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**SELF-STUDY TRAINING UNITS**

1. Getting started
2. Participation and non-participation
3. Disadvantage
4. Getting to know learners
5. Planning *relevant* learning
6. Delivering *engaging* teaching
7. Making learning *useful – maintaining motivation*
8. Making learning *useful – evaluation*

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**Unit 1 – Getting started**

This unit introduces inspirations, questions and terminology that have been at the heart of the MATURE project team’s work in developing support for those who promote learning with and for older people.

**Learning outcomes**:

On completion of this unit you will:

*Gain insight into terminology and concepts in later-life learning and MATURE training.*

* 1. ***Words and definitions***

‘All meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation’ (George Eliot).



Mutual understanding of key words and phrases is an important first step in debating issues and solutions. The jargon of later life needs interpretation.

*Personal reflection*

How would ***you*** define?

* Senior
* Later life
* Disadvantage
* Participation
* Engagement
* Facilitation
* When does ‘later life’ start?
* What is ‘engagement’ something you do for yourself; something that someone does to you; something that you do with others?

6 words and phrases generate multiple meanings which may be lost in translation. Look out for these words as you go through the self-study training units; their definitions may vary from your first thoughts.

* 1. ***Words – the bigger picture***

Sometimes the words we use embrace a range of concepts.

*Consider ‘old’:*

‘Old’ may be defined chronologically (65 years plus); by context (old enough to receive a pension); by your attitude and the attitudes of others (old-fashioned ideas). Definitions arise as a result of political intervention (the setting of age limits); of societal and cultural factors (the older generation); of personal feelings and issues of identity (grandparent = old). ‘Old’ may be positive or negative.

The breadth and range of possibilities make ‘old’ a challenging word. Favouring a chronological definition (everyone over the age is 60 is old) overlooks the heterogeneity of the cohorts of people aged between 60 and death. Negative perceptions attributed to ‘old’ (dependent; in ill-health; frail) may promote identities far removed from fact.

**Over to you**

‘Learning’ is another challenging word with multiple meanings. Analyse ‘learning’ for yourself. What does it mean to you? What do others say about ‘learning’?

On the MATURE website (<http://matureproject.eu/glossary>) you will find a glossary where partners have defined key project words. You may find these definitions useful as you work through the training units. These are not dictionary definitions but reflect the team’s mutually agreed meanings. The complexity of working in different languages on complicated concepts demands reflection and consensus about the terminology to be used. Do MATURE’s glossary definitions express your understanding of its words and phrases? How might you wish to develop or change meanings?

***1.3 Later-life learning***



The MATURE project team takes a profoundly optimistic view of the potential and benefits of learning for and in later life. The MATURE approach is one that places learning at the heart of interventions that contribute to the overall well-being of older adults. It is a critical factor in enabling people to age well.

‘In later life learning is a ***process*** not a ***reward***’ (Jim Soulsby, UK MATURE project team member).

Learning as an adult is a diverse activity. We pick up facts, information, understanding and new skills from a wide range of sources through a variety of methods. Many adults say they neither learn nor wish to learn but most gain new competences successfully and on a regular basis as a result of factors such as need (using new technologies), desire (taking up a hobby) or obligation (managing ill-health).

***Personal reflection***

Think of a new skill that you’ve recently gained.

*Why did you need the skill?*

*How did you go about acquiring this skill?*

*What resources did you use?*

*Who helped?*

***1.4 Protagonists in later-life learning***

*Older adults*

Look at the statistics in the box below. They are drawn from a number of European sources for 2012.

* In 2010 the population of the 27 European member states was 331,000,000
* In 2020 it is estimated to be 340,100,000
* By 2050 it is estimated to be 346,800,000
* In 2010 18.3% of the population of European member states was aged 65 or over
* In 2020 it is estimated that there will be 21.1% aged 65 or over
* By 2050 this percentage will have risen to 29.6% aged 65 or over.
* In 2010 the number of people within the EU aged 65 or over was 60,570,000
* By 2020 the number of people aged 65 or over is estimated to be 71,760,000
* And by 2050? **102,650,000**

The data reflect a key political issue affecting the European Union and the individual states within it:

* Changing demographics and their impact.

**Over to you**

***Personal reflection***

Note your answers to the following questions:

* *What do you understand by the phrase ‘demographic time bomb’?*
* *What is the age profile of your country/region/locality?*
* *What political steps have been taken to address the needs and impact of the ageing population where you live?*
* *How do you view the prospect of living in an ageing society?*

 ***Research***

* Look at the MATURE research report <http://matureproject.eu/research-report> (sections 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1) to discover more about the changing demography of the EU, its impact and ‘ageism’.

*Intermediaries*

**Intermediaries** – individuals, organisations or agencies who work with and on behalf of older adults in a paid or voluntary capacity. They may be services within the public sector (health, social services for example); within the private sector (care homes, for example); within the voluntary and community sector (charities; faith groups; clubs, for example). The remit of their work may or may not have any overt link to later-life learning. <http://matureproject.eu/glossary>

Other people are significant players in learning. Those around us whether friends, family, or community members stimulate interest, provide motivation, become a resource or a facilitator of learning. Social and family networks promote and support engagement and participation.

Intermediaries have a key role to play in brokering connections between older adults and others who can contribute to their well-being.

Later-life networking has its risks. Retirement jeopardises links made during employment. Children grow up and move away. Ageing friends leave networks through ill-health, bereavement, relocation. Creating and sustaining new networks may be inhibited by isolation, frailty, disability or disadvantage. Features of ageing such as loss of confidence or self-esteem affect our ability to make new friends and contacts.

Some intermediary organisations provide opportunities for older people to become part of new communities (faith groups and clubs, for example). These contexts promote support networks in which older adults can survive, thrive and learn. Other intermediaries are potential sign-posters (health and social services) making links between the individual and services that suit their particular need. Learning is one of those services.

***Sign-poster***: someone who is able to offer advice and information to a third party about relevant opportunities that may be open to them. A sign-poster can determine what may be of interest and match that knowledge to what is available and accessible.

***Personal reflection***

Think about your neighbourhood

*What are the options for older adults to meet together and/or to meet other members of your local community?*

***Case study*** – C.O.O.L. (Community Opportunities for Older Learners) project - Leicester and Leicestershire, UK.

1999 was designated the United Nations International Year of Older Persons. One of the outcomes of the Year in the UK was a toolkit to support the mapping of opportunities for older adults to learn in communities. In 2000 a partnership between NIACE (National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education), Leicester Adult Education College and De Montfort University, Leicester was created to apply the mapping process to urban neighbourhoods in the city of Leicester and to rural locations in the county of Leicestershire.

Volunteer older adults were recruited to undertake the research process under the guidance of a professional research assistant. The volunteers developed their own research methodology, planned and delivered the work, reported back and spoke in public forums about what they had achieved. The process became a rich learning-by-doing opportunity for all involved.

One truly amazing outcome was the discovery of an extensive range of opportunities for older people to engage in group activity very close to their homes. 124 groups were found to be operating in just one neighbourhood of the city and in a small rural locality in the North East of Leicestershire, 78 groups were active.

All these groups provided opportunities for networking, for informal learning and in the city, in particular, culturally focussed activities for older members of Leicester’s multiple ethnic communities.

The C.O.O.L. project confirmed that ‘learning’ took place in groups with wide-ranging remits. More often than not learning was neither offered by groups as a benefit of joining nor sought by the members. Those running meetings neither viewed themselves as ‘teachers’ nor their activities as ‘learning opportunities’.

What was missing was publicity; residents were unaware of what was on offer even within their own street.

*Teachers*

In section 1.1 of the MATURE research report (<http://matureproject.eu/research-report>) we set out our views on who ‘teachers’ are. We prefer to use the term ‘learning facilitator’ to encompass a wide range of people many of whom would not consider themselves teachers.

We regard group **learning facilitators** as:

*professional teachers of adults;*

*professional teachers from other educational sectors;*

*volunteer teachers;*

*individuals with a particular skill to share;*

*professionals and volunteers in services that do not have education as their main activity (health organisations; housing providers and services within housing, for example);*

*facilitators of clubs and other informal meeting groups.*

*Learning facilitation: ‘….carries with it a requirement for the teacher to ‘let go’. It demands recognition of the learner’s right to have a say in directing both the nature and content of learning. The skills of good facilitation are: the ability to direct but not control, group management, listening skills, conflict resolution, summarising and the extrapolation of key points, knowledge of what is possible, checking, evaluation and feedback – all conducted in a context that is without bias.’*

*(The LENA handbook* [*http://www.bia-net.org/en/lena.html*](http://www.bia-net.org/en/lena.html)*)*

Learning is of value whenever and however it happens. MATURE training sets out to add value by providing information and ideas gathered from a wide range of sources that deepen understanding of a particular cohort of potential learners.

***1.5 Collaborative and cooperative later-life learning***

The previous experiences of the MATURE project team have led to the conviction that a collaborative approach to the engagement of new learners and to the development and delivery of learning is beneficial.

Learning and teaching are not the prerogative of education providers. Consequently cooperative approaches to later-life learning do not have to be education-led.

The role of learning providers may be to offer support for the creation and establishment of innovative learning by others. Equipping others to function as learning providers has the potential to increase the number and range of contexts in which learning can take place. Broadening opportunities opens access for potential learners to sympathetic environments in which to learn. For providers, working with others may furnish solutions to the intransigent problem of non-participation.

***Case studies*** from Hamburg, Germany showing later-life learning partnerships in action.

 1: Kaltenbergen is an area at the outskirts of Hamburg. The flats are provided by a housing company called HANSA. HANSA asked the Hamburger Volkshochschule whether it would be possible to provide courses near their premises. Older tenants are not mobile and they do not have the money for public transport. HANSA supported the Volkshochschule by distributing a questionnaire to each household, asking what the older people would like to learn. A small programme of 6-7 courses was created and has been offered in this area for more than 6 semesters. It is highly successful; attendance rates are 95%!

