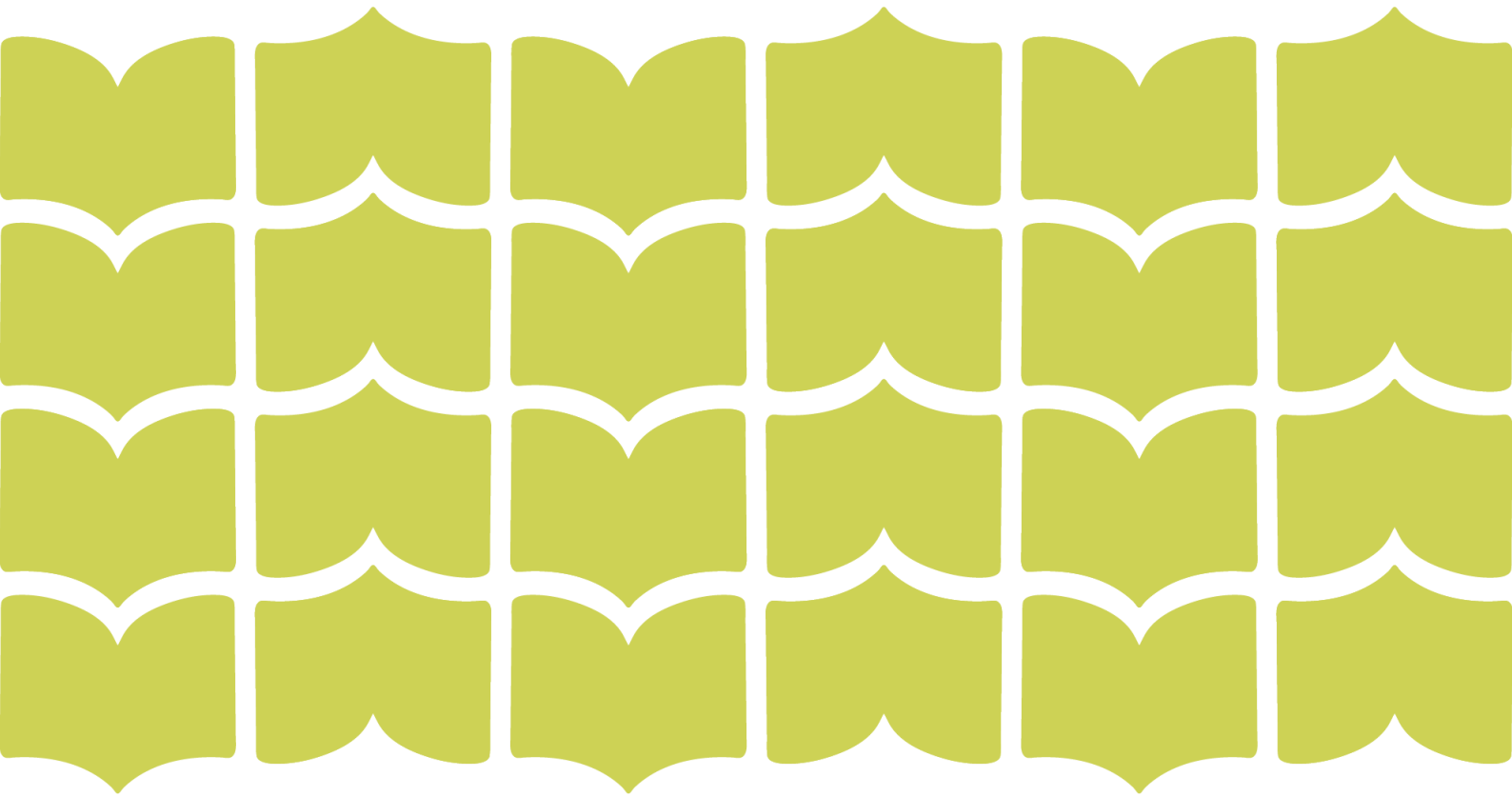
TEACH PEACE

Building Peace
Through Dialogue

GUIDEBOOK FOR DESIGNING LEARNING EXPERIENCES



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Building Peace Through Dialogue

Teach Peace is an Erasmus+ co-operation project which focuses on developing peace education for adults.

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TEACH PEACE

Building Peace Through Dialogue

1 TRAINING PROGRAMME

2 GUIDEBOOK FOR DESIGNING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

3 READY-TO-USE ACTIVITIES

This Guidebook is part of a larger set of Teach Peace materials. On our website, you can also find more information about peace education, as well as a training programme for educators and a set of simple ready-to-use activities which can be used with minimum preparation.

TEACH PEACE:
WARM WELCOME

Whether you are new to the field of peace education or adult learning, or a more experienced practitioner, this guide serves as a source of reflection or inspiration for your practice.

This workbook consists of compact texts on theories, models or frameworks related to facilitating adult learning in a peace education context. Short reflective exercises or creative activities will also help enhance your teaching approach.

We have focused on themes that support educators in strengthening their capacity to design dialogic learning experiences, with an adult learner in mind. Taking a reflective approach helps to enhance your professional practice as an adult educator. You can use these practices to design any training program to support everyday peace, including training of trainers.

Please use this guide as a source for reflection as well as inspiration. You can also invite your fellow trainers and educators to work on these themes together as peers in a learning circle.

This workbook is not for your eyes only. You might discover that some of the themes can be explored together with your learners as part of the Teach Peace training programme. Therefore adjust and apply them in your work for a good purpose.

Piret Jeedas
Bart Cosijn
Editors, Estonian Dialogue Academy

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FOREWORD:
CULTIVATING PEACE AND DIALOGUE IN ADULT LEARNING

You have just opened a workbook that is intended to support adult educators who want to work with peace education in a dialogic and learner-centred way.

In this current time of polycrisis, ongoing violence and war conflicts, we are more and more faced with the realisation that peace is not something we should take for granted. Peace is difficult to grasp as it is a multifaceted concept encompassing different aspects of human existence, from inner and psychological life to social, international or international relations (Hadžiomerović, 2026).

