

Designing a Training Programme

The Context

The most critical and neglected aspect of training in the development sector is its designing. We tend to borrow standard formats and designs from others and fit sessions to the requirements and availability of resource persons. Materials are organised and locations selected to suit the needs of the training institutions and budgets. While all these are important considerations, participatory training and its principles emphasise on a systematic and comprehensive designing effort to conduct and facilitate training.

- The design is one of the most important blueprints for the conduct of any training programme.
- The design reflects the philosophy and strategy of the training intervention.
- A training programme does not operate in isolation; it draws its validity from the organizational mission and its nature of interventions, key programmes and activities, primary tasks etc.
- A training design needs to be congruent with the specific objectives of the training, learning needs of the learners and learning styles of a group of learners, particularly a group of heterogeneous learners.
- In the context of the Participatory Training framework, the design of a training programme also reflects the values and principles of learning processes with adult learners.
- Some key considerations of designing that emerge are: Value and respect of learners' experience and knowledge, creating conducive conditions for both individual and group learning, encouraging collective discovery of new knowledge, and enhancing the learners' self-esteem and empowering them.
- The design captures both the commonalities and uniqueness of different sets of learners and is creative, flexible, reflective, challenging and dynamic based on "reality-testing" (that is steeped in actual practice in the field).

The Process of Designing

Designing is a systematic process comprised of a series of steps. The first step involves identifying the learning needs. This provides a basis for the entire design. Specific learning objectives are derived from these learning needs. These learning objectives form the broad framework for the training programme. The contents of training result from these training objectives. An appropriate sequence of training is then made, whereby it is determined

how to start a programme and end it, how to sequence the various contents to develop the pace for learning. Appropriate learning-training methods are then selected and a time frame for each content area and session is outlined. Therefore, the process can be summarized in the following steps:

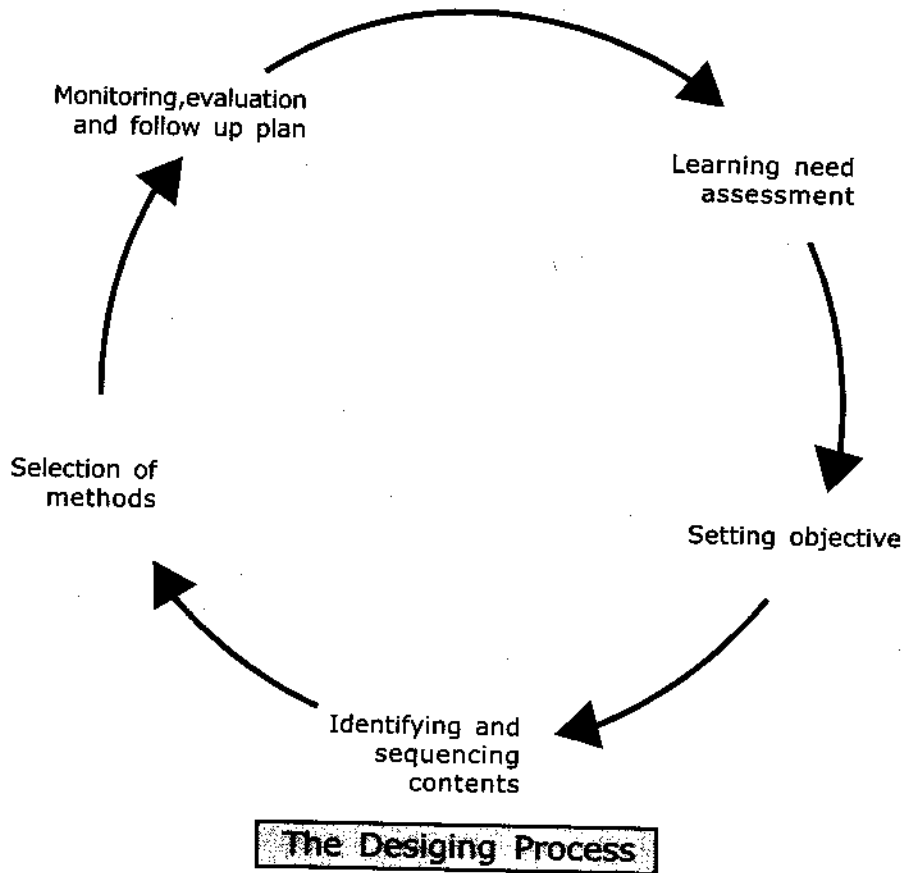
Step I: Assessing learning needs

Step II: Defining learning objectives

Step III: Identifying and sequencing contents

Step IV: Selecting appropriate methods

Step V: Setting a time frame



Assessing Learning Needs

The very first step in designing a training programme is to find out the different learning needs of a group of learners. Why should a training programme be conducted? This question can be answered only in the context of a particular set of learning needs. Many times trainers tend to assume the learning needs of a group of learners and outline the training objectives without delay. Despite past familiarity with a group of learners and vast experience in training, this step of assessing learning needs should be undertaken carefully and seriously.

