ADULT TRAINERS' GUIDEBOOK

Democracy in Action: Empowering Adults to Teach the Next Generation

Democracy4all Ages

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Introduction

Democracy is often explained as something large, serious, and reserved for politicians in grey suits speaking into microphones. Yet democracy actually begins in much smaller places. It starts when a child hears, “What do you think?” instead of “Be quiet.” It grows when disagreement is treated as curiosity. It survives when people learn that participation matters even when the result is imperfect, messy, or occasionally involves glitter glue on the classroom floor. This is why adult education matters so deeply.

Children do not learn democracy from posters hanging on classroom walls. They learn it from the atmosphere, tone and the invisible rules adults create every single day. A teacher who listens patiently during chaos teaches democracy more effectively than a textbook chapter called “Citizenship Education.” A trainer who allows different opinions around a table demonstrates democratic culture more convincingly than twenty PowerPoint slides full of definitions.

Adult educators therefore become something far greater than instructors. They become multipliers. One inspired teacher may influence hundreds of children over a career. One reflective educator can shape generations of future conversations, behaviours, and values. This creates a fascinating chain reaction: a trainer teaches a teacher, the teacher influences children, the children influence society, and society eventually wonders why meetings are suddenly less terrible.

Training adults to teach democracy is not the same as teaching adults mathematics, software skills, or how to survive another mandatory online meeting. Democracy education reaches directly into beliefs, experiences, fears, identities, and memories. Adults enter training rooms carrying invisible luggage. Some have experienced exclusion. Some distrust institutions. Some believe democracy means voting once every few years and then complaining professionally in supermarket queues. Others may never have had spaces where disagreement felt safe. For this reason, democratic education cannot rely on memorization or rigid instruction. It requires participation, dialogue, reflection, and emotional safety. Adults must experience democratic learning before they can create it for children. A trainer cannot convincingly encourage openness while controlling every conversation like an airport security officer confiscating toothpaste.

The training environment itself therefore becomes the first lesson. Participants observe everything: who speaks most, whose opinions are valued, whether mistakes are welcomed, whether humour is allowed, whether silence feels uncomfortable or respected. Democracy is taught through behaviour, atmosphere, and relationships.

There is also an important paradox in democratic education: people cannot be forced into democratic thinking through authoritarian methods. Telling educators, “You must now think openly and critically,” has approximately the same effect as shouting “Relax!” at someone who is stressed. Real democratic learning develops when people feel ownership over the process. Adults need opportunities to question, challenge, explore, disagree, and occasionally change their minds without feeling humiliated.

This makes the role of the trainer both exciting and unpredictable. A democratic trainer is not a performer delivering perfect wisdom from a stage. Instead, the trainer acts more like a guide, facilitator, conversation architect, and sometimes peaceful mediator between strong opinions and limited coffee supplies.

Unlike children, adults bring years of experiences into learning spaces. This can be a tremendous strength. Adults connect concepts to real-life situations quickly and often enrich discussions with practical examples. However, experience can also create resistance. Adults may say things like, “We already tried that in 2009,” or “This would never work in my school.” These moments should not be treated as obstacles but as invitations into deeper dialogue.

Teaching democracy to adults therefore requires honesty rather than perfection. Participants do not need trainers who appear flawless. They need trainers who model respectful disagreement, critical thinking, empathy, and curiosity. In many ways, democracy education succeeds not when everyone agrees, but when people learn how to disagree without destroying each other emotionally before lunch break.

At its heart, this guidebook is based on one essential belief: democracy is a daily practice. It lives in conversations, participation, fairness, listening, courage and the ability to say, “I might be wrong, tell me more.”

And perhaps that is the most hopeful part of all. Democracy requires ordinary people willing to learn how to live together respectfully, even when opinions differ, emotions rise, or someone inevitably forgets to mute themselves during an online session.

The work of adult trainers is therefore profoundly important. They are not simply delivering workshops but helping educators create future citizens who know how to listen, participate, think critically, and care about others. In a world increasingly full of noise, polarization, and instant reactions, this may be one of the most radical educational acts possible.

1. Meet **Our Team**

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2. Purpose of the **Guidebook**

This manual aims to support adult educators, trainers, and facilitators in designing and delivering inclusive, participatory, and democratic learning experiences. It combines theoretical foundations with practical methodologies, activities, and tools that promote active participation, critical thinking, dialogue, collaboration, and respect for diversity.

The manual encourages trainers not only to teach democratic values but also to put these values into practice throughout the learning process, creating environments where every participant feels respected, heard, and empowered to contribute.

Through theoretical foundation, practical guidance, reflection tools, and adaptable training templates, the manual seeks to strengthen educators' competences and support the integration of democratic principles into adult education and everyday professional practice.

3. Target **Group**

This guidebook is primarily addressed to adult educators, trainers, facilitators, and professionals involved in formal, non-formal, and informal adult education who wish to integrate democratic principles and participatory approaches into their practice.



It is also relevant to community educators, NGO staff, youth workers, and professionals working with diverse groups, particularly those promoting active citizenship, social inclusion, equality, and democratic participation.
The manual is suitable for both experienced practitioners and those new to democratic education, offering practical tools and adaptable methodologies for different learning environments.

The guidebook may also serve as a valuable resource for organisations, educational institutions, and community initiatives seeking to strengthen democratic practices within their activities. Its flexible approach allows users to adapt the proposed methods and tools to different contexts, group sizes, learning needs, and levels of experience, ensuring that democratic learning remains accessible, inclusive, and meaningful for all participant

SECTION A

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

1. Adult Learning **Principles**



Adults do not learn like children, and pretending otherwise usually ends badly for everyone involved. Give a child a sticker and they may enthusiastically complete a task. Give an adult a sticker and they will smile politely while internally questioning every life decision that brought them to this training room. Adult learning is rooted in experience, identity, and relevance. Malcolm Knowles, one of the most influential thinkers in adult education, argued that adults learn differently because they carry entire worlds with them into every educational setting: careers, responsibilities, failures, successes, biases, survival strategies, and occasionally unresolved frustration from group projects completed long ago. According to Knowles, adults are self-directed learners. They do not want to feel controlled or treated as passive recipients of information. Adults prefer involvement in decisions about their learning process. When participants understand why something matters and how it connects to their reality, engagement increases dramatically. Nobody enjoys sitting through abstract theories that feel disconnected from life. Adults are practical creatures. If they cannot answer the question "Why does this matter for me?" attention disappears quickly.

Adult Learning **Principles**



Adults also bring prior experiences into learning. This is both a gift and a challenge. Experience enriches discussion, creates deeper reflection, and allows participants to connect theory to practice. However, experience can also create fixed assumptions. Some participants may arrive convinced they already know what democracy education means. Others may associate it with politics, conflict, or empty slogans. Effective trainers invite participants to examine such experience critically and respectfully.

Another important principle is that adults are goal-oriented. Most adult learners do not participate simply because learning is "nice." They usually want solutions, improvement, confidence, practical tools, or professional growth. A teacher attending democracy training often wonders silently: "Will this actually help me on Monday morning when twenty children are arguing about who took the scissors?" Successful training therefore connects democratic values to concrete educational realities.

Respect is equally essential. Adults expect to be treated as capable individuals whose knowledge and perspectives matter. Nothing destroys motivation faster than feeling patronized. Trainers should avoid becoming "all-knowing experts" speaking endlessly while participants get distracted and disconnected. Democratic adult education thrives through participation, dialogue, humour, storytelling, and shared reflection.

Autonomy also matters deeply. Adults value freedom to explore ideas, ask difficult questions, and form their own conclusions. Ironically, democracy education itself requires democratic teaching methods. If participants are expected to encourage participation in children, they must first experience participatory learning themselves.

Real-life relevance is another central principle. Adults learn more effectively when content connects directly to authentic situations. Discussions about inclusion become more meaningful when linked to classroom conflicts, cultural diversity, or real educational dilemmas. Reflection becomes stronger when participants recognize themselves in examples rather than hearing distant theoretical language that sounds impressive but emotionally empty.

