



DigiIT

TRAINING BOOKLET

PROMOTING
DIGITAL SKILLS
AMONG ADULT
EDUCATORS OF
OLDER
GENERATIONS

MODULE 1:

**BASIC GUIDELINES FOR ADULT
EDUCATORS**



Co-funded by
the European Union

#1 BASIC GUIDELINES FOR ADULT EDUCATORS

The intention of this module is to transfer some transversal knowledge to educators and facilitators creating educational activities for the senior population. An effective educational activity builds on both individual and group learning, always respecting participants needs. To achieve the learning goals, the learning process must be carefully planned and framed, although flexible and adaptable.

Objectives:

- To explore the principles of Non-Formal Education;
- To understand the role of the facilitator;
- To understand different learning styles and preferences;
- To get familiar with Experiential Learning.

Outcomes:

The overall outcome of this module is to have a comprehensive introduction of some key concepts related to Non-Formal Education Methodology that each Educator/Facilitator can further deepen according to their needs and interests.

Lifelong Learning

The potential of lifelong learning is recognised by EU policies: it empowers people, encourages sustainable economic growth, and promotes just societies. Over time, EU nations have improved their cooperation, creating a set of universal adult learning principles, and deciding on goals and activities. Despite this development, the challenge still persists. According to Eurostat, only one in ten adults in the EU took part in training in 2019. Sadly, the participation rate for inactive, unemployed, and low-qualified Europeans was even lower.

EU leaders made a number of bold decisions to address such concerns. They established the right to high-quality, inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning for all as its guiding principle in 2017 when they proclaimed the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Through the [Porto Declaration](#), they strengthened their commitment in 2021 and agreed to the EU-level goal of at least 60% of adults engaged in learning each year by 2030.

These significant steps will eventually lead to a much-needed skills revolution. A shared vision is established when access to lifelong learning is seen as a right. Having an objective allows to guide and track the progress. Together, they offer a solid platform for action and collaboration among European institutions and nations.

Formal, Non-Formal Education and Informal Learning

It is difficult to cover all the definitions, linkages, and points of view on this topic in this document because disagreements over the notions of education and learning date back to Socrates.

People are always and everywhere learning new things. Every single day results in the development of new abilities, competencies, and/or skills for every single person. Learning is a constant and integral element of life. Sometimes, we don't even recognize all the resources we use to educate ourselves and acquire new knowledge, yet doing so helps us grow, acquire new abilities, and manage day-to-day situations. However, learning is sometimes assumed to only occur in formal settings and learning environments, unaware to the fact that a lot of important learning actually occurs either consciously or unintentionally in daily life.

Along with others, we have discovered that making the distinction between: Learning is a process and Education is a system.

These ideas inevitably prompt several inquiries regarding the connections between the various forms of education and the ways in which formal, non-formal, and informal components might be distinguished. Without oversimplifying, the current consensus appears to be that:

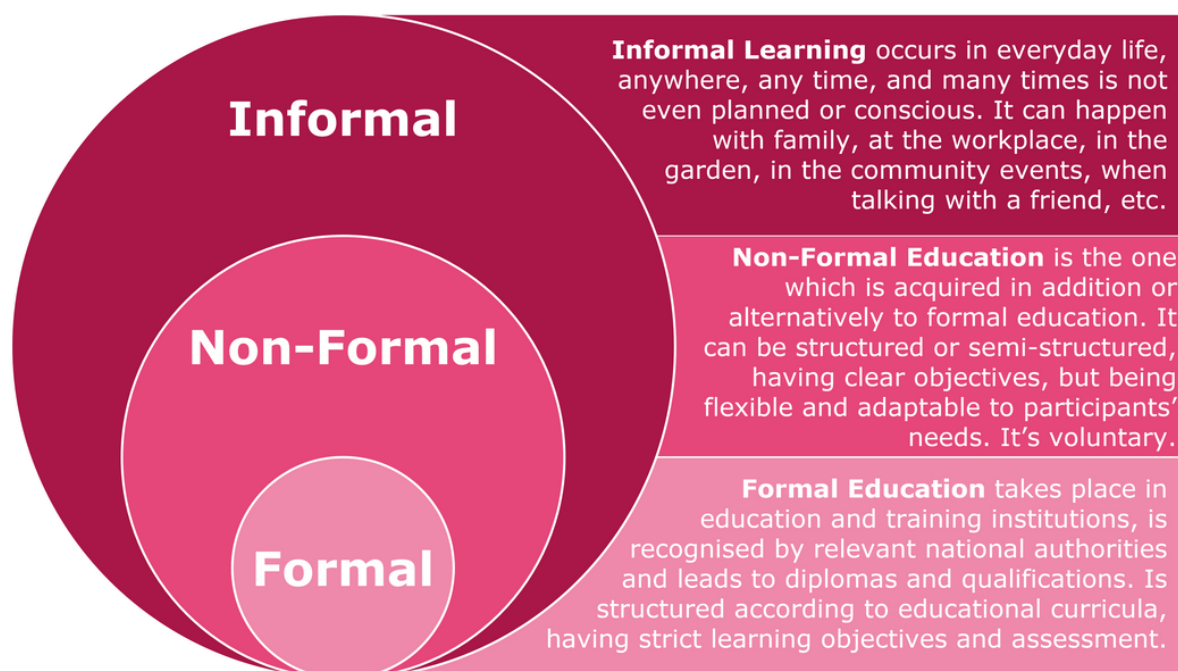
- informal learning occurs almost constantly in daily life (at home, on the street, in cafés, etc.);
- non-formal education is voluntary, is assisted by others, and is planned; and
- formal education is structured, regulated from the outside, and involves some type of certification.