Learning needs are those set of tasks that a person or a group of persons needs to learn in order to perform their role effectively and meet some of their specific requirements of the work s/he is involved in. In order to identify learning needs, a variety of methods are used

Common methods of need assessment:

- **The job or task that learners have to perform** gives insight to the learning needs of the group. The nature and requirements of their work become a source of information about their learning needs. This exercise can be done for each individual learner, for the entire group of learners as well as for an organization as a whole.
- **Existing records, documents and other such materials** can also become useful sources of information. These records may be minutes of meetings, progress reports, performance review documents, etc. They can also be records of events and problems that a group of learners might already have worked on.
- **Previous training conducted** with the same learners and reports of the session could also be a source of useful information. Some time these reports may also have future learning need assessment.

Sources to assess learning needs

A wide range of sources exist that can be used to assess learning needs of a group of learners. Clearly, learners themselves are the most direct source; we can find out from the learners what they want to learn. We can find out from people who know the learners what those learners may want to learn. For example, you can ask what an animator should learn in order to become a more effective animator. Similarly, we can find out from members of the community with whom that animator works what that animator should learn further. Individual and groups who regularly interact with learners are also useful sources of information about the learning needs of the learners.

Sources of Information

Learners themselves	Individually, collectively
Others who know the learners	Colleagues, community
Job requirements	Individual jobs, organizational work
Records	reports, documents, past training reports
Other	literature, newspapers, magazines

Methods of information collection

Methods of information collection vary considerably and depend on sources of information. When collecting information from learners and others individuals, the following methods may be used:

- **Interviews** can be used with a group of learners by creating a group discussion. Interviews can be individual too. Discussion has very different connotations.
- **Questionnaires** are also a useful tool for collecting information from learners as well as other persons around them. Questionnaires provide an advantage of being used extensively without the necessity of face to face interaction. Unlike interviews, questionnaires can be sent far away for assessment of learning needs.
- **Pre-determined tests** are also used to assess learning needs. For example, in assessing literacy skills of neo-literates, simple tests are administered. Results of these tests indicate the learning needs of those learners.
- **Study of records** and documents is an appropriate method when they are being used as a source of information.
- **Field observations** in some cases are a useful method of collecting information. Learners may be observed in their own environment conducting their usual activities. This observation can be used to infer learning needs. Another variation of observation is 'participant observation', this means that one observes even as one participates in a setting.

Defining Objectives

All learning needs do not get fulfilled through a single training programme. Training is a systematic, structured intervention to accelerate learning. Learning takes place on an ongoing basis while training is an occasional intervention to accelerate and stimulate the process of learning. Therefore, all learning needs may not be met through training. Hence, those learning needs that are structured, systematic and planned should be selected to be addressed in a training programme.

This requires a strategic appreciation of training. Sometimes learning needs can be met in a sequence of planned and phased training programmes. In such situations, a critical task is to interpret precisely and clearly, the objectives for each training programme. Accordingly, the focus of learning becomes important.

Focus of learning

Foci of learning can be classified in three ways:

- The first is learning of knowledge i.e. gathering of information, concepts, and ideas. This is "**cognitive learning**"- it includes mental, abstract and intellectual effort.
- The second focus of learning is called **awareness where an emotional appreciation** of the issues is done. It includes themes like motivation, commitment, values, emotions, (matters of heart) etc.
- The third focus of learning, of course, is to **build skills** in specific area, for example, skills in vaccination.

This framework of learning helps us to separate and clearly specify the objective of a particular training programme. This is important because each type of learning focus becomes necessary. Certain questions such as when, how and for whom should be exemplified in a training context. There is always some component of awareness raising and some component of skill building. The actual mix of these components varies from one particular situation to another.

Illustration:

A set of objectives for a training of trainer's programme maybe:

- Developing an understanding of participatory training (cognitive level).
- Raising awareness about one's own self as a facilitator (affective level).
- Developing basic skills related to designing a training programme (skills).

Identifying and Sequencing Contents

Once we have derived the objectives of a particular training programme precisely, the next task in designing is to identify contents, which will help us to achieve those objectives.

In identifying these contents, we once again need to look at:

- Who our learners are?
- What is their level?
- What is their starting point?
- What do they already know?
- How much detailed information can be given?
- Which combination of learning foci need to be emphasised with that group of learners?

For example, a training programme to generate greater commitment towards education of the girl child among members of the village education committee has to be conducted. This would require an emphasis on creating awareness rather than skills because the village education committee is not directly responsible for teaching; that is the job of the teacher.

The elaboration of content in order to respond to each of the objectives of training requires considerable knowledge of the subject matter. Experts may have to be consulted. Yet, it must be ensured that the contents are appropriate to the level of learners and not overly detailed.

Sequencing content

Having identified different content areas, the sequence or flow of different contents needs to be specified. The important thing in sequence is to determine how the entire training programme will flow from the beginning to the end and how one content area follows another.

