Learning and Change: An approach to Participatory Training
Those who have been engaged in promoting development in different capacities know how difficult and complex such an endeavor can be. Be it education or health care or rural development, the very act of promoting development has built in difficulties. The very nature of development implies change. At one level, this change includes changes in physical infrastructure. This may include provision of roads, buildings, irrigation and transportation mechanisms, communication, land improvement etc. At another and perhaps more complex level, development also implies change in social and human infrastructure. Improvements in health care, for example, do not only occur through the provision of primary health care centers of district hospitals. They come about through the work of those (like ANMs and doctors and multi-purpose health workers) in the field, as well as (and perhaps most critically) the actions of the individuals, families and communities towards improved health care practices. Thus, any developmental effort requires particular attention towards strengthening human and social infrastructure. This requirement of improvements in human and social infrastructure is particularly challenging in our Indian context. This has become so largely because of a long and complex historical tradition, diversity in social and cultural aspects and enormous variety of ecological reality, from deserts to mountains to coastal areas. This ecological and social diversity makes the task of strengthening social and human infrastructure in pursuit of development much more complicated and daunting.

We know from our experience that any activity assigned to us requires some preparation on our part before we can implement it effectively. This is true for children, this is true for adolescents and youth, and this is also true for adults. Some amount of preparation is necessary for a person to become an effective multipurpose health worker or rural extension worker or teacher. Likewise, some amount of preparation is needed for another person to become a supervisor of health workers or extension workers or teachers. This preparation is essentially what learning is all about. We learn to become effective teachers, multipurpose workers, extension workers as well as effective supervisor of these field workers. Therefore, those involved in promoting development have to create ways of promoting learning in the human infrastructure of any development programme without which the social infrastructure will not be able to work towards the goals of development. The case study Village Eco-System Planning, given in box 1, illustrates this need.

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<th>Village Eco-System Planning : Learning</th>
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<td><strong>Box.1</strong></td>
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<td>The present planning process for the rural development takes place without considering in depth the local resources, problems, need, cultural base and village level data base. Such plans fail to fulfill the requirements and priorities of the villagers. Also these plans remain out of touch of the changing realities and does not fit into the socio-economic conditions of the local people. Although the extension staff in different government departments at the district and block level are technically well trained, the implementation of the programmes takes place among the people. The extension agencies and the people remain on a different wavelength altogether. This gap and lock off enthusiasm and involvement of the local people is affecting the sustainability of the programmes. HARC (Himalayan Action Research Centre) is Voluntary Organization, working in Uttarakhand (U.P.) is of all firm view that for getting better results from the ongoing and future development programmes and to bridge the gap between the villagers and the extension workers the staff of government as well as NGO and the villagers need proper training and orientation for the proper understanding of village eco-system and its planning. Village Eco-System Planning (VEP) is an approach which helps in better understanding of the different resources, problems, possibilities and priorities of a hill village. VEP equips the development worker with the skill to understand and respect the local knowledge, culture and</td>
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This is particularly true when we work with the local families, neighborhood, and communities. Strengthening of that human and social infrastructure requires changes in their attitude, behaviours, skills, capacities, knowledge, information etc. When these changes come about in a manner that strengthens human and social infrastructure, then development programmes become successful. Therefore, changes in attitude, behaviors, skills, capacities, knowledge and information of people, families and communities require learning on their part. This learning becomes a critical variable in these changes, consequently affecting social and human infrastructure. It is in this context that much of development effort requires promoting learning among individuals, families and communities in rural and urban areas of our country. The learning may occur around health care, sanitation, drinking water, education, agricultural practices, forestry efforts, etc.

Viewed in this sense, any development initiative requires a judicious balance and combination of provision of physical infrastructure and promotion of learning for social and human infrastructure. It is in this sense that prepetition of these involved in development as well as those who are the prime beneficiaries of it becomes a major challenge for managers and supervisors of development programmes. It is, therefore, important to remember that development implies changes in attitudes, behaviour, skills of individuals and groups, on the one hand, and structures of society and administration, on the other. It is for the former type of changes in individuals, families and groups that learning through participatory training can be promoted. Changes in social structures, administration, system of government do not happen through tracing but have significant impact on the individuals, families and groups and their ability to use their learning on the part of individuals, families and communities benefiting from that programme, on the one hand, and the components that require improvements in structures, systems and procedures, on the other.