Peace education can be understood in several ways. According to UNESCO (2024, 7), peace education means "learning both about and for peace". In other words, peace education involves **both sharing information and teaching skills that can be used to resolve conflicts, create dialogue and build a culture of peace.** It is both a scholarly field and a set of diverse educational practices which reflects varying interpretations of peace (Hadžiomerović, 2026). The context for peace education can be diverse, from non-formal programmes to formal settings, from NGO context to higher education institutions or professional development programs. From community centres to schools, from hobby clubs to nature camps. Some argue that the theory and practice of peace education has so far been mainly developed for children and youth, while adult learning and education has remained sidelined (Hadžiomerović, 2026). Teach Peace aims to address this gap.
Peace education is a vital pathway toward nurturing understanding, resilience, and the collective responsibility to sustain peace in an increasingly fragile world.

Peace in everyday life

The main aim of peace education to help people to understand and work actively to defer causes of violence and to promote peace in everyday life (Hadžiomerović, 2026). Dialogue as a mindset and skillset is one way for practicing everyday peace. Dialogue starts within yourself: it is an inner peace practice. "Only the person who is capable of meeting him/herself honestly is able to meet the other authentically" (Schellhammer 2018, 66).

However, meeting others and practicing dialogue is not an easy task. We are witnessing increasing polarisation and divergent viewpoints, alongside the markedly different ways in which people respond to these developments. Some react with strong emotions and blame, others withdraw and become quiet. The voice, so central to dialogue, may become quieter and quieter.

In the face of growing uncertainty, people tend to adopt a range of coping strategies (Schellhammer 2018, 65):

- Retreat: people shut down and hide in their four walls trying to get away from a confusing world.
- Follow a strong and powerful leader who promises to bring clarity through domination.
- Draw a distinct line: to erect borders and walls, to distinguish clearly between oneself and the other, seeing the foreigner as a threat.
- Move towards even greater complexity: grasping for meaning and resolution in every opportunity that presents itself.
- Dialogical reaction: capable of encountering the other in meaningful ways while at the same time looking after oneself. Here we choose to respond intentionally: we go into and through uncertainty instead of avoiding it.

You may now take a short moment for reflection: in what situations do you tend to retreat? When do you build walls? Can you always choose to respond dialogically?

Although we want to answer with a strong “yes”, reflecting a bit deeper, we may realise that it is not always an easy task. Responding dialogically is something that needs to be learned or relearned.

Experiencing dialogic learning spaces

Our focus in TeachPeace is promoting peace in everyday life: working with knowledge, specific skills and attitudes that help to build a culture of peace. Peace as an everyday practice needs to be cultivated on an individual level, while also taking into account other people and broader societal developments. We continuously move from I to WE and US.

Dialogue is considered as a means to enable different voices to be heard. Yet, “dialogue is commonly regarded as a form of conversation in which everyone already knows how to participate and that can be learned with a minimum investment of effort, practice and time” (Gunnlaugson 2006). According to Peter Senge (as cited in Gunnlaugson, 2006), dialogue should be considered as a discipline of practices and principles that we study, master and integrate in our lives: especially when we are faced with conflicting themes and different viewpoints. Learning in everyday situations and drawing from personal experiences and observations is a crucial aspect in this approach.

Our survey of adult educators and peace trainers - Teach Peace report[1] - revealed that regarding building peaceful communities the most important skills to be developed are dialogue skills (81% of adult educators). Many adult educators themselves noted that in terms of professional development and growth, they wanted to learn new skills or develop their theoretical knowledge related to dialogue or conflict resolution.

Do you consider yourself a peace educator?

The field of adult education is wide and practitioners use different ways to convey their role, such as trainer, teacher, continuing education instructor, university professor, community activist or educator etc. Some educators may deliver adult education without any formal training; others may hold a degree in the field. We use the word “adult educator” to refer to anyone who is working with adults with integrity and purpose.

We may identify as adult educators, but not always as peace educators. Many participants in the *Teach Peace* survey said that, when confronted with the term ‘peace education’, they were puzzled over the meaning of the term; some were even sceptical of its usefulness. When presented with the project’s adaptation of the UNESCO definition, many of the adult educators did however consider that they already had a role in peace education. We hope that this workbook helps you too to find a stronger voice as a peace educator.

As the world around us becomes complex, and more conflicting themes emerge in our lives, we need adult educators who are willing to create meaningful and dialogic learning spaces, using the personal experiences and knowledge of adult learners as a crucial resource for

[1] Teach Peace report, 2025, https://youth-space.net/teach-peace-report/

collective work. As educators we need to constantly learn ourselves and critically examine our own assumptions related to the themes we explore or how we teach. It is particularly relevant, as there is no one right way to teach adults, as noted by educators Kathleen Taylor & Annalee Lamoreaux.

We, as authors of this guidebook, walk in the field of adult education with different “hats”. One has an academic background in andragogy. It is through the andragogical lens that we look at adult learning and designing learning spaces. It is important to bear in mind that there are also certain limitations: a learner-centred approach which leads to personal growth may still fail to create change at the broader community or structural level. Therefore, it is central that we dare to challenge realities that force violence and exclusion, recognising education as a catalyst for change at both the individual and societal levels.

The other “hat” is more rooted in practical work, with a background in facilitation, training and participatory processes, including conflict resolution. As it does not have an academic background, it brings the experience of being recruited as a trainer: a similar learning curve to the one that many adult educators have gone through. You are skilled in your field and now others would like to learn from you. Educators who come from this direction might have to move from a self-centred approach (What is my knowledge?) to a learner-centred approach (What do they want to learn?). Only while teaching and training, do you discover more theoretical ideas that you incorporate in your work.

We want to see ourselves as lifelong learners and practitioners.
Authors: Bart Cosijn, Piret Jeedas

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How can I create a dialogic learning space for peace education?

In this section you will:

- be introduced to dialogic approach in adult learning
- discover 12 principles for meaningful learning
- reflect on your practice
- make an initial design for a one-day course

As adults we are continuously engaged with learning and development, whether we are aware of it or not. Learning can be broadly defined as any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change (Illeris 2009, 7). Therefore any learning situation has the potential to transform something.