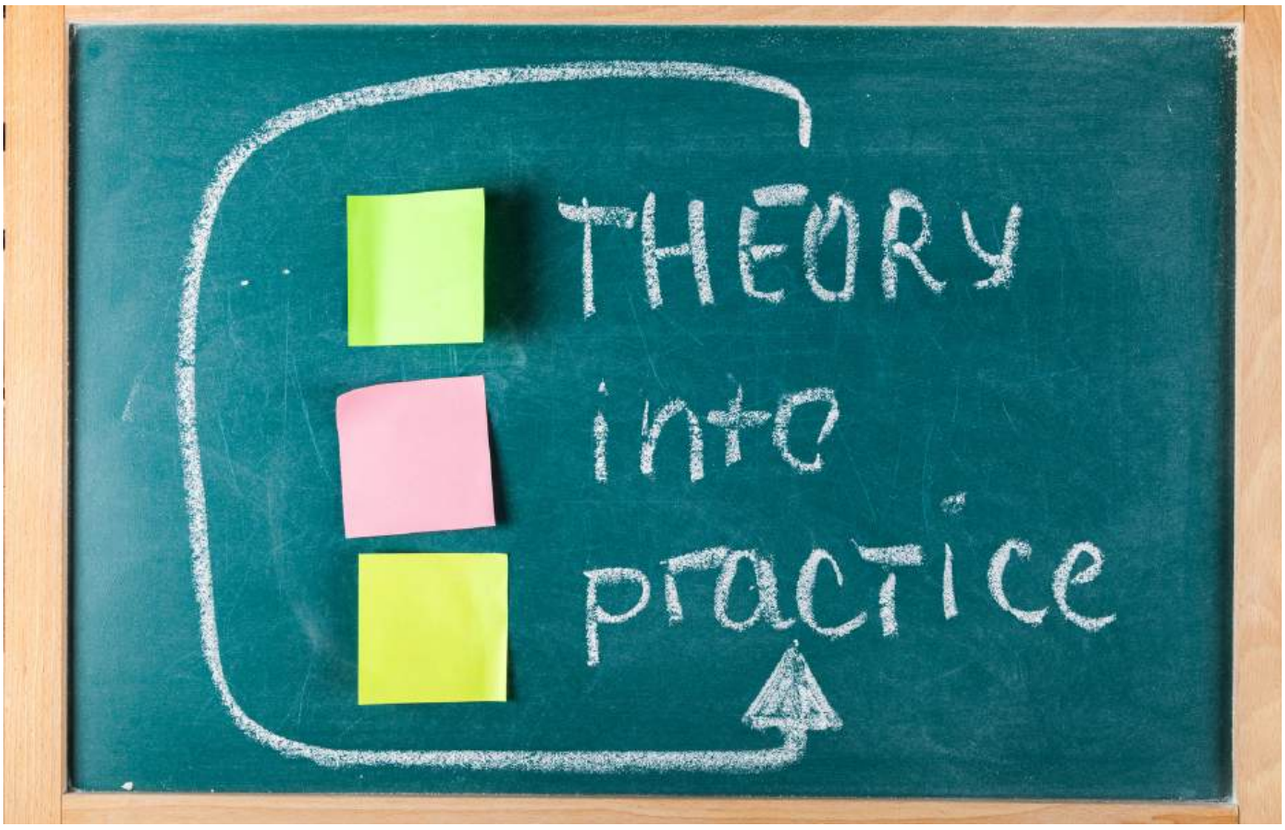
This has major implications for trainers. Adult education should not resemble a one-way lecture where participants sit quietly while someone reads bullet points and presentation contents out loud. Instead, learning environments should encourage interaction, reflection, collaboration, and experimentation. Adults need opportunities to discuss, test ideas, challenge assumptions, and connect learning to lived experience.

Democratic education particularly benefits from experiential learning approaches. Adults remember what they experience emotionally and socially far more than what they hear passively. A role-play about exclusion often creates stronger understanding than ten pages of explanation. A difficult group discussion may teach more about democratic participation than a perfectly designed lecture.

Humour and humanity also matter more than many trainers realize. Adult learners are not machines downloading information. They are people managing stress, responsibilities, insecurities, and limited attention spans. A trainer who creates warmth, psychological safety, and authentic connection often achieves more than one with perfect slides but no human presence.

Perhaps most importantly, adult learning requires trust. Participants must feel safe enough to express uncertainty, disagreement, or vulnerability. Democracy education involves values and identity; therefore emotional safety becomes essential. People rarely explore difficult questions honestly if they fear judgment or embarrassment.

The trainer's task is not to "fill" participants with knowledge. It is to create conditions where reflection, dialogue, and transformation become possible. This requires flexibility, patience, listening skills, and the ability to navigate unpredictability. Because once adults begin discussing democracy, participation, fairness, and power, conversations can become wonderfully alive, slightly chaotic, and occasionally more philosophical than anyone expected at nine o'clock in the morning.



2. Practical Implications for **Trainers**

In practice, adult learning principles mean trainers should involve participants actively from the beginning. Instead of immediately presenting definitions, trainers can invite educators to reflect on moments when they personally felt heard, excluded, respected, or powerless. These emotional memories often become powerful entry points into democratic learning.

According to Clark's evidence-based approach to training, effective professional development should be focused on clearly defined learning objectives and practical skill development. Rather than relying primarily on lectures or information delivery, training should actively engage participants through demonstrations, guided practice, reflection, and feedback. New knowledge is best acquired when it is connected to participants' prior experience and immediately applied to realistic situations. Trainers should use authentic examples, encourage active participation, and provide opportunities for learners to practice new skills in a supportive environment. This approach increases knowledge retention, promotes transfer of learning into professional practice, and helps participants develop confidence in applying what they have learned.

2. Practical Implications for **Trainers**

Such a training could begin with a provocative and reflective question: **"Why democracy?"** Participants could be invited to consider whether democracy is always the best way to make decisions and whether it has any drawbacks. For example, democratic processes can be time-consuming, sometimes lead to disagreement, and do not always guarantee the best outcome. By exploring these challenges first, teachers can better appreciate why democratic values - such as participation, dialogue, respect for different opinions, and shared responsibility - remain important. This opening discussion encourages critical thinking rather than presenting democracy as an unquestionable concept, helping teachers understand how to introduce civic participation to children in a meaningful and age-appropriate way.

Further - training sessions should balance theory with experience. Long monologues should be avoided in favour of dialogue, collaborative activities, case studies, simulations, and reflection exercises. Adults need space not only to understand concepts intellectually, but also to connect them emotionally and professionally.

Flexibility is also crucial. Trainers may need to adapt discussions according to participants' backgrounds, resistance levels, or emerging group dynamics. Democratic learning rarely follows perfectly predictable pathways. Sometimes the most valuable learning emerges unexpectedly through disagreement, humour, or honest reflection.

Finally, trainers should model the values they teach. Respect, inclusion, participation, empathy, and openness should not exist only in workshop content; they should be visible in the trainer's behaviour. Participants notice authenticity immediately. Democracy education becomes credible when people can feel it, not just define it.

3. Teaching Democracy to **Adults vs Children**

Teaching democracy to children often begins with simple ideas: sharing, fairness, listening, participation, taking turns. Children are usually still building their understanding of authority and responsibility. They ask direct questions with astonishing honesty. Sometimes uncomfortable honesty. A child may openly ask, “Why should I listen to rules if adults break them too?” which is simultaneously terrifying and philosophically excellent.

Adults, however, arrive with years of formed opinions, emotional experiences, political frustrations, professional habits, and personal histories. Some adults may strongly support democratic values. Others may feel disappointed or suspicious. Some may believe democracy is essential; others may associate it with conflict, inefficiency, or endless meetings where nothing happens except the gradual death of hope.

This changes the educational approach entirely.
Children are generally more open to exploration because many of their perspectives are still developing. Adults, by contrast, may protect their beliefs carefully because those beliefs are connected to identity, culture, and lived experience. Challenging ideas in adult education therefore requires sensitivity and respect. The goal is not to “correct” participants but to encourage reflection and dialogue.

For children, democracy education often focuses on behaviour and participation. For adults, it focuses more heavily on critical thinking, self-awareness, and professional practice. Adults need opportunities to examine not only what democracy means theoretically, but also how power, inclusion, communication, and fairness appear in everyday educational environments.

Children learn effectively through stories, games, and concrete experiences. Adults also benefit from experiential learning, but they additionally require relevance to real-life contexts. Teachers participating in democracy training immediately evaluate whether methods can realistically work in classrooms filled with time pressure, curriculum demands, emotional challenges, and children who occasionally behave like tiny revolutionary negotiators.

Another significant difference involves resistance. Children may resist because they are bored, distracted, hungry, or deeply committed to discussing dinosaurs instead of civic participation. Adults may resist because ideas challenge existing assumptions or professional habits. This resistance should not automatically be viewed negatively. In democratic education, disagreement can become an important learning opportunity.

3 Teaching Democracy to **Adults vs Children**



Teaching adults therefore relies heavily on dialogue rather than instruction. Participants should feel invited into conversation rather than positioned as passive audiences. Open discussion encourages ownership, reflection, and engagement. Democracy cannot be meaningfully taught through fear, humiliation, or rigid authority. Ironically, the method must reflect the message.

Adults also need emotional safety when discussing sensitive issues. Conversations about equality, discrimination, participation, or authority may trigger strong feelings or personal memories. Skilled trainers create environments where disagreement remains respectful and where curiosity matters more than winning arguments.
Ultimately, democracy education for adults succeeds when participants begin reflecting not only on society, but also on themselves. How do they respond to different opinions? How do they handle power in classrooms? Who gets heard? Who gets ignored? Which voices feel "difficult," and why?

These questions are rarely simple. But perhaps that is exactly the point. Democracy is not neat. It is living, imperfect, uncomfortable, hopeful, exhausting, necessary work. And education remains one of the few places where people can still learn how to practise it together.

4. Creating a Democratic **Learning Environment**



A democratic learning environment is not created by hanging inspirational posters about respect while one person dominates every conversation for three hours. Democracy in education is not decoration. It is the atmosphere, structure, behaviour, and relationships combined.