**Participatory Training Principles**

In a sense, therefore, participatory training is a methodology of promoting learning for change among individuals, families and communities. The principles of participatory training are derived from the framework of Participatory Research and improved through practices over the past couple of decades. Training is not something new to development managers. Most development programme has some component of training. So we are familiar with the concept of training: pre service training, in-service training, refresher training, etc. etc. How is participatory training different? Is it the same thing with new label? Or are there some basic differences? In reality, the theme of this paper should have been participatory learning, because that is what participatory training is all about. If the purpose of training is to promote learning among individuals, families and communities then this purpose must be translated in practice. Much of the training in its conventional sense does not focus on learning, but makes most effort on training. As a result, training, training goals, training structures, training methods, trainers etc. become the focus of much conventional training while the learners get missed out. This is where participatory training methodology makes a radical departure. It focuses on the learner and it therefore, concentrates on learning.
Some of the principles as evolved in practice over the years are as follows.

**Designing Training**

The most critical and neglected aspects of much of training in development is its designing. We tend to borrow standard formats and designs from others, we tend to fit sessions to the requirements and availability of resource persons, and we organise materials and locations to sit the needs of the trainers, training institutions and budgets. While all of that may be important, participatory training and its principles mentioned above emphasise a systematic and comprehensive design effort preceding training.

**Assessing Learning Needs**

First aspect of designing is assessing learning needs. See box 2 for an example. This implies understanding of who the learners are. If we are engaged in a programme of basic education and we want to promote a deeper commitment on this issue in the village education committee, then the member of the village education committee become the learners. Who are these members? What is their background? What are their attitudes? What do they already know, correctly or incorrectly, authentically or otherwise about the issues of child education? What are their prejudices? What are their experiences? This is the most important step. Obviously, a variety of learning need can be thrown up and the diversity among members of the village education committee could make it even more complicated. It is at the next stage that we move to the step of interpreting objectives for the learning programme.

### Box 2

#### Major Learning Needs:

**a. Identification of The Activity**

For too many activities fail because of wrong choice of the activity. We are getting increasingly convinced that if the selection is based on market based criteria, it will result in a better choice. Quite often it is seen that the activity is started based on factors such as:

- Having some skill
- Availability of raw materials
- Availability of some aid such as free machinery
- Availability of some government scheme.

While there is nothing wrong with starting an activity based on any of the above mentioned criteria, it is essential to apply the grueling and uncompromising test of marketing before the activity is begun. And that test begins by asking three basis questions:

- Is there a significant demand for this product?
- Will this demand exist in future also?
- At the price which the customer will be willing to pay, will we be able to recover all our costs and earn profit too?

**b. Marketing of The Product**

We observed that:

- Marketing is the weakest link in unsuccessful activities
- Marketing is the major dimension on which successful & unsuccessful projects differ.

Further it is also seen that:

- In successful projects, marketing is given the highest importance.
In successful projects, the attempt was to ensure the flow of large, regular orders, on the other hand in some not so successful projects, one distinct feature is the continuous shortage of order and the erratic nature of inflow of customers’ orders.

In general, there is absence of the concept of test marketing. It is seen that many times the project is allowed to go too far without checking the acceptability of the product in the market on a small scale (pilot production).

Thus training in marketing skills forms another important need.

**c. Close Co-ordination, Monitoring, Review, Control & Taking Remedial Action:**
This may also be termed as ‘Managing The Activity’. It was observed that

- There is close coordination in successful projects. People involved in the project meet regularly & tie up all loose ends by clarifying various aspects of implementation, changing rectifying the course of action wherever necessary.
- There is a professional & business like collection of information & facts. This data is used for decision making. For example in many projects, they monitor weekly and monthly production and sales etc. and there are effective systems in the organization to collect data and information required.

This then forms the third important area in which training is to be imparted.

