



**INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY**  
Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

## **Certificate Programme**

# **Participatory Training Methodology**

## **UNIT - 1**

## Units of Participatory Training Methodology

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### Unit 1: Understanding Participatory Training

- Current Issues In Training
- Understanding Participatory Training
- Adult Learning Principles
- Role Of The Trainer

### Unit 2: Designing Participatory Training

- Meaning and Significance
- Steps in Designing

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- Overview of Participatory Training Methods
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## INTRODUCTION

Participatory training should be looked at separately from the term 'training'. It is based on a certain value premise that believes in the empowerment of the poor and marginalised sections of society, including women. This value premise gives centrality to the participation of the poor and marginalised in shaping their future, and resists the conventional approach to education which presumes their ignorance, and consequently promotes a top down delivery of information.

As a result of its normative orientation, participatory training methodology takes an alternative approach to conventional training. It believes that poor and marginalised sections of society lack the confidence and self-esteem to exercise control over issues which affect their lives. Therefore, the focus of participatory training is not just about 'knowing more' but about 'behaving differently'. It is directed at building up one's critical consciousness, examining one's values, attitudes and orientations.

Participatory training sees itself as making an educational intervention. Rather than being a formal education process, it is a non-formal, ongoing process of growth and discovery; a process which activates both trainers and learners in a common learning situation. It aims to facilitate learning and critical thinking processes about relations of power. In doing so, it leads to a clearer understanding of the totality of an individual's situation, and their potential role in the process of social change.

This Unit introduces the theoretical concept of participatory training. It analyses the normative orientation of participatory training as fundamental to understanding the methodology and principles it applies in practice. The principles of adult learning upon which participatory training is based will also be analysed, alongside the importance of an appropriate learning environment, and the role of the trainer.

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit you will have developed:

- Conceptual clarity on participatory training and its significance in social change
- An understanding of the principles of adult learning and the importance of a good learning environment
- An understanding of the essential characteristics of trainers, and their role and responsibilities

## 1.1 Current Issues in Training

Training has become an integral component of most development programmes, whether in areas of community health, improvement of agricultural production, social forestry or income generation. Both government and non-governmental organisations use training extensively in various forms, with varying and diverse impacts.

However, various approaches to training are affected by a number of serious issues and concerns. Section 1.1 begins by identifying and reflecting upon some of these concerns, before introducing an alternative view of training from which participatory training draws its inspiration.

### 1.1.1 Problems in Conventional Approaches to Training

Training has always been viewed as a learning process - learning of new skills, concepts and behaviour. As such, it is an educational activity. In general, training implies non-formal education of adults, but in a purposive, directed sense. It connotes a structured event, with boundaries of time, place and people.

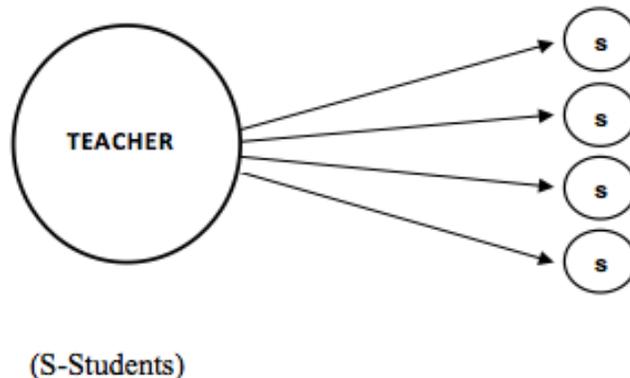
The conventional meaning of training has been the transfer of expertise from trainer to learner, where the trainer defines what a particular set of learners needs to learn. This approach assumes a unidirectional flow of knowledge from the trainer, who is the 'expert', to the learner. Learners play a passive role and are bound to learn what the trainer teaches.

This training approach does not allow learners to participate actively, and gives the trainer total control over the process. Everything in this type of training, from defining the objectives to evaluating the learner, is done by the trainer. The choice of training methods is based upon the trainer's preference and convenience, and often results in a predominance of lectures. The emphasis is on subject matter, or content, and the trainer's competence is ensured if s/he is a specialist in the subject. Therefore, this conventional approach to training is very close to formal education or schooling.