Therefore, non-formal education can be thought of as a system that operates independently of formal education and that combines resources, personnel, goals, tools, and methodologies to create an organized learning environment.

Non-formal education is defined for the purposes of this training as a planned educational process that coexists with traditional systems of education and training but often doesn't result in a credential. Because participation is voluntary, each participant actively participates in the learning process.

In contrast to informal learning, where learning occurs less consciously, a person who receives non-formal education is typically aware that they are learning. Through its connections to the real world, emphasis on social learning, and learner-centered processes of critical reflection of knowledge and values, non-formal learning has demonstrated a tremendous potential to enhance or supplement formal education.

This educational approach typically employs immersive, interactive, and participatory methods while learning in groups. Most people find these strategies appealing, which boosts their motivation and actually engages them.



The Role of the Facilitator

Making something simple is how facilitation is defined. Planning, leading, and managing a group is the job of the facilitator, who also makes sure that the goals of the group are successfully accomplished. Rather than providing the correct answers, asking questions helps the group reach a consensus during a discussion.

To facilitate effectively, the facilitator must be objective and take a neutral stance, stepping back from its personal point of view and focus on the group process.

The facilitator must have a thorough understanding of the intended result, the context, and the background before formulating a strategy and a plan that responds to the needs of the target group and promotes the overall objective. The facilitator assists the group's participants in a variety of capacities, including supporter, informational resource, and partner.

To bring the group to a successful conclusion, and achievement of the desired outcome, the facilitator will:

- **Create a safe and trustful learning environment**, providing physical, emotional, and intellectual security for the group, a space for sharing, thinking, growing and learning;
- **Design and plan the group process**, selecting the **learning tools** that best fit the dynamics of that group;
- **Guide the group**, ensuring that:
 - Participants have a good level of **self-awareness and motivation**;
 - Participants achieve a **mutual understanding** about the desired outcome;
 - There is **effective participation** of all members and that contributions are considered and included in the discussion;
 - There is an atmosphere of **self-reliance** among the group;
 - Participants take **shared responsibility** for the outcome.
- **Monitor, assess and summarise the outcomes** and impact of the activities performed by the group.

Learning to Learn

The ability to organise one's own learning, including through efficient time and information management, both individually and in groups, is referred to as "learning to learn."

It includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. It entails acquiring, analysing, and assimilating new information and abilities as well as looking for and using guidance.

In order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts, including at home, at work, in education and training, and in other contexts as well, learning to learn encourages learners to build on prior knowledge and life experiences. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

Questions which can help the learner to reflect are:

- What does learning mean to me in general? What are my experiences so far?
- What are/were my learning goals? How did they change (if at all)? How will/Did I reach them?
- How do I want to learn? How did I learn?
- Which activities in a particular training motivated me most in my learning?
- Where did my skills and knowledge improve?
- Which methods do I want to/did I use to evaluate what I learned?
- Which learning style do I prefer: learning by doing, by reading and thinking, by observing? How did I explore the different ways of learning compared to learning in school or university?
- How will I use what I learned?
- How did I deal with challenges in my learning process?
- How do I motivate myself to deal with obstacles and continue learning?