2: To reach older migrants is very difficult, but it is easier if AE providers work with migrant organisations. In Hamburg, working with LIMAN, a migrant organisation for Turkish migrants 55+, proved to be the right way: many participants have found their way to courses nearby, or courses have been offered in the rooms of LIMAN. This contact has been in existence for more than 6 years and several new ideas for courses/ learning offers have been developed together.

***1.6 Partnerships***

For the MATURE team ‘partnership’ describes the coming together of individuals, organisations and/or agencies with a common interest in promoting the well-being of adults in later life.

‘Partnership’ includes informal links between individuals (neighbours; community leaders) as well as more formal arrangements (the commissioning of services between organisations). ‘Partnership’ may be functional (support for an individual or group) or strategic (focusing a range of services across a locality, a region or nationally). Good partnerships result in a change for the better in the lives of the people engaged in them.

The MATURE team acknowledges the importance of all kinds of partnership practice in the engagement of new learners and in the delivery of effective learning.

Being able to work in partnership is not always conceptually or practically straightforward. The establishment of a strategic partnership across a wide geographical area will require robust infrastructures, funding and political will. Potential partners may operate in a competitive context that limits their ability to participate or to prioritise the needs of beneficiaries over those of their organisation. In any partnership mutual understanding of and respect for the aspirations of its individual members is critical to success.

Difficulties are less pronounced in informal partnership where individuals act with and on behalf of each other. In the case of disadvantaged adults informal cooperation may be the starting point for engagement.

Awareness of the power and potential of a ‘helping hand’ is a first step in reaching out to the disaffected and disengaged.

**Over to you**

*What examples are there of partnership work that promotes the well-being of older people in your area?*

*What new partnerships might be created? Who would the partners be? What might they achieve together?*

**Unit Summary**

Engagement in later-life learning requires:

 Acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of the cohorts of adults deemed to be in later life.

Appreciation of the fact that the words we use mean different things to different people. Misconceptions arise through careless use of language.

 Acknowledgement that later-life learning works best within a collaborative framework.

Understanding of the people (other than those from education) who can and should be involved in actions to promote well-being through learning.

Awareness of the benefits and difficulties of partnership practice.

**Unit 2 – Participation and non-participation.**

This unit is intended to stimulate thoughts about ‘participation’. Why is it important for seniors? What are the benefits? Who participates in learning? Who does not and why?

**Learning outcomes**:

On completion of this unit you will:

*Gain insight into why participation matters to older adults.*

*Understand who participates in learning in later life*

*Research reasons for non-participation*

* 1. ***Participation and active ageing***

A dictionary definition of participation is: ‘the act of taking part or sharing in something’.

There are many examples of ageing and older adults who participate in a wide range of activities of benefit to themselves and others. Freedom from work leaves time to pursue sports, hobbies and interests; to assist with child or elder care; to support friends; to develop communities through service in local and regional administrations; to contribute to initiatives that help others; to take unpaid work; to learn.



‘Active ageing’ is term defined for us by the World Health Organisation:

( Active ageing means) ‘..continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and

civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Older people who retire from work, are ill or live with disabilities can remain active contributors to their families, peers, communities and nations. Active ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age. Maintaining autonomy and independence for older people is a key goal in the policy framework for active ageing.

Ageing takes place within the context of friends, work associates, neighbours and family members.

This is why interdependence as well as intergenerational solidarity are important tenets of

active ageing.’

World Health Organisation – Active Ageing

<http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html>

**Over to you**

***Research***

The **Active Ageing Index** (AAI) is a jointly managed project by the European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion together with the Population Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

It is a tool to measure the untapped potential of older people for active and healthy ageing across countries. It measures the level to which older people live independent lives, participate in paid employment and social activities as well as their capacity to actively age.

[http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/Active+Ageing+Index+Home](http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/Active%2BAgeing%2BIndex%2BHome)

*Undertake the exercise on the ‘Do it yourself’ page of the AAI site.*

* *What does the information tell you about older adults in your country? How do you compare with your nearest neighbours? With countries further afield in the EU?*

Links between engagement and sustained health and well-being suggest that participation is a key aspiration for later life.



‘Participation’ is, like ‘learning’ and ‘old’, a word that is open to various interpretations. In 1969 Sherry Arnstein endeavoured to capture its meanings using a ladder concept:



The bottom rungs of the ladder describe levels of ‘non-participation’. The objective of ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’ is not to enable people to participate but to allow power holders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants. The tokenistic levels permit people to have a voice but imply that they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded.

The ‘Citizen Power’ levels enable increasing degrees of decision-making. People can negotiate and engage in trade-offs with power holders. At the highest rungs, ‘Delegated Power’ and ‘Citizen Control’, people obtain full power, directing activity and managing actions.

Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969

***Research***

Think about your locality.

* *What opportunities are there for older adults to participate in civic and social life?*
* *What is the nature of their participation? Using Arnstein’s ladder, how would you describe that participation?*

***2.2 The benefits of participation in later-life learning groups***

Participation has become an indicator of well-being in later life. People are encouraged to participate in the broad social and civic sense. Participation in actions that empower people to stay active longer is promoted; participation in learning is one of those actions.

‘Ageing people were discovered as new clients for education, a true human resource and labour-market reserve, whose employability should be fostered and who should be involved in lifelong learning just like other age groups.’

Working and ageing:
<http://www.isfol.it/isfol-europa/progetti-internazionali/implementazione-dell2019agenda-europea-per-l2019adult-learning/copy_of_Workingandageing.Emergingtheories.pdf>

*Case study*

A 2012 report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills in the UK, using data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) found that:

…..being in an older age group and being retired reduced the probability of formal learning; but being older had no impact on informal learning, while being retired was positively associated with informal learning. As for other factors, the level of prior qualifications was found to have a significant impact on both formal and informal learning participation. Those with more education were more likely to participate. Good health was strongly related to participation in informal learning but was not a significant determinant of participation in formal learning (after controlling for other factors). Males were less likely to engage in both formal and informal learning activities than females.

A consistent finding was that informal types of learning (music, arts, evening classes; gym, exercise classes) had an impact on wellbeing. We might speculate that participation in informal learning might occur because of the intrinsic enjoyment of the subject and also sometimes because it provided opportunities for getting out and socialising. Indeed these messages are what emerge from the qualitative literature. It suggests that intrinsic interest in learning and/or in a specific subject, and meeting people are important reasons for learning at older ages. Older adults often appreciated learning because it helped them to be receptive to new ideas, to improve understanding and maintain a positive outlook.

Learning and wellbeing trajectories among older adults in England. October 2012. Jenkins, Andrew and Mostafa, Tarek. Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. UK

Proof of increased well-being as an outcome of attendance at a learning group is welcome. The profile of the learners in the survey poses questions about the breadth of participation, however, the key features being: already educated, healthy, motivated to learn and predominantly female.

***Research***

* To what extent does the profile of older learners described in the UK survey match that of the seniors engaged in learning in your country/region/locality?

***2.3 Participation in later-life learning***

* In 2009 fewer than 5% of adults in the 27 EU states aged between 55 and 64 had participated in education and training during the 4 weeks prior to being surveyed. [Eurostat <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>]
* In 2012 4.5% of adults in the 27 EU states aged between 55 & 64 and 4.5% of those aged between 50 & 74 had participated in education and training during the last 4 weeks. [Eurostat]
* Participation in education and learning decreases with age. [Eurostat and National Institute for Adult, Continuing Education, NIACE (UK) <http://www.niace.org.uk/niace-adult-participation-in-learning-surveys>]
* As a guestimate, fewer than 4% of adults in Europe aged 65 and over are engaged in education and training. Only 1 in every 25**.**
* In 2012 that represents 2,422,800 people aged 65 or over.

**24 out every 25 people aged 65 or over within the 27 European member states are NOT engaged in education, training or learning.**

***Fact***: Participation in learning groups declines with age. Why?

We know about common barriers to participation:

*Situational* : lack of money; lack of time; lack of transport; personal commitments.

*Institutional*: inconvenient schedules or locations for learning; poor creation and dissemination of information; lack of relevant or appropriate programmes; inflexible structures; intimidating entry requirements; lack of empathy.

*Dispositional*: feeling ‘too old’ to learn; lack of confidence because of poor previous educational experience and attainment; tired of ‘school’ and ‘classrooms’; unwillingness to learn.

These common barriers are revealed by research into non-participation and will be weighted differently in different societies. In addition to the barriers we know about there may be others, more personal and not shared: poverty; health issues; family commitments; cultural differences; poor literacy.

Some adults may simply just not like, need or want to learn in a group. Simple solutions to widening participation such as increasing the number courses on offer or tackling common barriers like price and accessibility are unlikely to attract those hostile to the concept.

**Over to you**

* Speak to older members of the family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances about learning in a group. What are their impressions? Why might they join? Why might they not join? How might reservations about joining be overcome?
* Make contact with a group that attracts seniors (a club; faith group, for example). How does that group recruit members? Does it employ special strategies to engage older adults? Could those strategies provide lessons for people in charge of learning groups?

***2.4 The learning group – a barrier to participation***



The very nature of learning groups may be a factor in non-participation.

One of MATURE’s predecessor projects - **LARA**, *Learning - a Response to Ageing* - looked in detail at the kind of learning that might underpin active ageing. LARA focussed on learning environments with the potential to promote independence and autonomy in later life.