**d. Dynamism & Powerful Personality Of The Person Leading The Income Generating Activity**
It was observed that

- Successful activities were led by people who had personality traits such as
  - Result oriented
  - Friendly but firm
  - Active & mobile
  - Continuously meeting people
  - Highly oriented towards solving problems & taking decisions.

It was also felt, this is a difficult area as far as training is concerned.

Above needs were assessed on the basis of market survey, project report preparation and also interviewing successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs.

**Defining Objectives**

All learning needs do not get fulfilled through training. Training is a systematic, structured intervention to accelerate learning. We know from our experience that learning happens on an ongoing basis while training is an occasional intervention to accelerate that process of learning, to move that process of learning to simulate that process of learning. So ongoing learning through life, its activities, through practice, by doing is a reality for all. Therefore, all the learning needs need not be fulfilled through training. This is where we have to make a choice which of those learning needs that can actually be addressed in a training programme which is more structured, systematic, planned. This requires a strategic appreciation of training. Sometimes we may examine learning needs in a manner that a sequence of training programmes could be planned. We may look at one set of learning needs in the first phase of that training programme, and after a period of time (weeks or months) we may have another phase which addresses another set of learning needs. This is critical task of interpreting precisely and clearly objective for a training programme.
**Focus of Learning**

It is here that an appreciation of learning becomes important. Focus of learning can be classified in three ways. One is learning of knowledge, gathering of information, concepts, ideas. This is cognitive learning, it includes mental, abstract and intellectual effort. The second focus of learning could be called awareness where an emotional appreciation of the issue is done, it includes themes like motivation, commitment, values, emotions (matters of heart) etc. The third focus of learning of course, is to build skills in doing something: skills in vaccination. This framework of learning helps us to separate and clearly specify what is the objective of a particular training programme. This is important because each type of learning focus can only be addressed by one set of learning methods. It is our experience that, in reality, combination of learning foci become necessary. There is always some component of awareness-raising and some component of skill building. The actual mix of these varies from one particular situation to another.

Once we have developed the objectives precisely and clearly for a training programme, the next task in designing is to identify contents which will help to achieve those objections. In identifying these contents, we once again need to look at who our learners are, what is their level, what is their starting point, what do they already know, how much deeper we can go, which combination of learning focus need to be emphasized with that group of learners? For example, we want to conduct a training programme to generate greater commitment to education of girl child among members of village education committee is not directly responsible for teaching that is the job of the teacher. But its responsibility includes monitoring, supervision, community access, ensuing attendance, providing support etc.

This elaboration of content in under to respond to each of those objectives of training requires considerable knowledge of the subject matter. This is where we may take the help of those who are knowledgeable about the subject matter, but we need to ensure that the contents are appropriate to the level of learners and do not get unnecessary overburdened.

**Sequencing Content**

The next step in designing is to sequence the content in a logical manner. A logically sequenced training programme takes the learners step-by-step from one base of knowledge and learning to another base. If it starts at the macro level then it gradually brings then down to their micro reality. On the other hand, if it starts from micro reality, it gradually take their to macro appreciation. Sequencing through a clear logic is important to ensure that learning occurs through a training programme. Inappropriate sequence can confuse learners as well as obstruct their learning.
Choosing Methods

The last step in this process of designing is selection of appropriate methods. In our work, we use learning-training method which addresses each focus of learning directly. In case of first focus of knowledge, concept and information, new knowledge, new concepts, new information can be best provided through what is known as lecture method. For literes participants, reading materials can also be provided. But the quality, level and appropriateness of those materials need to be ensured. One could make use of other aids (like flip charts, posters, transparencies etc.) but essentially the purpose of lecture either by one person or by a panel of persons is to provide additional information, new knowledge and concepts to the group of learners.