Participants immediately sense whether a learning space feels democratic. They notice who speaks most often, whose opinions are welcomed, whether disagreement feels dangerous, and whether mistakes are treated as failures or opportunities. In many ways, the emotional climate teaches more powerfully than the official content.

Psychological safety is therefore essential. Adults need to feel safe enough to speak honestly, ask questions, admit uncertainty, and occasionally say, "I actually don't know." This may sound simple, but for many people it is surprisingly difficult. Educational systems have often rewarded correct answers more than honest reflection. Democratic learning requires spaces where curiosity becomes more valuable than perfection.

Ground rules help create this safety. However, rules imposed without discussion can feel contradictory in democratic education. Whenever possible, participants should contribute to agreements about communication, listening, confidentiality, and participation. Even small acts of shared decision-making help build ownership and trust.

4. Creating a Democratic **Learning Environment**

Equal participation also matters deeply. In almost every group, certain voices naturally dominate while others become quieter. Democratic facilitation does not mean forcing everyone to speak constantly. It means creating balanced opportunities where different personalities and communication styles can contribute meaningfully.

Humour can also play an important role. Democratic spaces do not need to feel heavy or overly formal. Laughter builds connection, reduces anxiety, and reminds participants of shared humanity. Of course, humour should never exclude or humiliate people. The goal is warmth, not performance.

Ownership of learning is another key principle. Adults engage more deeply when they feel the process belongs partly to them. Trainers should encourage participants to bring examples, questions, dilemmas, and experiences into discussions. A democratic learning environment values participants not merely as learners, but as contributors.

Conflict, interestingly, is not necessarily a sign of failure. In democratic education, respectful disagreement can become productive and meaningful. The trainer's role is not to eliminate tension completely, but to help participants navigate it constructively. Democracy without disagreement is usually just obedience wearing a friendly disguise.

Creating democratic learning environments also requires attention to inclusion. Trainers should remain aware of language, cultural differences, accessibility, power dynamics, and participation barriers. Sometimes exclusion happens loudly; other times it happens quietly through assumptions, interruptions, or invisible hierarchies.

Most importantly, democratic environments are lived rather than announced. Participants believe in democratic education when they experience respect, participation, fairness, and empathy directly. A trainer who listens carefully, shares power thoughtfully, and responds authentically teaches democracy long before any formal definition appears on a slide.

And perhaps this is the real beauty of democratic learning: people leave not only with information, but with the memory of how it felt to belong, contribute, question, and be heard.

SECTION B

FACILITATION METHODS AND PRACTICES

SECTION B: FACILITATION
METHODS AND PRACTICES

Section B translates the principles of adult learning and democratic education into practical facilitation methods. It is designed for adult trainers, teacher trainers, facilitators, and professionals working in formal, non-formal, and community-based education. It expands the original guidebook outline, which identifies open-ended questioning, small-group work, and participatory facilitation as key elements of this section.

The methods presented here are grounded in andragogy, experiential and transformative learning, critical pedagogy, communities of practice, deliberative democracy, and popular or grassroots education. They also reflect the Council of Europe's understanding that democratic competence should be developed through pedagogy, teacher education, assessment, and institutional practice —not merely presented as theoretical content.

A democratic trainer does more than explain participation. The trainer creates conditions in which participants can experience participation, share authority, question assumptions, listen across differences, and contribute to the direction of their learning. Adult learning and education should strengthen critical thinking, autonomy, responsibility, peaceful coexistence, human rights, solidarity, and participation in community life (UNESCO, 2015).



1. Facilitation **Techniques**

Facilitation differs from traditional instruction. In a lecture-centred model, knowledge usually moves from the expert to the participants. In democratic facilitation, knowledge is developed through dialogue between the trainer, the participants, their professional experiences, and the social context in which learning takes place.

This approach draws on Freire's concept of problem-posing education, in which participants are not treated as empty recipients of information but as capable people who can name, question, and transform their reality (Freire, 1970). It also reflects Brookfield's emphasis on critical reflection and democratic discussion, where adults examine assumptions, encounter alternative perspectives, and justify their views through reasoned dialogue (Brookfield, 1987, 2005, 2017).

Democratic facilitation does not mean that the trainer has no role or that every session must be completely unstructured. The trainer remains responsible for creating a clear learning process, protecting psychological safety, ensuring accessibility, managing time, and supporting meaningful participation. However, authority is exercised transparently and responsibly rather than through domination.

Core principles for democratic facilitation

Trainers should:

- treat participants as knowledgeable contributors;
- connect learning with participants' lived and professional experiences;
- explain the purpose of activities and decisions;
- invite participants to influence the learning process;
- ensure that disagreement is possible without humiliation;
- recognize different forms of participation, including speaking, writing, listening, observing, and reflecting;
- monitor whose voices are heard and whose remain absent;
- connect discussion with practical action;
- model the democratic values being explored.

These principles are consistent with UNESCO's recommendation that adult learning should use learner-centred approaches, acknowledge diversity, minimize barriers to participation, and strengthen learning communities and democratic partnerships.

1.1 Open-Ended Questioning

Open-ended questions invite interpretation, reflection, and dialogue rather than one correct response. They are especially valuable when exploring democracy because democratic issues often involve competing values, uncertainty, context, and disagreement.
Questions such as “Do you support democratic classrooms?” may produce brief or socially desirable answers. Questions such as “Who usually has the power to make decisions in your classroom, and what are the consequences?” invite deeper reflection.

Purpose
Open-ended questioning can help participants:

- examine assumptions;
- connect theory with experience;
- consider multiple perspectives;
- articulate values and reasoning;
- identify power relations;
- move from abstract concepts to professional practice.
- move from abstract concepts to professional practice.

Examples

- What does participation look like in your educational setting?
- When have you felt genuinely heard in a group?
- Can a decision be democratic if some people remain silent?
- When does guidance become control?
- What makes disagreement productive rather than destructive?
- Whose voices are easiest to overlook in educational settings?
- What would children notice if they observed how adults make decisions?

Facilitation steps

1. Introduce a clear question connected to the training objective.
2. Allow participants quiet thinking time.
3. Invite initial responses in pairs or small groups.
4. Open the discussion to the wider group.
5. Ask participants to explain the reasoning behind their views.
6. Invite contrasting perspectives without forcing consensus.
7. Summarize key themes, tensions, and unanswered questions.
8. Connect the discussion with professional practice.

1.1 Open-Ended **Questioning**

Useful follow-up prompts

- What leads you to that conclusion?
- Can you provide an example?
- Does anyone see this differently?
- What assumptions are present here?
- Who might be affected by this decision?
- Has the discussion changed or complicated your position?

Trainer tip

Avoid asking an apparently open question when only one answer will be accepted. Participants quickly recognize when "discussion" is being used to lead them toward a predetermined conclusion.

1.2 Active and Democratic **Listening**

Listening is not a passive pause while waiting to speak. It is a democratic practice through which participants demonstrate that another person's experiences and reasoning deserve attention.

Active listening involves:

- concentrating on the speaker;
- avoiding unnecessary interruption;
- checking understanding;
- paraphrasing key ideas;
- asking clarifying questions;
- separating understanding from agreement;
- noticing emotional as well as verbal communication.

Listening pairs

Participants work in pairs. One person speaks for three minutes about a professional experience in which participation was encouraged or restricted. The listener does not interrupt, advise, or debate. The listener then summarizes what they heard, and the speaker confirms or corrects the summary. Roles are exchanged.

Debriefing questions

- How did uninterrupted speaking feel?
- What made you feel listened to?
- Was it difficult to listen without preparing a response?
- How could this practice influence staff meetings or classroom discussions?
- What is the difference between hearing, understanding, and agreeing?

This exercise can reveal how unusual it is for adults to receive sustained, non-judgmental attention. It also prepares participants for dialogue on sensitive issues.

1.3 Think–Pair–Share

Think–Pair–Share gives participants time to think individually before entering a larger discussion. It supports quieter participants and reduces the advantage held by those who process ideas quickly or speak confidently in public.

Steps

1. Think: Present a question and allow two to three minutes of individual reflection.
2. Pair: Participants discuss their responses with one partner.
3. Share: Each pair contributes one idea, question, or disagreement to the whole group.
4. Synthesize: The trainer identifies recurring themes and contrasting views.

Example question

“What is one apparently ordinary classroom practice that may unintentionally limit children’s participation?”

This method is useful at the beginning of a topic, after a theoretical input, or before a plenary debate.

1.4 Dyads, Triads, and Buzz Groups

Small-group formats increase opportunities for participation and enable adults to connect new concepts with their own experience.

- **Dyads** are pairs and work well for personal reflection or listening exercises.
- **Triads** allow three roles, such as speaker, listener, and observer.
- **Buzz** groups are temporary groups of three to six participants who discuss one focused question for a short period.

Example: The Democratic Classroom Buzz Group

Ask each group to discuss:

"What is one decision currently made only by adults that children could meaningfully influence?"

Each group identifies:

1. the decision;
2. the people currently involved;
3. the people currently excluded;
4. a realistic method for increasing participation;
5. possible risks or limitations.