***Research***

The role of the teacher and the style of the learning group are discussed in the LARA training manual in the section: ‘Making Experience Count’. <http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html> )

LARA’s emphasis on facilitation, on experiential and active learning was a deliberate attempt to stimulate participation of the kind described in the higher rungs of Arnstein’s ladder. A review of learning opportunities within partner countries led to the conclusion that passivity was a consequence of many popular lecture-style groups. Subject-driven courses limited the participants’ ability to tailor learning to suit specific need. Assumptions were made about what should be taught with scant regard for individual expectations, motivations or abilities. In short too much learning fell into the descriptions of the ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’ rungs of the ladder. People were ‘participating’ in the sense of attending but not experiencing the democratic processes of active learning that move participation from ‘taking part’ to ‘empowerment’.

*Case study – Austria*

REIFER LEBENSGENUSS was a health promotion project in a rural area in Austria. Project activity included finding ways of enabling groups of older adults to meet together in small villages. All the groups were managed by seniors from the respective village. The different groups chose activities that fitted with their respective needs.

One group decided that they wanted to learn computer and internet as they believed this would allow them to stay better included in society. They informed the project coordinator and asked for help.

The coordinator approached the mayor and the university seeking support with finding a computer room with internet connection. The coordinator also sourced a specialist trainer with experience of working with older people.

The group now runs a weekly computer-café in their village using facilities offered for free by the mayor. Other older people have joined. Café members help each other with computer and internet problems in a sociable and relaxed environment.

This participatory learning experience shows ‘teaching’ and the ‘teacher’ in a specific and delimited role. Of interest is the fact that ‘teaching’ was one of several interventions that enabled the Austrian seniors to learn what they wanted to. The learning provider was not the initiator of the process but contributed to a number of actions that together generated a successful outcome.

The way in which learning took place has had a positive and lasting impact on participants, giving them the confidence to run their own learning and to include others in that experience without being led, managed or controlled by an ‘expert’. This learning experience has led to ongoing participation in the wider community.

**Over to you**

Consider the scenario below which is one faced by MATURE’s Slovenian partner ZDUS.

‘….there is a block of apartments where approximately 40 older, retired people live on their own. There are more women than men and mostly they have low pensions, low levels of formal education and few/poor social contacts amongst each other.’

* *Who might act as intermediaries between residents and the outside world in this case?*
* *What might be the triggers for enabling interaction among residents?*
* *How might initial contact be made with residents? Who would be responsible? What might encourage people to take part?*
* *How might learning assist?*

**Unit summary**

Participation:

Is viewed as beneficial for and an indicator of well-being in older age.

In learning declines with age.

May be affected by a number of barriers aggravated by later-life issues.

Understanding what affects participation is a crucial first step in reversing negative trends.

Talking to people who do ***not*** take part is important for planning learning that really widens participation.

**Unit 3 Disadvantage**

This unit considers disadvantage in the context of later life. What are the relationships between participation in learning and disadvantage?

**Learning outcomes**

On completion of this unit you will:

*Gain insight into the impact of disadvantage on the lives of ageing and older adults.*

*Understand ways in which learning might contribute to alleviating disadvantage.*

*Analyse your readiness to widen participation from among disadvantaged seniors.*

***3.1 What is ‘disadvantage’?***

*Case study*

Consider Alex’s story from the CODA project (Breaking Barriers in Language learning) <http://codaproject.eu/>

Alex W is 23 years old. He has been blind since birth and lives with his family in a large house in the countryside, part of which has been adapted to cater for his special needs. He was privately educated in a school for the blind and went to university. Although he has applied for many jobs and would like to work, he is unemployed and currently spends much of his time volunteering for a local charity for the visually impaired where he runs a youth club.

*Is Alex disadvantaged? Why? Why not?*

‘Disadvantage’ takes different forms, has different levels of severity, different effects, different outcomes and, of course, is not confined to the ageing and the old.

Dealing with disadvantage calls on the resources of the individual who suffers it and on those of individuals, agencies and organisations with the means to offer support. Alex has had the support of his family. He has enjoyed educational opportunities that have mitigated the effects of his disability. The disadvantages he suffers as a result of his disability have not disappeared but they might have been more acute without the interventions that have taken place.

A range of factors and situations may cause people to become or feel disadvantaged. Some of these may be ‘visible’ –a life-limiting disability, for example – some less obvious – low self-esteem, poor literacy. Disadvantages have a negative impact on the individual’s success and effectiveness. The greater or the more numerous the disadvantages, the higher the risk.

***3.2 Ageing - advantage and disadvantage***

Within the very large cohort of people who might be considered ageing or old there will be many who would perceive themselves and be perceived as not in any way disadvantaged. There are considerable advantages for the individual in ageing: wisdom; experience; self-confidence; motivation; self-knowledge; the ability to connect generations. There are advantages for societies that make use of the potential within their ageing populations: experience; skills, knowledge and understanding; commitment; continuity.

Rhetoric suggests, however, that ageing and ageing societies are problems not blessings. Age -related discrimination is a worrying issue in Europe:

‘When it comes to discrimination against people aged 55 and over, the survey shows that half of Europeans perceive it as rare or non-existent (50%), whereas 45% of Europeans believe this type of age discrimination is widespread.’ <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_sum_en.pdf>

Forming positive opinions of the advantages of ageing is important. Believing in and doing something about those positive opinions may be key to success in later life. Positivity about ageing is not just for the individual within the process; it ought to be the norm for societies and it is a critical personal attribute for those who work closely with ageing and older adults.

**Over to you**

In the grid below list the advantages that ***you*** might associate with ageing and later life for the individual (personal) and for societies (economic and social). How might all these advantages be used for the benefit of individuals and societies?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Advantages | Making advantages work  |
| Personal | Wisdom | Opportunities to share ideas and understanding to support decision-making and action by others. |
| Economic | Disposable income | Potential for targeted growth in holiday and retail businesses. |
| Social |  |  |

*The disadvantage of ageing*

The ‘problem’ of ageing is spoken of most often in relation to the cost of support for dependent seniors. What of the cost to the individual in terms of well-being?

Becoming and being older may cause acceleration in life transitions:

* Change in work status – from employed to retired
* Changes in family status – children leave home; grandparent-hood
* Bereavement – family and friends
* Relocation – smaller home; different country; different area
* Health – major and minor illnesses
* Loss of independence – care duties; inability to live alone
* Changing self-perception – loss of confidence and self-esteem; issues of identity

***Research***

For more about life transitions look at the LARA Training Manual in the section called ‘Ageing’. <http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html> )

Transitions are challenging when they come about singly and with time to adjust but ageing creates a context where multiple transitions are not unusual, one being the cause of another, for example, ill health leads to a change of location and loss of independence. In this accelerated process the ability to manage is undermined by the scale of change.

So age-related disadvantage might be defined as an accumulation of set-backs caused by a succession of transitions with which the individual is ill-equipped to cope. The individual’s ability to function effectively and successfully is seriously undermined and, in extreme circumstance, independence is lost.

***Case studies***

***John Smith:***

John Smith was 56 years old. All his life he had hidden the fact that he could not read or write. As a child he had been described as “imbecile”, “uneducable”, “retarded” or “educationally subnormal”. John had spent his whole working life on a farm, driving, looking after animals, mending fences; but now, after an accident, he could no longer do that. He was now no longer the bread-winner for his family.

***Jacinta:***

Jacinta did not know how old she was. She knew she was old. She felt old. Other people looked at her as though she was old. She had fled from so many countries: India; Pakistan; Bangladesh; Uganda; Sudan; Egypt; Jordan; Turkey; Bulgaria; Albania and now Italy.

Jacinta had moved so many times with family, without family. When did she lose her family? She no longer knew where they were. Did she have grandchildren, great-grandchildren? And now? What was her life? Kneeling very low on the pavements of Florence, risking hostile feet standing on her, kicking her, knocking over her usually empty begging bowl.

**Over to you**

Disadvantage has not prevented John and Jacinta from being active as they age although it has had implications for their well-being and quality of life. A compulsion to define and quantify abstract concepts such as disadvantage can generate negative attitudes to real individual achievement.

* *What skills will John and Jacinta have accumulated during the course of their lives?*
* *What strengths do they bring to their current situation?*

***3.3 Disadvantage in later life***

The MATURE project has chosen to focus on *specific* areas of disadvantage that may afflict older adults and/or that become aggravated with advancing years:

***Health*** – physical and/or mental conditions that affect an individual’s ability to participate in learning and/or be active in other areas of daily life. They may be conditions that have been life-long, or that arise as a result of ageing.

***Dependency*** – the point at which an individual can no longer function effectively without consistent support from others. This support may come from family members, the state, private care organisations.

***Culture*** – the cumulative knowledge, experience, beliefs and values of a group of people. Older migrants, older members of minority ethnic communities, older members of faith groups may be among those who experience cultural barriers to participation in learning and in the wider communities in which they live.

***Attitude*** – the beliefs of older adults and the perceptions of others about age and ageing people. Positive and negative views of ageing, learning, education, status contribute to the formation of beliefs about oneself, one’s role, one’s rights, the responsibilities of others.

The individual needs knowledge, understanding, skills and support to address the barriers that any of these disadvantages might create. In order to overcome disadvantage a proactive process is required at a time when action may be severely undermined. Inability to effect processes that address disadvantage may lead to withdrawal, non-participation and isolation.

Resources to address disadvantage come from within the individual and from intermediary agencies that can offer support and strategies for successful interventions. Given the range of interventions necessary, a joined-up approach between individual and a number of different intermediaries is the most likely route to a successful outcome.

**Over to you**

Consider John’s story above.

* *What support does John need to address his current situation?*
* *Who might be able to offer that support?*
* *Think about your own locality, which agencies could help someone in John’s position?*
* *How might contact be made between John and those who can help him?*

MATURE’s experience has been that top-down approaches to disadvantage are less successful than bottom-up. Corporately determined and generalised solutions have a tendency to alienate potential recipients who may not recognise that the help offered suits their situation. When agencies place the individual and their needs at the heart of actions that are negotiated and tailored specifically, results are more far-reaching.

