Training Methodologies

Contents

1. Underlying Principles of Adult Learning

Trainings for adults tend to take place over a short but intense period of time. As such, you'll want to make sure that each session is as effective as possible.

Below are some general observations on how adults tend to learn. The section on "Organizing a training" later in this document offers some practical tips on how to turn these underlying principles into structured training sessions.

1.1 Adults must want to learn

As adults, we generally want to know why we need to learn something. We tend to most effectively learn a new skill or acquire a particular type of knowledge when we have a strong inner motivation to do so; that is, if there is a convincing answer to the question, "How is this going to help me?"

As trainers, this means we need to think about: -how we can elicit what participants want to learn -how we can pitch a topic most effectively
-how we can sustain interest and conversation through the training itself

1.2. Adults will learn only what they feel they need to learn

"How is this going to help me right now?" Adults are mostly results-oriented and we tend to want immediate rewards for our investment. In this case, participants will be investing their time and will want to get something out of it.

Acknowledge that needs will vary: Participants will be coming in to the workshop with specific individual needs, and these might be different! The challenge is to try to make sure everyone is catered to in some way.

Be practical and direct. If some questions are off-topic, you can respond by saying that the question is addressed in another workshop on offer, or can be discussed afterwards in off-workshop time.

1.3. Adults learn by doing

"Experience is the best teacher." Adults need to be able to use their new knowledge and skills fairly immediately, so they see the relevance of them. That is why adult learning spends a considerable amount of time on hands-on exercises ("experiential learning"). Use physical materials. Make maximum use of the learning cards and handouts so participants get as much hands-on work as possible; incorporate drawing exercises where it makes sense.

Offer further resources. Try and give participants additional printed materials and/or links to practical online resources where these exist.

1.4. Adult learning focuses on problems, and the problems must be realistic

Assess. Begin by finding out what participants can do, as well as what they want to do.

Anticipate gaps in skills and knowledge, and prepare practical activities to teach those specific skills or knowledge.

1.5. Experience affects learning

Acknowledge and build on participants' previous experience. Adults tend to have strong opinions and positions on specific topics and issues, stemming largely from their own individual experiences. Recognizing participants' experiences helps focus the discussions and conversations. Bringing out their experiences during the workshop can also help when it comes to meeting their expectations.

The workshop itself also offers us the opportunity to provide new, positive experiences.

1.6. Adults learn best in informal situations

Involve participants in the learning process. Let them discuss issues and decide on possible solutions.

Keep the environment informal. Although the nature of the workshops are actually quite structured, it is important to make the participants feel that it is not formal. Make the environment relaxed and inviting.

Encourage questions. Make sure that participants ask questions immediately and often. Emphasize that "there are no stupid questions."

1.7. Adults want guidance, not to be told what to do

Present options, not instructions.

2. Organizing a training

2.1 Choosing a structure

In organising a training, first think about what structure the training will take. This will depend on,

among other things, available time and resources, participant numbers and training goals.

Possible structures include: -Short workshop -Longer training or sprint -One-on-one -Discussion groups -Informal "Hackspace"

Also think about the longer term: Is there a possibility for follow-up? This makes a difference in helping things "stick."

Map out the basic parameters: -Length: How much time do you have? What is realistic? -Number of participants & trainers: In most cases, there should be at least one trainer per 8 participants; this can be stretched to 1:15 for a short (e.g. one hour) workshop. If you're doing hands-on work, ideally there should always be a minimum of two trainers. -Type of participants: Are you focusing on a specific group? (age, socio-economic profile, gender, etc) - Venue: What resources do you have? - Training needs: What are the needs of your participants? See more on "designing needs assessments" later in this document.

2.2 Choosing a venue

Some things to consider when choosing a venue: -Who is running the venue? Are they a trans- and feminist-inclusive space? Make sure to explore the local context; Are there tensions between the venue and certain groups? -How safe are the surrounding areas? Certain neighborhoods tend to have a "reputation" of "not being safe" but part of this perception can be based on stigma. When we say "safe," we mean assessing potential risks and finding collective strategies to reduce them, like arriving and leaving the venue in groups, making sure there is public transport available, etc. -If you choose a venue that can host several groups at once, check which groups are using the same building at the same time. Even if the venue cannot give you exclusive access, it's good to ensure a separate space where the group can have enough privacy. -Bathrooms: Is there a bathroom? Is it shared with other people? Are they gender-binary? Make sure all bodies can feel comfortable. -Are the venue and its surroundings accessible for all? Find out if there are special needs in the group and take them into account.

