



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

Certificate Programme

Participatory Training Methodology

Unit - 4

Units of Participatory Training Methodology

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

Unit 3: Training Methods

- Overview of Participatory Training Methods
- Selection of Methods
- Common Training Methods
- Debriefing and Consolidation

Unit 4: Experiential Training Methods

- Understanding Structured Experiences
- Methods in Structured Experiences

Unit 5: Monitoring and Evaluation of Training Programmes

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Meaning and Importance
- When Do We Evaluate?
- Methods of Evaluation
- Report Writing

Unit 6: Management Of Training

- Management Of Participatory Training Programmes
- Managing Training Teams

Table of Contents of Unit 4

S. No.	Topic	Pg. No.
Unit 4	Experiential Learning Methods	
	Introduction	4
	Learning Objectives	5
4.1	Understanding Structured Experiences	6
4.1.1	The Experiential Learning Cycle	7
4.2	Methods in Structured Experiences	9
4.2.1	Small Group Discussion	9
4.2.2	Case Study	14
4.2.3	Role Play	15
4.2.4	Simulation	18
4.2.5	Instruments	21
4.2.6	Learning Games	22
	Summary	24
	Additional Readings	25
	References	25

Introduction

The focus of Unit 4 is on experiential learning methods. We have seen that participatory training draws largely from the tenets of adult learning, which hold that adults learn best from and through experience. One's own experience, both past and present, and others' experiences form an important source of learning. Hence, experiential learning methods provide an opportunity for learners to experience, share reactions and observations; reflect upon implications and consequences; discuss patterns and dynamics; develop practical and conceptual understanding; and apply it to real life situations. Unit 4 describes the importance of 'structured experiences', that is, experience-based learning methods, and their relevance with respect to the normative objectives of participatory training. It introduces the importance of the Experiential Learning Cycle, and the various experiential learning methods which can be applied within the context of a participatory training.

Learning Objectives:

In the end of this Unit, you should have:

- An understanding of the concept of structured experiences
- An understanding of the importance of the Experiential Learning Cycle
- Various methods used in experiential learning, their procedure, and relative advantages and disadvantages

4.1 Understanding Structured Experiences

Structured experiences as a training method make deliberate use of ‘experience’ directed towards achieving specific learning objectives. They are called ‘structured experiences’ because a structured and systematic mechanism of using experience for learning is created in this method.

The experience that constitutes the basis for learning can be of several types. It can be the learner’s own experience which is drawn upon strategically in order to realise a particular learning objective. When drawing upon learners’ past experience for learning, small group discussions are a common method employed. Role play is an additional popular method that uses learners’ past experience for learning. It can also be based on the experience of another person other than the learner. This is commonly used in the case study method.

Additionally, it can be the experience of participating in the training itself, which constitutes the basis of learning. Participatory training places emphasis on learning through ‘here and now’ experiences – this is the shared experience of learners during the training itself. While the past experience of each learner is unique, the here-and-now experience can create a shared basis for learning. These experiences become common learning material, unlike past experience, which is mostly available with each learner only. Various exercises and simulations can be used for creating an experience during training itself and drawing learning from it.

Elements of A Structured Experience:

- Objectives of the experience – the ‘why’ of the experience
- Content of the experience – what people said, discussed and dealt with

- Structure of the experience – activities undertaken by the group, e.g., exercise, role play etc.