The groups then share their proposals. The activity moves discussion from general support for democracy toward concrete institutional practice.



1.5 Facilitated Large-Group Discussion

Large-group discussion can create shared learning, but it may also reproduce inequalities. Confident speakers, senior professionals, native speakers, or socially dominant participants may occupy most of the available space.
The facilitator should therefore make participation structures visible.

Strategies for balanced participation

- use a speaking order or talking object;
- invite contributions from people who have not yet spoken;
- ask participants to write before speaking;
- alternate between plenary and small-group formats;
- limit repeated contributions from the same participants;
- invite participants to build on rather than repeat previous ideas;
- offer the possibility to contribute anonymously;
- summarize without assigning greater value to high-status voices;
- avoid forcing individuals to disclose personal experiences.

The Council of Europe's RFCDC emphasizes that democratic competence includes values, attitudes, skills, and critical knowledge, and that educational practice should create opportunities for learners to enact these competences.



1.6 Circle **Process**

A circle process arranges participants so that no one occupies a physically dominant position. It has roots in Indigenous, community-based, restorative, and dialogical traditions, although trainers should avoid presenting all circle practices as culturally identical.

Purpose

A circle can:

- create a sense of equality and shared presence;
- slow down discussion;
- strengthen attentive listening;
- provide space for personal reflection;
- support community building;
- enable difficult conversations.

Steps

1. Arrange participants in a circle without tables where possible.
2. Explain the purpose and agree on communication principles.
3. Introduce a focused question.
4. Pass a talking object around the circle.
5. Participants may speak or pass.
6. Complete a second round for responses or reflections.
7. Close with one sentence from each participant.

Example prompt

"Describe one moment when you experienced democracy as something lived rather than something taught."

The right to pass is important. Democratic participation includes the right not to speak publicly.



1.7 Fishbowl **Discussion**

A fishbowl makes group communication patterns visible. A small inner circle discusses a topic while an outer circle observes.

Steps

1. Place four to six chairs in an inner circle.
2. The remaining participants sit around them.
3. Present a question or dilemma.
4. The inner group discusses for 10–15 minutes.
5. The outer group observes listening, participation, power, and reasoning.
6. Participants exchange roles.
7. Debrief both the content and the process.

Suggested topic

"Should children have a formal vote in decisions about classroom rules?"

Observation questions

- Who spoke most?
- Who introduced new perspectives?
- Were disagreements explored or avoided?
- Did participants respond to one another or simply state positions?
- How was authority constructed within the group?
- What helped or prevented equal participation?

Fishbowl discussions connect democratic content with reflection on the democratic quality of the discussion itself.



2. Experiential **Learning Methods**

Adult learners often understand democratic principles more deeply when they experience them, reflect on them, connect them with theory, and consider how to apply them. This aligns with Kolb's experiential learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning should not be reduced to "learning by doing." An activity without reflection may be memorable but educationally shallow. The debriefing process is what enables participants to interpret the experience, challenge assumptions, and transfer learning to new contexts.



Transformative learning similarly emphasizes that adults may revise their frames of reference through critical reflection and dialogue, particularly when an experience challenges existing beliefs or expectations (Mezirow, 2000).

Experiential learning sequence

1. **Experience**: Participants take part in an activity, simulation, case, or task.
2. **Description**: They identify what happened without immediately interpreting it.
3. **Emotional reflection:** They consider how the experience felt.
4. **Analysis**: They examine power, assumptions, behaviour, and consequences.
5. **Conceptual connection:** The trainer connects the experience with theory.
6. **Application**: Participants identify implications for their practice.
7. **Action**: They plan a concrete experiment or change.

2.1 Simulation: The School Assembly

Purpose
To examine participation, representation, unequal power, and decision-making.
Duration
45–60 minutes
Materials

- role cards;
- description of the school dilemma;
- paper and markers;
- observation sheet.

Scenario
A school has received a small grant. It must decide whether to use the money for:

- a playground improvement;
- digital equipment;
- an inclusion support programme;
- an environmental project;
- teacher training.

Roles
Participants may represent:

- school leadership;
- teachers;
- parents;
- children;
- municipality representatives;
- support staff;
- a community organization;
- a group rarely included in decision-making.

Some role cards may include unequal power, access to information, or speaking time.
Steps

1. Distribute roles and allow preparation time.
2. Conduct a simulated school assembly.
3. Ask the group to reach a decision.
4. Pause if necessary to observe how power is operating.
5. End the simulation and explicitly release participants from their roles.
6. Debrief the experience.

2.1 Simulation: The School Assembly

Debriefing

1. Who had formal power?
2. Who had informal influence?
3. Whose knowledge was considered credible?
4. Did everyone have an equal opportunity to contribute?
5. Was the final decision democratic?
6. What would meaningful participation require?
7. How could children's involvement be supported without becoming tokenistic?

2.2 Role-Play: The Difficult Staff Meeting

Scenario

A teacher proposes involving children in revising playground rules. One colleague supports the idea, another considers it unrealistic, the school leader is concerned about time, and a parent representative worries that children will make unsafe choices.

Purpose

To practice:

- active listening;
- respectful disagreement;
- reframing;
- identifying underlying concerns;
- building common ground;
- negotiating realistic action.

Trainer instructions

After the first role-play, invite observers to identify moments when communication opened or closed. Repeat the scenario using alternative facilitation strategies. This second attempt is important because participants move from analysis to practice.

2.3 Case Study: Participation or Decoration?

Case

A school creates a student council. Children meet every month and suggest improvements. However, adults decide the agenda, reject proposals without explanation, and photograph the council for the school website. Children gradually stop contributing ideas.

Discussion questions

- Which elements appear democratic?
- Which elements are tokenistic?
- Where is the actual decision-making power?
- What information do we still need?
- How could adults respond differently?
- What structures would give the council meaningful influence?
- How might the children evaluate the process?

Case studies should not always end with one “correct” solution. Their value lies in helping participants examine complexity, context, and competing responsibilities.



2.4 The Power Walk
Use with Care

A power walk can make inequalities visible by assigning different social roles and asking participants to step forward in response to statements about access and opportunity. However, it may also oversimplify identity, reproduce stereotypes, or expose personal experiences.
Where used, trainers should:

- create fictional and multidimensional roles;
- avoid asking participants to disclose their own identities;
- explain the limitations of the activity;
- focus on structures rather than individual blame;
- conduct a careful debrief;
- provide an opt-out alternative.

A less performative adaptation is a Power Map, in which groups place fictional stakeholders on paper according to influence, access, and participation. This can generate equally rich analysis with lower emotional risk.



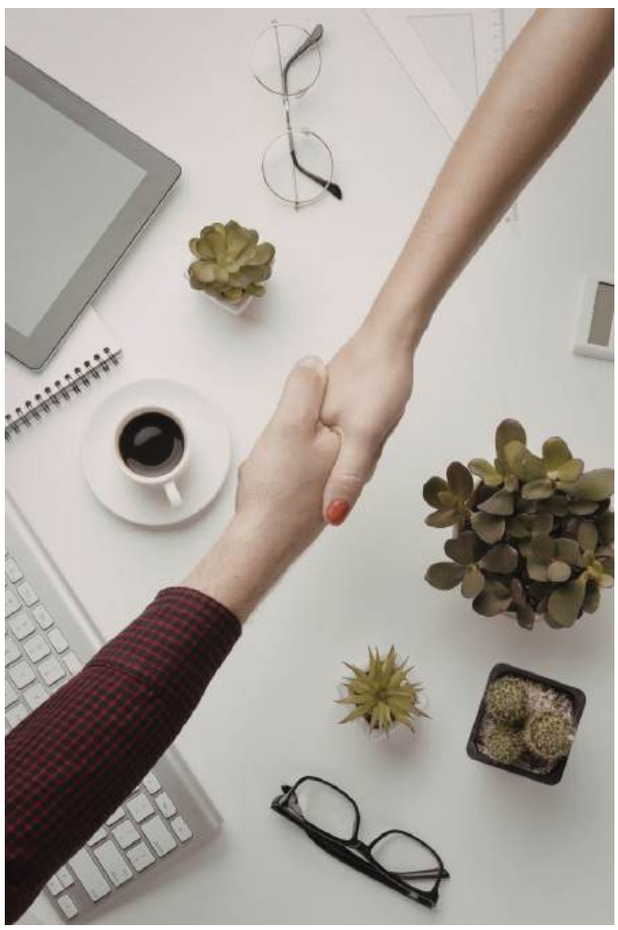
3. Collaborative Learning **Approaches**

Collaborative learning reflects the democratic principle that knowledge can be created collectively. It is particularly relevant in adult education because participants bring professional knowledge, community experience, cultural perspectives, and practical expertise.

Wenger's concept of communities of practice explains learning as participation in a shared social practice rather than only the acquisition of information (Wenger, 1998). People develop knowledge through mutual engagement, a shared area of concern, and a repertoire of stories, tools, concepts, and practices.

This has strong connections with grassroots and self-organized groups. In community assemblies, cooperatives, neighbourhood initiatives, social movements, mutual-aid networks, and popular education groups, learning often occurs through participation in collective problems rather than through formal instruction. Members identify needs, share expertise, test solutions, review outcomes, and distribute responsibility.