What makes a good space for learning? -informal -big enough, with enough chairs -well-lit -airy -plants or access to outside space -enough wall space for activities -enough power outlets -enough space for group activities and breakout groups. Extra rooms can also help participants feel closure after difficult or emotional sessions. -not too noisy -a little bit isolated - external people should not be walking past

Ensuring everyone is comfortable: We are used to handling pain and discomfort, and we don't necessarily perceive or willingly share our discomfort, needs and challenges with others. We are diverse physically, emotionally and psychologically. Some of us have back or knee pains, different attention spans, mood swings etc. We might associate certain characteristics of a space with past experiences. Don't expect participants to directly ask for what they need.

As a facilitator, be sensitive to context and pay special attention in giving participants options. Some ideas for other seating arrangements include: -Seating in a circle (including facilitators) -Availability

of cushions, blankets, comfortable chairs, high and low chairs -Avoid physical barriers such as tables or chairs in the way -Possibility to lay on the floor or sit against the wall

2.3 Logistics

Materials. What materials do you need? Who will provide these? Don't forget to include facilitators' material needs in your planning (e.g. Will they need a printer? Do you have enough ink?). If you're going to need an internet connection, check the reliability of this beforehand.

At minimum you will need: -enough pens (at least one per person) -paper (don't expect people to bring their own paper)

You will probably also need: -markers -flipchart / whiteboard -big pieces of paper -post-its -any supporting materials for specific activities (print-outs etc) ◦ projector and screen/wallspace - speakers & connector cords -tape (to stick paper onto walls)

Food. Food is an important, but sometimes overlooked, part of creating a training where participants feel relaxed and comfortable. -Check dietary requirements. Try to accommodate these. -It's important that food is on time, as otherwise this can derail your training schedule. Try and make sure the meal is not too heavy (though do make sure there's enough!) -Must-haves: coffee, tea, water. It's good if these are ongoing and available at all times. -General snacks: best is to have light snacks, and include fruit and nuts. -Morning snacks: If the training runs over a day or more, ideally there should be something there in the morning (fruit, nuts, crackers) for anyone who missed breakfast.

Basic facilities. Don't forget to pay attention to the basics! Make sure there's enough toilet paper, running water, etc.

3. Planning your training agenda

Before designing a training, you need to find out what your participants' needs are. It's useful to do a two-fold assessment focused on both needs and practicalities.

3.1 Conducting a training needs assessment

Determine capacities and gaps. A training needs assessment should focus on what participants already know or can already do, and what their knowledge or skills gaps and needs are.

Take context into account. The training needs assessment will differ depending on the focus of the training. A training with a digital-security / privacy focus might, for example, include questions that determine things like: -level of familiarity with computer and mobile phone terminologies -level of familiarity in the use, configuration and trouble-shooting of computers and mobile phones -what applications and online services participants currently use -a short risk assessment

3.2 Conducting a practical needs assessment

A practical needs assessment can be used to determine things like: -how much time participants have for preparation before the training starts -how much time they might need in the training schedule itself to attend to outside demands -what their general style of learning is

Questions can include things like: -Are you able to read x-y pages of preparation beforehand? If not, how much preparation are you able to do?
-Are you fully detached from your other work or will you need to do a few small things while in the training? -Do you tend to learn better through reading or listening?

3.3 Pre-training activities

The answers to your practical needs assessments should inform the way you design your training, and should also help with developing pre-training activities. If participants have time, it's often helpful to send some documents to read beforehand. These can include: -The training agenda -Readings on topics related to the agenda -Participant guidelines

Also remember to take into account your general participant profiles: language, age, gender, etc.

3.4 Timing and schedules

For trainings that run for half a day or longer:

Start early. The starting time should be 30 minutes before the work actually starts. This gives time for people to chat, have coffee, acclimatise to the space and to the work that's going to happen, and accommodate anyone who is running late.

Schedule a maximum 6 hours of training time. Trainings are interactive and collaborative - this takes effort and focus. Try not to push the learning part of the day beyond 6 hours, as anything beyond this will tend not to be effective. Ideally make the lunch break longer (2 hours), so that people also have an opportunity to catch up on work or have a walk or a bit of downtime after lunch.

Content: Choose intensity over volume!

Example schedule:
9:30 Start
10:00-13:00 Work (with at least one tea break of 20-30 minutes in the middle). This gives time for two sessions of 1h15. 13:00-15:00 Lunch break
15:00-18:00 Work (with 20-30 minute tea break in the middle). This gives time for another two sessions of 1h15.

This can all be negotiated with participants, but be careful of forcing "consensus" about things like breaks, as people might not speak up if they would like more break time.

3.5 Designing individual sessions

When you're designing individual sessions, make sure that each session is designed to fit into the time allocated, including wrap-up and questions at the end. It's important to start and end on time,

and to honour the scheduled breaks.