Some major assumptions of this training methodology are (PRIA, 2011, p. 1) –

- Acquisition of subject knowledge by learners will automatically lead to action, or change in behaviour
- The trainer ‘owns’ the knowledge and can therefore transmit or impart it as an ‘instructor’
- Learning depends essentially on the trainers’ teaching capacity and the learners’ learning capacity
- Training is the responsibility of the trainer and the training institution
- Knowledge and training are value neutral and ‘objective.’

#### Diagrammatic representation of conventional training approach



#### Note Bank:

##### Banking Concept of Education

“Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues ‘communiqués’ and ‘makes deposits’ which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.”

(Freire, 1989)

### 1.1.2 Alternative View of Training

In response to the felt inadequacies of conventional training approaches, alternative approaches to training evolved over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this alternative view, training is not limited to the 'transfer of expertise' or equated with 'imparting knowledge'. Rather, it is seen as a process of growth and discovery, aimed not just at 'knowing more', but at 'behaving differently'. The focus is on building up one's critical consciousness; examining one's values, attitudes and orientations; on 'unfreezing' set notions and set patterns of behaviour; and questioning, re-thinking and re-learning.

This approach to training can be seen as a non-formal, on-going education process, in which both trainers and trainees learn from each other. It is aimed at building the learners' confidence in their capacity to observe, criticise, analyse and figure things out for themselves. It enables an individual not only to deal effectively with others, but also to understand oneself in terms of needs, feelings, motivations and past experiences. It helps clarify how information leads to awareness and consolidation of people's fragmented perceptions, leading to a clearer understanding of the totality of their situation. Thus it becomes a learning process, with emphasis on learning and not on training. Learning revolves around the participants' own needs, and progresses through these opportunities for reflection and analysis. This shift in emphasis is crucial in this alternative view.

This alternative view of training is also known as 'training for change'. Learners are encouraged to voice their own ideas, explore ways to solve their problems, and investigate their own reality on the basis of their experiences. Its methodology is learner-centred, experience-based and open-ended.

Some major assumptions of this alternative approach to training are:

- People cannot be developed; they must develop themselves.

- Acquired knowledge does not automatically lead to action or changed behaviour. People first need to be convinced about the importance of change.
- Learners themselves are a rich source of information and knowledge about the real world
- The collective is a powerful tool for learning and change.
- Training and knowledge can never be value neutral.

The table below sets out the main differences between the conventional and alternative approaches to training:

<b>Conventional Approach</b>	<b>Alternative Approach</b>
Learning as a product	Learning as a process
Teacher/instructor controlled	Student/learner centred
Transfer of knowledge	Discovery of principles
Trainer/teacher/instructor = expert	Trainer/teacher/instructor = facilitator, resource person
Learner/student = knows nothing	Learner/student = knowledge of reality and full of capacity
Learner = passive, receptive	Learner = active, discovering
Encourages conforming, coping	Stimulates independent thought, creativity

(Lammerink & Bolt, 2002)

### **Think Tank**

With reference to examples of conventional approaches to learning in your own context, what affect does this approach have on the community in your opinion? How does it shape their behavior, mentality and ambitions, if at all? Do you think alternative approaches could have a different impact? How?

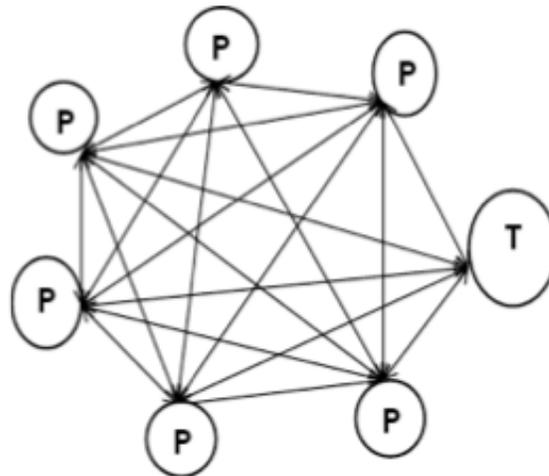
Show your reasoning alongside your answer.

## 1.2 Understanding Participatory Training

### 1.2.1 Normative Orientation of Participatory Training

Participatory training is an educational strategy based on the alternative approach described above. In participatory training, learners are regarded as active participants in the educational process. Their needs and questions, reflection, analysis and strategies for change carry the process forward.

**Diagrammatic representation of participatory training approach**



(P – Participants; T – Trainer)

Rather than viewing participatory training as merely a set of techniques, its educational thrust is to be viewed in a historical, socio-political context. Value-free or neutral training is a myth. Ever training has an underlying normative bias, even if that bias remains implicit. The starting point in understanding participatory training is to understand its worldview.