UNESCO recognizes adult learning as a means of strengthening learning communities, community development, solidarity, democratic governance, and multi-stakeholder partnerships that include civil society, volunteer groups, learners' associations, trade unions, public authorities, and community organizations.



3.1 Jigsaw **Method**

The Jigsaw Method was developed by the American social psychologist Elliot Aronson and his students in the early 1970s. It was first used in 1971 in Austin, Texas, following school desegregation, as a way to reduce racial tension, competition, and hostility among pupils by making learners depend on one another to complete a shared task.

The method works like a jigsaw puzzle: each participant becomes responsible for one part of the topic, joins an "expert group" to study it, and then returns to their original group to teach the others. Because every person holds an essential piece of knowledge, the structure promotes cooperation, individual responsibility, active listening, and mutual dependence.

Steps

1. Divide a topic into four or five subtopics.
2. Form "expert groups," each studying one subtopic.
3. Provide resources, questions, or cases.
4. Expert groups identify the most important ideas.
5. Re-form participants into mixed "home groups."
6. Each expert teaches their part to the others.
7. Home groups complete a shared task using all contributions.
8. Debrief the process.

Democracy education example

Expert topics:

- participation;
- fairness;
- freedom of expression;
- inclusion;
- shared responsibility.

The final task is to design a short democratic classroom activity incorporating all five principles.

Democratic value

The method communicates that everyone holds a necessary part of the group's knowledge.

3.2 Learning **Circles**

Learning circles are small, relatively self-directed groups that explore an issue over time. They have been used in adult education, civic associations, social movements, trade unions, study associations, and community organizations.

Key characteristics

- members share responsibility;
- the group agrees on its purpose;
- experience is treated as a learning resource;
- facilitation may rotate;
- inquiry develops over several meetings;
- learning is linked to collective action.
-

Suggested structure

1. Agree on a common question.
2. Identify what members already know.
3. Decide what the group needs to investigate.
4. distribute research or observation tasks.
5. reconvene to share findings.
6. identify competing interpretations.
7. decide on an action or practical experiment.
8. review what happened and what was learned.

Example theme

“How can our educational setting increase the participation of families who are currently underrepresented?”
The circle might gather perspectives, map barriers, speak with families, test a new participation method, and evaluate the result.

3.3 Peer Consultation or Otto Scharmer **Case Clinic**

Peer Consultation (Case Clinic) is a collaborative learning method in which one participant presents a real professional challenge while the rest of the group supports the exploration of the issue through careful listening, clarifying questions, collective reflection, and constructive feedback. Rather than providing immediate advice or "correct" solutions, the process encourages participants to examine multiple perspectives, question assumptions, and generate new possibilities for action. This approach is consistent with adult learning theories that emphasize reflection, dialogue, and collaborative knowledge construction (Scharmer, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

It is based on:

- Deep listening
- Reflection
- Collective intelligence
- Appreciative inquiry
- Adult experiential learning

S**teps**

1. One participant presents a current dilemma.
2. The group listens without interruption.
3. Participants ask only clarifying questions.
4. The presenter remains silent while the group discusses interpretations and possibilities.
5. The presenter reflects on what was useful or surprising.
6. The group identifies broader lessons.

Ground rule

The group should not try to “fix” the presenter. Advice is most useful after careful listening and analysis.

Example dilemmas

- A few confident children dominate every class council.
- Families participate only when there is a problem.
- Staff members disagree about children’s decision-making rights.
- A democratic activity produced conflict rather than cooperation.
- One participant repeatedly uses discriminatory language during training.

3.4 World Café

World Café is a structured conversation process in which participants discuss interconnected questions at small tables and move between tables, carrying ideas from one conversation to another (Brown & Isaacs, 2005).

Purpose

It can help a group:

- gather diverse perspectives;
- identify patterns;
- connect separate conversations;
- generate shared proposals;
- build collective intelligence.

Steps

1. Arrange small tables with paper and markers.
2. Introduce the purpose and conversation agreements.
3. Present one question per round.
4. Groups discuss for 15–20 minutes and record ideas.
5. One person remains as table host while others move.
6. The host summarizes the previous conversation.
7. New participants add, question, and connect ideas.
8. Conduct two or three rounds.
9. Harvest major themes in plenary.

Suggested questions

- What prevents meaningful participation in educational settings?
- What practices help people feel that they belong?
- How can authority be shared without abandoning adult responsibility?
- What could schools learn from community assemblies or self-organized groups?

Caution

Movement alone does not make a World Café democratic. The questions, hosting, access arrangements, synthesis, and use of participants' contributions must all be transparent.

3.5 Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology (OST) is a participatory facilitation method developed by Harrison Owen in 1985. It is designed for situations where participants have diverse experiences and where the solutions to complex issues emerge through dialogue, collaboration, and self-organization rather than through top-down instruction (Owen, 2008). It is especially suitable when a group contains substantial experience and the trainer wants participants to influence the agenda.

Core process

1. Present a broad central theme.
2. Invite participants to propose discussion topics.
3. Each proposer announces a topic and chooses a time and space.
4. A shared marketplace agenda is created.
5. Participants choose which sessions to attend.
6. Discussion hosts record key points and proposals.
7. The group reconvenes to share outcomes and next steps.

Example theme

"Building democratic cultures in education: challenges, possibilities, and actions."

The law of mobility

Participants may move to another discussion when they are neither learning nor contributing.

Trainer responsibility

Self-organization does not remove the need for inclusion. Trainers should monitor whether the format disadvantages people with mobility, language, confidence, or accessibility barriers and provide alternatives.



3.6 Consensus-**Building**

Consensus-building is a collaborative decision-making process in which participants openly discuss different perspectives and work toward a solution that everyone can support or accept. It emphasizes active listening, mutual respect, equal participation, and addressing concerns, rather than simply achieving unanimous agreement or majority approval.

A simple consensus sequence

1. Define the decision clearly.
2. Gather perspectives and needs.
3. Identify shared principles.
4. Generate possible proposals.
5. Test proposals against concerns.
6. Amend the proposal.
7. Check levels of support.
8. Record the decision and unresolved concerns.
9. Agree on review arrangements.

Useful support scale

Participants can indicate:

- full support;
- support with reservations;
- acceptance;
- stand aside;
- serious objection.

A serious objection should concern harm to the group's purpose or values, not simply personal preference.

Discussion question

When is consensus more appropriate than voting, and when might it become too slow, unclear, or vulnerable to hidden power?

Participatory democracy literature emphasizes that democratic competence develops through involvement in decision-making rather than through voting alone (Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970).

4. Creative and Reflective **Techniques**

Reflection helps participants connect an activity with their assumptions, emotions, professional identity, and future action. Brookfield (2017) argues that critically reflective practice involves examining teaching through multiple perspectives rather than relying only on the educator's own interpretation.

Trainers can encourage participants to examine an experience through four lenses:

1. their own experience;
2. learners' or children's perspectives;
3. colleagues' perspectives;
4. relevant theory and research.

Reflection should ask more than "Did you enjoy the activity?"
Enjoyment can be useful feedback, but it does not reveal what participants learned. Strong reflection explores meaning, power, change, and application.

1 . Critical Incident Reflection
Participants describe a specific moment that made them feel heard, excluded, powerful, uncertain, or challenged.

Prompts
What happened?
Who was involved?
What did you assume at the time?
What alternative interpretations are possible?
What power relations were present?
What did you learn about yourself?
What might you do differently now?

Critical incidents can be discussed individually, in pairs, or in writing.

4. Creative and Reflective **Techniques**

2 Assumption Audit

Participants select a familiar educational statement, such as:

- Children need adults to make important decisions.
- Open discussion always increases participation.
- Quiet participants are disengaged.
- Voting is the fairest way to decide.
- Experienced educators are more resistant to change.

They then identify:

1. evidence supporting the statement;
2. evidence challenging it;
3. people who benefit when it is accepted;
4. people whose experiences may be missing;
5. a revised, more nuanced statement.

This activity reflects critical pedagogy by asking participants to examine how apparently neutral assumptions can sustain unequal power.

3 Reflective Journaling

A journal can help participants process learning privately and document development over time.

Suggested prompts

- What challenged me today?
- Which idea created resistance in me?
- Whose perspective did I find difficult to understand?
- What did I notice about my use of authority?
- Where do I create space for participation?
- Where might I unintentionally restrict it?
- What will I test before the next session?

Trainers should clarify whether journals are private, voluntarily shared, or used for assessment.

4. Creative and Reflective **Techniques**

4 Mind Mapping

Mind mapping can help groups visualize the relationships between democratic concepts. Place “Democratic Learning Environment” at the centre and invite participants to connect:

- participation;
- rights;
- responsibilities;
- power;
- inclusion;
- dialogue;
- conflict;
- care;
- accountability;
- community action.

Groups then compare maps and identify missing or weakly connected elements.

5 Gallery Walk

Participants create posters or visual responses and display them around the room. Others move around, read, and add questions or comments.