One of the core assumptions in adult education is seeing adult learners as subjects: someone with agency and autonomy. According to self-determination theory, autonomy is related to the need to regulate one's experience and actions. When acting with autonomy, behaviours are engaged wholeheartedly, whereas one experiences incongruence and conflict when doing what is contrary to one's will to do something. (Ryan & Deci 2017). Autonomy is the desire to direct our own lives, to control tasks, time, team and technique. In other words: what we do, when we do it, whom we do it with and how we do it (Merriam & Bierema 2014, 147). Thus, autonomy stands at the heart of adult learning, shaping individuals' ability to act with purpose, alignment, and self-direction. This aspect of autonomy plays a crucial role in peace education.

Dialogic education

Jane Vella, writer and educator, has a rich experience working with learners in different socio-cultural contexts in Africa, United States, Latin America, Europe, Middle East. These experiences, together with her engagement with Paulo Freire's humanistic approach to education, have deepened her understanding of teaching adults.

She advocates for a dialogue education where learners are seen as subjects and active decision makers, in contrast to passive and powerless participants. "One basic assumption in all of this is that adult learning is best achieved in dialogue" (Vella 2002, 3). Dialogue is not only a tool for communication, but also for understanding.

Dialogue education holds a principle that adults have enough life experience to be in dialogue with any teacher about any subject. (Vella 2002, 3).

This means that they will learn new knowledge, attitudes or skills best in relation to life experience.

Acknowledging life experience is central when we work with themes around peace. We should trust that learners can bring valuable insights to the fore related to peace and conflicts around peace, even when they might not be aware of it. Choosing to teach dialogically helps cultivate peace: as learners engage in dialogue, they may reconsider their understanding of peace and, in turn, open new pathways toward reducing indirect and cultural forms of violence.

Jane Vella (2002, 4) has articulated 12 principles and practices to begin, maintain and enable dialogue. By applying these practices we can help to build the culture of peace. While introducing the principles we add quotes from Jane Vella, and introduce some examples from our own practice as adult educators.

Twelve principles and practices to enable dialogue and nurture peace

- Start with learners' needs and strengths
- Build safety and trust
- Build respectful relationships
- Sequence learning intentionally
- Balance action with reflection
- Respect learners as decision makers
- Engage the whole person
- Connect learning to real-life application
- Clarify roles and build learning partnership
- Facilitate learning through collaboration
- Teamwork and small groups
- Enable active participation

LEARNING NEEDS AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

"People are naturally excited to learn anything that helps to understand their own lives, their own themes".

Jane Vella

Learners join any program with different needs, expectations and experiences. Therefore it is worth it to spend some time learning about their interests, curiosities or needs related to the programme, as well about their wider life context. Although we as trainers bring the content - for example, teaching peace - learners can also express what they want to learn and what is meaningful to them. Sometimes they might find it challenging to articulate it, but asking a good reflective question is still a relevant starting point. Listening to learners, learning about one's context, discovering learners' resources are ways to start the dialogue.

Practice one: Sending out a registration form prior to the training is our standard practice. For longer dialogue training programmes, we have conducted brief 15-20 minute calls based on the form. These conversations provide deeper insight into participants' situations and challenges, as well as what they need from the trainers and the group to support their learning.

SAFETY

"We create a context for learning. That context can be made safe".

Jane Vella

When designing and facilitating any programme—including tasks and materials—we aim to create conditions in which learners feel that the experience will truly work for them. This includes ensuring a safe environment where difficulties, emotional responses, or potential conflicts within the group can be addressed constructively. The feeling of safety is created when

- a trainer makes his/her competence and experience clear;
- the program objectives are clearly articulated and discussed with the learners;
- everybody has a voice to express their hopes, fears or expectations;
- a coherent sequence of activities is offered, beginning with simple activities and moving to more complex ones;
- a non-judgemental environment is created by articulating common principles for participation.

Practice two: We begin creating a sense of safety through prior communication with learners and a warm welcome at the door. The training starts with peer conversations, allowing participants to get to know each other, before gradually moving into whole-group activities.

SOUND RELATIONSHIPS

"Sound relationship involves respect, safety, open communication, listening and humility".

Jane Vella

Building meaningful relationships between the trainer and learners - as well as among learners themselves - is at the heart of effective training. A trainer can model a spirit of inquiry, curiosity, and authentic presence, making themselves genuinely visible and accessible to participants. When a trainer listens attentively and responds with respect, learners feel acknowledged and valued. This relational approach also helps soften and dissolve potential power dynamics in the room, creating a more open and collaborative learning environment. **You should not underestimate the role model you are as an educator and the example you set by your behaviour.**
Often group members start aligning their behaviour to yours, especially when they don't know each other or are new to this type of learning environment. People's question when they join often is: "How am I expected to behave?" You are an important part of that answer.

Practice three: We see ourselves as learners, so we often participate in the exercises alongside participants. We briefly check with them beforehand to ensure this approach supports their learning, rather than creating hesitation or discomfort in expressing themselves

SEQUENCE AND REINFORCEMENT

"Failing to honour sequence and reinforcements can lead to dropping out of course, people acting out anger, fear, and disappointment, adults believing they cannot learn." **Jane Vella**

Sequence means that programming of knowledge, skills and attitudes moves from simple to complex, from group supported to solo tasks. From short to long, from easy to more difficult learning tasks. If you see anger, confusion, reluctance to try and experiment, test the sequence of the learning task by asking feedback from the learners.

Reinforcement is about inviting learners to do learning tasks in new ways over and over to ensure effective learning: repetition of facts, skills and attitudes in diverse, engaging and interesting ways until it is learner.
It is your task as a trainer to design learning situations where adequate reinforcement can happen. Here the art of using different methods becomes important.

Practice four:
In a dialogue training course we learn about dialogue, give an opportunity to experience it and then offer a chance to practice it in a small group of 4-5 people. It is then followed by reflecting on the experience.

PRAXIS

"Praxis is a Greek word that means "action with reflection."
Jane Vella

Adult learners are hands-on and practical learners who learn concepts, skills or attitudes by doing. A learning task is a praxis when it includes significant action and also time for reflection on that action. You can invite reflection after doing some activities as well reflecting on the application of certain concepts and ideas.