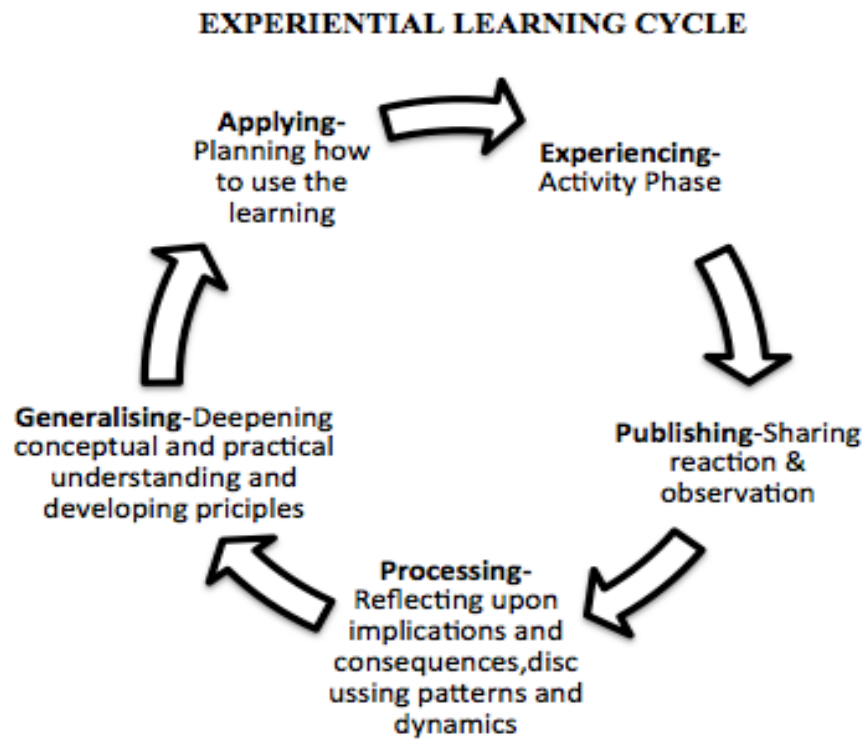
4.1.1 The Experiential Learning Cycle

It is important to note that merely undergoing an experience, feeling some emotion and receiving a few vague impressions does not lead to productive learning. There is a need to reflect on the experience and analyse it – its structure, its dynamics and our reactions – in order to gain insights and derive more broadly applicable principles. Based on this ‘structured’ use of experience, one is well equipped to go through similar experiences in life with a transformed vision that expresses itself through changed behaviour.

Throughout our lives, we are continuously learning and we go through all of these steps instinctively and rapidly. For instance, when faced with unpleasant experiences, we automatically withdraw and decide to try something else next time.

In participatory training, the crucial step is deep reflection, the systematic examination, the analysis of what is behind the experience, and the reasons for our reaction to it. The entire Experiential Learning Cycle is deliberately structured to equip learners with the strength to confront experiences and derive conscious learning from them. Structured experiences deploy learning-training methods where the trainer deliberately uses an experience for the purpose of learning, based on the Experiential Learning Cycle.

The following illustration visualises this learning cycle (PRIA, 2011, p. 72).



THINK TANK

With reference to your own professional context, how do you think making use of 'structured experience' could contribute to the personal development of the people you work with?

4.2 Methods in Structured Experiences

4.2.1 Small Group Discussion (PRIA, 2011)

Small group discussions are the most commonly used method within the experiential learning category. This method uses the learners' past experiences in a very deliberate manner. Group participation forms the basis for small group discussion methods. In this method, the learners are divided into groups of 5 to 13 persons and given a real life or relevant subject matter, or question to discuss. The discussion is carried out by the learners with reference to their past experiences, attitudes and values. The idea is to use this opportunity to share their experiences as a way to arrive at new knowledge and new insights.

In order to qualify as a structured experience, the discussion should not be hypothetical or speculative.

It is important to realise that the discussion is not an end in itself and the entire cycle needs to be completed. A common mistake made is to have the discussions without the subsequent presentation and summarisation. To complete the learning cycle, once the



discussion is complete, each group should present the outcomes of their discussion to the large group. On the basis of these presentations, working principles should be evolved as a way to conclude the session.