Example task

Each group designs one element of a democratic training environment:

- physical space;
- communication;
- decision-making;
- inclusion;
- conflict;
- evaluation.

The gallery walk enables movement and interaction while also giving participants time to read and reflect.

4. Creative and Reflective **Techniques**

6 Action Planning

Critical reflection should be linked to action—what Freire described as praxis: reflection and action directed toward transformation (Freire, 1970).
An action plan should identify:

- the issue;
- the desired change;
- the people affected;
- the people who should participate;
- the first small step;
- possible barriers;
- support and resources;
- indicators of progress;
- a date for review.

Example
Issue: Children's suggestions are collected but rarely acted upon.
First action: Introduce a visible response board showing which suggestions were accepted, deferred, adapted, or declined—and why.
Participation: Children help design the response categories and review the process after one month.

5. Visual and Supporting **Materials**

Materials should support thinking and participation rather than decorate the session or replace facilitation. The choice of materials should reflect accessibility, language diversity, group size, and training purpose.

Useful materials

- flipcharts and large paper;
- sticky notes;
- photographs and illustrations;
- short videos;
- role and scenario cards;
- quotation cards;
- timelines and diagrams;
- digital polling tools;
- collaborative documents;
- online whiteboards;
- audio materials;
- tactile objects;
- printed templates.

Principles for accessible materials

Trainers should:

- use clear and concise language;
- avoid overcrowded slides;
- provide strong contrast and readable font sizes;
- explain images rather than assuming shared interpretation;
- provide materials in advance where appropriate;
- offer digital and printable formats;
- avoid relying only on colour;
- read written instructions aloud;
- provide sufficient processing time;
- include captions or transcripts for audiovisual material;
- consider language support and translation needs;
- ensure that materials represent diverse people without stereotyping.

The Council of Europe presents the RFCDC as a flexible framework that users should adapt to their own contexts rather than apply as a rigid, one-size-fits-all model.

5. Visual and Supporting **Materials**

Using visual prompts for democratic dialogue

A photograph, cartoon, classroom scene, or object can prompt discussion without requiring extensive prior knowledge.

Process

1. Show the image without explanation.
2. Ask participants to observe silently.
3. Invite factual observations: “What can you see?”
4. Invite interpretation: “What might be happening?”
5. Explore perspective: “Who has power here?”
6. Connect to practice: “Where do we see similar situations?”
7. Ask what is absent from the image.

The distinction between observation and interpretation helps participants become more aware of their assumptions.

Using video

Short video clips can support case analysis, observation, and reflection. Before showing a video, give participants a clear viewing focus.

Possible observation tasks:

- Who speaks and who remains silent?
- How does the facilitator respond to disagreement?
- What supports or limits participation?
- How is authority communicated?
- What alternatives could be used?

Avoid using long videos as passive content delivery







6. Icebreakers **and Energizers**

Icebreakers should not be used simply to fill time or make adults perform uncomfortable activities. Their purpose should be connected to trust, learning, participation, or group formation.Participants should always be able to decline an activity involving personal disclosure, touch, movement, or performance.

1 Democratic Introductions
Each participant introduces themselves by sharing:

- their name;
- their professional context;
- one decision they would like learners to influence more;
- one question they bring to the training.

This immediately connects introductions with the subject of democracy.

2 Common Ground
Participants form small groups and identify three things they share and one meaningful difference. They should avoid obvious similarities such as “we are all educators.”
Debrief

- Was it easier to identify similarities or differences?
- What types of difference feel comfortable to discuss?
- How can a group build belonging without demanding sameness?

3 Democracy Spectrum
Mark a line from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Read statements and invite participants to position themselves.
Suggested statements:

- Voting is always the fairest decision-making method.
- Children should have a say in every decision that affects them.
- Neutrality is possible in education.
- Conflict damages democratic learning.
- A facilitator should share their own opinion.
- Participation should be voluntary.

Participants discuss their positions and may move if their thinking changes.

Trainer tip
Emphasize that movement is not inconsistency. Changing one’s position after hearing new arguments can demonstrate reflective learning.



6. Icebreakers **and Energizers**

4 One-Word Check-In
Participants describe how they are entering the session in one word. They may explain or pass.
This simple activity allows the trainer to sense the group's emotional and energy level without requiring detailed personal disclosure.

5 Silent Line-Up
Participants arrange themselves without speaking according to a neutral category, such as:

- years of educational experience;
- distance travelled;
- month of birth.

Debrief

- How did the group communicate?
- Who took leadership?
- Did leadership shift?
- Who was included or overlooked?
- How did the absence of speech affect power?

Even a short energizer can become a reflection on cooperation and informal authority.

6 Community Mapping Energizer
Place a large sheet on the wall. Participants add a note showing one community, group, network, association, initiative, or informal collective in which learning occurs.
Examples may include:

- parent groups;
- neighbourhood initiatives;
- volunteer networks;
- community gardens;
- cooperatives;
- professional learning communities;
- cultural associations;
- mutual-aid groups;
- online communities;
- social movements.

Participants then identify what makes learning possible in these spaces. This helps broaden the concept of education beyond formal institutions.

7. Learning from Grassroots **and Self-Organized Groups**

Grassroots and self-organized groups offer valuable insights into democratic adult learning. Such groups often emerge when people identify a shared issue and organize collectively rather than waiting for an external authority to provide a solution.
Examples include:

- neighbourhood assemblies;
- community gardens;
- social cooperatives;
- mutual-aid networks;
- parent initiatives;
- volunteer groups;
- worker education circles;
- participatory budgeting groups;
- local environmental campaigns;
- community learning centres;
- feminist consciousness-raising groups;
- migrant and minority associations.

These groups differ significantly, and they should not be romanticized. Self-organization can still reproduce hierarchy, exclusion, or informal power. Nevertheless, they often demonstrate several democratic learning principles:

Shared ownership
Members participate in defining priorities rather than following a curriculum designed entirely by an external expert.

Knowledge from experience
Personal and community experience is treated as legitimate knowledge.

Distributed expertise
Different members contribute different forms of knowledge, including professional, cultural, practical, and relational expertise.

Learning through action
Groups learn by organizing meetings, solving problems, negotiating disagreement, and evaluating action.

Rotating or accountable leadership
Facilitation and responsibility may rotate, or leaders remain accountable to the wider group.

Connection between learning and social change
Learning is linked to improving a shared situation rather than only developing individual competence.

These features align with Freirean popular education, communities of practice, participatory democracy, and UNESCO's emphasis on learning communities and participatory governance in adult education (Freire, 1970; Pateman, 1970; Wenger, 1998).

Activity: What Can Formal Education Learn from Grassroots Groups?

Duration
45 minutes

Steps

1. Participants identify a self-organized or community-based group they know.
2. In small groups, they describe:
    - how decisions are made;
    - how knowledge is shared;
    - how new members participate;
    - how conflict is handled;
    - how responsibility is distributed.
3. Groups identify one strength and one risk.
4. Participants consider which practice could be adapted to educator training or classroom life.
5. Each participant develops one small experiment.

Reflection questions

- Which types of knowledge are valued in formal education?
- Which types are often ignored?
- When does informal leadership become hidden hierarchy?
- What supports accountability in self-organized groups?
- How can shared ownership be created without placing unfair burdens on participants?
- What can schools learn from community organizing without copying it uncritically?

8. Debriefing Framework **for Trainers**

Every substantial experiential activity should be followed by a structured debrief.

A useful sequence is:

1. What?
   - What happened?
   - What did you notice?
   - What roles emerged?
   - What decisions were made?

2. So what?
   - How did the experience feel?
   - What assumptions became visible?
   - What helped or limited participation?
   - How did power operate?
   - What democratic values were present or absent?
   - What theoretical ideas help explain the experience?

3. Now what?
   - What does this mean for your practice?
   - What would you adapt for your context?
   - What risks should be considered?
   - What is one change you could test?
   - Who should be involved in planning that change?

The trainer should avoid rushing to explain the “lesson” before participants have interpreted the experience themselves.

9. Choosing the Appropriate **Method**

No facilitation method is automatically democratic. A method becomes democratic through its purpose, design, accessibility, transparency, and use of participants' contributions.

Before selecting a method, trainers should consider:

- What is the learning objective?
- What prior experience does the group have?
- Is the topic emotionally sensitive?
- How much trust exists?
- How large is the group?
- How much time is available?
- What language or accessibility barriers may exist?
- Does the method allow meaningful choice?
- How will quieter participants contribute?
- What will happen with the knowledge generated?
- Is consensus required, or is disagreement an acceptable outcome?
- How will reflection and application be supported?

A World Café may look participatory but still be superficial. A short presentation may look traditional but be appropriate when participants need a common conceptual foundation. Democratic facilitation is therefore not defined by avoiding all trainer input. It is defined by using authority transparently, purposefully, and in ways that support learners' agency.

10. Key Message **for Trainers**

Democracy cannot be taught credibly through methods that silence disagreement, conceal power, or treat adults as passive recipients. Participants need opportunities to experience dialogue, shared inquiry, critical reflection, practical decision-making, and responsibility.