Practical five: When working on the theme of "resilience", we begin by inviting participants to reflect on challenging life situations and consider what helped them navigate those difficulties. We then encourage them to share some of their reflections within the group. This process helps highlight how resourceful people already are and allows them to discover new resources they may not have been aware of. Afterwards, we introduce the concept of resilience in more detail and invite participants to reflect on and write down ways in which they can further strengthen their resilience.

RESPECT FOR LEARNERS AS DECISION MAKERS

"Adults are decision makers in a large part of their lives. Adults need to understand that they themselves decide what occurs for them in the learning event."
Jane Vella

In a dialogue education, the content is like an open system: we should invite learners to analyse, edit or add to what they are learning. A good guiding question here is: What else do you feel you need or want to learn about the topic? Learners as subjects means that they should have a choice. Making a choice is about taking one's responsibility for learning and being a decision maker, for example regarding the content or how one wants to learn. "**Don't ever do what the learner can do: don´t ever decide what the learner can decide**", says Vella (2002, 16).

Practice six: We use a variety of small group exercises in our work. At times, however, participants may feel overwhelmed and prefer to work individually. When we are in naturally beautiful surroundings, like in nature, we often invite participants to take a dialogue walk using guiding questions, while also offering the option of a solo walk.

IDEAS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

"Learning involves cognitive material - ideas and concepts. It involves learning something about the concepts (emotions) and doing something (action)."

Jane Vella

Quite often we tend to overload learners with lots of information, data or facts. Especially trainers who are just starting to teach and carry a lot of expertise in their subject matter - you want to "give" everything away, and hope that learning takes place. So we have to be mindful about how much information we give to learners and when. Too many materials can harm the space needed for ideas and feelings of adult learners. When we consider cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of learning we address the whole human being.

Practice seven: When working with sensitive topics, learners may experience strong emotions and express them within the group. In such moments, rather than moving on to the next theme or exercise, it becomes essential to respond to the emotional needs of individuals or the group as a whole. At times, we pause the session to allow learners to attend to their needs; at other times, we create space for deeper dialogue about what has been triggered for group members.

IMMEDIACY

"Most adults do not have time to waste. We want to spend our time studying content that will make a difference now."

Jane Vella

The content being delivered must be designed to be relevant to the context and life of the learner. When this happens, there is a sense of the immediate usefulness of the learning.

One of the questions to reflect at the end of the learning session is: How can I use this new skill/attitude/ idea most effectively? Learners as subjects can reflect upon it and decide for themselves the significance and application of what has been learned. Don't be too disappointed when they don't intend to use materials you have provided or when they are critical of it. This type of feedback is crucial for improving the learning environments you create.

Practice eight: When teaching dialogue facilitation skills, we ask learners to plan their own dialogue session based on the topics they find most relevant in their community or organisation. We offer a template for planning. After some initial planning, they share ideas in pairs or in a group and give each other feedback.

CLEAR ROLES

"Adult students need reinforcement of the human equity between teacher and student and among students."

Jane Vella

Learners perceive educators in certain roles or power positions. Educator as an "expert", "someone who knows" etc. The same applies for co-learners. Some learners may not want to open up when other learners strongly advocate their power position or strong previous experiences related to the topic. It can make one feel worthless. If you are perceived as someone with whom it is difficult to disagree or question, dialogue is difficult to emerge. How do you want to be perceived by your learners? And how can you help to create a learning space of equality?

Practice nine: At the beginning of the learning session we talk about our approach to teaching. We highlight that we are not experts, but consider ourselves as active learners and practitioners in the field.

TEAMWORK AND SMALL GROUPS

"Respecting people as subjects means having people choose their own teams as often as possible, especially when the learning task is complex and difficult."

Jane Vella

As people work in small groups or teams, peer learning is being enhanced. Peers may have similar experiences, they can challenge co-learners in some other ways then the trainer. Peers can be supporting those who are struggling with complex themes or tasks.

Some learners do not see the value of learning in the group: it can even be considered time-wasting. It may be due to the fact that sometimes group work is used without clear learning objectives, but just to give learners something to do.

Vella (2002, 23) says that "what is happening in the team is what is happening every day." So if resistance emerges or feelings arouse, this needs to be addressed as well. Teamwork should be planned to support learning, not merely fill the time.

Practice ten: Art can be used to simulate dialogue. We ask learners to choose an image from a collection of art images. Then they share reflections, ideas, questions that emerged while looking at the images. After initial sharing they agree as a group a common theme for dialogue.

ENGAGEMENT

"When we ask learners to be passive, they learn to have no power."

Jane Vella

Learning is an active process. When we create conditions for learners to be engaged throughout the learning process, transformative learning may occur. Engagement can take many forms, from initial planning phase to initiating meaningful projects during the course or making application visible after the training.

Practice eleven: When teaching dialogue facilitation skills, we ask learners to actually facilitate one in their community within one month after the training. Then we meet online to share experiences and reflect on the lessons for the future.

ACCOUNTABILITY

"What learners learn is much beyond what I have planned."

Jane Vella

In adult learning, accountability is the learner's responsibility to manage, monitor, and take ownership of their learning goals and progress. When learners can participate in the construction of meaning, they are more likely to learn what is needed in their context. As adult educators, we are accountable for delivering quality learning, supporting learners' progress, and ensuring that education programmes achieve their intended goals.

Practice twelve: At the end of the training event, we offer people a chance to reflect on their learning experience by writing down the main two main insights from the training and 2 ideas they want to try out in their everyday life.

Reflective practice:

- When you read these principles, think about your own practice: which principles are easier to apply and in which context or target groups? It might be easier to reflect on a concrete training program you have just delivered or planning to.
- Which principles can be more challenging for you to apply and why?
- Which of the principles do you want to address in your next training?

Activity:

- You are planning a one-day training on conflict resolution for community leaders. Based on the initial needs assessment you want to pay attention to the following principles from the 12 listed above - safety, immediacy and sequence and reinforcement.
- Draw on an A4 paper initial ideas about the possible learning journey.

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LEARNING PROCESS DESIGN

How can I design meaningful and dialogic learning journeys?

