

Developing Adult Trainers' skills to manage heterogeneous groups



Guidelines for Adult Trainers: Managing Diverse Groups

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1. Introduction

Our classrooms are multicultural even when no learners from ethnic minorities are present. Our learners originate from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Their backgrounds vary with regard to age, religion, socioeconomic standing, household composition, and family composition. In addition, they differ in terms of beliefs and attitudes, way of life, abilities/disabilities, and race or nationality. Consequently, this is simply one of the aspects that contribute to the diversity of our classroom and affect the culture of our learners.

The settling of immigrants and refugees has formed numerous "minorities" in Europe, thereby enhancing the continent's longstanding social and cultural diversity. Not until educators began researching immigrant education did they realize that our classrooms have always been filled with learners from diverse backgrounds.

The aim of this output is to address this diversity, with a focus on migrants and refugees in a supportive and inclusive way, in order to ensure that they have the conditions for a successful professional and social career.

Several factors need to be taken into account when discussing the management and training of diverse groups. The purpose of this output is to provide trainers with a practical guidebook that will assist them in modifying the way they teach in order to improve the learning experience for marginalized groups of learners, specifically migrants and refugees.



2. Educational Approaches

2.1 Immigrant Education

Various educational approaches were introduced in Europe from the 1970s through the 1990s. These new approaches did not always replace the pre-existing ones, but rather complemented them in a variety of ways.

Migration, minorities, the move to an era of transnational economic systems, European integration, and global communication have, since the late 1960s, generated an environment of mutual dependence among peoples, leading in cultural contact and communication. This gave rise to the education of refugees and immigrants. Initially migrant education was deficit-based (Cogolin & Krutratx, 2003), with a focus on language acquisition. In addition to migrant education, many EU nations have adopted multicultural education. This practice could be seen as the first step towards intercultural education. In the 1980s and 1990s, the discussion revolved around special education for immigrants, as opposed to assimilation or integration, but without mutual inclusion. The approach to intercultural education ultimately led to the conclusion that a person from a different nation was no different from a native person with the same social background.

The majority of educators that specialize in this field have concluded that all learners should develop intercultural competence in order to flourish in our modern society.

2.2 Inclusive Education

Learners from marginalized groups do not experience equality outside the classroom, which implies there is still much work to be done to tackle social problems such as racism and discrimination.

Another crucial point is that learners from marginalised groups do not experience equality outside the classroom, which means that they must



Alvarez and Juang (2010) define everyday racism as "hidden, everyday manifestations of prejudice", such as being ignored and isolated, being made fun of and shamed, or being treated differently from members of the majority group. These common practices towards people belonging to excluded groups in society are dangerous because they are part of the accepted framework of the dominant group. Essed (1991) finds evidence of everyday racism in most social and institutional settings, so we should assume that all our educational institutions, both as workplaces and learning spaces, contain such characteristics and are experienced by both learners and teachers, some on a daily basis.

3. What has to change?

This section will explore ways in which educators could assist socially heterogeneous groups. As no teaching method is ideal for all learners at the same time, there is no quick or simple solution. The solution resides in diversity, in a variety of teaching methods and strategies. To meet the goal of educating underrepresented communities, the most effective teaching strategies are those that interest the learner, entail contact and communication, and have a structure that encourages each learner to participate in the learning process.

According to study (Cohen and Lotan, 1995), we only utilize a small fraction of our learning potential when we only listen or observe; yet, when we explain something to others, we learn more. The more we attempt to conceptualize a topic, the more we comprehend it. The more we seek to communicate with people, the greater our understanding; the more we discuss a topic, the more we learn; the more we think rather than recall, the more we learn and retain. Therefore, the greater our participation in the learning process, the more we learn, comprehend, and retain. The question is if this possibility is provided to our learners on a daily basis or whether it is an uncommon event in our sessions.