A Group Discussion in Progress

Procedure

- The trainer begins by instructing the group clearly about the task, and specifying the time and the form of the presentation
- Trainer divides the large group into small groups
- Different groups may be given different tasks; in this case the, groups should be divided first, and the task explained thereafter
- Let the groups discuss (through sharing and analysis) the matter under consideration for the stipulated time
- Trainer asks the groups to reassemble into a large group
- One or two individuals from each group are asked to present their discussion to the larger group.
- Trainer adds any relevant points that he/she feels have been left out, and uses the points made in the group presentations to arrive at a broader understanding that contributes to the individual learning process of the learners

Uses

- This method can be used to encourage learners to share information and experiences
- Provides an opportunity for learners to use their knowledge and experiences
- Promotes collective analysis and reflection

Below are some common advantages and disadvantages of using the small group discussion methodology.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It allows the learners to be in control, with respect to pace, content and focus ▪ It provides opportunities for the learners to express themselves ▪ It allows the learners to validate their knowledge and skills ▪ It allows learners to clarify, reflect and reconfigure their experiences ▪ It helps to promote a sense of belonging within a group ▪ It can be empowering, once the learners realise their own ability for critical thinking and change through this medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is time consuming ▪ It requires good facilitation; if facilitation is poor then the process is vitiated ▪ There is a possibility that dominant or aggressive members may hijack the process ▪ Members might not take the discussion seriously. This affects the quality of the discussion ▪ It requires more space to accommodate different groups, and can be difficult to monitor when multiple discussions are taking place simultaneously ▪ In mixed gender groups, women can be ignored

NOTE BANK**Special Forms of Small Group Discussion****Buzz Group**

A buzz group is a small, intense discussion group usually involving 2 to 3 persons responding to a specific question or in search of very precise information. The full plenary group is subdivided into the small groups. It's called a 'buzz' group because it mimics the sound of people in intense discussion! It is an extremely useful technique in training, as these small groups can be divided into participants with wide ranging experiences or those with highly specialised positions (depending on the topic and the desired outcome). Obviously, a broadly experienced group brings a wider understanding of the problem, which is good for tackling multi-disciplinary problems. Specialist groups, on the other hand, can 'dig' deeper into the issues.

(diffundo, 2014, p. 2)

Fish Bowl Group

Fish bowls involve a small group of people (usually 5-8) seated in a circle, having a conversation in full view of a larger group of listeners. Fish bowl processes provide a creative way to include the 'public' in a small group discussion. They can be used in a wide variety of settings, including workshops, conferences, organisational meetings and public assemblies. Fish bowls are useful for ventilating 'hot topics' or sharing ideas or information from a variety of perspectives. When the people in the middle are public officials or other decision-makers, this technique can help bring transparency to the decision-making process and increase trust and understanding about complex issues. Sometimes the discussion is a 'closed conversation' among a specific group. More often, one or more chairs are open to 'visitors' (i.e., members of the audience) who want to ask questions or make comments. Although largely self-organising once the discussion gets underway, the fish bowl process usually has a facilitator or moderator. The fish bowl is almost always part of a larger process of dialogue and deliberation.

(Knowledge Sharing Toolkit, 2014, p. 1)

NOTE BANK**Some Ideas On Creative Presentation**

The purpose of presenting the results of the small group's work to the members of other subgroups is so that others get to know and really understand what the findings of the subgroup are. This pooling and sharing of findings enriches the discussion if the presentations of the subgroup's results are lively and attractive, focused on the main findings and easy to understand.

For this reason the presentation should be such that the other participants get a good picture ("I see what you mean") of your views on the topic so that these can be compared with their own points of view.

For this purpose, given below are some examples of expressive techniques that a group may use. It is up to you to select the most appropriate one, or better, to create your own technique of presentation.

- a). A graphical form, for example, murals, posters, cartoon strips, collages, etc

- b). A corporal presentation, for example, simulations, socio dramas, songs and other types of theatre

- c). A written form, for example, stories, different kinds of poems, histories or other narrations

- d). An audio presentation, such as an interview, a radio report or other types of broadcasting programmes, a story telling session, etc.

All kinds of creative forms of presentation can be considered, as long as the form of presentation does not interfere with the content itself.

THINK THANK

Imagine that you are facilitating a small group discussion within the context of a training session. Describe how you would conduct the session, including your instructions at the beginning, monitoring during the discussion, and the debrief and consolidation. Try to be creative in your answer and approach!