In this section you will:

- learn about andragogical model
- be introduced to eight design steps
- apply design steps in planning a training

"People are always learning. What matters is what they learn from the situations they find themselves in," says Roger Säljö, professor of education and educational psychology. As trainers we are the ones creating these situations: it is both a rewarding opportunity and a responsibility as well.

Adult learners

Malcolm Knowles (1913-1977) was an influential American educator who popularised the term "andragogy", the art and science of how adults learn. Andragogy focuses on the process of learning and the active role of the learner. The instructor's role is to facilitate rather than dominate the learning (Merriam & Bierema 2014, 56). It supports discovery-based learning, encouraging learners to construct their own understanding through problem-solving and collaboration with peers.

The andragogical model proposes several core principles that provide a foundation for planning adult learning journeys.

- **Adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it.** They want to understand why they are learning something or how what they're learning applies to their current situation.

- **The self-concept of adults is heavily dependent upon a move toward self-direction**. Self-concept refers to a sense of agency, independence, and personal decision-making. Adults want to be seen and treated by others as self-directed.

- **Prior experiences of the learner provide a rich resource for learning.** Adults have breadth and depth of experiences to draw on and apply to new learning.

- **Adults typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with a life situation or perform a task.** Adults want to learn things that are relevant in a real-life context. They tend to be goal - oriented; want just-in-time learning; need a clear 'why' and 'what' for learning goals; and see value in meaningful learning experiences. This is in contrast to young people who are often more familiar with structured learning settings, where learning goals and relevance are guided by the educator and explored over time.

- **Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered: education helps them to develop competency and achieve their full potential.** Adults want to perceive that learning will help them in their lives, for example in performing tasks or dealing with problems they confront in everyday life situations. When new skills, knowledge or values are presented in the context of application to real-life situations, the learning is more likely to happen.

- **The motivation for adult learners is internal rather than external.** Motivation is the drive and energy we put into accomplishing something we want to do. As adults we may be motivated by external motivators such as seeking recognition or attaining credentials, earning a certificate, getting promoted etc. But there is a deeper intrinsic motivation hidden in all of us, such as inner fulfilment and living a meaningful and purposeful life.

You may discover that, although these principles make sense to you, there are situations where they are more difficult to apply. For example, in a formal setting you might meet adults whose motivation is external - such as getting a certificate. They can show resistance. Some learners might be more dependent on others and show hardly any agency themselves. You may find the most enthusiastic and eager learners in community settings and volunteer based learning programs. Our constant work lies in keeping on trying and expanding on each principle, so that learners become more self-aware and self-directed, willing to take responsibility for their own life. This will include practicing peace.

Designing for learning: Eight design steps

Dialogue education starts with preparation - engaging in "A Learning Needs and Resources Assessment" (LNRA), which is used to discover the context of adult learners. Getting to know your learners is part of preparation. It is about listening to the learners. We try to understand the learner in his/her everyday life context. We are curious about what the learner brings. What prior knowledge, experiences, and initial feelings do learners usually have about this subject? What are their learning goals, expectations, and preferred learning styles?

There are a number of ways to engage with learners prior to a training programme: for example through surveys, focus groups, job shadowing etc. What we learn as trainers from the assessment informs the content we decide to teach.

Based on the results of the LNRA, we begin to design the learning event or training program. The responses to the eight design questions (Jane Vella) create the structure of the learning event. As an example on how to apply this model, we design a four hour session on resilience that is one theme of the Teach Peace training program.

USING THE EIGHT DESIGN STEPS

Example: One-day training session for cultivating peace in community, 16 people

Design questions	Example
WHO the number of participants what was learned in the LNRA about their context, the teacher(s)	*A group of 16 community members, leaders, volunteers, youth workers, or local peace advocates.* *These people have diverse ages and backgrounds. They are interested in a better understanding of conflict, conflict resolution, and building dialogue.*
WHY the situation: why this session is taking place	*Many communities experience misunderstandings, tension, conflicts, generational differences, and a lack of effective communication. The participants are looking for practical tools to build trust, manage conflict peacefully, and promote inclusion and respect.*
SO THAT the behavioral indicators of learning expected to address the situation, desired outcome.	*At the end of the training, the participants will leave the session with:* • *A greater awareness of peacebuilding practices;* • *Improved listening skills;* • *Practical conflict transformation tools;* • *Increased trust among participants;* • *A concrete community peace action plan ready for implementation.*

WHEN the time frame of the session, duration	*Date: 12 September, Length: 8 hours*
WHERE the site, its opportunities and limits	*Library with a big open space, small coffee corner.*
WHAT the content: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (ideas, feelings, skills)	• *Why should we talk about tensions and conflict?* • *What are tensions? How are they related to misunderstandings, poor communication and conflict?* • *What characterizes peaceful communities?* • *How can you strengthen your own abilities to manage conflict peacefully?* • *How can people, organisations, communities deal with conflict and build trust?*
WHAT FOR the achievement-based objectives ("By the end of the named time period, all participants will have . . .")	*By the end of the workshop we will all have:* • *shared and reflected on personal experiences of tension and conflict, recognizing how we have coped in those situations;* • *been introduced to the concept of conflict resolution and community dialogue;* • *engaged in a dialogue circle to explore and suggest ways to manage conflict and build trust, individually and collectively.*
HOW learning tasks, methods and materials • Presenting new information, connecting it to the learner's experiences, providing relevant input (e.g., reading) that encompasses ideas, feelings, and activities. • Supporting application: the opportunity to act on what has been learned. • Supporting the transfer of learning to the learner's everyday context.	*Attuning exercise, framing the workshop, peer dialogue, short theory, dialogue circle, writing.* *As an example on how to apply this model, we design a four hour session on resilience that is one theme of the Teach Peace training program.*

In order to design wisely the HOW part of the training you may find helpful to learn about the holistic model of the learning process introduced in the next chapter. It gives more concrete language and a model on how to design meaningful learning processes.

In addition to these 8 design steps, consider an additional step - SO WHAT - to learn about the impact of training. You can do a follow-up meeting with the learners or send out a feedback survey to find out what they experienced and learned during the training.