*Case study*

The EuBia project report – ‘Getting Older People Involved in Learning’ identifies criteria for a good project focused on senior education:

*The EuBiA Criteria for a good project:*

*1. the project arises from the real and perceived learning needs of older adults*

*2. the project has involved older people in its creation*

*3. the project has been developed by calling on the expertise of a range of people in order to meet the needs of the end users*

*4. there is evidence that the project can be transferred and adapted to meet specific needs (individual, local, regional, national)*

*5. there is evidence that the outcomes of the project can be further developed and sustained in the longer term*

Page 29 <http://www.bia-net.org/images/stories/eubia/pdf/eubiaguide/eubia-guide-en.pdf>

These conclusions arose from the experience of and research by EuBia participants on the theme of reaching out to older people through networking and co-operative practice. The EuBia team, like MATURE partners, view learning provision as a service that operates in conjunction with others to provide solutions to individual need.

***3.4 Barriers to success in addressing disadvantage***



The MATURE team has found instances of inspiring success in engaging disadvantaged adults in actions that impact on their well-being. Some elements of practice are common to all successful engagements:

* A focus on the needs of the individual older adult
* Good models of existing partnership practice and networking that can be built upon
* Cooperative working practice that focuses on the end-user rather than the priorities of the collaborators
* Investment (time and money)
* Strategic support
* Skilled and experienced practitioners
* Practice that promotes empowerment not dependency

In general, MATURE partners discovered that widening participation in learning groups was undermined by the fact that many of the key factors above were missing from delivery models. Practitioners have had little opportunity to develop critical skills to enable them to engage the hardest to reach. Whilst adult education policy-making exhorts providers to widen participation, the context in which they work adversely affects their ability to do so. Success is limited to project work and isolated instances of good practice that are hard to sustain.

Real success comes from changing hearts and minds. Changing hearts and minds relies on people understanding why change is necessary and how it might begin to take place. If learning group leaders adopt a can-do approach to reaching out, engaging and teaching disadvantaged older adults, a critical victory will have been achieved.

**Over to you**

*How ready are you to face the challenge of widening participation from among disadvantaged adults?*

First take a look at: Key competences for adult-learning professionals - Contribution to the development of a reference framework of key competences for adult learning professionals - Final report’

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/keycomp.pdf>

 “A1) Personal competence in systematic reflection on one's own practice, learning and personal development: being a **fully autonomous lifelong learner**.

A2) Interpersonal competence in communicating and collaborating with adult learners, colleagues and stakeholders: being a **communicator, team player and networker**.

A3) Competence in being aware of and taking responsibility for the institutional setting in which adult learning takes place at all levels (institute, sector, the profession as such and society): being responsible for the further development of adult learning.

A4) Competence in making use of one's own subject-related expertise and the available learning resources: **being an expert**.

A5) Competence in making use of different learning methods, styles and techniques including new media and being aware of new possibilities and e-skills and assessing them critically: **being able to deploy different learning methods, styles and techniques** in working with adults.

A6) Competence in empowering adult learners to learn and support themselves in their development into, or as, fully autonomous lifelong learners: **being a motivator**.

A7) Competence in dealing with group dynamics and heterogeneity in the background, learning needs, motivation and prior experience of adult learners: **being able to deal with heterogeneity and groups.**”

* *How many marks out of 10 would you score for competences highlighted in the text? What ‘evidence’ would you produce for your answers?*

*How do you shape up?*

In the boxes below list all of the skills and attributes that you think you have acquired, both professional (teaching and non-teaching) and personal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Professional skills** | **Personal skills** |
|  |  |

Now re- read John’s and Jacinta’s stories above.

* *Which of your skills would you use in engaging with these non-learners and to what purpose?*
* *Could you intervene successfully with John and Jacinta? If not, what is missing from your personal and professional skills inventory?*

**Unit summary**

‘Disadvantage’, like ‘old’ and ‘learning’ is a complex term with varied meanings.

Being or the perception of being at disadvantage may lead to discrimination.

Those who are ‘old’ are not always ‘disadvantaged’.

The ageing process may result in factors that create or increase disadvantage.

Tackling barriers to participation caused by disadvantage is part of the role of the learning facilitator but not solely their responsibility.

**Unit 4 - Getting to know learners**

This unit looks at first contacts. At its heart are best practice principles pertinent to all adult teaching In respect of understanding the motivations, expectations and aspirations of learners in order to plan and deliver relevant learning. In the case of non-participant and hard-to-reach adults first contact can be challenging not least because of the dire consequences of mismanagement.

**Learning outcomes**On completion of this unit you will:

*Recognise role ‘attitude’ plays in later-life learning*

*Understand the teacher’s role in initial engagement practices*

*Gain insight into methodologies for first contact with non-participants*

*Develop awareness of the principles of positive first engagement strategies.*

***4.1 Pushing out the boundaries***

Contexts have the habit of prescribing teacher behaviour. For those working in formal and non-formal adult education institutional constraints can dictate the direction of travel for both teachers and learners. For learning facilitators in sectors outside education, organisational impact maybe different but just as limiting. For learning participants this means that those who understand the rules and, more importantly, have the skills to manipulate them can take part. Non-participation in learning may have quite a bit to do with adverse attitudes on the part of organisation hierarchies or individual teachers.

One of the strengths of adult learning is that it does not have to be, and in many cases is not, constrained by the same limitations imposed on the education of young people. Yet an inclination to replicate school behaviour is in evidence in much of what takes place, dictated by the expectations of teachers and learners and reinforced by the application of rules and regulations.

**Over to you**

*Consider the picture below. Answer the questions.*



1. *Observation*
* *What do you see?*
* *Where and when could the scene be taking place?*
* *Is there something that puzzles or upsets you?*
* *What feelings does this scene create for you?*
* *Describe the situation from the perspective of the old man.*
1. *Analysis*
* *Can you relate to the character portrayed*
* *What could discourage him and keep him away from learning?*
* *Do you believe he is a candidate for learning?*
* *What are the assets he could bring to a class?*
1. *The bigger picture*
* *How could you encourage him to participate?*
* *What do you consider to be your strongest skills as an educator in approaching such an individual?*
* *What are your weakest skills?*

Pushing out the boundaries is a process demanding reflection, analysis, creativity and commitment. In learning, boundaries include not only those imposed by the context but also those that are within individual players – the facilitator, the potential learners and the existing learners. Attitudes, beliefs, convictions, confidence, antagonism must be addressed,

accommodated or overcome.

***4.2 Attitudes***

The influence of attitude – our own and other people’s – is a powerful feature of inclusion and exclusion. What we think, believe and feel about others informs our reaction to them; our ability to influence how other people view us may determine how successful we are at remaining included.

Collective attitudes about states and processes (old age; ageing) may conspire with individual perceptions to create a generally negative response. We have seen in unit 3 that there are serious advantages to be gained from acknowledgment of the good in the ageing process but still at individual and societal levels negative attitudes are widespread.

There are a number of risks inherent in overlooking the positives. If older adults are perceived as problematic there will be fewer actions taken to enable their participation (on the grounds of increased cost; effort; capacity; capability). If negative perceptions of ageing are allowed to prevail, individuals assume those as part of their own self-perception (‘I’m old therefore I can’t learn’). If those who work with older people hold unhelpful pre-conceptions they are unlikely to be successful in stimulating activity to improve well-being.

***4.3 Becoming inclusive***

Conviction that lifelong learning should be for all is the starting point of an ‘inclusive’ attitude. Inclusion in learning demands the minimising or removal of barriers that may exclude someone from any part of the process.

Exclusion is a possibility at any number of points in the learning journey: finding out about learning; accessing a learning opportunity; becoming part of a learning group; learning in a group; making progress.

***Personal reflection***

Social exclusion is:

 ‘the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any social, economic, political or cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society’ (Walker and Walker, 1997).

‘social exclusion of older people is conceptualised mainly as a low degree or even lack of participation in both formal and informal social and/or family networks, including leisure activities, inadequate social support and social isolation.’

Volunteering by Older People in the EU <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/34/en/1/EF1134EN.pdf>

*What do you feel about these definitions? Is there anything missing? Anything wrong? Anything that might be phrased differently?*

* *Does the way in which adult learning happens where you are contribute to or combat the social exclusion of older people?*

In order to come to an informed view, think about:

* Participation rates
* The kinds of learning on offer
* The profiles of learners you know about
* The profiles of older adults you know

Note the factors that **contribute to** inclusion and that **militate against** it in the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Inclusive practice** | **Exclusive practice** |
|  |  |

Changing from exclusive to inclusive requires the interaction of different players in a collaboration that puts the needs of the individual at the heart of the process. Attitudes, principles and practice may all need to adapt; entrenched views and habits will be challenged.

Inclusion is the right option but the hard one. Making learning happen for people marginalised from the process frequently results in learning that looks nothing like the norm. Whether such learning can be accommodated in the local structures in which adult education occurs is a matter of research, judgement and cooperative action.

*Case study*

OED network <http://www.eaea.org/oed-projekt/index.php>

EAEA (the European Association for the Education of Adults) runs the OED (Outreach, Empowerment, Diversity) network. The project has examples of inclusive practice in adult learning from across Europe. These examples were achieved using information gathered from a common ’grid’ designed to capture ‘best practice’. The ‘grid’ provides a useful tool for organisations to evaluate their own practice in relation to inclusion.

Although this project’s focus was not specifically towards later life learning, the examples give clear insights into the acute learning needs of a range of marginalised groups with solutions that involve collaborative practice where leadership is provided by a number of different agencies (not just adult educators).

Evaluating how well your own organisation does in relation to inclusive practice provides vital information for advocacy, changes to practice and examples of internal good practice that can be built upon.

Seeking out good practice provides potential mentors and partners in a change process with models of practice that can be replicated, with support and advice.