The trainer's task is not to create permanent agreement. It is to support people in learning how to think together, disagree constructively, recognize power, listen across differences, and translate democratic values into everyday professional and community practice.

The RFCDC similarly treats democratic culture as a combination of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding that enables people to participate effectively and live together in diverse democratic societies.

SECTION C

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Designing a Democratic **Training Workshop**

Designing an effective democratic training workshop requires more than selecting participatory activities. Trainers must ensure coherence between learning objectives, participants' needs, facilitation methods and evaluation strategies.

A democratic workshop should not merely encourage participation; it should provide opportunities for participants to influence the learning process, question assumptions and connect new knowledge with their professional experiences.

The following five-step approach offers a practical framework for planning.

Step 1: Define Learning Objectives
The starting point is to identify what participants should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the workshop.
Learning objectives should address three complementary dimensions:

- **Knowledge**: Understanding democratic principles, children's rights, participation and inclusive educational practices.
- **Skills**: Facilitating dialogue, managing disagreement, supporting collaborative decision-making and adapting participatory methods.
- **Attitudes**: Demonstrating openness, respect for diversity, willingness to question assumptions and appreciation of different perspectives.

For example, instead of stating that participants will understand democratic education, a more observable objective would be:

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to design and facilitate a participatory learning activity that encourages dialogue, shared decision-making and equal opportunities for contribution.

Trainers can use the RFCDC competence descriptors to inform objectives and identify behaviours that can be observed during learning activities (Council of Europe, 2018).

1. Designing a Democratic **Training Workshop**

Step 2: Identify Participants' Needs

Adult learners enter training programmes with different professional experiences, expectations, knowledge levels and motivations.

A needs assessment helps trainers understand these differences and design relevant learning experiences. Information can be collected through short questionnaires, introductory discussions, interviews or self-assessment exercises.

Useful questions include:

- What experience do participants have with democratic or participatory education?
- Which facilitation challenges do they encounter?
- What methods do they currently use to encourage participation?
- What would they like to improve in their professional practice?
- Are there language, accessibility or other participation requirements?

Needs assessment should continue during the workshop. For example, trainers may invite participants to identify the questions they most want to explore or select practical cases for group discussion. This reflects Knowles' emphasis on adult learners' readiness to learn and their need to understand the relevance of educational activities (Knowles et al., 2015).

Step 3: Structure the Sessions

A well-structured workshop combines conceptual understanding with practical experience and reflection.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle offers a useful framework: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. In democratic training, this can be translated into the following sequence:



1. Designing a Democratic **Training Workshop**

Step 4: Select Appropriate Facilitation Methods
Methods should be selected according to learning objectives, group characteristics and available resources rather than simply because they are interactive.

Training objective	Suitable methods
Explore existing beliefs	Opinion corners, assumption audit
Develop active listening	Talking circles, paired dialogue
Examine different perspectives	Role-play, case studies, fishbowl
Encourage shared knowledge	Jigsaw, peer consultation
Practise collective decisions	Consensus-building, group challenges
Support critical reflection	Reflective journaling, critical incidents
Transfer learning into practice	Microteaching, action planning

The trainer should consider how each method distributes opportunities to participate.

For example, an open discussion may favour confident speakers, whereas individual reflection followed by paired discussion can create more accessible opportunities for contribution.

Brookfield (2017) emphasises the importance of critically reflective teaching, including examining assumptions about learners, authority and educational practice.



1. Designing a Democratic **Training Workshop**

Step 5: Plan Evaluation

Evaluation should be incorporated throughout the training rather than restricted to a questionnaire at the end.
A democratic evaluation process combines evidence of learning with participants' perspectives on the training experience.

Three complementary levels can be considered:
Immediate feedback: Did participants find the activities relevant, accessible and useful?
Learning and competence development: Can participants demonstrate improved understanding or facilitation skills?
Transfer into practice: Have participants applied the methods in their educational settings?

Practical tools include pre- and post-training self-assessments, observation checklists, reflective journals, exit tickets and follow-up questionnaires.

Importantly, participants should be informed about how their feedback will influence future workshops. Collecting opinions without considering or responding to them risks turning participation into a symbolic exercise.



2. Sample Democratic **Workshop**

Workshop Title: "Democracy in Practice: From Participation to Facilitation"
Target Group: Adult educators, teacher trainers, educational coordinators and facilitators.
Duration: 4 hours, including a 15-minute break.
Recommended Group Size: 15–25 participants.
Overall Aim: To strengthen participants' ability to design and facilitate democratic learning experiences in adult education and teacher training.
Materials: Flipcharts, markers, sticky notes, scenario cards, projector, voting dots, reflection sheets and evaluation forms**.**

Workshop Programme		
Time	**Activity**	**Purpose**
00:00–00:20	Opening Circle and Group Agreements	Establish trust and shared responsibility
00:20–00:50	What Makes Learning Democratic?	Explore beliefs and assumptions
00:50–01:30	The Democratic Decision Challenge	Experience negotiation and participation
01:30–01:45	Break	
01:45–02:25	Democratic Facilitation Role-Play	Practise managing group dynamics
02:25–03:20	Design a Democratic Learning Activity	Apply learning to professional practice
03:20–03:45	Peer Feedback and Reflection	Strengthen learning through dialogue
03:45–04:00	Evaluation and Closing	Identify learning and next steps

Activity 1: Opening Circle and Group Agreements
Duration: 20 minutes
The trainer welcomes participants and invites them to sit in a circle.
Each participant briefly completes the sentence:
"For me, a democratic learning environment is one where…"
The trainer records recurring ideas and asks participants to identify principles they would like to establish for the workshop.
These may include respectful listening, equal opportunities to contribute, confidentiality, openness to disagreement and the right to pass. Rather than presenting a predetermined list of rules, the trainer facilitates the creation of shared agreements.

2. Sample Democratic **Workshop**

Activity 2: What Makes Learning Democratic?
Duration: 30 minutes
Place four statements around the training room:

- The trainer should always make the final decision.
- Every participant should have an equal opportunity to contribute.
- Disagreement makes learning more difficult.
- Learners should help shape the learning process.

Participants move toward an agreement position or indicate their views using cards if movement is unsuitable.
The trainer invites volunteers to explain their reasoning and encourages different perspectives.
Follow-up questions might include:
“Can a trainer exercise authority and still facilitate democratically?”
“Does equal participation mean everyone must speak for the same amount of time?”
“When can disagreement become a learning opportunity?”
The discussion should help participants recognise that democratic facilitation does not eliminate professional responsibility. Instead, it requires authority to be exercised transparently, reflectively and with respect for learners' agency.

Activity 3: The Democratic Decision Challenge
Duration: 40 minutes
Divide participants into groups of four or five.
Present the following scenario:
A community education centre has received funding for one new learning initiative. Participants have proposed a digital literacy course, a language programme, a community arts project and a civic participation workshop. Resources are limited, and the group must agree on how to proceed. Each participant receives a role card describing a particular priority or concern.
Groups have 20 minutes to develop a proposal that considers the different perspectives.
The aim is not necessarily unanimous agreement but a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.
During the debriefing, ask:

- Who influenced the discussion most?
- Were all perspectives considered?
- How were disagreements managed?
- Did anyone feel pressured to agree?
- What made the process democratic or undemocratic?

Facilitation tip: Observe participation patterns rather than focusing only on the final decisions. Encourage participants to distinguish between reaching agreement and creating a fair decision-making process.

2. Sample Democratic **Workshop**

Activity 4: Democratic Facilitation Role-Play

Duration: 40 minutes
Participants work in groups of four.
Each group receives a challenging facilitation scenario, such as:
A participant dominates the discussion while others remain silent.
A teacher dismisses participatory methods as unrealistic.
Two participants strongly disagree about an educational approach.
One participant acts as the facilitator, two act as learners and one observes.
After five minutes, participants exchange roles.

Observers use a short checklist:

- Did the facilitator listen without immediately judging?
- Were different perspectives acknowledged?
- Were opportunities created for quieter participants?
- Was disagreement handled respectfully?
- Did the facilitator maintain appropriate boundaries?

A final group discussion identifies strategies that participants would use in their own training settings.

Activity 5: Design a Democratic Learning Activity

Duration: 55 minutes
Participants form small groups and design a 20–30-minute activity for their own professional context.
Each design should include:

1. A clearly defined democratic learning objective.
2. A participatory method.
3. Opportunities for learners to express different perspectives.
4. Strategies for accessibility and inclusion.
5. Reflection questions and a simple evaluation method.

Groups may draw on methods introduced during the workshop or adapt activities from the Democracy4All Ages educational resources.
The trainer circulates, asks questions and provides support without taking over the design process.

2. Sample Democratic**Workshop**

Activity 6: Peer Feedback and Reflection

Duration: 25 minutes
Each group presents its proposed activity briefly.
Other participants provide feedback using the Plus–Delta approach:
Plus: What is effective and should be maintained?
Delta: What could be changed or improved?
The presenting group identifies one modification it would make before implementing the activity.
The session concludes with an individual reflection:
“One thing I will change in my facilitation practice is…”

Activity 7: Evaluation and Closing
Duration: 15 minutes
Participants complete a short exit ticket addressing three questions:

- What was the most valuable learning experience?
- Which democratic facilitation method would you like to use?
- What support would help you apply it?