Participatory training derives its perspective and values from an assessment of contemporary socio-economic realities. It recognises that a large number of people are poor, unorganised and oppressed, while a well-informed, powerful elite dominates the economic, political and cultural life of society.

Right from the early period of history, religion and literature produced by learned scholars' use of language, symbols, culture, rituals, mores and traditions have been utilised to reinforce the perpetuation of unequal social systems. Socialisation from infancy instils in us values and attitudes, which encourage us to view these unequal systems as unchangeable aspects of reality. Over the last hundred years or so, formal education or schooling has perpetuated this thinking.

Whether people remain illiterate or go through an education that resists change, social conditioning ensures that they conform to existing systems. In recent years, the media, radio and television have become major tools in controlling the minds and dictating the thinking of ordinary people. The rise of 'expertise', 'specialisation', high-level academic research and so forth have created a general conviction that ordinary people possess no useful knowledge, and therefore have no right to question anything. People's experience and popular knowledge have been devalued and disregarded as a basis or guide for social and economic actions. In the meanwhile, monopolistic control over the production, distribution and use of knowledge has increased manifold.

Ordinary people, which include the poor, oppressed and marginalised, whose basic knowledge and experience have been devalued and delegitimised for centuries, lack confidence to exercise control on issues which affect their lives. They have lost faith in their ability to understand their world, let alone to transform it. The underlying reason is the conventional approach to education for the poor and oppressed, which presumes they are ignorant.

Participatory training thus holds an implicit bias towards the empowerment of the poor and marginalised, towards the creation of a more just and equal society. It is an educational intervention, based on an alternative approach to training. It seeks to promote social change by strengthening people's understanding that change is

**Note Bank:**

**What is social change?**

Our society is characterised by a small section of the various kinds of elite who own and control a large amount of resources (land, capital. etc.) This section is well informed, powerful and well organised, and dominates the economic, political and cultural life of society. On the other hand, there is a vast majority of people who have no control over resources, including their own labour. They are weak, unorganised and considered ignorant. They include labourers, small farmers, tribals, workers and women who spend their lives struggling to survive. There are also several categories of people between these two classes.

Social change implies improvement in the lives of this vast majority of the people in the direction they consider appropriate for themselves. It entails informing, mobilising and organising this vast majority so that they can identify, articulate and struggle for their common interests. It entails widespread conscientisation of all classes and categories of people so that they uncover and examine both hidden and overt expressions of injustice. Social change thus requires changes to be made in individuals, groups of individuals and in systems and structures of society.

possible, encouraging them to critically examine their own experiences, and to exert their latent powers for autonomous constructive action. It challenges the myth that some people are 'too old, too poor or too primitive to learn', and seeks to encourage participants to see themselves as a source of knowledge and information about the world, by recognising the value of popular knowledge.

**Note Bank**

Participatory training aims at creating an experience of personal and collective change, thus strengthening people's understanding that change is possible, within one's self and at the level of the group.

It encourages people to question what they have always accepted, to critically examine their own experiences, to derive insights through analysis.

Participatory training recognises and validates authentic people's knowledge, which is based on real experiences, and synthesises it with fresh insights and restructured concepts based on the analysis of this experience. The new body of knowledge thus created leads to a powerful sense of ownership and a willingness to transform reality. Learners thus become prepared for action.

**1.2.2 Principles of Participatory Training**

As we have seen, participatory training is based on a set of value premises, derived from an alternative view of training and a normative orientation rooted in an analysis of contemporary society and its unequal power relations.

The articles of faith which constitute the cornerstone of participatory training may be described as follows:

- Faith in ordinary people, and their ability to learn, change and grow
- Faith in people's capacity to understand, act and transcend their limitations
- Faith that ordinary people do know, are capable of knowing and are interested in knowing

Deriving from our articles of faith, participatory training is based on the respect of learners and their experiences, what they know and what they wish to know, who they are and what they may become.