***4.4 Finding hard-to-reach learners***



Some may say that the recruitment of learners is not part of the teacher’s role. An inclusive approach demands that all interested parties play their part and that includes teachers.

Once a commitment to widening participation has been made (understanding that ‘widening participation’ does not mean ‘more of the same’), it follows that non-learners become the principal target group of the learning provider.

By definition ‘non-learners’ are unlikely to be known to learning providers. They may be: users of other services, health, for example); members of faith or cultural groups, clubs and societies; regulars in bars, cafes, libraries, shopping precincts, hostels for the homeless; at school gates collecting children; visiting relatives in care. So making first contact is likely to be dependent on building good relationships locally.

Co-operation with other services that are used by older people can help to widen participation by:

* bridging the divide between non-participants in learning and learning providers;
* providing vital information about learning needs;
* signposting learning opportunities;
* co-opting new learning providers.

Intermediary agencies may not overtly embrace the provision of learning within their remit but learning nevertheless happens in their engagement with older adults (advice about health issues; financial and benefits advice, for example).

Learning providers can play a part in highlighting to local intermediaries untapped potential for learning within their organisations. Co-operative action thereafter can turn potential into reality. Intermediaries can, themselves, identify gaps in the learning market and take steps to fill them.

*Case study*

The African Caribbean community in Leicester, UK, had a problem. A number of seniors who met together regularly at a social club organised by a community day centre approached the manager with their concerns. They felt that the younger generation was becoming remote from its cultural roots. The seniors wanted to share their first hand experiences of Caribbean culture. They’d decided that remedies for a variety of illnesses would provide practical advice as well as illustrate their rich heritage. Remedies had been passed on orally; many of the seniors had literacy problems. The seniors thought that new technology would be an effective way of engaging the interest of younger people; the seniors had very limited experience of IT and next to no practical skills.

What happened?

*The day centre manager recognised that the staff at the centre were not able to help with this dilemma.*

*He approached the city council for advice and help.*

*The council put the centre in touch with a local adult education college at the same time indicating how funding could be sought for the project.*

*The adult education college brought together a number of its teachers (literacy; IT; creative writing) and made contact with members of the library service working with Leicester’s diverse communities. Together this group met not only the original group of seniors but also with other Caribbean groups operating in the city. A project was born.*

*The partnership put together a successful proposal for funding that enabled teachers to work with seniors to gather content for a book of remedies; to write that content in ways that reflected the oral tradition; to instigate intergenerational activity between members of the community to create and populate a website. A lot of learning happened.*

The launch party for ‘Caribbean Calabash’, the book and the website (no longer in commission) brought together young and old community members, teachers, librarians, councillors, the media and the wider community of Leicester who now all know:

‘Cobwebs on cuts; donkey milk good for asthma and ginger for indigestion.’

*Note that*:

There was never any mention from the seniors of needing or wanting to ‘learn’. They had an issue and it turned out that learning played a significant part in its resolution.

As part of collaborative action to find hard-to-reach learners the learning facilitator can:

* gather information about learning need;
* interpret that information and suggest action;
* ask questions to improve understanding of different ‘client groups’;
* relay what is needed to organisations;
* identify agencies and individuals as targets for longer term collaboration (other groups with similar interests; services that might progress the work, for example);
* match-make between parties to solve issues (locations for learning; specialist equipment, for example).

***Research***

The LENA project in which members of the MATURE project team have been involved set out to find ways of meeting non-participant and hard-to-reach older adults. LENA tested a focus group model of engagement to determine what kind of learning might attract and motivate marginalised seniors.

Pages 28 – 41 of ‘Learning that works for older people’ (the LENA handbook) <http://www.bia-net.org/en/lena.html> summarises the experiences and outcomes of this focus group work.

LENA’s work gave valuable insight into both the format and content of learning opportunities that might persuade the uncommitted to join in and which would lead to an empowering experience. It led to considerations of the subject matter that was of real importance and of the relationships within groups that promoted real learning. Techniques for facilitation were key to the successful management of focus groups (Page 15 of the LENA handbook).

**Over to you**

*Case studies*

* Read the case studies from Austria, REIFER LEBENSGENUSS (Page 25)**;** Greece, HAEA programme for older adults (Page 29)**;** Slovenia, Simbioz@, e-literate Slovenia (Page 34) in the MATURE research report <http://matureproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MATURE-Research_upload_versionC_100613.pdf>)

Think about the areas of disadvantage that MATURE has focussed on: health, dependency and culture. In the boxes below list all of the agencies that you can think of in your locality that may have contact with older adults disadvantaged in one or more of these ways.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Health** | **Dependency** | **Culture** |
|  |  |  |

* *Do any of the agencies that you have listed already co-operate with learning providers? In what way?*
* *What barriers are there, if any, to co-operation between agencies in your area? What are they? How might they be overcome?*

**Unit summary**

The learning facilitator role contains within it the need to reach out to new learners.

Changing attitudes is part of reaching the hard-to-reach.

Developing strategies for engaging with the hard-to-reach is a collaborative action in which the role of learning facilitator can be clearly identified.

Flexibility, willingness to push out boundaries, empathy and commitment are key features of inclusive individuals and organisations.

**Unit 5 - Planning relevant learning**

This unit explores ways in which the learning facilitator might plan learning that will engage and be meaningful. Group learning can make considerable demands on participants. Subject-driven content has its own language, assumptions and outcomes. There is anticipation that, in choosing what to study, people are already in possession of sets of skills that will enable them to engage with content and bend the outcomes to meet their motivations. For those that do learn this may well be true but for non-participants the whole business of learning can be a threatening mystery.

**Learning outcomes**

On completion of this unit you will:

*Consider models of planning*

*Assess your current practice for its ability to generate relevant and engaging learning*

**5.1 Planning learning**

At the heart of good planning lies an understanding of the reasons what, why, how and where adults need or want to learn.

***Research***

Look at the case studies from Germany, Greece and Slovenia in the MATURE research report <http://matureproject.eu/research-report>:

Page 27 - Computerfrühstück für Ältere, Germany

Page 30 - THE SEELERNETZ group by 50plus Hellas

Page 36 - ZDUS’ self-help group

Look again at the focus group activity reports in the LENA handbook (Pages 28 to 41) <http://www.bia-net.org/en/lena.html>. Pay particular attention to the ‘Lessons for curriculum development ‘sections at the end of each summary. Note in the boxes below key points from the examples about the role of the teacher; the content of learning; methodology; learners.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role of the teacher** | **Content** | **Methodology** | **Learners** |
|  |  |  |  |

For the groups of adults in these examples ‘relevant’ learning is learning that has an impact on their lives. It is learning that is needed to address a problem, real or potential, that, if left unresolved, diminishes their capacity to function as they wish and may have a detrimental effect on their well-being. These are not people who ‘don’t want to learn’ but they are people who want to learn things that make sense to them.

***5.2 The starting point***

Relevant learning happens when the learning facilitator understands what that means for the individuals in a group. Getting to know group members is critical. The easy route is to assume that people who have been attracted by a course called ‘IT for the over 50s’ are there because they share common aspirations about what and how they will learn. Overlooking the inherent heterogeneity of a group of diverse ages, backgrounds, personalities, customs and cultures diminishes the likelihood of successful learning for all.

It is even more important to understand and do something about the individual expectations of those who do not participate. Talking to others in formal or informal contact with non-leaners is a starting point but the most valuable planning conversations will take place between new learners and the learning facilitator.

Overcoming tendencies to cluster people into homogenous bundles requires soul-searching on the part of the learning facilitator.

*Activity*

Choose a well-known celebrity and describe your view of his/her personality; ask friends/colleagues to do the same (for the same person). Compare your descriptions and respond to the following questions:

*Why do we see the same people in different ways?*

*To what extent does our view of ourselves influence our views of others?*

*If to some extent, then why?*

*What do we dislike about others, which might be an unreasonably harsh reaction?*

*What do we tolerate in others, which might be an unreasonably generous reaction?*

*Where do these biases come from?*

*What is subjectivity/objectivity? What is discrimination?*

*What problems can result from judging people subjectively rather than objectively?*

*How can we develop more objectivity in judging others?*

Use this activity with your learning group.

Getting to know about individual learning need and expectation is not a one-off exercise. The information gathered to inform initial programme planning will be built upon as the group evolves. Learning changes people as it happens not just after a learning programme has ended. A constant dialogue between facilitator and group members is necessary to evaluate how things are going; to make changes; to develop new approaches and content that fit with the changing aspirations of the learners.

***5.3 Developing learning content***

A different approach to the development of course and curriculum content is likely to be a necessary step in the engagement of hard-to-reach, disadvantaged seniors. A hypothesis that the MATURE team has worked on is that the common diet of adult learning may itself present barriers to participation and go some way to explaining why there are so many non-learners in later life.

This fact was starkly illustrated in the focus group experiences of LENA project partners from the Czech Republic (Page 28 LENA handbook <http://www.bia-net.org/en/lena.html>) where memories of what learning was like under a totalitarian regime had generated negative expectations that were challenging to overcome.

The Chair gymnastics group at VHS Hamburg (Page 28 MATURE research report <http://matureproject.eu/research-report>) arose out of consideration of the self-perception of previous participants that they were now ‘past it’ in terms of being able to attend ‘normal’ exercise classes.

MATURE partners have developed a commitment to a view of curriculum and course development, fine-tuned and tested during predecessor projects in which members of the team have collaborated.

The view of learning that has emerged is that:

* It is an active and experientially based activity.
* It is conceived and delivered with consistent input from the end user.
* Its effectiveness is judged by the impact on lives and individuals rather than the sum of quiescent skills.
* Its outcomes are many and varied; the most effective for older adults being those that deliver competences to underpin proactive longevity.
* It is not the sole preserve of ‘education’. Collaboration and cooperation are key to the development and delivery of learning that works.