Designing sessions using ADIDS

Structure: The ADIDS approach provides a great framework for structuring a learning session, dividing it into five sections (Activity / Discussion / Input / Deepening / Synthesis), each of which flows logically from the one before.

Length: These sections might be short and fit into a single session, or they might be more involved and be done over multiple sessions.

More information: The Level-Up project provides a detailed explanation on how to use ADIDS in your session planning: https://level-up.cc/before-an-event/preparing-sessions- using-adids/#preparing-sessions-with-adids

4. Running a Training

4.1 Beginnings

The start of a workshop/training is really important, as this is when the tone is set, expectations are laid out and rapport is created.

Be early. Be at the training venue early so you can welcome participants into the space. Chatting to them as they come in helps create a relaxed atmosphere, and also gives you a sense of where they're at before you start the training.

Make sure everyone has a chance to speak right at the beginning of the training. This can be done through a go-round that asks participants to introduce themselves to each other (if this has not happened already), and answer a specific question. This go-round can be used to gauge expectations: "Why did you come to this specific session? / What do you hope to learn today?"

Address expectations. Once you've got a sense of expectations, make sure you address them by letting everyone know what the session will and won't cover. For things that participants want to learn but which will not be covered in the training, let them know where they can find these things out - either after the training is over, or in another workshop on offer.

Communicate the training parameters. Don't forget to communicate the parameters of your time together: how much time you've got, the goals of the training and the basics of what will be done.

4.2 Ensuring a safer space

Creating a safe, respectful space and environment for participants is one of the essential aspects of group work. Each step sends a message to workshop participants that they are respected and valued. It means participants feel comfortable to speak openly and freely about their feelings, challenges and emotions as they may come. In the workshops where the issues personally affect people (whether those are physical, emotional or spiritual threats and challenges), participants may

have strong emotions as they do their inner work facing their own oppression, privilege, anger, hurt, pain and suffering.

The working spaces should be safe, welcoming and extremely comfortable, allowing participants to relax, let go of the worries of their daily life and focus on the workshop. Creating a safe space involves thinking about all of these aspects: choosing an appropriate workshop venue, the availability of comfortable seating arrangements, offering support (including physical movements, qi gong, tai chi, yoga), the use of workshop spaces, creating a nice atmosphere, using nature as an available resource, the importance of fun, and ensuring a common language.

The understanding of a 'safer space' is very personal and stems from everyone's personal experiences in terms of how we have perceived and experienced what is "safe." An awareness of the context in which human rights defenders and activists are carrying out their work, the potential or actual threats they face, and their experience as survivors is vital. We must also take care to assess the potential implications of such threats for the safety of the training itself, as well as for creating an optimal and productive learning experience for the participants.

Shared agreements and values are a good way to introduce, create and nuture a safer space within the training. -Gathering around in a circle, invite participants to think of things they want to ask the group in order to feel more comfortable and safe. -Try to phrase statements as "positive" instead of a long lists of 'no'. -Pay attention to the balance of participation, as sometimes people do not feel comfortable asking for the things that they need. -Think together about how these agreements are going to be put in practice during the workshop: will there be observers? an evaluation round at the end of an activity? a reminder at the beginning? Make sure to discuss and agree what will happen if someone breaches one of them. -Write all the agreements down on a flipchart and hang it up in the room where people can see and add to it.

Inclusiveness: -A single member of a minority/diverse group may not feel safe in a group. Including at least two members of a diverse group prevents any single person from feeling isolated, or having to feel like a representative of a whole group.

Building relationships: -Work on self-care and well-being and the connection to our activism. In the workshops and trainings that we have provided for activists, many people have highlighted that the space allowed them to take off their "masks" and connect on a deeper level with themselves and their activist community. This helps them achieve authentic solidarity – support that is without judgement, agendas or strings attached.

Time:
-to slow down, stop, reflect, rest, assess their personal lives, work, safety and well-being.

Language: -Workshops should be held in the common language of the group. -Interpreters or translators can be used if necessary, but they should be: -familiar with the workshop concepts and the work of the participants -preferably a woman human rights defender or a supporter of the women's rights movement in that region -trusted by the organising group and participants – as the workshop proceedings are confidential and should not be shared outside the workshop space.

Continually pay attention to the physical, digital, emotional and mental states of the participants and adjust the workshop accordingly, when possible.

4.3 Endings

Questions: Allow time for questions and to clear up anything that's not clear.

Wrap-up: It's a good idea to wrap up the session at the end, summing up what's been done. This should ideally map onto the goals set out for the workshop at the beginning of the session! It's also good to check in with participants on what they've taken away from the session.