There are several important considerations when determining a useful sequence. Logically sequenced contents take learners step-by-step from one pace of knowledge and learning to other. Sequencing of the contents can be done in the following ways:

- **First**, the content related to the individual is dealt with followed by content related to the group, moving on to the community and then to the society. It is a micro to macro sequencing of contents.

Illustration: Micro-Macro**Sensitisation workshop on violence against women
for victims of violence**

Day 1	Session	Method
9.30 am-10.30 am	Welcome Introduction	
10.30 am-11.00am	Tea	
11.00 am- 1.00 pm	Issues and challenges concerning women	Individual exercise and group discussion
1.00 pm- 2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 pm- 4.00 pm	Violence against women: personal experiences	Individual case studies and open discussion
4.00 pm- 4.30 pm	Tea	
4.30 pm- 6.00 pm	Video on strategies to combat violence against women	Video and open discussion
Day 2		
9.30 am - 11.00 am	Perpetuation of violence against women: Psychological and family analysis	Case study and discussion
11.00 am-11.30 am	Tea	
11.30- 1.00 pm	Perpetuation of violence against women: Societal analysis	Case study and discussion
1.00 pm-2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 pm - 4.00 pm	Strategies to combat violence against women	Lecture
4.00 pm- 4.15 pm	Tea	
4.15 pm- 6.00 pm	Individual strategies to overcome violence against women	Individual assignment and group discussion

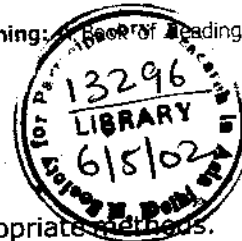
- **Second**, the sequence moves from society to community to the group followed by self. This is macro to micro sequencing.

Illustration: Macro-Micro

**Sensitisation workshop on PRIs:
For first time Pradhans of Panchayats**

Day 1	Session	Method
9.30-10.30 am	Welcome Introduction	
10.30 am-11.00am	Tea	
11.00 am- 1.00 pm	Perspective on development and Participatory Development	Buzz group and lecture
1.00 pm- 2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 pm- 4.00 pm	73 rd constitutional amendment- salient points	Lecture
4.00 pm- 4.30 pm	Tea	
4.30 pm- 6.00 pm	Video on PRI functioning	Video and open discussion
Day 2		
9.30 am – 11.00 am	Roles and responsibilities of Pradhan	Lecture
11.00 am-11.30 am	Tea	
11.30- 1.00 pm	Factors promoting and hindering functioning of Pradhans	Case study
1.00 pm-2.00 pm	Lunch	
2.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Presentation of group report and discussion	
3.00 pm- 3.30 pm	Tea	
3.30 pm- 5.00 pm	Plans for applying learning to own work	Individual assignment and group discussion

- > **Third**, is a combination of these two sequences, where one starts with macro, comes to micro and then moves again to the macro level. The sequence flows from society to community to group to self and back to the group to community to society.



Choosing Methods

The next step in the process of designing is selection of appropriate methods. In this area of work, we use learning - training methods as these, address each focus of learning directly.

If the focus of learning is knowledge, concepts and information, it can be best provided through what is known as the lecture method. The other methods of acquiring new knowledge could be demonstration, field visits, etc.

- For literate participants, reading materials can also be provided. But the quality, level and appropriateness of those materials need to be ensured.
- Other aids like flip charts, posters, transparencies etc. may also be used. But essentially the purpose of lecture either by one person or by a panel of persons is to provide additional information, new knowledge and concepts to the group of learners.

When **the focus of learning is awareness**, the existing experience of learners can be utilized. Methods appropriate for awareness have been called **structured experiences** because they make structured use of either the past or the present experience of learners or others.

- Group discussion as a vehicle for learning is one such example. Learners in a small group share their experiences and critically analyze them to develop new insights and appreciate the issues involved.
- Exercises and simulations generated during the training programme are other examples of structured experiences. These make use of the experience generated during the training itself.
- Role-play is another example of structured experience. It encourages the learners to enact a part of the reality they have observed or experienced. Role-play also promotes awareness.
- The case study method is useful in situations where other people's experiences are used for the learning of a group. The case study may be written, oral, audio, or audio-visual.

The third **focus of learning is the learning of skills**. No skills are learnt without practice.

- Apprenticeship is a long-standing method of learning skills. Be it playing a sitar or repairing of scooters, in both cases the model of practice is apprenticeship. During the training programme itself, methods should be such that allow practicing of skills by the learners.

Some important considerations for selecting a methods are:

- Who are the learners and what is their background?
- How can a conducive learning environment be created?
- Availability of physical infrastructure, material and other resources.
- Size of the learning group and facilitator.
- What are the trainers' capacities and competence?

The choice of the learning method is a crucial determinant of an effective training programme. Following the, above steps, a time schedule is set, learning materials are prepared, resource persons are identified if needed.