When we take the focus of learning on awareness, this is where the existing experience of learners needs to be utilised. Methods appropriate for awareness have been called structured experiences because they make structured use of either the past or the present experience of learners or others. Group discussion as a vehicle for learning is one such example. Learners in a small group share their experiences and critically analyse it with a view to develop new insights and appreciation of the issue involved. Exercise and simulations are other examples of structured experiences which are generated during the training programme itself. They make use of experience ‘here-and-now’ generated during the training itself through those exercises and simulations. Role play is another example of structured experience; it encourages the learners to re-enact a part of the reality that they have observed or experienced. Therefore, role play can become another important method is promoting awareness. A role play given in box 3 illustrates above points.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Method: Role Play</th>
<th>Box 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The late Report</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Five Minutes for preparation, five minutes to act and Ten minutes for review.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Two players and rest as observes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment:</strong> Table and chairs if possible video camera</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure:</strong> Explain concept of playing. Issue briefs to actors and explain observers what to observe. Bring the participants together and start the play. Stop at right time. Review the exercise.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brief for the CDPO:</strong> Two months ago you have asked Mukhya Sevika for a report describing the information needs of different projects of the department. The deadline was today and the Mukhya Sevika has conveyed a message that it should be ready in about a fortnight. Your ADC is due to speak to you next week regarding this. You did emphasise its importance when you asked for it. You have asked your Mukhya Sevika to see you.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brief for Mukhya Sevika:</strong> Two months ago CDPO had asked you to record the information requirements of different projects of the department. It was part of the computerisation needs of the department in the future</td>
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Participatory Research In Asia

In situations where other people’s experiences have to be brought for the learning of a group of learners, case study method is useful. Case study can be written, it can be oral, it can be audio, it can be audio-visual. Case study essentially means experience of some others which is brought to the training situation as it could be helpful in promoting the learning of that group of learners, so if we want to promote awareness-raising as a focus of learning, we must find a combination of methods under structured experience to do so.

The third focus of learning that is learning of skills, requires practice. No skills are learnt without practice. Apprenticeship is a long standing method of learning skills. Be it playing a sitar or repairing of scooters, in both cases the model of practice is apprenticeship. During a training programme itself, it is possible to build methods which allow for practicing the skills by the learners, if they have to learn certain skills in order to play their roles more effectively.

Thus the choice of method becomes the crucial determinant in effective design of a training programme. Once these steps have been followed, then people responsible for designing and conducting training have to make a time schedule, look at learning materials, either draw them from other sources or prepare some on their own and identify resource person, if they do not have their own capacity in certain areas of the content. But it is here that the institutional framework, availability of resources, timing etc. needs to be considered and a review of the design prepared earlier can be undertaken. It is our experience that the designing of training is the most creative part of conducting a training programme and if sufficient attention and application is made to this step then the conducting of training can be pleasurable and successful experience.

Considerations while conducting training

Even where high quality design has been prepared, all physical arrangements have been made, learning materials readied, the real challenge in promoting learning comes during the training itself. Of course, the simplest issue in conducting training is expertise in the subject-matter. It is important to make sure that the trainer team along with all the different resource persons cover the subject matter well. The knowledge of subject matter to be covered during the programme is an important aspect of any effective training. This is, of course, conventional wisdom too. In most conventional training programmes, the trainers are experts in the subject that is being covered and bring a depth of knowledge to the learners.

Learning Points

The role play allows for most of basis lesson in communication skills to emerge. These include:

- Techniques of questioning and listening;
- Observing non-verbal signals;
- Summarising;
- Influencing;
- Controlling conversations.

on which ADC is working on. It was due to be finished today. It isn’t. You found it boring and help from others minimal. You sent your CDPC a note to say you will have it ready in a fortnight. CDPO has asked to see you.
Learning Environment

But beyond the expertise in subject matter, there are several other significant considerations while conducting training within the framework of participatory training methodology.

Conducive learning environment

The first consideration relates to creating a conducive learning environment. It is our experience that participants come to a training programme with all kinds of fears, doubts, expectations, confusions, some are informed about the purposes and programme of training, and some are not even aware of it, some have been forcibly sent despite their wishes, some have come because they thought the programme will be useful to them. As a result, the first task in a training programme is to prepare participant to become learners. It cannot be automatically assumed that all those who come to participate in a training programme have acquired a learning orientation. And if they do not become learners early on in the programme, then their learning will be severely affected. In a short duration training programme, this is even more challenging because orienting participants to become learners needs to be done rather rapidly right in the beginning. This is where expectation of the participants can be obtained. But the most important contribution in this direction comes from the behavior of the trainers itself. How seriously the trainers take the learning of their participants, how deeply committed they are to ensure that the participants learn during the training programme, have the most important effect in orienting participants to become learners.