3.1 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a generally established method of teaching for heterogeneous groups. In addition, it has been shown that it enhances learners' comprehension and reaches a greater number of learners as opposed to only those who are already well-versed in a subject. **Collaborative learning groups** are not only a good method for fostering academic achievement through active engagement, but they can also be an effective method for minimizing isolation. By forming a group, educators could attempt to overcome the superficial barriers that learners may face when working alone. In teamwork, individual attitudes, ideas, experiences, and beliefs are exposed when they are utilized to attain a common goal through combined effort. Teamwork fosters a deeper understanding of the topic at hand as well as the dynamics of teamwork, which are valuable throughout life, and enables communication among team members. Collaborative learning enables students to develop their critical thinking, cooperation, and communication abilities. Certainly, the content of the educational materials is crucial.

Individual educators cannot alter the system, but they may adapt their teaching style and classroom structure by being interested in learning and applying innovative and inclusive teaching practices. Nevertheless, we should consider the following: Is an educator merely a facilitator of a subject? A trainer is a multidimensional educator and role model who teaches his classes much more than a subject - even if they do not wish to learn. In the majority of educational institutions, trainees are accustomed to individual structures where the objective is to outperform others, not to develop collaborative abilities. Thus, prior to beginning a collaborative session, the trainer must prepare himself and the group. Numerous things are required in the beginning:

- The trainer should prepare (determining the size of the groups, setting up group workstations, forming the groups by the trainer, providing written instructions, ensuring good working conditions, and preparing tasks to achieve the session's objectives).



- The trainer should always ensure that all trainees comprehend their role when using the collaborative method.
- A supportive and secure environment should be fostered (getting to know each other, presentation of the training method).

3.2 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning or learning through experience is the foundation of lifelong learning, as many essential skills and values, such as communication, critical thinking, advocacy, tolerance, and respect, cannot be taught; they must be acquired and practiced through experience. In experiential learning, Kolb (1984) specifies four phases of the educational process that the learner goes through:

1. **Experience:** the learner is confronted with an experience. This could be a planned event or participating in an activity (taking action).
2. **Reflection:** the learner reflects on the new experience in the light of his/her existing knowledge, exchanges views and discusses new patterns and dynamics in order to gain a deeper understanding of the new experience
3. **Conceptualization:** creates a new idea or modifies an existing abstract concept and how this new idea relates to the "real world"
4. **Active Experimentation:** the learner applies the new knowledge and perhaps changes old behaviours to see what happens

Based on this model, the educator can design activities that enable students to apply newly gained ideas and information to real-world scenarios. Each activity should be supported by a full description that includes suggested review and discussion questions to assist participants reflect on what occurred, how they felt about the experience, and how it relates to what they already know and the world at large.

Therefore, through a combination of activities and serious conversations, educators have the potential to address and possibly eliminate issues such as stereotypes, bias, and privilege, even those of the learners themselves. The trainee should be at the

centre of the educational process, because what matters is not so much what the facilitator or teacher delivers or conveys, nor the subject matter, but what the trainee/participant learns or gains throughout the sessions. In this way, the educator is open to modifying the subject and level of work to the participants' present conditions, thereby enriching the sessions.

4. Example of a trust-building activity

Establishing a positive classroom environment through the utilization of activities allows students to use all of their senses to learn; they learn by experiencing and feeling something, and there is constant interaction that helps them get to know one another better. Always follow an activity with reflection so that students are aware of what they have learnt. The BINGO activity described below is a great example of a classroom activity that promotes trust.

Resources: A room with enough space, BINGO boards

Group size: Any size

Time: 15-25 minutes including Reflection

Guidelines:

1. Each participant receives a bingo sheet with age-appropriate claims for the learners in each context.
2. Trainees are encouraged to walk around and ask each other questions, and when someone answers "yes" to a question, they should write that person's name in the appropriate box.
3. The objective is to acquire 5 different names in a row in a bingo, and when they do, they must shout BINGO. After shouting BINGO, they should keep asking questions and try to fill in as many boxes as they can.