The implication for planning is that it is a three stage process:

1. Networking
2. Consultation
3. Implementation



**Over to you**

The ‘teacher’ has a part of play in all of these stages. To find out what that is and to understand the planning process, use the references in the ‘Further research and information’ box below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What** | **Why** | **Further research and information** |
| Networking | To connect all those on a local/regional patch who work with and/or for older adults (including representation from individual older adults).Through collaborative action, to determine learning need and to develop cooperative solutions to that need. | LISA – Learning in Senior Age [www.bia-net.org/lisa](http://www.bia-net.org/lisa)) EuBiA – Broadening People´s Minds in Ageing, [www.bia-net.org/EuBiA](http://www.bia-net.org/EuBiA) |
| Consultation | To hear about learning from older people and from their representatives/supporters.To determine the nature and content of learning that might work for disadvantaged non-participants.To negotiate how, when and where learning might be provided.To review what learning will be relevant. | LENA – Learning in the post professional phase [www.bia-net.org/lena](http://www.bia-net.org/lena) |
| Implementation | To ‘translate’ the messages from networking and consultation into learning opportunities.To explain to potential participants how what has been planned meets their desires and motivations as expressed in the consultation process. | LENA – Learning in the post professional phase [www.bia-net.org/lena](http://www.bia-net.org/lena)LARA – Learning, a Response to Ageing: [www.laraproject.net](http://www.laraproject.net) |

* 1. ***Literacies for Ageing***

During the course of previous project work it has been apparent that the kind of content likely to be of most appeal to non-participant older adults addresses later-life concerns: maintenance of good health (diet, exercise, mental stimulation); keeping up with new technologies; staying safe (in the home and outside); reminiscence, reflection and the sharing of previous experience.

The ageing process will include events and experiences that can be built upon to provide a rich repository of skills and understanding. Growing older may result in an impairment of the individual’s ability to re-ignite, acquire and exert these competences to enable him/her to tackle future challenges. Disadvantage may exacerbate this impairment.

**Over to you**

In order to better understand competences for ageing the LARA project team (LARA – Learning, a Response to Ageing), developed a paradigm – Literacies for Ageing – that described what people need to be able to do to lead active, participatory and autonomous later lives.

Take a look on page 16 of the LARA toolkit: <http://www.laraproject.net/images/stories/lara/pdf/trainingpackage/en-lara-toolkit.pdf> )

The LARA paradigm has at its heart ‘Learning Literacy’. The premise is that actions described within Learning Literacy make a positive contribution to overcoming challenges identified in other literacies.

The paradigm is a flexible tool that helps focus thoughts and ideas about the ways in which learning can be formulated to be of use. Elements of the Learning Literacy section are consistent, describing the process of learning that is transferable to the situations outlined in the other literacies.

*Activity*

Below is a development of the LARA literacies paradigm to enable you to identify the challenges that disadvantaged seniors may face.

Step 1. From your own knowledge and experience add to the effects of disadvantage in Health, Culture, Attitude and Dependency.

Step 2. Consider what outcomes might be achieved by applying the action of the ‘Learning Literacy’ to the effects of disadvantage that you have listed.

Step 3. Consider what kinds of learning programmes might lead to these potential outcomes.

* 1. ***How do you measure up?***

Having considered the planning practices outlined in this chapter, time to reflect on your own work:

* *Do you already use (a) networking (b) consultation to inform planning? With whom? In what ways?*
* *In devising learning content how do you accommodate the individual learning needs of people in your group?*
* *What experience have you already had of working with people with a disadvantage? In what ways did your planning change to accommodate their needs?*
* *How does your current practice contribute to the development of competences for ageing as expressed in the LARA paradigm?*

**Unit summary**

Planning learning:

Requires understanding of what is relevant for learners in later-life.

Demands a new look at the style of learning programmes, their content and the methodologies employed.

Works well when undertaken in collaboration with others not least the end user.

Requires adaptability and flexibility from learning providers at individual and organisational level.

**Unit 6 - Delivering engaging learning**

Consideration of the needs of disadvantaged, hard-to-reach learners will have an impact on every part of the teaching process. What happens once a group has been formed and learning negotiated will be just as important as finding participants in the first place.

**Learning outcomes**On completion of this unit you will:

*Reflect on aspects of the group as a support for learning*

*Understand which methods promote autonomy and independence in learning for seniors*

*Considers ways in which equity and equality can be promoted within a group situation.*

* 1. ***The importance of group learning for disadvantaged seniors***



One of the most debilitating consequences of later life and of disadvantage can be isolation.

 ‘….social contact and relations with other people are thought to have a considerable positive influence on an individual’s well-being and health. Indeed, the continued participation of older persons in society may maintain their feeling of self-worth, thereby avoiding risks associated with isolation, a loss of confidence or reduced self-esteem.’

Eurobarometer Active Ageing report 2012 <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_378_en.pdf>

The group part of group learning, therefore, becomes of real importance. Interaction, communication, informal problem solving, formation of friendships, support, empathy and fun are all possible process outcomes from group learning. Their contribution to the individual’s learning journey should not be underestimated.

A variety of strategies and tasks is needed to enable individuals to interact in different ways and combinations; the learning facilitator will manage these interactions to stimulate learning. Understanding the potential of various in-group combinations is a starting point.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Size | Tasks | Impact on learners |
| Individuals | Personal reflectionGenerating personal data | Personal focus increases‘safety’Personal focus meanspositive startBrings a sense of belongingto and ownership |
| Pairs/threes | Generating dataChecking out dataSharing interpretationsGood for basiccommunication skillspractice (eg. listening,questioning, clarifying)Good size for cooperativeworking | Builds sense of safetyBuilds sense of confidence by active involvement (self-belief)Lays foundation for sharing and co-operating in bigger groupReticent members can still take part |
| Fours/tens | Generating ideasCriticising ideasUsually sufficient numbersto enable allocation ofroles and responsibilities,therefore wide range ofwork can be tackled (eg.problem solving, presentation) | Decreasing safety forreticent membersStill difficult for members to ‘hide’Strong can still enthuse the weakSize of group still smallenough to avoid sub-sets forming |
| More than ten | Size hinders discussion butworkshop activities arepossible | Difficulties in maintainingsupportive climate‘Hiding’ becomes commonDivisive possibilities withspontaneous splintering into sub-sets |

Processes for creating and managing interactions within a group are well documented. Implications for the learning facilitator are the need:

* to differentiate (time spent with different sections of the group; different activities for different sub-sets; different outcomes sought etc.);
* to acquire strategies for creating and changing the combinations of participants;
* to create, select and apply resources that enable people to work in different ways towards a common goal;
* to manage their own time so that it can be spent equitably supporting the learning that takes place.

**Over to you**

*Suggestions for creating groups*

* Colour codes – issue colour cards; people with the same colour work together.
* Number codes – number participants from 1 to 3 , for example – all the number 1s work together.
* Playing cards – issue each participant with a playing card – all the Aces work together.
* Birthdays – ask participants to form groups with others whose birthday falls in the same month.
* Self-selection around a particular task or activity – people who all want to debate; read etc.

*What might you add to this list?*

* 1. ***Experiential, active learning***

The proper management of groups has a lot to do with making experiential learning happen effectively.

Key to successful learning is acknowledgement of and respect for the experience that adults bring to any group activity. Building on that experience to achieve new learning has proved both effective and motivating. Experiential learning is not just a good way of acquiring new skills it also builds confidence, self-esteem and the participatory competences that isolated adults may have lost.

*Activity*

Being able to use experience is dependent on bringing to light the experiences you’ve had.

Consider this question and answer the questions below:

**What thirty seconds of your life would you most want to re-live, if you only had thirty seconds left?**

*What does your chosen highlight say about the type of person you are?*

*How does your current life and likely outcomes compare with your chosen past- life highlight?*

*Are you working towards or away from what really makes you happy and fulfilled? If away from, how might you regain and redirect your focus?*

*Does your chosen highlight provide clues for passions and talents which you are currently under-utilising or neglecting?*

*Did your highlight come by planning or accident?*

*What do our best moments tell us about making the most of what time we have?*

The experiential approach favours the development of reflective and analytical skills as well as the acquisition of new learning in order that we might benefit in a more positive fashion from what has gone before.

For an update on Experiential learning look at the LARA training manual Page 18 and try out the Facilitator checklist on Page 21 of the LARA toolkit.

(<http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html>).

MATURE partners have elected to develop the theme of experiential learning by looking in detail at two aspects. The first is a particular method of simulating individual reflection through aesthetic experience. You tested it in Unit 4, section 4.1:

*Aesthetic Experience - a notion understood as the systematic exploration of artworks- can contribute by unearthing integrated knowledge, encompassing critical, reflective and affective dimensions of learning. Such an experience enlarges the perspectives for approaching the processes and the phenomena, for “seeing” them from a different point of view, for deepening aspects beyond appearance and for better understanding causal conditionings (Kokkos, 2010).*

The Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig multi-lateral project ‘ARTiT’ has elaborated on this theme. Follow this link to learn more about their work: <http://artit.eu/en/ARTiT_METHODOLOGY_AND_MODULES_EN.pdf>

Sharing personal experiences in a public forum (the group) can be painful and may be resisted by some. Finding the means to ‘anonymise’ that sharing process enables people both to reveal experience and to step away from and critically reflect upon their thoughts. Once shared, the combined experiences of the group can be put to use.

Self-determination and self-organisation are important factors in maintaining autonomy in later life. They are the second focus of MATURE in the context of experiential learning.

**Over to you**

*Case study*

A group of elderly women, German and Turkish, want to go on a trip in Hamburg. The weather is nice; they have a little money to spend. Now several options are on the table. A longish discussion goes on and there is no agreement in sight.

One of the women asks the facilitator to make a decision herself since the group is not able to reach a decision.

The story can have several endings:

The facilitator decides on one of the options and explains why she decided that way.