The main principles of participatory training are derived based on the preceding analysis:

- Participatory training is participant-centred. The training arises out of the participants' specific needs as articulated by them; it focuses on their objectives as opposed to the trainer's objectives; and the participants maintain control and influence over the methods of training.
- The comprehensive nature of participatory training necessitates combined focus on awareness, knowledge and skills. Awareness of one's own situation and the overall socio-economic reality is important. Awareness-raising is therefore an important element of such training. Similarly, knowledge-acquisition is a common objective of all training programmes. Thirdly, learning new skills must be built in such training programmes.
- Learning is derived through the experiences of participants. This experiential approach relies heavily on the past experiences of the trainees. A systematic sharing of experiences relating to the themes of the training is undertaken from which insights are drawn for everyone. This principle underscores the need for valuing all types of human experiences and not placing a priori judgements on their validity. Another aspect of experiential learning is generating common experiences during training itself. This is accomplished through simulations and exercises designed to provide experiences to participants on the training themes. It is the combination of past experiences and the here-and-now experiences generated during the programme that provide materials for learning.
- Creation of a suitable learning environment is a crucial consideration. It has been observed time and again that trainees need an opportunity to first unlearn and then relearn. Both these processes can be highly threatening to a person. It is important that participants feel accepted as they are, psychologically safe to share and experiment, and enjoy mutual support.
- An important ingredient of training is its utility in day-to-day life and living. What is learnt in a training programme needs to be transferred to real-life situations. This transfer of learning needs to be carefully planned, as it does not take place automatically. It can be accomplished through a method of action-planning, using the active participation of learners.

- The role of the trainer is crucial. In participatory training, it is not just a trainer's technical expertise, but also his/her own behaviour and value system which is critical to the success of the training. The role of the trainer will be discussed in more detail in Section 1.4

### **1.2.3 Limitations of Participatory Training**

It is important to note that the role of participatory training in fostering social change has limitations.

Firstly, the structures and systems of society do not change through the training programmes. Participatory training helps people to assess their strengths and weaknesses, and acquire relevant skills through which to play a meaningful role in society. It helps people to become aware of their current position in society, and their potential role in the process of social change. All of this notwithstanding, structural transformation can never be brought about through training alone. Additional important steps outside the training context are needed for social change.

Secondly, while working towards change with the poor, downtrodden and illiterate people, there is a great temptation to define change for them. As such, the educational intervention basically mobilises support for a particular cause that the trainer considers 'right'. The trainer can skilfully manipulate the learner's thinking, so that they start believing it is their own cause. In this the trainer becomes equally responsible of controlling the learner's thought process, as any other oppressive power.

Participatory training may create informed options for the learner, but it should also give the learner the option to accept or reject these options. If learners are helped to discover and develop their inner resources through an environment that provides opportunities for them to develop their abilities, they will demonstrate an increased capacity to manage their lives. The trainer must trust them to do this. The trainer's responsibility is first and foremost to help learners achieve a 'raised consciousness', and to liberate their latent powers of independent thought and inquiry, so that they begin to view themselves as creators of ideas and initiators of action.

**Think Tank**

With reference to your own community, do you think people would be receptive to a participatory training programme? What might be the limitations of this approach in your context? Justify your answer by showing your reasoning. For example, your answer might include reference to social structures, the role of the trainer, learner receptiveness, and anything else you think relevant.

## 1.3 Adult Learning

### 1.3.1 Adult Learning and Its Principles

Participatory training deals with adults, and as such, has its theoretical base in the principles of adult learning. Many adult training programmes suffer from a lack of understanding of the various principles and conditions under which adults learn, rendering them ineffective. Those who try to make adults learn in an environment similar to a formal school, sometimes end up believing it is impossible to bring about any change in adults. A common misconception is that most learning takes place through childhood and stops after adolescence, and that it is impossible to alter this learning afterwards.

The principles of participatory training are rooted in the belief that adults continue to learn, grow and change throughout their adult life, and that adults learn in different ways and under different conditions to children and adolescents.

The main differences are as follows:

- Adults learn what is of interest and relevance to them
- Adult learning is autonomous
- Adults base their learning on personal experiences – they enter learning activities with a perception about themselves that influences the learning process. This experience should be valued and nourished during the learning process
- Adults learn best when the environment is safe, accepting, challenging and supportive

### The Importance of Experience

Adults come to a learning situation with a rich storehouse of past experience, which can be both a potential learning resource and an unavoidable hindrance, for past

experiences determine how a learner interprets new experiences and how s/he learns.

Moreover, adults identify themselves through these experiences and their understanding of the meaning of life is affected by them. Devaluing or ignoring adults' experience is tantamount to a personal rejection. Effective learning occurs when adults use past or present experience to gain a deeper understanding of their reality and thus prepare to encounter fresh experiences. The sharing of experiences by learners and the trainer should be an important element of participatory training, as this helps to give value to past and present experiences, and creates a readiness for new learning. Indeed, adults prefer learning 'relationally', that is, perceiving how facts relate to their reality, rather than memorising facts.