Can play the guitar	Likes to play chess	Likes to cook	Has a pet	Grows up your own greens
Likes to watch films	Is good at cooking	Has a sports car	Has met a celebrity	Lived abroad
Would like to become a writer	Has a tattoo	Can ride a bike	Went camping last summer	Plays sport regularly
Took a road trip	Hates animals	Likes cats	Likes sweets	Runs a website
Likes to sing	Speaks languages 2	Likes jazz music	Likes drinking wine	Has a birthday in August

Reflection: What was going on in the room at the time of this activity?

5. Example of a topic-awareness-raising activity

This activity aims to increase awareness of inequality of opportunity and compassion for those less fortunate. In this activity, participants assume roles and progress based on their life opportunities and perspectives.

Resources: A room with enough space

Group Size: any size

Time: 20-30 minutes including Reflection

Guidelines:

1. Request that each person take a role card. Tell them not to show it to anybody else and to keep it to themselves. Ask them to start to get into their role.
2. Ask participants to remain completely silent as you instruct them to form a straight line next to each other (as in a starting line).
3. Inform participants that you will be reading a list of situations or events. They should step forward each time they can answer "yes" to the statement. Otherwise, they should stay where they are and not move.
4. Read the situations and events one by one. Pause briefly between each statement to allow people to take a step forward.
5. Finally, ask everyone to observe their final positions. Allow them a few minutes to get out of character before discussing in plenary.

Situations and events concerning migrants and refugees:

- You have never had a serious financial problem.
- You can take a holiday once a year.
- You are not terrified of being stopped by the police.
- You have to replace your clothes at least once every three months.
- You have never experienced discrimination because of your ethnicity.
- You believe that your perspective on social and political issues is valued and that your views are listened to.
- You believe that your language, religion and culture are valued in the society in which you live.
- You have a decent home with a telephone, internet and television.



Participants' role cards:

You are an unemployed single mother.	You are the daughter of the local bank manager. You study Engineering at the university.
You are a homeless young man, 27 years old.	You are the owner of a successful import- export company.
You are an unemployed university graduate waiting for the first opportunity to work.	You are the son of a Chinese immigrant who runs fast food business.
You are an illegal immigrant from Mali.	You are the mayor of the city.
You are a 23-year old refugee from Afghanistan.	You are a 40-year old doctor.
You are a fashion model of African origin.	You are a 32-year old lawyer.
You are a retired worker from a factory that makes shoes.	You are a 30-year old HR specialist in a big company.
You are a 25-year old cleaner from Syria.	You are the manager of two restaurants.

Reflection: ask participants what happened and how they felt about the exercise and then discuss the concerns that were addressed and what they learned.

6. Example of cooperative learning

The aim of this activity is to generate discussion between groups of trainees on a specific topic or area of interest.

Resources: A room with teamwork tables

Group size: any size

Time: 30-45 minutes including Reflection

Guidelines:

1. The trainer delivers a short lecture (10-15 minutes) on a specific topic or area of interest. He may also provide reading material.
2. Trainees are divided into "core groups" and "expert groups" and each of them is assigned a different subject within the same general topic.
3. Trainees work on their research topics with others who have the same topic (their expert group)
4. They then return to their "core group" to teach them about their topic. The group discusses the questions and tries to gather as many possible answers as possible.
5. At the end, they make a presentation in which they creatively explain the topic to the others.

Reflection: Ask participants what happened and how they felt about the exercise and then discuss what they learned

7. Conclusions

In this product, we presented our findings from project-related activities on teaching and managing heterogeneous groups. Additionally, we incorporated the activities conducted throughout the educational mobility in Iceland. The first activity is a method for breaking the ice that may be used to foster an atmosphere of safety and trust among the participants. The second activity was designed to raise awareness of



migrants' unequal access to opportunities, but it can equally be adapted for any other group. The third activity fosters learning and conversation about a particular topic. This guide is intended encourage and inspire other adult educators to incorporate cooperative learning into their sessions so that everyone has equal access to the learning process.