Energy level of participants

Several other dimensions of learning environment acquire importance in such situation. The first, at a simple level, is energy level of participants. To the extent that learning is an active exercise, not a passive reception of information dumped from outside, the energy level of the participants is critical. They need to be excited about learning they need to be encouraged to actively engage in learning. Energy levels can be stimulated through a variety of interventions, change of pace and methods, through some energisers (like songs, physical exercises etc.). But ensuring high energy level among learners is important in support of a learning environment. An example in box 4 highlights these points.

Psychological comfort and safety

Another ingredient of learning environment is a sense of psychological comfort and safety. Adults learn when they find that they have a reasonably comfortable learning environment. This is particularly relevant because learning can at times be painful, it can challenge one’s deep-seated attitudes, emotions and values; it may require change of one’s behavior and skills, it may require readjustment of oneself. Now, change in human beings is not necessarily easy. Therefore, while they are examining the possibilities of change, while they are learning new idea, attitudes and skills, the participants need to feel a sense of psychological safety. This can be significantly enhanced by promoting mutual cooperation and trust within the group, by building a level of rapport and confidence between learners and trainers and by ensuring risk-taking by participants where mistakes may be committed in the process of learning (without fear of penalty).
An ‘eight days’ training of trainers programme was organised and conducted by PRIA from 5th to 12th April’95 at Suraj Kund, Haryana. The participants were associated directly or indirectly with developmental work.

Objectives of the training programme were to develop an understanding of philosophy of participatory training, understanding group processes and build skill on designing training.

In the beginning of the training programme, as an ice-breaking exercise, the participants were asked to stand in a circle and step inside it respectively for the following questions:

- Participants visiting PRIA for the first time
- Participants visiting Delhi for the first time
- Participants who have travelled more than 20 kms to reach here
- Participants who are married

Following this, the participants were requested to form in pairs and to introduce the other partner on the following points:

- Name
- Educational background
- Work experience
- Training they do in their organisation
- Thoughts that were utmost when they set out for TOT

After this, logistics information regarding steering committee, make shift library, first aid, use of videos, rules regarding sessions and food were told. These inputs energises the learning process of the participants.

The training programme was residential in nature both for trainers as well as trainees. This helped them to have long interacting hours and also the presence of trainers all along accelerated the process of learning. Songs, sung by trainers and tallness at opportune time, had also acted as a stimulator to keep the energy level of the participants high.

**Affective aspect**

Another dimension of learning environment is the emotional dimension of learning. As has been said earlier, learning is suffused with a variety of emotions. Learning can be fun, pleasurable exciting; it can also be painful, can create fears and doubts. The self-concept of learners has a tremendous impact on how they learn. Some people have an unrealistically high self-concept where they assume they know it all, for them to become a learner is rather difficult. For a vast majority of others, their self-concept is low. This is particularly true for the marginalised sections of our society; this is true for lower levels of functionaries in a department; it is true for women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe groups, the landless laborers etc. So, when learners have low self-concept, they do not feel confident about their ability to learn, to speak out and, therefore, feel hesitant. This is where a learning environment can contribute to enhancement of their self-concept, in a way that they can pursue learning.

**Heterogeneity of learning group**

Another major characteristics of learning environment is the recognition of the differentials that exist within a group of learners. There is no single learning group
where all the individual learners are alike. In fact, even where strict criteria and screening has been undertaken at the time of selection for the training programme, individuals differ in terms of their styles of learning, pace of learning, their sense of self-concept etc. This heterogeneity can both be a constraint as well as a resource within the learning group. When differentials are too vast and heterogeneity is such that it can impede the pace of learning some innovation during the training may be necessary where groups of learners may be divided into sub-groups according to the criteria of heterogeneity. Difference and heterogeneity can be utilised during training in order to demonstrate the variety that exists in the real world. In fact, real world is even more heterogeneous. Attitudinal and behavioral aspects of learning get support and reinforcement in interaction with different others during a learning-training situation. Having people from different gender, class, caste, educational backgrounds etc. can be sometimes an asset in encouraging people to learn to work with diversity.