The facilitator gives the opportunity to vote and the majority counts.

The facilitator declines to take matters in her hand and gives the decision (and the decision making process) back to the group.

* *Evaluate each of the possible outcomes of the case study for their contribution to the self-determination of the group and of the individuals in it.*

*Consider this extract from the case study above:*

‘A group of elderly women, German and Turkish, want to go on a trip in Hamburg. The weather is nice; they have a little money to spend.’

* *How many different activities can you think of that will support these learners to achieve their goal? What resources might they need?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Resources** |
| 1. Research into what is on offer in Hamburg
 | MapsInformation brochures and guidesInternetTransport options |
|  |  |
|  |  |

* 1. ***Facilitation***

Facilitation is the natural bedfellow of experiential teaching and learning. It describes the responsibilities of the teacher which include:

* to keep the group together and let it grow (participation, communication, decision-making, leadership, conflict resolution);
* to summarise and synthesise information;
* to appreciate and encourage individuals within the group;
* to initiate discussion, articulating unsolved group issues;
* to celebrate, use and manage the heterogeneity within the group;
* to be accessible to learners, listening to them, their anxieties, thoughts, problems, joys;
* to share one’s own life experiences with the learners;
* to provide a sense of direction by giving feedback;
* to develop a close rapport with learners and to build their trust and confidence;
* to set up learning sessions that enhance the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants;

**Over to you**

*How does your methodology match up with the features of facilitation described above?*

* 1. ***Equality and equity***

Knowing about the motivations, aspirations and expectations of the people in your group; managing group activities to secure experiential and active learning; applying facilitative rather than didactic methodologies are all elements in the creation of democratic and fair group learning. Creating the right environment for equitable practice is key to achieving equality.

Equity relies on actions taken by facilitator and learners to ensure that the individual achieves what s/he aspires to achieving, in ways that are appropriate and relevant. Equity is not about treating everyone the same. Giving all group members an equal chance to succeed may mean spending more time with, doing more work with, lending more support to one individual than to others. In a group where participants are disadvantaged the ratio of time spent with those individuals may be significantly more. Careful group management will be necessary to ensure that ***all*** members feel valued and are progressing. Actions may include the co-option of other group participants to facilitate learning or to mentor and support those at disadvantage.

Additional group behaviours that contribute to equitable group management include:

* Fostering respect
* Challenging negative attitudes and unacceptable behaviours
* Celebrating successes, diversity and difference
* Valuing contributions, ideas and opinions

How and why these are important can be discussed with group members. A communal task enabling the group to debate what actions will demonstrate conformance to these practices may lead to self-determined ‘group rules’.

**Unit summary**

The delivery of learning in a group provides benefits for participants over and above the acquisition of news skills and knowledge.

Effective group management is a key skill for the learning facilitator generally and, in particular, when accommodating disadvantaged and/or disaffected learners.

The manipulation of group practice to generate opportunities for experiential and active learning fosters empowerment among participants.

Considerations of equity and equality are paramount in groups attended by marginalised and disadvantaged seniors.

**Unit 7 Making learning useful – maintaining motivation**

This unit considers ways in which newly engaged learners might be encouraged to pursue learning beyond the initial experience. It addresses motivational strategies within the learning group and steps that can be taken to embed learning in daily life.

**Learning outcomes**

On completion of this unit you will:

*Understand the impact of motivation*

*Gain insight into processes and methods for maintaining the motivation to learn*

*Understand how and why motivation for learning can be sustained*

***7.1 Maintaining motivation in the group***

A number of motivating strategies have been discussed already: the development of relevant content; perfecting delivery; the management of groups. Imagine the group leader as a juggler:



Keeping motivation going is just like keeping a set of balls in the air – if one drops, momentum is lost and learning undermined.

Those learners whose experience of learning as an adult may be non-existent, who have overcome considerable barriers to attend a learning group and who may be deeply suspicious of what will happen will require more effort than the committed learner.

We have promoted the idea of collaborative practice in support of engendering motivation to participate. Whilst overall responsibility for doing something about motivation within the learning group remains with the leader there is good reason to co-opt others into the process.

***7.2 In-group strategies for motivation***

*(a) Being a group member.*

The democratic, participatory learning group that is the result of good facilitation requires that members feel comfortable with their role and that of the other members.

Social interaction often provides the group leader with more valuable information about group members than their contribution to group activities. It’s in a relaxed atmosphere that you learn about particular skills or knowledge; likes and dislikes; anxieties and opinions; character and characteristics.

*Sociability checklist*

- Make time for social interaction

- Create a relaxed environment (the provision of tea and coffee; opportunities to circulate and meet other members, for example)

- Understand how all members of the group wish to be treated

- Respect participants’ personal customs (forms of address; routines; culture)

- Discuss and agree group rules (no mobile phones; no inappropriate interruptions, for example)

- Engage group members in group management (leading discussions; preparing refreshments; locking up)

- Instigate group activities outside learning sessions (visits to places of interest; meeting for coffee)

- Ensure that everyone CAN take part, making sure that they do but understanding that not everyone participates to the same degree or in the same way

- Challenge behaviour that is not acceptable to the group

- void the creation of cliques

*What ideas can you add to secure positive social interaction among group members?*

*Case study*

**Computerfrühstück für Ältere (computer breakfast for older people)**

Our German colleagues at the Volkshochschule in Hamburg have instituted a new course to attract non-participants. When asked:

*What was key to making learning attractive to these older adults?*

Their answer was:

We thought about key messages very hard. They are: openness (you only pay when you come); no commitment, you learn those things you want to learn; no curriculum but a very social atmosphere (coffee, tea, something to eat); a “learning helper” waiting in the background to help when help is needed.

Finding the right time: late morning, same day as the farmers’ market.

Finding the right “teachers”: they had to have the right attitude (trust the learners to steer their own learning process, don’t overwhelm them with information that is not asked for)

Openness for all: migrants, disabled persons, slow learners. Sometimes learners questioned these values and there had to be meta- discussions among the group to make clear that “all persons” means “all persons” - nobody is excluded.

New learners who may not have previously been in a group might need time and support to adjust. Make their introduction painless. Introduce a new member to one other empathetic member in the first instance; gradually increase the number of introductions so that the new learner gets to know people bit by bit. Be on the lookout for relationships that will not work. Learning groups replicate life; there will be members with little in common. Aim for respect of differences; do not enforce relations that may become upsetting or disruptive.

*(b) Take the mystery out of ‘learning’*

MATURE partners have found a recurring theme among non-participant seniors: ‘learning is not for me’. The source of this attitude is most often attributed to age (‘I’m too old to learn’) or previous educational experience (‘I was never any good at school’).

More deep-rooted and challenging reasons have also emerged. Failure to acquire basic skills (in literacy and numeracy) as a child may have led to a lifetime of concealment. The manipulation of education for political purposes leaves generations of older people suspicious of the motives of those who promote learning.

Even words are important. Education has a jargon of its own and the use of educational terminology can be deeply off-putting for nervous learners.

Learning facilitators need both the confidence and the skills to explain the learning process in easy-to-understand steps and language.

At every stage tell people:

* what they are going to be doing;
* why they are doing it;
* what the likely outcome of having done it will be.

Encourage participants:

* to ask questions;
* to say whether they like or don’t like doing things in a certain way;
* to ask for reiteration and reassurance.

Make it the norm:

* to interrogate the process of learning;
* to give participants the opportunity to bend learning to their liking;
* to use group members to talk about their learning experiences and tips.

*(c) Celebrate small steps*

Measuring learning is an important way of marking progress and of stimulating continued commitment. For new learners formal processes of measurement (tests; marks) can prove an insurmountable barrier. Nevertheless, showing that something is working is one of the best ways of instilling confidence.

Successful measurement of learning relies on setting achievable learning goals. Over-ambitious targets will undermine confidence and reinforce negative attitudes; over-simplified targets can be patronising.

Remember to acknowledge outcomes unrelated to the central theme of the learning group. Success in all aspects should be celebrated whether in the understanding of what has been taught; in the personal skills used to become a competent group member; in competences associated with the learning process.

**Over to you**

Methods for acknowledging success include:

* observation with feedback (‘did you realise what you just did then?’)
* co-option of other group members (‘ask X to show you how to ….’)
* learning diaries kept by the individual to map the journey
* testimonial evidence (what groups members notice; how learning has been put into practice in daily life; what impact learning has had on personal attributes (e.g improved confidence))

*Add your own ideas for the informal measurement of learning.*

*(d) Illustrate how small steps contribute to a greater whole*

Show learners how every achievement contributes to a longer term goal. It’s important not to lose sight of the big picture by focusing too closely on its constituent parts.

Use an analogy such as wall-building. The wall is the ultimate goal; the bricks, the steps in the achievement of that goal; the mortar, the links between the steps that build towards the goal; the builder, the learner who makes it all happen.



**Over to you**

*What motivates you to begin something new? What lessons from your own experience would you use to motivate others?*

***7.3 Motivation to keep on learning***

One of the aspirations of the learning group facilitator must be to inspire commitment to learning as a force for good. This does not mean that a commitment is made to attending the group for the foreseeable future. One of the best indications of success in group learning is the rate at which participants feel confident enough to leave to apply what they have learned or to pursue other options.

*The application of learning*

Showing people how what has been learned can be applied to other learning underpins independence.

*Case study*

*A European project team (VIVACE) looking at ways to engage disadvantaged groups in language learning came upon study circle methodology prevalent in Slovenia.*

‘In Slovenia, VIVACE works with disadvantaged adults through the well-established study circle method, which is a highly learner-centred approach.  A wide range of different kinds of learners took part in languages study circles – prisoners, those with hearing difficulties, the blind and visually impaired, young people with learning disabilities and victims of war.