Reflective practice:

- Which planning framework do you use and why?
- Think back to the last training event you planned and delivered. How did you apply these 8 design steps? Maybe you did not apply all eight, or some you only did implicitly. What design elements would need more attention?
- Which methods for learning needs assessment have you experienced? Do you feel that your needs were considered in actual delivery?

Activity:

- In the previous section you draw on A4 paper a possible learning journey on conflict resolution for community leaders.
- Apply the principles of andragogy, eight design steps and plan an actual training program. You can use the content of Teach Peace training module 2 as an input if you like.

Author: Piret Jeedas

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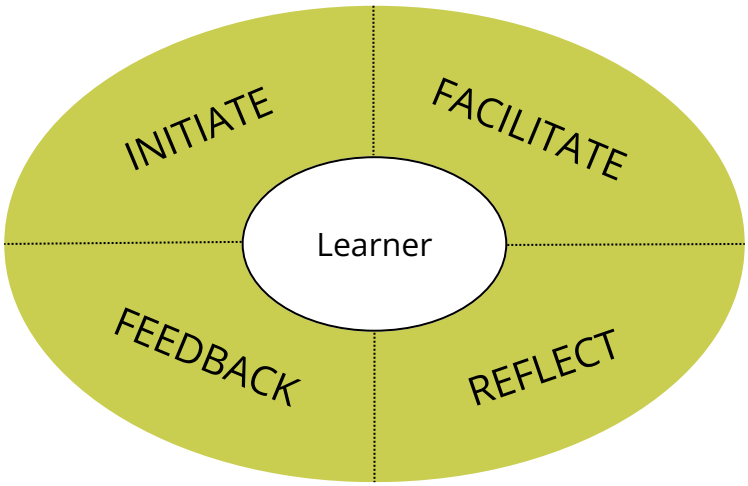
THE HOLISTIC LEARNING PROCESS MODEL

In this section you will:

- **be introduced to a holistic learning process model**

The eight design steps model described in the previous chapter helps to create an overall framework for the training.

The most interesting part of the design is still the question of HOW: how do you guide learners on their learning journey? Which methods do you use, or tasks do you create etc?



One simple and helpful model looks at the learning process as a four-phase process: initiation, facilitation, reflection and feedback. Each phase has certain points that need attention and are supported by different tasks or methods. The purpose and desired outcomes of the training course will guide us in choosing the appropriate methods. The methods used will also depend on the nature of the subject, learner's needs and previous experiences as well their readiness to try out new things and to be challenged. Sometimes the physical learning space, the resources available as well as the trainer's own readiness to try new methods will impact the choice. Teaching should also be about expanding current ways of being, learning or doing. In safe learning spaces we can also invite some experimentation.

You can apply this model to a longer program or shorter sessions. We will apply this model to deliver a workshop on resilience and well-being: topics that are part of Teach Peace training program.

Example: The Resilience and Well-Being Workshop to Librarians

9.45-14.00

INITIATING ***Frontloading, Evocation***	**Which methods to use? Which task to give? What kind of materials can be helpful?**
• attuning to learning • arousing interest • building connections to prior knowledge • activation of experiences • setting learning goals • forming a relationship between learners and trainers • forming agreements • building safety	9.45-10.00 Welcome coffee and mingling. 10.00 Welcome and attunement. Attunement is the practice of creating a trusting and equal space by focusing people's attention to the situation, the topic and each other. What is this workshop about? Shortly about the background story of the workshop. 10.10 Short check-in. How did I take care of my well-being this morning? Principles: listen with attention, speak with intention. Invitation to share any reflections from check-in. Short summary. Shortly about the program and agreements
FACILITATING LEARNING ***Constructing, Realization of Meaning, Processing the Content***	
• studying new material, delving into its meaning, analyzing, synthesizing • connecting new information with familiar information • developing new skills, attitudes • solving problems	10.30 What **is** resilience? Short peer to peer conversation. Hearing a few voices from the group. A few slides: Why the theme of resilience has emerged: the time of business, urgency, change tiredness, work stress. Some statistics and images. 10.45 Personal stories. Individual time. Invitation to make notes. 10 minutes Story: When you look back on your rich life journey, alongside all the good and exciting moments, recall a difficult and challenging time or situation. What helped you get through that difficult situation? What helped you get back on your feet and start moving again? Take one small step forward...

	10.55 Sharing stories in a group of 3. People decide how much they wish to share. Based on the stories they harvest on post it notes insights on personal strategies and inner resources. 11.30 Small break with a snack. 11.45 Sharing story harvest. Putting insights on the wall, clustering with the help of participants. 12.00 Introducing the concept of resilience and its 4 components: body, soul, mind, heart Individual writing exercise: how am I already resilient? What can I do to strengthen it? Sharing any reflection with the group. 12.30 Dialogue circle: how can we work with resilience in our libraries and communities? As learners have already been introduced to the dialogue method, the facilitator asks for a volunteer to facilitate it. One participant volunteers as a note taker, who writes a summary and shares with the participants afterwards.
REFLECTION ***Utilizing*** ***As a result of reflection on the meaning, learners could develop a personal and emotional relationship to what they have learned and a desire to apply it or to explore it independently***	
• repetition and consolidation • using what has been learned in new relationships and new situations • creating personal meaning (forming one's own attitude) • motivation to implement	13.30 Note to myself as a participant. Each learner reflects on the workshop content: writes 2 ideas for nurturing personal resilience and working with resilience in the library/at the community level. 13.40 Closing circle. Whoever wants to share what was most valuable for him/her in one word. *The workshop is continued with a common lunch.*
FEEDBACK **Assessment, Evaluation**	
• making sense of what has been learned • perception of learner's strengths and further development needs • analysis of the performance of the trainer's work	After the workshop a short feedback form is sent to the participants.

Sometimes we have been asked which method to use at which phase, or what works best. You may already guess what the answer is? Always know what the purpose is and then choose a method accordingly. We invite you to be creative and create one yourself. There are number of simple practices we use for enriching learning such as:

- sharing personal stories and experiences;
- offering case-studies;
- introducing statements followed by discussion;
- using short videos;
- asking people to create mind-maps or concept maps;
- inviting experts to share their experiences and challenges;
- encouraging short dialogues between learners;
- creating silent time for writing and reflecting;
- asking open and thought - provoking questions;
- giving real-life tasks;
- using simulation;
- using study visits.