4.2.2 Case Study (PRIA, 2011)

The case study method involves the use of others' real life experiences, which are reflected upon and analysed by the learners so as to extract or arrive at new learning principles. These experiences may be sourced from an individual, a group, an organisation or a particular context. The learners' own experiences, values and feelings form the basis for analysing others' experiences. Depending on the subject matter, case studies (and stories) may be presented in written or verbal forms, or even through the medium of film or song, depending upon cultural appropriateness and the background and level of the learners.

Procedure

- Present the case study
- Divide the group into smaller groups and give them the task (question)
- Allow individuals to reflect and discuss within their groups
- Debrief and consolidate – this could either be through small group presentations to the rest of the group, or through a broader group discussion once the smaller discussions are completed

Uses

- Can be used to convey complex theoretical concepts in a simple way
- Allows the group to reflect on its appropriateness in their milieu/life

- Allows discussions/sharing on potentially threatening situations, which the learners may not be willing to share if asked directly
- Sharpens learners' analytical and diagnostic skills
- Exposes learners to situations they might not ordinarily experience in their own lives
- Exposes learners to similar experiences elsewhere to enable them to feel a sense of solidarity and validation with respect to their own experiences
- Helps to create new knowledge through collective reflection, analysis and synthesis

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple	It may be difficult to find an appropriate case study
It can be used with illiterate learners	The case study may be too general to focus on a specific issue
It can be used for cognitive learning	Case studies written by others contain the author's perceptions, feelings and ideologies. This may lead to distortion of objective reality.
Low cost and culturally appropriate	Hypothetical or prepared items may be too idealistic

4.2.3 Role Play (PRIA, 2011)

One of the most common experiential learning training methods is the role play. Role play is a structured experience in which learners get an opportunity to act out problems concerning human relations and human interactions before a group of co-learners and facilitators. It is a conscious attempt to examine the various roles played in actual life,

and is useful where participants share a similar experience which is difficult to communicate due to its emotional nature. It is a structured experience because learning takes place through the re-enactment of past experiences. It therefore allows learners to utilise their experiences of real life situations. This process is then subjected to critical reflection through effective feedback given by both the observers and the actors. It is a powerful training method if the focus of learning is awareness.

Procedure

- Select a suitable role play depending on the purpose of learning
- Identify role enactors/performers
- Prepare briefs and explain situation to the learners
- Explain the points to be observed by the observers
- Set the stage and start the role play
- Consolidate and debrief

Role play can be used in a variety of ways. The choice of a particular role play depends on the learning agenda, group of learners and trainer's capacity.

Techniques:

- a) A small group enacts a situation where other learners observe the role play. A discussion follows that enactment. This use of role play is similar to a where learning occurs through observation. Such a role play can be enacted by the trainers themselves, a few outsiders, or a handful of learners, with or without trainers.
- b) Role play is also used to stimulate discussion on complex issues. A brief enactment by either trainers, learners, or both, can be used to stimulate further group discussion on similar issues and experiences that learners share. This method of learning is essentially a group discussion, where role play merely acts as a stimulant or catalyst for the discussion that follows. In this use, it is similar to an aid like charts, video clippings, etc.

- c) In certain situations, role play is also useful to practice skills. For example, adult education instructors can be trained to practice how to motivate adult learners by enacting different roles. The prime method of learning here is by practicing and receiving feedback from learners and trainers after that practice.
- d) Role play is a re-enactment of past experiences. Another way to use role play is for all learners to be involved in enacting an issue or a situation with which they are familiar. For example, a group of 25 illiterate women learners can be divided into five sub-groups to prepare and re-enact the experience of being a wife in the family. Since all the learners share this experience and all of them are involved in the re-enactment, learning occurs here through the twin steps of preparation and re-enactment.