A study circle is fuelled by the needs and interests of the individual, who, to the best of his/her ability, actively participates in learning and works within the circle.  Every study circle decides by itself what, where and how they will learn.  Each study circle has a mentor who supports the group.  For the language study circles they were not required to speak the foreign language but were given training in study circle methods.

Our language study circles used cooking, literature, travel and music as a focus for their language learning. Besides selecting the content, participants also select their own goal.  Learning in a study circle always leads toward concrete conclusions: products, events, exhibitions, excursions, literary evenings, publishing of brochures, theatre plays... so not only does the circle encourage the creativity of participants, but also contributes to the development of their community.   Languages study circles in Slovenia have produced quizzes, comic strips, posters and articles for in-house publications.’

<http://codaproject.eu/>

The VIVACE case study demonstrates how people can direct and take charge of their own learning. The model presupposes that at least some of the participants will be committed and know how to go about learning. The informality of these self-organised groups has enabled people under a range of disadvantages to both participate and learn.

The processes that the individual applies to build skills, knowledge and understanding are transferable from one context to another. The more someone takes control of these processes, the more likely they are to be able to avoid reliance on other people.

Straightforward exercises that encourage the application of competences to alternative tasks act both as reinforcement of learning and a demonstration of its application. A focus on analysis of the stages that are undertaken rather than the end product helps.

*Case study*

*In a cookery class for men, participants are learning to make a nutritious soup. They have discussed what ‘nutritious’ might mean; they have talked about the best places to buy ingredients. The group leader has explained how recipes work and everyone has tried out weighing, measuring and estimating quantities. Individually they have been out and bought the ingredients they need. Together and with support from the leader they are making their soup ready for lunch after the group meeting. At that lunch the group leader suggests that they try out another recipe of their choice before the next meeting and report back on the outcome.*

The controlled process of creating the soup has given participants insight into following recipes. In the first instance working with others and with support gives confidence to try again unaided. Not everyone will want to cook their own recipe immediately; some may need two or three attempts at communal cooking before they feel safe enough to do so. The pioneers, willing to chance their luck straight away, will contribute to the general understanding of the process and stimulate a ‘can do’ attitude within the group.

Clearly learning how to cook has an immediate impact on daily life. The route between some learning content and its application is short and quite obvious.

The cookery course develops understanding of a process that consists of: dealing with instructions; being accurate and doing things in a particular order. Alongside this comes the acquisition/refreshment of ‘hard’ mathematical skills (weighing, measuring and estimating). The process of cooking then has potential for transfer to a number of other practical situations (preparing the ground for planting vegetables; mixing concrete; putting flat-pack furniture together).

**Over to you**

* *If you learn how to do yoga, what other things might the process learning enable you to do?*
* *What about learning to manipulate spreadsheets?*

People who have lived long lives have a store of strategies and experience for dealing with what comes, whatever their circumstances. Sometimes these assets have become reflex (they just happen); sometimes they have been forgotten; sometimes they seem obsolete.

The learning process provides an opportunity for a review of existing competences.

Disadvantaged adults may be at greater risk of underestimating what they can do. If, within a learning group, they are enabled to apply what they know to new situations, confidence in their own abilities will improve.

**Unit summary**

Keeping motivation alive is key to successful learning.

Considerations of motivation are integral to all aspects of the planning and delivery of learning.

Disadvantage may contribute to demotivation. Attention should be given to actions that stimulate motivation throughout the learning process and promote positive views of ageing.

Demonstration of the potential of learning to make an improvement on life can be a powerful motivating force.

**Unit 8 - Making learning useful - evaluation**

*“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”.* (Mahatma Gandhi).

Learning has a bearing on living. The benefits of learning, whether ‘quick fix’ or longer term, are evidenced best in the impact that has been made on life. Active and autonomous older age relies on maintaining and acquiring skills for support as well as nurturing the will and confidence to stay enthused and engaged.

**Learning outcomes**

On completion of this unit you will:

*Review the ‘what, how and when’ of evaluation*

*Reflect on success indicators and measurements of learning*

*Develop concepts of ‘progression’ that may apply to hard to reach disadvantaged older people.*

* 1. ***Defining evaluation***

**Over to you**

What’s your view of the evaluation process? How would you answer the questions below?

*What needs to be evaluated and for which purpose?*

*What will I do with the information gathered? Will I be able to use my findings?*

*Who should evaluate (internal, external)?*

*How to evaluate (formal/informal)?*

Working out what is working and what is not; making judgements about what has been gained and what has not; valuing progress; using information to do better are crucial aspects of successful learning.

There are many layers to the evaluative process:

* The evaluation of learning sessions (methods used; content; outcomes) to inform the planning of future meetings.
* The evaluation of the performance of individuals in a group to identify success, new learning need and additional support.
* Management and analysis of all processes of evaluation that take place within a group (peer evaluation; self-evaluation) to ensure their outcomes feed into future conduct and content.
* Self-evaluation by facilitator and participants of their own performances.
* Peer evaluation.
* External evaluation.
* Formal and informal evaluation.

The most important facts about evaluation are that:

* it is a constant and ongoing feature of the learning process, not something that is simply applied at the end;
* it is a cooperative process involving the equitable consideration of all points of view;
* it is positive process aimed at ‘doing better’ as a result of acting upon opinion and advice;
* it is a dynamic process. Outcomes from evaluation require action.
* Understanding and taking part in evaluation is a valuable life skill generating transferable competences for the individual.
	1. ***Informal evaluation***

It may be that organisations have to apply evaluation processes in conformance with quality regulation. Formal evaluation requirements will have to be sensitively handled but facilitators should be aware that what is externally imposed may not be what is required to make a success of a learning group. Thinking about evaluation is part of the facilitator role and bolstering formal requirements with processes that generate timely and usable information will be necessary.

**Over to you**

Think about evaluation processes that you have used or taken part in.

*List the means by which evaluation was sought (questionnaire; interview).*

*What happened as a result of the evaluation process?*

*Rate the evaluation techniques you have listed. Which is the most effective? Which is the least effective and why?*

Evaluation requires reflection; outcomes need to be analysed and solutions sought. Evaluation is a life skill and adults will be more or less competent in it as they join the group. Reinforcing the positives of evaluation may re-ignite or engender valuable assets transferable to other aspects of life. Disadvantage may undermine the capacity for analysis and action-planning. Reacquiring these skills will be an important part of the learning process.

The key players in informal evaluation are participants and the facilitator operating democratically. The facilitator does not impose evaluation, s/he takes part in it. Interactions will include: individual reflection; reflection in pairs, small groups, whole groups.

A useful tool for stimulating reflection is the mind map which can be used for individual or communal activity, to stimulate discussion and debate and to inform consensus driven action.

**Over to you**

Mind maps begin with a central concept that the rest of the map revolves around. Begin by creating an image or writing a word or phrase that represents that first concept.

From that concept, create main branches (as many as needed), that each represent a single word that relates to the central concept.

Then, create sub-branches that stem from the main branches to further expand on ideas. These sub-branches will also contain words or phrases that elaborate on the topic of the branch it stems from. This helps develop the overall theme of the mind map.

*Have a go! Your central concept is ‘The purpose of evaluation in late-life learning’ what might you add to the mind map?*

Look at the LARA training manual Page 20 (<http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html>) where you will find the 5+ method – another means of stimulating reflection.

*How might you adapt the proposed model to encourage consideration and analysis of learning attainment?*

* 1. ***Outcomes from evaluation***

Evaluation processes will provide a view of learning that has taken place, how it happened, what was more or less enjoyable, what worked.

In a facilitated and experiential learning environment care should be taken to report all outcomes even (or especially) those that exceed the stated aims of the programme. ‘Report’ at least in the informal sense by feeding back to participants the full range of competences that has been acquired. It will be of particular importance to highlight achievement of any or all of the competences of the ‘Learning literacy’ in the LARA project’s literacies paradigm (LARA toolkit Page 16 (<http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html>).

Learning to learn (again) opens access to the ‘know-how’ necessary to tackle other skills gaps. The processes described in LARA’s Learning Literacy are key to autonomy and independence. Process outcomes feature in even the most subject-driven, traditional learning contexts and should be acknowledged for what they are – invaluable tools for future learning.

**Over to you**

Look at the case study of the SeniorenUni Basel on Page 13 of the LARA training manual (<http://www.laraproject.net/outcomes/lara-training/lara-training-package.html>).

The case study illustrates one way in which the LARA literacies paradigm itself can be used by learning providers to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes of learning.

*Think about a learning opportunity that you have delivered, received or know about. Evaluate how and to what extent (giving examples) the competences of ‘learning literacy’ were promoted.*

***8.5 Action planning and progression***

At the end of it all the aspiration is that learners, who have joined a group for the first time, overcoming many barriers to do so, will have been ‘bitten by the bug’. They’ll want to continue both in learning and in the upward trajectory in their lives to which learning will have contributed.

Part of the action planning process will include information-giving - straightforward advice about what might be possible next, how to find out about it, and how to engage with it. Use the experience of the group to debate what might be of interest to the individuals within it. Point out that progression in learning is not always linear but can be from one ‘subject’ to another, from learning to action. Reinforce the message that being able to learn opens up options beyond that of joining another group. Stress that being part of a group is not the only outcome of being able to learn.

**Over to you**

MATURE’s focus is later-life learning.

 *Are its principles and practice transferable to other stages of life?*

 *What additional practices from other sectors are transferable to improve participation by
 disadvantaged seniors?*

 *What have you learned from MATURE?*

 *How will that change your practice in the short and longer term?*

**Unit summary**

Evaluation is a pre-requisite of teaching and learning and a valuable life skill.

Reflection, analysis and action planning are valuable competences in combatting disadvantage.

Evaluation practice may exceed the demands of institutional processes.

Evaluation of all outcomes of learning – hard, soft and process – gives a multi-faceted picture of achievement with the potential to stimulate further engagement.

Evaluation is not a chore it is a necessity.

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