### 1.3.2 Characteristics Of Adult Learning Environment



As assessment of the principles of adult learning make it clear that a special learning environment is essential if adults are to learn effectively.

Trainers are not simply given a learning environment. This has to be created, built, sustained and nurtured by the trainers themselves. In the context of adult learners and the learning process, the challenge of building and sustaining an environment that

facilitates both individual and collective learning, as well as a process of questioning, critiquing and reflecting, becomes very crucial. As trainers we have to create the conditions for the principles of adult learning to be operationalised.

Key characteristics of the learning environment are (PRIA, 2011, pp. 11-13):

### **1. Valuing Learners and Their Experiences**

A fundamental aspect of the learning environment is valuing the learner, valuing his/her uniqueness, experiences, contributions, knowledge and capacity to learn, grow and change. This requires the trainer to pay keen attention to the learner, to understand what the learner is saying and to provide support.

### **2. Sharing Personal Experiences**

Since adults learn from their experience, conditions have to be created for an easy, open, systematic and effective sharing of their past experience. Sharing experiences does not mean endless, open-ended story-telling sessions. Sharing has to be focused in relation to specific learning objectives and therefore structured in such a way that learners find the opportunity to share their experience in relation to those learning objectives with other learners and the trainers.

### **3. Openness**

Another principle of the learning environment is openness – to oneself, to others, to question, to examine, and to observe. Learning conditions have to be created in such a way that learners and trainers can be open with their thoughts and their feelings, as well as their actions.

#### **4. Challenging**

The learning environment should challenge the learners. They should be provoked, stimulated, cajoled and challenged. Trainers should aim towards creating conditions which stimulate people to stretch themselves beyond their immediate capacity, to utilise their potential creatively, to utilise their capacity, to unfreeze themselves, and to realise their critical faculties.

#### **5. Safety**

Psychological safety and comfort should be assured in the learning environment. The learner should feel challenged without feeling threatened. The learner should be stimulated and provoked but never undermined. They should be questioned, but not demolished. A sense of psychological safety, whereby people feel they can make mistakes and still be accepted, is an essential aspect of the learning environment.

#### **6. Support**

A related aspect, therefore, is support – emotional support, intellectual support, behavioural support. This support should be available individually and in small groups. To facilitate this, conditions need to be created so that learners are supporting each other as much as the trainers and facilitators are supporting the learners.

#### **7. Feedback**

Finally, the learning environment must have conditions built in for feedback. The feedback mechanism should be easy and relaxed.



Each of these three foci is best accomplished through a particular method. Awareness-raising is most aptly achieved through a dialogue among trainees and between the trainer and trainee. It entails the critical examination of objective and subjective reality.

Knowledge acquisition is most efficiently done through lectures, talks or reading. Relevant and precise information can thus be disseminated and absorbed. Learning new skills or sharpening existing ones demands opportunity for practice, within the training programme itself. Thus a combination of varied training/learning methods is utilised in participatory training

### **1.3.3 Sustaining the Adult Learning Environment**

A trainer needs to do several things in order to build the learning environment and sustain it. These are listed below:

- a. The design of the training should be such that it maintains the necessary learning environment at all times, and keeps the learners engaged and the pedagogy alive and relevant.
- b. Shared responsibility for learning by the learners should be established by involving the learner, soliciting their support, commitment, responsibility and feedback towards building and maintaining the learning environment. They should maintain their role as facilitator, counsellor and friend within their peer group.

- c. The physical and administrative aspects of the training (food, travel) should be well coordinated and managed, so as to not cause stress and anxiety of any kind for the learners. Small aspects, such as the cleanliness and organisation of the training room, advance preparation/installation of technical aids, organisation of small rooms for group exercises, noise, too much movement in the room, people coming and going, etc, become important issues for the trainers. It is important to ensure that the learners do not get disturbed, nor be forced to fend for themselves in the process.
- d. Most importantly, the trainer's behaviour becomes a significant contributor to the learning environment. Knowledge of training design alone is not enough; their understanding about themselves is crucial, their perspectives, values, behaviour, action, and how they respond to learners. The role of the trainer in participatory training will be analysed in the next section.