Uses

- Helps learners to utilise their experiences of real life situations
- The enactment is helpful in developing awareness at individual and group levels
- Complex social issues can be discussed in a non-threatening environment
- It is particularly apt for issues dealing with complex emotional and attitudinal aspects of learning
- Where the focus of the role play is on learning from past experience, it can be a powerful method if the focus of learning is awareness

In whichever way the role play is used, a discussion must follow in order to process the experience of either observation or re-enactment. This processing should follow the Experiential Learning Cycle of debriefing explained earlier. It must be remembered that the real consolidation of learning through role play occurs through the steps of preparation, re-enactment, discussion processing and analysis.

Advantages	Disadvantages
It presents complex issues simply and in a short span of time	There is a possibility of it becoming entertainment which vitiates learning
It helps the suppressed and illiterate to express their feelings	Participants can get too involved in their roles and later lose objectivity during analysis
It is a simple and low cost learning tool, and does not need material or advance preparation	Acting can become an end in itself and participants can overact or distort the roles
It focuses on problems which are very real in nature	It is necessary to explain clearly the learners' observatory role, or else the discussion which occurs later on the basis of this observation will be inadequate

4.2.4 Simulations (PRIA, 2011)

When learners need to become aware of something that they have not been very conscious of, or when the situation involves complex interacting dynamics, which can only be understood through an immediate 'hands on' experience, simulations are used. Simulation is a method based on the here-and-now experience shared by all the learners. It recreates a complex reality situation within the context of a training programme.

It involves assigning very definite roles to each participant, and having them act out a situation according to the given roles. Various events and activities are set up to facilitate the interaction between the actors. It is carried on long enough to generate responses and reactions based on real feelings – participants need to genuinely 'get into their role'. However, learning takes place without any serious risk because the situation is after all

'make-believe'. Unlike role play, simulation is a more intense experience where the facilitator is responsible for simulating not just the roles but also the sites where they are performed. The process of planning a simulation is very systematic and must be done in advance. This is not so in the case of role plays.

Procedure

Pre-Simulation

- The objectives of the exercise should be very clear. What does one want to achieve through this simulation? The conceptual framework should be prepared in advance, and the debriefing planned in detail.
- An appropriate simulation should be selected, according to the purpose of learning. A conceptual framework should be developed.
- Rules and instructions of the activity should be clearly defined and written down.
- Delineate the roles carefully and prepare role briefs. Decide who will assume which roles. Try to include all learners, as simulations should not have observers.
- Define the situations and events in which the characters will interact. There may be more than one situation/event.
- Decide upon where to have the simulation. The site/s chosen should parallel the real-life sites of the situations chosen.
- Keep necessary props and learning materials ready at hand, to be used for the different roles.

Conducting A Simulation

- Assign roles; give each person the appropriate role brief. This role brief should include what type of person s/he is, including some details of personal history.
- Ask the participants to study their roles and try to 'become' the role. Do not let different players study each other's brief.
- Have some appropriate means of identifying the different roles available, such as name tags.

- Brief the participants about the situation and let them start acting according to their interpretation of the roles.
- Stop the simulation when appropriate, or the essential part is over, or if it is getting out of hand.
- The facilitators should observe the process and take notes which could be used in the debriefing later.

After The Simulation

- Give the participants time to emerge out of their roles.
- Ask the participants to share their feelings; keep your questions directed and not too vague, for example, questions like 'what happened to you during the simulation', 'how did you feel', etc, can be asked.
- Note their responses (on a chart).
- Try to draw parallels with real life while analysing the patterns in the data.
- Collate these feelings, give necessary inputs and draw up a summary.

Advantages	Disadvantages
A simulation creates a learning process which operates on both individual and group levels and allows for an exploration of real life situations and social processes	Participants may not immerse themselves fully in their roles. This hampers the interactive learning process. Also, some participants go very deep into their roles and find it difficult to come out.
The intensity and creativity of the experience allows participants to immerse themselves in the topic under discussion	Simulation is a difficult exercise, and requires a competent facilitator to conduct it and also involves meticulous and detailed planning for every stage of the activity
It generates a large amount of data for learning	Sometimes, the effort of the facilitator is spent more on the 'real activity', and the data generated is left unprocessed. This disturbs the learning process.