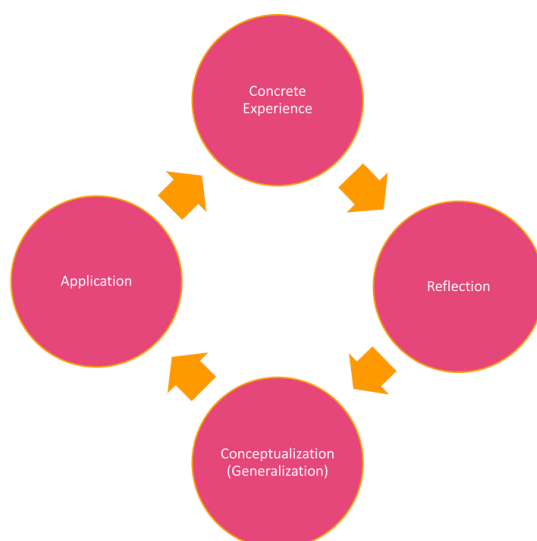
Experiential Learning

It is common for training courses to be described as either practical or theoretical: as either involving doing or involving thinking. In order to learn it is not enough simply to have an experience. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalisations which enable new situations to be tackled effectively.

Similarly, if it is intended that behaviour should be changed by learning, it is not enough simply to learn new concepts and develop new generalisations. This learning must be tested out in new situations. The learner must make the link between theory and action by planning for that action, carrying it out, and then reflecting upon it, relating what happens back to the theory.

It is not enough just to do, and neither is it enough just to think. Nor is it enough simply to do and think. Learning from experience must involve links between the doing and the thinking.

Learning from experience involves four stages which follow each other in a cycle, as in the following diagram:



The terms used here as labels for the four stages come from Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, and placed in this sequence they form the experiential learning cycle.

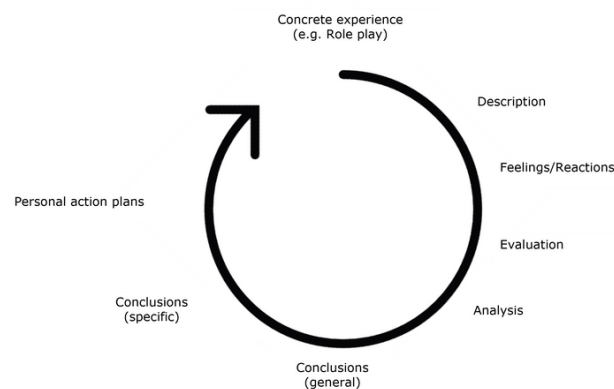
Concrete Experience: is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or field work.

Reflection: is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience.

Conceptualization (Generalization): is when the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed.

Application: is when the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience.

One of the most challenging stages is what happens after learning experiences and how learning points can be drawn out through structured reflection. The diagram below relates the **stages of a full structured debriefing** to the stages of the experiential learning cycle:



Description: What happened? Don't make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions; simply describe.

Feelings/reactions: What were your reactions and feelings? Again don't move on to analysing these yet.

Evaluation: What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements.

Analysis: What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you. What was really going on? Were different people's experiences similar or different in the important aspects?

Conclusions (general): What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?

Conclusions (specific): What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or way of working?

Personal action plans: What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?

Learning Tools

A tool is usually any physical item that can be used to achieve a particular physical result, especially if the item is not consumed in the process.

However, informally the word has also come to be used to describe a procedure or process with a specific purpose.

Tools can be classified according to their basic functions (cutting tools, cooking tools, drawing tools, etc.) but in fact they can be creatively used to other purposes.

A learning tool is something that creatively and inventively initiates or supports an action or process that leads to a learning result or outcome.

Tools alone have no influence. **It is educator/facilitator' task to adapt them to the context, objectives and target group, but most importantly to own skills to turn them into something powerful!**