Keep on listening to learners and inviting them to be an active part in the learning process.

Reflective practice:

- In order to learn, people need to feel safe. Learners want safety to be themselves. Safety is needed when we want people to take risks, experiment. How can you build safety in a group where people have polarised views?
- How do you give power to learners?
- How do you challenge participants to try something new?

Activity:

- You are invited to organise a four hour session on “Building resilient and peaceful communities”. 14 librarians will join the course. Make an initial draft about what kind of learning journey they could go through following the phases of initiation, facilitating, reflection and feedback.

Author: Piret Jeedas

References:

- Adapted by Piret Jeedas. M. Karm. 2008. Learning methods in training. Based on a project: Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking.

DEALING WITH CONFLICTS IN GROUPS

How do I deal with conflicts and polarisation in groups, and as part of the larger societal context?

In this section you will:

- learn to better recognise different forms of conflict in the groups you work with
- learn about conceptual approaches to conflict and polarisation, in order to understand group processes and the influence of dynamics in your communities, the society or other contexts
- learn about a few practical approaches for dealing with conflicts as educator

Conflicts are a part of life - just as eating is, playing or having fun. Conflicts happen in a wide variety of degrees. From small: for example a misunderstanding. Or big: people threatening each other with violence. Conflicts have a context. They involve people with their own specific histories, backgrounds and characters. They create dynamics between individuals or groups. They arise and pass away, or they stay lingering.

Challenges in the group

The challenges adult educators have to face when conflict arises are multiple. Think for example about learners that are distracting themselves and other group members by constantly looking at their phones. These questions can help you to reflect on these challenges:

- **What is your role in it?** Do you observe a conflict arise among your adult learners, or are you part of it yourself?
- **Is the conflict a direct result of events that happen in your group?** Is it grounded to events that happen or have happened outside the group, the society, organisation, etc.? Is it related to individual behaviours, rooted in personal attitude, character, etc? Or maybe a combination of these factors?
- **Is the conflict hindering or blocking the learning process** in such a way that it has to be paused or stopped? Or is it a calculated or expected part of the process and can it be managed or integrated in the learning session?
- **Who is responsible** for dealing with the conflict? You as an adult educator? For example because you take the task on you to create a safe space for your learners.

- **Can the participants in the group resolve the issue themselves**, without help? For example when they have learned tools to do so and you as an educator believe the group has the power to do so. Or does it need a combination of both educator and learners?
- How can you best reflect on conflicts that emerge during learning situations? Is it meaningful to come back to it at the end during a collective reflection? Or is it something you could talk about with the people involved afterwards?

But what exactly is a conflict? An heated argument or a passionate debate is not immediately a conflict. When working with a dialogical approach learners are often empowered to speak their mind, inspired by a question or another form of stimulation. Learners begin to express their ideas, feelings or thoughts. They start responding to each other and discover differences in their thinking.

Conflict radar

As an adult educator it can be helpful to exercise your 'conflict radar', meaning you develop a sensitivity for group processes and relationships between learners in your groups, and between learners and you as an educator. The signals that indicate some form of conflict can be weak in the beginning. One person giving critical feedback to one other person. Another person criticising exercises or learning materials. Someone not wanting to say much about themselves and looking away etc.

One part of having your "conflict radar" switched on is the ability to recognise patterns. If one person starts to comment on one specific member or a group, this might mean something is the matter. Another example can be that an adult learner is eager to engage in debate with others, to show their presence in the group. So many things, situations, behaviours, opinions, judgements etc. might lead to conflict or difficulties. The question you as an educator have to ask yourself every time: is this a problem for me? Is this a problem for the group and their learning process? Should I do something about it, or not?

You should also tune your radar to the relationships between your learners and you as an educator. Not all group members are the same: they are different people with different characters, talents, abilities, ideas, appearances, etc. As much as you believe in the idea that everyone in your group is equal, in practice it can happen that some people pop-up more clearly on your radar than others. For example an active learner who always responds to your question, or a dominant learner who is constantly looking for attention from others. These dominations, some positive, some more negative, can consume your attention and energy. It might be that these 'bigger ships' are dominating your field of vision in such a way that you no longer see the 'smaller ships' so clearly (see images on the next page).

*Inspired by The Lewis method of Deep Democracy

Conflict radar:
Types of sabotage*



Conflict radar:
Keep small ships in sight



Constantly scanning the room for the small ships is just as important as rewarding the active learners and managing people who need extra attention. One way of doing this is moving your attention in a very conscious way to learners who tend to take less space in your groups.

Practical tactics can be:

- asking people who have not spoken yet about their ideas and observations.
- creating sub-groups with small ships only.
- asking more dominant people to actively listen to more timid people, to create connections between small and big ships, etc.

Dealing with difficult conversations

One potentially helpful way to look at problems that arise during conflicts is by understanding the layers which conversations ca consist of. In their book *Difficult Conversations,* (Stone, Patton & Heen, 2010) make a distinction between three different types of conversation that often happen at the same time, based on studying hundreds of conversations of every kind. The authors (2010, 7) state that in each of these conversations, people make errors. These errors distort our thoughts and feelings, and get us in trouble. The three types of conversations are:

1. **The 'What happened?' Conversation.** Most difficult conversations involve disagreement about what has happened or what should happen. Who said what and who did what? Who's right, who means what, and who is to blame?
2. **The Feelings Conversation**. Every difficult conversation also asks and answers questions about feelings. Are my feelings valid? Appropriate? What do I do about another person's feelings? What if they are angry or hurt?
3. **The Identity Conversation**. This is the conversation we each have with ourselves about what a situation means to us. What impact might it have on our self-image and self-esteem, our future and our well-being?

"Managing all three simultaneously may seem hard, but it is easier than facing the consequences of engaging in difficult conversations blindly." (Stone et al 2010, 8). The authors advise to focus on creating a learning conversation, together with all the participants in your group, so as to make use of the conflict in a productive way, A good place to start is the Identity Conversation, since at this level people's emotions can easily 'dig in their heels'; this can be an obstacle to getting further. At the same time, this provides a chance to let go of these emotions and feelings. Stone et al (2010, 10-143) give four strategies for doing that.
As an adult educator, you can apply these strategies yourself. But you can also stimulate your learners to apply them.