It has potential for transferability of learning – the insights gained can be used back home if the simulation is close enough to reality	Considerable skill is required in the debriefing sessions, or else the data generated will not be utilised for learning.
The end result is not predictable: learning takes place as directed by the learners themselves, at their own pace	The choice of a particular simulation is difficult – one that is too close to reality becomes threatening and one that is too remote becomes irrelevant. The challenge is in choosing and designing a simulation that works.

Uses

- To understand complex social issues
- To learn in a situation which is very similar to real life
- Learning can take place at different levels

4.2.5 Instruments (PRIA, 2011)

'Instruments' are a kind of structured experience in which learners are given a particular printed format containing clear instructions and a series of questions, usually with multiple choices, or requiring brief replies. Participants fill in the questionnaire individually, or in twos/threes for each other. At the end, instructions explain how to examine answers, assign scores and tally scores. The meanings of various different scores are also explained.

The purpose is for each learner to generate data about herself or himself. However, it is left to the learners to decide how to use this information about themselves. Thus, in terms of the Experiential Learning Cycle, the steps of publishing, processing, generalising and applying are done individually by each participant, and not collectively by the whole group.

Some examples of instruments are the personality trait inventory, interpersonal perception form, T-P questionnaire for leadership, FIRO-B, etc.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can be a very effective method for learning more about one's own self through systematic self-examination, reflection and, in some cases, feedback	Can only be used with a group which is highly literate
The learner does not feel external pressure or compulsion	Needs a certain amount of honesty and genuine interest in the learner to generate meaningful data
Learning takes place at the individual's own pace according to his or her interest and inclination	Works better with people who can learn intellectually at the level of abstractions
	Very difficult to design instruments

4.2.6 Learning Games (PRIA, 2011)

Learning games are those methods that are seemingly fun activities involving all participants. There are rules and regulations, and the games may or may not include a competitive element. Games are usually employed to convey feelings and processes which are implied within the game being played, e.g., trust games, leadership games, and so on.

After the game is played, it is essential that the feelings of the participants are debriefed and consolidated; otherwise it will remain as either an ice breaker or an energiser.

Uses

- To explain group processes
- To explain issues of trust, social relationships and so on

Procedure

- Explain the game
- Involve the learners in the game
- Consolidate, debrief and derive learning

Advantages	Disadvantages
They are lively, fun and involve everyone	Finding or designing appropriate games is not very easy
Complex issues can be explained in a simple manner	Games must be interactive, option providing and not directive (like simple dice games with messages on the designated squares)
They allow the participants to experience the matter under consideration within the course of the training itself (also called here-and-now experience).	May generate lots of feelings and excitement which could obstruct the learning process
	The focus of the game must be clear to the trainer or debriefing will be confused; entertainment without learning is not the objective

Summary

In participatory training, the starting point for creating new knowledge is the existing knowledge that people have as a direct result of their experiences. Unit 4 has analysed the use of experiential learning methods within the context of participatory training. We have seen that as a training method 'structured experiences' make deliberate use of 'experience', directed towards achieving specific learning objectives. They are called 'structured experiences' because a structured and systematic mechanism of using experience for learning is created in this method. The importance of the Experiential Learning Cycle was discussed, highlighting the important role of debriefing and consolidation after each structured experience. Various 'structured experience' methods were also discussed, with a view to introducing their procedures, and their relative advantages and disadvantages.

Additional Readings

PRIA. (2007). Monitoring: Meaning and importance. In PRIA, *Participatory training: A book of readings* (pp. 90-98). New Delhi: PRIA.

References

diffundo. (2014, September 25). *Buzz groups*. Retrieved September 25, 2014, from diffundo: Excellence in Training, Design and Delivery: <http://www.diffundo.com/instructions/resource15.pdf>

Knowledge Sharing Toolkit. (2014, September 25). *Fish bowl*. Retrieved September 25, 2014, from Knowledge Sharing Toolkit: <http://www.kstoolkit.org/Fish+Bowl>

PRIA. (2011). *A manual for participatory training methodology in development*. . New Delhi: PRIA.