## 1.4 Role of the Trainer

The trainer is a central figure in any training programme and the first point of contact for the learners. In participatory training methodology, the main objectives of the trainer are two-fold:

- a. Stimulating critical faculties of learners; and
- b. Creating conditions for learning

In order to achieve these twin objectives, the trainer is obliged to play multiple roles.

### 1.4.1 Characteristics of a Trainer

#### **Faith in Participatory Training as a Tool for Growth and Development**

In order to become an effective trainer, the primary requirement is that one should have faith in participatory training as an instrument for change. In this regard, promoting participation of the learners or participants in all training activities is crucial. A trainer has to be supportive of the efforts of the participants aimed at realising his/her personal learning objective. Importantly, a trainer should also be a full participant in the training. It is important for a trainer to communicate his/her conviction about the training to the participants through words as well as actions.

#### **Belief in A Humanistic Approach**

A trainer who believes in the participatory approach should have full respect for the dignity of the learners or participants. A trainer should respect and be caring for the participants regardless of their position, their background and literacy level. A trainer should be able to convey through his/her communication and behaviour that all participants are held in high esteem. An experienced trainer knows that positive attitude and respect is reciprocated and becomes the basis of a harmonious and functional relationship with the participants.

## **Commitment to the Training Programmes**

Ensuring that the training programme is delivered well and objectives have been accomplished as per the training design requires the unqualified commitment and interest of the trainer. It is very important in order to maintain the credibility of the trainer. At no point during the training should the participant sense disinterest in the trainer, because this can demotivate the participants as well. At times, it may be necessary for the trainer to modify the content, methodology or facilitation style of the programme. The trainer should be willing to be flexible, and make his/her best effort to accomplish the task successfully.

### **1.4.2 Responsibilities and Competencies Of A Trainer**

To be an effective trainer in participatory training, a clear understanding of the responsibilities and related competencies of the trainer is required.

The trainer should also be clear about her/his role as facilitator; that is, rather than controlling the process, s/he must give maximum space for the learners to control their own learning process. Doing so must help the learners feel empowered.

The difference between roles and responsibilities can be understood on the basis of the questions 'how' and 'what'. The answer to 'What the trainer has to get done' defines his/her responsibilities while the answer to the question 'How the trainer is expected to behave' defines the roles s/he has to assume.

The major responsibilities and competencies of the trainer can be summed up as follows:

#### **1. Pre-Training**

- Identify and translate learning needs into objectives, content and programme design – trainer must possess knowledge about learners and their context, and

the strategic role of training in their context. Trainer must possess knowledge of different methods of needs-assessment, alongside theoretical underpinnings of participatory training.

- Ensure and meticulously plan in advance the facilities, learning materials, required equipment, participants and other related components of the training event, alongside the coordination of the programme logistics.

## **2. During Training**

- Facilitator - Guide the learning process so that individuals learn from each other and the group functions effectively. Involves eliciting emotions, enhancing participation, focusing trainees' attention on their potentialities and awareness of group dynamics
- Instructor - Present information and concepts, clarify objectives, create and sustain a structured learning environment and help generate new learning.
- Counsellor - Support and guide individual trainees during periods of stress and strain, and help trainees to assess their potentialities and competencies, so as to enable them to reflect, grow and change.
- Recorder - Maintain records of the process and content to enable monitoring, analysis and documentation, observe the flow of content and process and maintain detailed notes.
- Evaluator – Assess impact of training programme on the trainees by planning evaluation mechanisms, using written as well as verbal reports to assess an event, assess individuals changes in behavior, attitudes and knowledge, conduct mid-term reviews and provide relevant feedback.
- Organiser/Administrator – Manage all related tasks during the programme such as time and space for each session, solving problems related to food or

accommodation, organise reservations, departures and arrivals, and manage the learning situation.

### **3. Post-training**

- Report Writer – Prepare a report of the training programme and disseminate to all interested parties.
- Follow-up coordinator – Continue contact with individuals and their organisations to assess impact of training and provide necessary follow-up support where needed. Involves communicating at various intervals, inviting feedback from both organisations and individuals, collating learning needs for next event and providing support in the field.

## Summary

In Unit 1, you have developed an understanding of the theoretical underpinning of participatory training. This includes its belief in an alternative approach to training, its normative orientation, alongside the principles of adult learning. The importance of the learning environment in participatory training has also been analysed, alongside the role, vital competencies and responsibilities of the trainer.

## Additional Reading

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## Recommended For Further Reading

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