical awareness of the concept of multiple and changing identities and how we engage in these identities
- Actively promote equal opportunity and show understanding how inequality can operate in and beyond NFE setting

### **The collaborative approach within appropriate community partnerships**

- Are able to set up working links with community, business by identifying suitable and committed partners
- Are able to build and deepen partnerships agreeing common vision and goals
- Can jointly review and evaluate the success of any joint project
- Can identify a range of possible actions which will both enhance learners' knowledge and skills and have community benefits
- To get recognition and support from different policy makers who formulate the principles and the design of NFE in community
- Contributing to the establishment and development of the community of non-formal educators – sharing and comparing good practices, coordinating approaches, realizing mentorship, providing mutual support

### **Assessment for Learning**

- Designing and using assessment as a tool for learning and progression
- Assessing the work of learners in a fair and equitable manner
- Learner involvement and shared responsibility in the assessment process
- Using feedback as a tool for learning and progression
- Working within the systems and quality requirements of the organization in relation to assessment and monitoring of learner progress
- Using different ways to support the learners' development of self-reflection and self-assessment
- Sharing and confronting own teaching experience with that of the colleagues in a way it may reflect back images of their own actions and attitudes

- Compare and contrast their practices and attitudes with existing research and theory

### **Access and Progression**

- Encouraging learners to seek initial and further learning opportunities and to use services within the organization
- Providing support for the learners within the boundaries of the educator's role
- Maintain own professional knowledge in order to provide information on opportunities for progression in own specialist area
- Following multi-agency approach to supporting development and progression opportunities for learners

### **Professional Knowledge and Understanding**

- What constitutes good and high quality in non formal education, the characteristics of effective non formal educational setting, the strategies to raise learners' achievement
- Model for curriculum and its assessment
- Effective teaching and assessment methods including the use of educational technologies
- The different influences from the educational background which have impact on strategic and operational planning
- Leadership theories and practices and understanding of how these apply within a non –formal education context
- Management , including personnel, external relations, finance and change
- Normative documents regulating the functioning of non-formal educational settings

- The potential and actual contribution which evidence from research, enquiry processes and inspection can make to professional and non formal education setting development

### **Skills and abilities**

- Express and instill clear educational values
- Motivate and inspire learners, staff, local community
- Anticipate problems, collect and weigh evidence, make judgements and take decisions
- Adapt to changing circumstances and new ideas
- Solve problems and identify opportunities
- Negotiate, delegate, consult, direct and coordinate the effort of the other actors involved in NFE process
- Negotiate, delegate, consult, direct and co-ordinate the efforts of others
- Follow through and pursue policies to implementation and monitor and review their effectiveness in practice
- Identify, analyze and interpret current management of non formal education
- Communicate effectively, with all actors and communicate with very diverse actors from point of view of age, ethnic, professional, social background
- Recognize and use the most appropriate management strategy for each situation
- Deal sensitively with people, resolve conflicts and where appropriate build consensus
- Understand and interpret statistics, financial information and other data

- Seek advice and support as appropriate
- Prioritize and manage their own time
- Maximize the use of information technology for curriculum and for administrative purposes

## **Non-Formal Educator as Manager**

### **Strategic direction and development of the non-formal educational process**

- Provide an educational vision and direction supported by the learners and by the community which could secure successful learning and achievements by the adult learners and continuous improvement in their academic, physical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Create and implement strategic plan which identifies appropriate priorities and targets for improving learning and achievement,
- Ensure that there is a commitment to the aims, motivation to achieve them and involvement in meeting long, medium and short term objectives and targets which secure the educational success of the non-formal education setting
- Ensure the management, finance, organization and administration of the non formal setting, supports its vision, aims and objectives for good non formal teaching, learning and improved standards of achievement
- Monitor, evaluate and review the effects of policies, priorities and targets of the school in practice and take the necessary action for improvement
- To manage its own non-formal education setting according to the principles of a development of a business firm or to the principles of a NGO