**Trainer’s behavior**

Lastly, and perhaps most important, is the question of trainer’s behavior. In Participatory Training Methodology, a distinction is made between a facilitator and a subject-matter expert. A subject-matter expert is that trainer who provides knowledge, concepts and skills on the subject matter at hand. Sometimes this is done by bringing external resource persons; sometimes it is done by members of the training team itself. In addition to this role, there is perhaps the more important role of facilitator of the learning process. This role needs special preparation and is a major challenge in participatory training. Interventions aimed at strengthening learning environment, at monitoring learning process, at adapting the pace and depth of coverage, etc. all require skillful facilitation. Therefore, one of the first challenges is preparation of the trainers to be facilitators. It is not automatic that knowledge of a subject-matter makes you a good facilitator. A competent medical doctor can have command over subject matter on health care but does not automatically become a good facilitator; or a competent education material producer does not automatically become a good trainer.

**Facilitation**

The primary capacities entailed in being an effective facilitator relate to one’s ability to work with others in an encouraging, supportive, non-threatening and collegial manner. This is a tall order, and particularly so in large, hierarchically designed organisations like governments development administration. Most of our development departments are long hierarchies and expect of its staff those behaviours which are appropriate of boss and subordinate. When the same boss acts as a trainer in a training programme; he needs to become a facilitator, requiring totally different set of behaviours than what may be appropriate in the role of a boss. Hence it becomes much more difficult. That is why special orientation and capacity building is required for those who intend to play key trainer roles in development administration.

**Ability to respect the learners**

Another important dimension of trainer behavior is our attitudes towards the learners. We have talked about it earlier in terms of seriousness by which trainer approaches the learning situation. Another dimension in this regard is the question of respect: respect towards learners, respect about their capacity to learn, respect towards their diversity and differences, particularly in relation to the trainer. Respecting the knowledge that they already have, respecting them as individuals and groups of individuals. This respect cannot be mere world on the part of a trainer. This respect
has to be demonstrated in action during the training itself. But this respect is very critical. When the trainers respect the learners, then they begin to respect themselves. This respect then becomes the foundation for mutual trust, cooperation and support in strengthening appropriate learning environment for all. This is, in fact, a real challenge, because many of us in our role as trainers have been made to believe that we are more competent, more knowledgeable, more capable than those who come to us as learners. Overcoming this hang-up is a real challenge and requires deliberate re-tooling of our own attitudes and behaviors. A critical variable while conducting participatory training is the ability to respect the learners and thereby encourage them to take responsibility for their learning.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring essentially is an ongoing process of ensuring that the programme is on track and that pace and content of learning remain relevant to the group of learners. As an ongoing assessment process, monitoring can take several forms. Predominately it is an exercise done by trainers themselves, it may include a group of learners from time to time. The mechanism of a steering committee which reviews the day’s proceedings at the end of the day is a practical one in this regard. Monitoring can also be done through daily or weekly reviews conducted in a somewhat more structured and formal manner. Clearly, one has to be on top of the learning process during the training in order to be able to utilise the feedback from monitoring.

Another consideration while conducting training is ensuring that the pace and depth of coverage is relevant and consistent with the requirements of the learners. It calls for an ongoing monitoring effort. Monitoring by trainers and facilitators entails observing learning processes as it occurs during a training programme. This observation can also focus on a specific individual or sub-group in order to ensure that they participate actively in the learning processes. Formal, more structured, mid-term reviews can be undertaken during training programme to elicit feedback from the participants. But this is not a substitute to the requirement of ongoing and continuous monitoring of the process of learning of various learners, their sub-groups etc. Essentially the concern here is to look at the way learning is occurring in order to adapt its pace and depth to the requirements of learners. It helps to remain flexible as the training programme is undertaken.