Give tips for further learning: Always try to point to resources or ways in which participants can continue their learning by themselves.

Evaluation: Evaluations are an important part of any training, as they can help you see what works and what might need to be changed. Make sure to allocate a few minutes for this, either at the end of each session or, for a longer training, at the end of each day. Evaluations can be done in a number of ways. Two simple options are: -Plus/Delta: For each session done, stick up a piece of paper with two columns: Plus (what worked?) and Delta (what could be changed?). Participants' comments can be written on sticky notes and stuck under the relevant column. -Evaluation forms: Prepare a basic evaluation form beforehand and print out one copy for each participant. Questions can include things like: What worked? What could be done differently next time? What did you learn that was new? What will you take with you into the future?

Follow-up: If possible, make yourself available for informal follow-up questions afterwards - this could be moved to a more informal space.

5. Facilitation

Without your presence, the content of the workshop falls apart. And remember that what you are doing is for you, too. In "real life," you are probably doing this after a long week of work and other commitments. You might be stressed because you just finished preparing the content of the workshop 15 minutes before starting! You might have barely slept or you had to travel in an uncomfortable bus to arrive at the venue. Oh, and of course, Murphy's Law, there isn't the right cable to connect with the projector. Agh! Try to leave these things behind and enjoy this moment and the people you are sharing with.

5.1 General points to keep in mind

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 -Honour participants' own words. Avoid listening to someone and then responding
 with "I think what you mean to say is..." or "I'll summarise what you said as..."
 and use your own interpretation. (Though of course rephrasing can be useful if
 you're just using it to check your own understanding!)

 -Encourage participation

 -Be comfortable with silence. People need to think and process information. Avoid
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the temptation to fill silences with more talk!

-Avoid dependence. The group can work without you and it should be your goal to enable them to eventually operate without a facilitator.

-Set the context for the meeting: Let people know at the beginning why they are there, what they will be doing, why it's important and when it will be finished.

-Create a welcoming space. The space people work in matters. Move the furniture if needed. Make sure people are comfortable and able to move around. A welcoming space is not just physical, it's also about the way you engage with the group, building rapport and trust.

-Take care when it comes to timing and pace. Be aware of the time. Make sure you finish on time. Adjust as necessary to do this. Be aware of people's energy levels and vary the pace. Sometimes it's important to speed up, sometimes it's important to slow down.

-Give clear instructions. Try and make sure your instructions are as clear as possible, and don't give too many instructions at once. Concentrate on one task at a time, moving on to feedback or the next instruction when a task is done.

-Give time indications. Say how much time there is for the task you're setting. Also give participants an indication when they've got a minute or two minutes left on a task, so they can start wrapping up.

-Instructions first! If you're giving out handouts or cards, it can help to give the instruction before you hand these out, while everyone's attention is still focused on you.

-Reporting back to the group? If participants are going to be reporting back to the group afterwards, remember to let them know this before they begin the task.

-Be clear about the "why." With each task, try to say why it is being done. What's the point? This does not need to be elaborate - a couple of words putting the exercise in context can be enough.

-Humour and play are powerful tools to support participant learning. Laughter, physical movement and breathing exercises are great for releasing pent up tension, emotion and stress.

5.2 Movement and physical activity

Workshops can provide participants with an opportunity to rest, move and heal, and movement can be a great part of that, at the beginning, during and/or end.

-There are several energisers that use gentle movement to increase participant concentration and connection to their bodies, from dance to stretching and breathing exercises.

-Self-defense basics also can be taught by a trained facilitator.

-Take into consideration how participants experience their bodies. Always keep in mind that physical touch and movement vary from culture to culture, and that many women are also holding emotional pain and memories in their bodies that can be

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released through movement.

-Some participants may have limited physical movement — and many women human rights
defenders are living with physical pain and discomfort (which they often overlook
in order to keep working). Healing sessions can be used to cope with high levels of
stress and/or physical discomfort and can be a rare, and emotional, experience.

-Facilitators should always err on the side of caution and keep the exercises and
healing options gentle, and allow participants time to absorb the effects of these
forms of body work.

-In some cases, participants may want follow-up sessions or an opportunity to
discuss their reactions one-on-one
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5.3 Self care

Take care of yourself, and make sure not to overload yourself. Accept your own limitations before managing the expectations of others. It's hard work facilitating. It's tiring and takes a lot of effort to hold a group of people as they explore issues or struggle with ideas or decisions. Be self-aware: know when you need a break, or what helps you in your own self care.

5.3 Practice

Facilitating is a practice art. You can't learn it from a book or from a single "How-to" session. So get out there and practice! Just do it. Often. And ... Have fun!