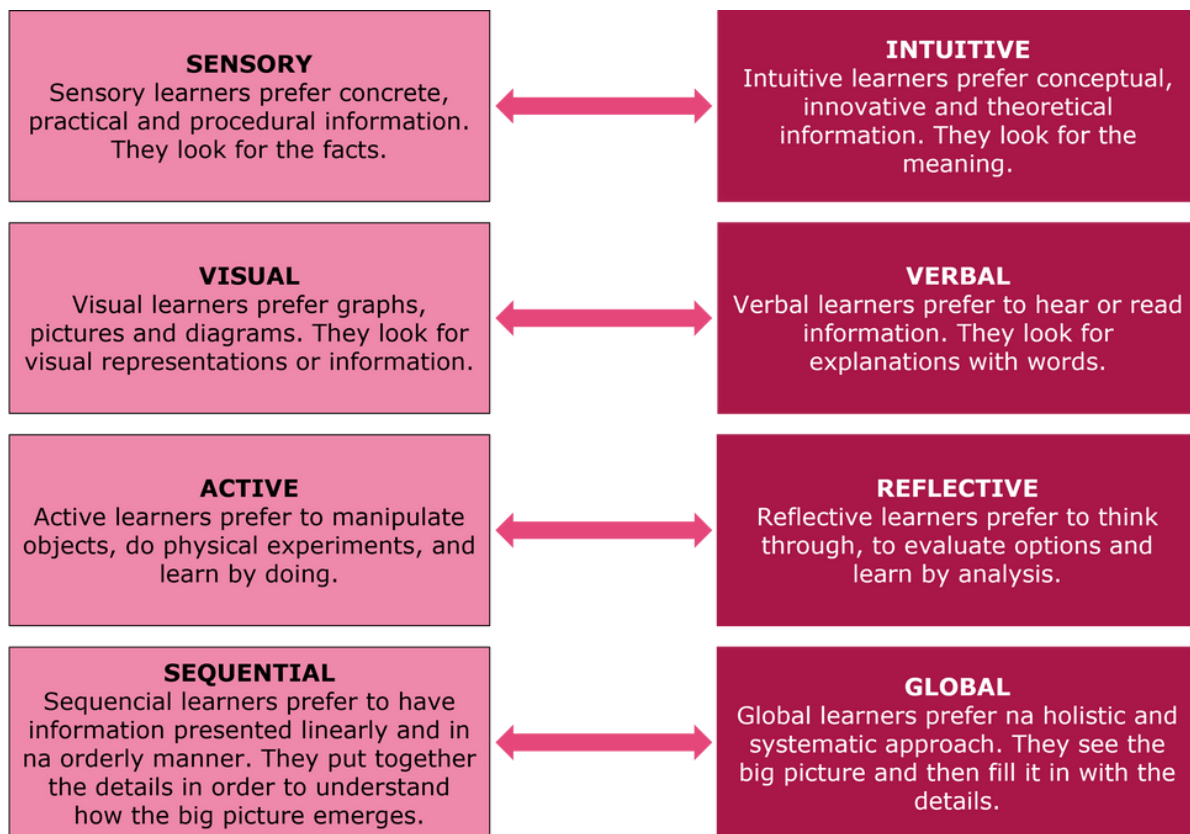
Usually, a learning tool:

- Can be transferable and capable of further change and development depending on context;
- Results in identifiable learning outcomes;
- Can be adaptive to a variety of learning methods and approaches, for example group work, games, discussions, simulations;
- Can support participants in identifying their own learning needs and capacities;
- Engages and stimulates participants in the learning process;
- Should be user friendly and flexible.

Communication and Learning Preferences

'Every time you are facilitating/training or communicating with others, you have ideas and information which you want them to understand and learn effectively and efficiently. Learning preferences and styles vary for each person and in different situations. By considering and understanding that other people can have quite diverse learning preferences, you can improve your communication to transmit your message effectively, in a way that more people can understand, making the most out of their learning potential.

One of the most widely used models of learning styles is The Index of Learning Styles. According to this model there are four dimensions of learning styles. Think about these dimensions as a continuum line with one learning preference in the extreme left, and the other one in the extreme right. The middle of the line is the balance, and this is the key for a great learning capacity, not limiting your ability to receive and understand new information.



Your preferred facilitation and communication methods may in fact be influenced by your own learning preferences, so it's important to understand your own learning preferences and develop skills that help you to learn and teach in a variety of ways. For example, if you prefer visual rather than verbal learning, you may tend to provide a visual learning experience for your learners, which may not be the best learning approach for them.

Be conscious of your preferences and the range of preference of your group. Provide a balanced and well-adjusted learning experience by:

- Sensory-Intuitive: Provide both hard facts and general concepts.
- Visual-Verbal: Incorporate both visual and verbal cues.
- Active-Reflective: Allow both experiential learning and time for evaluation and analysis.
- Sequential-Global: Provide detail in a structured way, as well as the big picture.