**Women’s Learning**

A third set of issues relate to the special requirement of women’s learning. In our experience it is clear that possibilities of women’s learning are somewhat different from the possibilities of men’s learning. The emotional, circular and experiential dimension of learning is far more explicit in case of women’s learning. As mentioned earlier, women’s self-concept in many situations is also very low, particularly when it comes to learning. At the same time, because they have been deprived of opportunities for learning once given such an opportunity, women make use of them much more enthusiastically and seriously. If appropriate conditions have been created, women can actually make better use of learning opportunities during a training programme. But their differential approaches, stand-point and learning processes need to be organized, if we want to promote significant learning by women. The case study given in box 5 reflects these points.
Taking control of our health: Some experiences of community health workers’ training

Box 5

Poor illiterate women from Shankarbhuvan suffused that with SEWA and CHETNA team, they can work on the issue of health, water supply and sanitation. They also suggested that health training be organised, because “we know nothing about our bodies and health”. Some women were not confident about participating in such training—“How can we learn these things? We are complete illiterate” Others, though nervous, were excited about learning and being involved in a new and different kind of activity. Despite the ridicule, apprehensions and some opposition that they faced from their families and the community, all of them were determined to go ahead with their plans.

Together with SEWA and CHETNA organisers, some women from Shankarbhuvan were to participate in the training. The next question was: who would be involved? The issue was settled in one of the meetings at Shankarbhuvan. Nine women initially wanted to participate in this training. Three had to withdraw because of marriage and moving away, and other family commitments. Finally six women decided that they would be the first health workers of Shankarbhuvan.

These women suggested that the trainings could be done once in a month for three or four days duration. They could not spare more time, as apart from household work, they were all daily wage workers, involved in various trades of the informal sector. They re-sewed old cement bags for transporting onions and potatoes, scrubbed and re-pointed old tins, peeled garlic and sold vegetables, old clothes and scrap metal. The women also felt that these training should be held either at SEWA or CHETNA offices, as there were too many distractions at Shankarbhuvan’s. Finally, as a support to training it was decided to have a “clinic” twice a week, providing basic curative care to “Shankarbhuvan’s” residents for a normal fee. The “diwakhana” was also a practical means to train women in diagnosing and providing curative care and health education.

The Measles Epidemic

The topic for first training was decided by the outbreak of a measles epidemic in Shankarbhuvan. At least four children died before they could act. The intervention was difficult because of a whole host of beliefs and rituals that health workers did not even understand at that time. Health workers arranged for measles vaccine from the local municipal dispensary, and government health workers immunized the children. Meanwhile, they closely observed and suggested treatment for children who developed complications as a result of in-castes. They also fixed the dates of their first health training with women. Although a sad event in Shankarbhuvan had prompted training programme, all were enthusiastic about starting.

The training began with a discussion of how measles is viewed in traditional community like Shankarbhuvan, and what is done to cure it. They learned about its diagnosis by a “blurva” (local-healer), of how the ‘Mata’ (Mother Goodness) associated with the disease had to be appeased and how a child’s death had to be accepted because the ‘Mata’ ordained that it be so. Then, health workers shared the modern knowledge about measles, its transmission and how and why it is a killer of children in poor communities.

From the measles training, several points emerged which were incorporated in subsequent session. First, starting with what we all know and experience every day sparks off greater interest and involvement of all participants. So it was discussed how Ramiber’s sun goy measles, how it was diagnosed and reasons why the little boy eventually died. The training methods and materials from this point onwards incorporated own experiences, down to the charts and drawings which portrayed life at Shankurbhuvan.

Evaluation

The second challenge of evaluation is more problematic. More evaluation of training programme is conducted at the end of the programme itself. We train the participants then we receive their feedback. This evaluation basically tells us the extent to which the programme was relevant and conducted in manner consistent with its objective and methodology. The evaluation can also provide feedback on physical arrangement, trainer’s behavior, learning material, learning methodology etc. However, it is only some time later after the training programme, when the participants return to their real life that they can really assess the extent to which they are putting to use anything they learnt during training be it cognitive, attitudinal or skill-wise. This calls for an evaluation after a period of time after training. Depending on the duration and scope of the training this period could be a month, two months or six months. In situations where the trainers and the learners interact more frequently (like in a development administration department) the impact of training could be
monitored even more closely. If a Chief Medical Officer is the trainer, then he can observe how the multipurpose workers behave after training in the course of his normal interactions with them over the next few weeks. More systematic and structured evaluations can also be conducted after a period of time in order to assess the manner in which the participants used any of the learning. That evaluation can also indicate to us what other support mechanisms the participants need in their back home real life organisational situations, in order to be able to implement all the various things they have learnt. This is why the task of systematic documentation and evaluation after the training becomes important. But this task has not been performed very well.