Four strategies to let go of emotions and feelings

- **It is not my responsibility to make things better; it's my responsibility to do my best.**
- **They have limitations too.** Sometimes you will tell the other person about your feelings and perspectives, or about the impact they are having on you, and they understand, and you each agree to change your behaviour.
- **This conflict is not who I am.** An important barrier to letting go occurs when we integrate the conflict into our sense of who we are. (...) We define ourselves in relation to our conflict with others.
- **Letting go doesn't mean I no longer care.**

The moment that your 'conflict radar' notifies you of an issue that needs your response, your first action is often the most difficult. Questions that might pop-up in your mind are: Is my radar accurate? Should I act? What should I do? Will it have the effect I aim for?

Dealing with conflicts

The authors say that an effective way to get started with a difficult conversation, or when conflicts arise in group work, is to focus on two steps:

- **Step one**: Begin from what they call the Third Story (more on this on the next page): take a birds-eye perspective. Zoom out and try to see the bigger picture: what patterns do you observe in the dynamics of the group? How are aspects of the context influencing the group? and so on.
- **Step two**: Invite group members to work on mutual understanding and problem-solving. For example, share what you see from the birds-eye perspective, in a neutral way, and without blaming anyone. Then ask the group members if they think of any strategies to help the group collaborate to come up with solutions.

The Third Story is the story of the situation as it is seen by someone who is not involved and who has the ability to look at the group dynamics from a distance. Stone et al compare this to the role of a mediator: "This means describing the problem between parties in a way that rings true for both sides simultaneously." (Stone et al 2010, 150). The goal of zooming out is to create a situation where the people in the conflict can agree on the same description of the situation. It does not mean that they immediately agree on what needs to be done to get out of the conflict. But it builds a common understanding of the fact. It is not your story as an educator involved in the room, nor is it the story of the others present, or of the people involved in a possible conflict.

During the second step you invite others to work on a mutual understanding and find solutions to the conflict. Here it is important that you are clear about your purpose: why do you intervene? Always formulate your words in the form of an invitation.

You are only one set of eyes and ears: trust the collective intelligence and ask everyone to help with understanding the problem, with defining the goal or bottom line and with finding a solution to the conflict. Do not impose solutions for conflicts. The more you make group members a partner in finding a way forward, the more likely it is they will accept your invitation and actually work together.

The authors also suggest sharing your internal conflict, as a way to stimulate a positive attitude among your learners. There is a fair chance they will recognise your conflict and start sharing their own thinking. The last advice is to be persistent. If you as educator or others in the group are proposing a solution and the people who are at the root of the conflict don't understand it or use other strategies (consciously or unconsciously) to define the problem differently, refuse to think along or do not accept the solution, be patient but persistent in your approach (Stone et al 2010, 155-157).

Example of dealing with a minor conflict (from our own experience)

Educator: I see that some people are using their phones a lot. (factual observation)
Educator: Are you making notes about the session, or is it for something else? (verifying the facts)
Participant A: I am waiting for an important call.
Participant B: Sorry, I was looking for an email.
Educator: I understand that sometimes we have issues to deal with, even during sessions like this. I observe though that it is limiting your concentration on the exercise and also affecting the others in the group. (zooming out - Third Story) Would you agree with that?
Participant B: Yes

Participant A: Yes, but this call is really important; I hope to get this new job.
Educator: I understand very well that this is important for you. What would be a good solution to make sure everyone can concentrate on the exercise, without being disturbed by phone use? Who has a proposal? (describing purpose and invitation)
Participant C: Maybe we can take a brief break, so she can take the call?
Participant A: But I want to continue with this exercise, I like it.
Educator: I am happy that you like it, but that would not solve the problem that both you and the others are disturbed by you focussing on your phone and a possible incoming call. (persistance)
Participant A: Maybe it is indeed better to take a break then.
Educator: OK, let's pause for 10 minutes. And if you haven't received your call, I propose you wait for it outside and join again after you are done. (persistance) Is that ok for you? (check)

In this example, the educator tries to follow the strategies the authors of Difficult Conversations have laid out. This is not always easy as you will have to be very conscious of the words you use, don't blame people, don't make assumptions about what people might think or feel, stick to the facts (like a journalist), and try to keep your personal emotions to yourself. That does not mean that you can not be happy, joyful or enthusiastic. These positive emotions can be powerful tools to praise and stimulate your learners. Creating a good and open atmosphere is also a good strategy to prevent conflicts.

Reflective practice:

- When I observe or experience forms of conflicts or polarisation?
- -What kind of effect does it have on me? As a person? As a professional?
- How much responsibility do I take upon myself in those situations?
- What kind of conflict solver am I? What is my style? Which strategies work well for me? Which ones do I want to add to my toolbox?

Activity:

- Next time you observe a conflict that does not involve you, observe it in a conscious way. If you can, make some notes about what actually happens, who is involved, what kind of behaviour you observe.
- Afterwards try to deconstruct the conflict by thinking what were the roots of the cause.
- You can also think about what could have been done about it, and whether you could have had a role in it or not.

Author: Bart Cosijn

References:

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ENDNOTES

The goal of this Guidebook was to provide you as an adult educator with a selected number of models and principles for adult education. These can help you to design learning experiences. We touched upon aspects like, the dialogic approach to adult learning, learning process design, a holistic learning model, and dealing with conflicts in your groups of learners.

This Guidebook builds on the Training Programme produced by the *Teach Peace* project. You might like to take a look for more ideas and information.

For some simple ready-to-use peace and dialogue activities that you can use with adults in many contexts, we suggest you explore the project's "Ready-to-use activities for teachers, trainers and community practitioners".

May you shape many peace - focused actions and dialogic learning journey!.

Teach Peace Project Team

THANK YOU FOR JOINING OUR TEACH PEACE TRAINING PROGRAMME!

We hope you have found the materials helpful.

Now may be the perfect moment to begin shaping your own peace-focused actions and dialogue initiatives.

We're keeping our fingers crossed for you.

Teach Peace Project Team