## **Management of the non-formal education process**

- Provide clear and effective leadership which secures the active commitment and engagement of the staff, learners, local community to the aims and targets of the NFE setting and translates this into effective practice throughout the school
- Implement monitoring and evaluation system which scrutinize the effectiveness of the non formal learning process and regularly review the outcomes in order to prioritize action for improvement
- Understands mechanisms of NF learning and non formal learning educational settings and know how to use effectively the support and resources available
- To manage educational NF setting in accordance with the laws and practices governing the non-formal education and NGO sector in the given country
- Inspire motivate and galvanize the staff, learners and the local community into a vital and lively partnership, engaging collectively in the school's vision, aims and objectives for raising students achievements and improving their personal development and progress
- Secure a high degree of recognition for and pride of the achievements of the NF setting
- Perform successfully the role of principal adviser to and build and effective partnership with the community / trade union/ which enables to meet its strategic leadership and management

## **Learning and Teaching**

- Create and maintain environment conducive to effective learning, good teaching, good behavior and discipline

- Establish clear code of NFE where all differences /social, cultural ,religious, age, / are respected and social responsibility and moral and spiritual growth are secured
- Monitor and evaluate quality of teaching and standards for all pupils – create standards
- Monitor evaluate and review curriculum and its associated assessment in order to identify areas for improvement
- Set high expectations amongst learners, staff, colleagues ,clients organizations by using data and information on pupil performance and by promoting secure educational environment sharply focused on successful learning and achievement
- Educational setting wide climate of high expectations, good discipline, highly effective teaching successful learning
- Establish and build upon subsequently upon high standards of attainment achieved by the learners

### **People and Relationships**

- Create positive climate, focused on improving standards of pupils achievement, personal development and civic responsibility
- Plan, allocate support and evaluate work undertaken by groups, teams and individuals with clear roles for all participants
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with learners, local communities, colleagues
- Develop effective relations with the wider community
- Successfully build and manage effective teams
- Use appraisal as a central strand in how the school manages, evaluates and seeks to improve its own performance and that of all those working within it

- Embody for all actors the vision, purpose and leadership of non formal education setting

### **Development and Deployment of People and Resources**

- Select staff of highest possible quality
- Ensure effective and efficient management and organization of accommodation and learning resources within the non formal education setting budget
- Monitor direct and review the use of all available resources in order to raise learners achievements
- Utilize the local and wider community to secure and maximize the potential for additional central and local resources
- Take an effective part in training of the trainers and of the new trainers
- Ensure that all the staff are effectively deployed according to their strengths, that weaknesses are identified and appropriate actions taken

### **Accountability**

- Provide information advice and support for securing effective teaching, learning and raising standards of achievement
- Present a coherent and accurate account of the NFE setting performance in a form appropriate to a range of audiences - learners, local community, professional associations, colleagues
- Exercise effective oversight of financial management in order to ensure that the NFE setting can account for expenditure committees and budget systematically and analyze resources in relation to priorities and their impact on school improvement

- Provide and communicate information about NFE process effectively and in appropriate ways to different audiences- ensure that NFE setting provides good value for money

### **Professional Knowledge and Understanding**

- Principles, frameworks and theories which underpin good practice in learning and teaching
- The impact of own practice on individuals and their learning
- Ways to reflect , evaluate and use research to develop own practice and to share good practice with others
- Ways to communicate and collaborate with colleagues and/or others to enhance learners' experience
- The need for confidentiality, respect and trust in communicating with others about learners
- Relevant statutory requirements and codes of practice
- Organizational systems and processes for recording learner information own role in quality cycle
- Ways to implement improvements based on the feedback received
- Co-operation with colleagues beyond the NFE setting in order jointly to develop codes of management, of good educational practices, in elaborating standards for NFE and for promoting NFE into the community
- Co-operating with managers from formal education in order to coordinate efforts, curriculum, mobility of the learners