**Follow-up**

Another aspect of post-training activities is follow-up. The nature of follow-up actually gets determined at the time of designing the training itself. Because it is at the last stage of designing that we ask the question: why should these people learn these things? That rational comes from either the job that people are doing or the new assignments they are likely to have or to solve easier where a whole group comes for training; for example, a group of multi-purpose workers from one PHC. The follow-up support to them essentially required working with that PHC and its district unit. But where individual participants come from all over the place, different regions and organization, then follow-up becomes more problematic. Clarity about what kind of follow-up actually should occur right at the stage of designing so that reduces and efforts can be planned for after the training. Intensive follow-up may be necessary in some situation in order to strengthen the process of learning and to take the ideas and skills acquired during training into the field. A case study in the box no. 6 highlights these aspects.

Preparation of the colleagues, superiors and others in the organisation can also constitute a part of the follow-up process, such that new learning acquired during training can be put to direct use. In some situation, participants are encouraged to plan what they will do on their return from training. In this back home planning exercise, participants may have some concrete steps that they undertake when they return from training. Follow-up may entail providing support in undertaking those steps. Sometimes even a letter from the trainers to the superior of the participating individual can act as an important follow-up. The important thing is to keep in mind that follow-up is linked to the very purpose of training.

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**Follow up for Development Training of Material Farmers**

**Box 6**

Seva Mandir, Udaipur, a voluntary agency involved in non-formal adult education and rural development, had initiated a Peer Group project in socially and economically backward black Kerwara. A Peer Group Leader (PGL) was identified from each of twenty five contiguous villages. These PGLs were Trained in agriculture, cooperative and rural engineering and expected to form Peer Groups in their respective villages. After two years it was felt that PGLs were not effective in organising Peer Groups. To facilitate this process two Peer Groups from Pati and Pure (Pseudonyms) were intervened with consciousness raising, experimental learning and community activism approaches. After the training two dates for follow up meeting were fixed. The follow up was intended to monitor the progress made by the groups.

Visit to Pati - Two members on behalf of Peer Group and villagers described gains made after training, value of organisation and collective action and also future actions. A self-chosen problem-trying to bring the canal up to their villagers - (shall benefit seven villages) govt. officials expressed incapability. The Peer Group was constraining its exploration of alternatives. After facilitation through nine dot exercise, a date was fixed to convene a meeting of villagers from seven villages and present joint application. Strategies for electing the right person in
forthcoming Panchayat election and developing common references, frameworks and understanding were also discussed in the follow up meet.

So What?

It is not too difficult to understand what has been stated above. Participatory training methodology is not a very complicated framework, or set of principles or tools. What is more difficult about its practice is the institutional and attitudinal bottleneck. Look at the government from the national to the districts level; there exist hundreds of training institutes, training programmes, trainers throughout this vast arena of development programmes. And, yet, over the last two decades, evaluation reports of most development programmes (be it in agriculture, rural development, health care, education, drinking water etc.), highlight a major weakness of these programmes to be inadequate and incompetent training interventions. This is despite the fact that we have hundreds of such training institutions, trainers, crores of Rupees as budget, etc.

So what is the problem?
The problem is not lack of infrastructure; the problem is the value and significance that is attached to training. The problem is that much of this training is undertaken without concern for learning. The limitation has been that those who are responsible for training treat it merely as a job, to deliver or complete targets of training. They are neither committed to nor value their contributions towards the learning of those who come as participants. Without addressing this issue centrally, candidly and emphatically, this document or any other exercise that is preceded or followed, will make no significant impact on the manner in which training is treated, conducted and valued in government development programme. Participatory training methodology cannot be equated to a set of techniques, tools or aids. It is essentially a question of our values and our attitudes, to believe that people, ordinary people, illiterate, poor people can learn? Do we really believe that they are interested in learning? Do we really feel excited about and responsible for supporting others learning? These questions and issues are at the heart of the meaning of the participatory training methodology.

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