The trainer closes by acknowledging participants' contributions and explaining how feedback will inform future training.
Where feasible, participants can be invited to pilot their activities and share reflections in a follow-up meeting.



3. Addressing Challenges **in Democratic Training**

Democratic learning environments do not automatically eliminate tensions, unequal participation or resistance. Indeed, encouraging dialogue may make differences in values, experiences and expectations more visible.
The trainer's responsibility is not to prevent all disagreement but to establish conditions in which challenges can be addressed constructively.

Resistance to New Ideas
Adult educators may question participatory methods because they perceive them as time-consuming, difficult to manage or incompatible with established institutional expectations.
Resistance should not automatically be interpreted as unwillingness to learn. It may reflect previous experiences, uncertainty about professional competence or legitimate concerns about implementation.
Brookfield (2017) encourages educators to examine assumptions critically, while Mezirow (2000) emphasises reflection on established frames of reference.

Practical strategies:

- Invite participants to explain their concerns.
- Acknowledge relevant professional experiences.
- Demonstrate methods before asking participants to adopt them.
- Use examples that reflect realistic educational constraints.
- Encourage small-scale experimentation rather than immediate transformation.

For example, if a teacher states, “Democratic discussion takes too much time,” the trainer might respond:
“In which situations have you experienced this difficulty? Could we explore a five-minute technique that creates opportunities for participation without changing the entire lesson?”
This approach turns resistance into a starting point for professional inquiry.

Different Knowledge and Experience Levels

Training groups often include participants with varying levels of familiarity with democratic education. Some may have extensive experience with non-formal education, while others may be encountering participatory methods for the first time. To support both groups, trainers can combine accessible introductions with opportunities for deeper analysis. Useful approaches include mixed-experience groups, optional extension tasks, peer mentoring and practical demonstrations. However, experienced participants should not automatically become unpaid assistants or dominate group discussions.
The trainer should ensure that all participants remain learners and contributors.

Teachers' Attitudes and Professional Beliefs

Democratic training may challenge beliefs about authority, discipline, learner autonomy and the role of educators. For example, some participants may associate effective teaching with maintaining strict control, while others may favour extensive learner choice. Rather than presenting these positions as simply correct or incorrect, trainers can facilitate critical examination of their implications. A useful activity is an Assumption Audit.
Participants complete statements such as:

- "Learners participate best when..."
- "A good trainer should always..."
- "Giving learners more choice means..."

They then discuss where these beliefs originated and whether alternative interpretations are possible. The purpose is not to force agreement but to encourage reflective professional judgement.



Conflict Management

Conflict may arise from differences in values, cultural experiences, professional perspectives or communication styles.

Freire's (1970) dialogical approach emphasises the importance of treating participants as subjects capable of reflection and action rather than passive recipients of information.

In practice, trainers should distinguish between constructive disagreement and behaviour that undermines participants' dignity or safety.

When conflict occurs, the trainer can:

1. Pause the discussion and acknowledge the tension.
2. Restate the issue using neutral language.
3. Invite participants to explain their perspectives without personal attacks.
4. Identify underlying concerns or shared interests.
5. Explore possible ways forward.
6. Reaffirm group agreements and boundaries.

For example:

“We seem to have different views about how much decision-making responsibility learners should have. Could we explore what each approach makes possible, and what challenges it creates?”

Where discriminatory or intimidating comments occur, the trainer should intervene rather than treating harm as simply another legitimate opinion.

Key principle: Democratic facilitation does not require neutrality toward discrimination. It requires fairness in participation while maintaining respect for human rights and dignity.



4. Inclusion and Diversity **in Democratic Training**

Inclusion is a fundamental condition for meaningful democratic participation. A workshop cannot be considered fully participatory simply because everyone is invited to attend. Trainers must also consider whether participants have realistic and equitable opportunities to contribute, understand the content and influence the learning process.

The Council of Europe's RFCDC places human dignity, cultural diversity, respect, openness and cooperation at the centre of democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2018). UNESCO's global citizenship education guidance similarly emphasises inclusive learning, critical understanding and responsible participation (UNESCO, 2015).



Managing Diverse Groups

Participants may differ in language proficiency, disability, educational background, cultural identity, age, professional experience and familiarity with training methods. These differences should inform workshop planning without leading trainers to make assumptions about individuals.

Practical measures include:

- Providing materials in accessible formats.
- Using clear language and explaining unfamiliar terminology.
- Combining verbal, written and visual activities.
- Offering individual reflection before group discussion.
- Providing accessible spaces and alternative ways to participate.
- Allowing additional processing time when needed.

For instance, participants who are uncomfortable speaking in a large group may contribute through anonymous written responses, paired discussion or visual representations.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity involves recognising that participants may have different communication practices, experiences of authority and understandings of participation.
However, trainers should avoid treating cultures as homogeneous or assuming that individuals represent an entire community. Intercultural dialogue should encourage curiosity, reflection and respect without requiring participants to disclose personal experiences or speak on behalf of their cultural group. When using examples, case studies or role-play scenarios, trainers should avoid stereotypes and deficit-based descriptions. A useful question for trainers is:
"Whose experiences are represented in this activity, and whose might be missing?" This question can guide the selection of materials, speakers and practical examples.

Ensuring Equal Participation

Equal participation does not necessarily mean identical participation.
Some learners may contribute through speaking, others through writing, listening, drawing, organising or facilitating group tasks.
The trainer's role is to ensure that different forms of contribution are recognised and that no participant systematically controls the learning process.
Practical techniques include structured turn-taking, talking objects, small-group rotations, anonymous idea collection and assigning rotating group roles.
Trainers should also reflect on their own behaviour.
For example:

- "Do I consistently invite responses from the same confident participants?"
- "Do I interpret silence as disengagement?"
- "Have I created genuine opportunities for participants to disagree with me?"

Such questions help trainers examine the often-unnoticed power relationships within adult learning environments.
Inclusion should also extend to evaluation. Participants must be able to provide feedback safely and through accessible channels, including anonymously where appropriate.

5. Real-Life Examples and **Transfer into Practice**

Democratic training becomes particularly meaningful when participants can connect theoretical principles with practices used by community organisations, adult education providers and international training programmes.
The following examples illustrate how participatory approaches can be applied in different contexts. They are intended as practice references and adaptable models, not as claims about activities already completed within Democracy4All Ages.

Example 1: Roma Organisations and Participatory Community Learning
Roma community organisations and mediators provide an important context for examining inclusion, representation and participation in adult education.
The Council of Europe's ROMED programme offers a documented example of training that supports mediators working between Roma communities and public institutions.
Its Trainer's Handbook includes participatory planning, stakeholder involvement, monitoring and self-evaluation, with the aim of strengthening community empowerment, accountability and shared responsibility.

These principles can inform democratic training workshops involving Roma organisations or other community-based groups.

Suggested training application: Community Priorities Workshop
Participants work in mixed groups of community representatives, educators and relevant stakeholders.
They identify an educational or community issue, discuss different experiences and develop possible responses.
The facilitator ensures that community representatives have meaningful opportunities to shape priorities rather than merely commenting on proposals prepared by institutions.
The group then agrees on realistic next steps and responsibilities.

- Reflection questions include:
- “Who defined the problem?”
- “Whose knowledge influenced the proposed solution?”
- “Did everyone have the same opportunity to shape the decision?”
- “How will the group remain accountable to the community?”

This example illustrates an important principle: participation should involve influence over decisions, not simply presence in discussions.

Example 2: Learning, Teaching and Training Activities (LTTA)

International Learning, Teaching and Training Activities provide opportunities for educators from different professional and cultural backgrounds to exchange practices, test methods and develop shared educational approaches. Within a democratic education project, an LTTA can be organised as a collaborative learning laboratory rather than a sequence of presentations.

Suggested LTTA practice: Democratic Facilitation Lab

Participants from different partner organisations form mixed-nationality groups.

Each group receives a democratic education activity and is asked to:

1. Experience the activity as learners.
2. Reflect on the facilitation process.
3. Identify possible cultural or institutional adaptations.
4. Redesign the activity for a specific adult learning context.
5. Facilitate a short demonstration for another group.
6. Exchange structured peer feedback.

For example, one group may adapt a consensus-building exercise for community educators, while another develops a dialogue activity for teachers working with culturally diverse classrooms.

This approach combines experiential learning, collaborative design and reflective practice. It also supports the transfer of learning across educational settings without assuming that a single method will work identically in every country.

Example 3: From International Training to Local Implementation

A central challenge of international training is ensuring that learning continues after participants return to their organisations.

A practical solution is to connect training with a small-scale implementation commitment.

At the end of an LTTA, each participant develops an action plan identifying:

- One democratic facilitation method they will introduce.
- The group or setting in which they will use it.
- The adaptations required.
- The evidence they will collect.
- The support they may need.

For example, a trainer might commit to introducing a short reflective circle at the end of each adult education session.

After four to six weeks, participants meet online to discuss what worked, what difficulties emerged and what they would change.

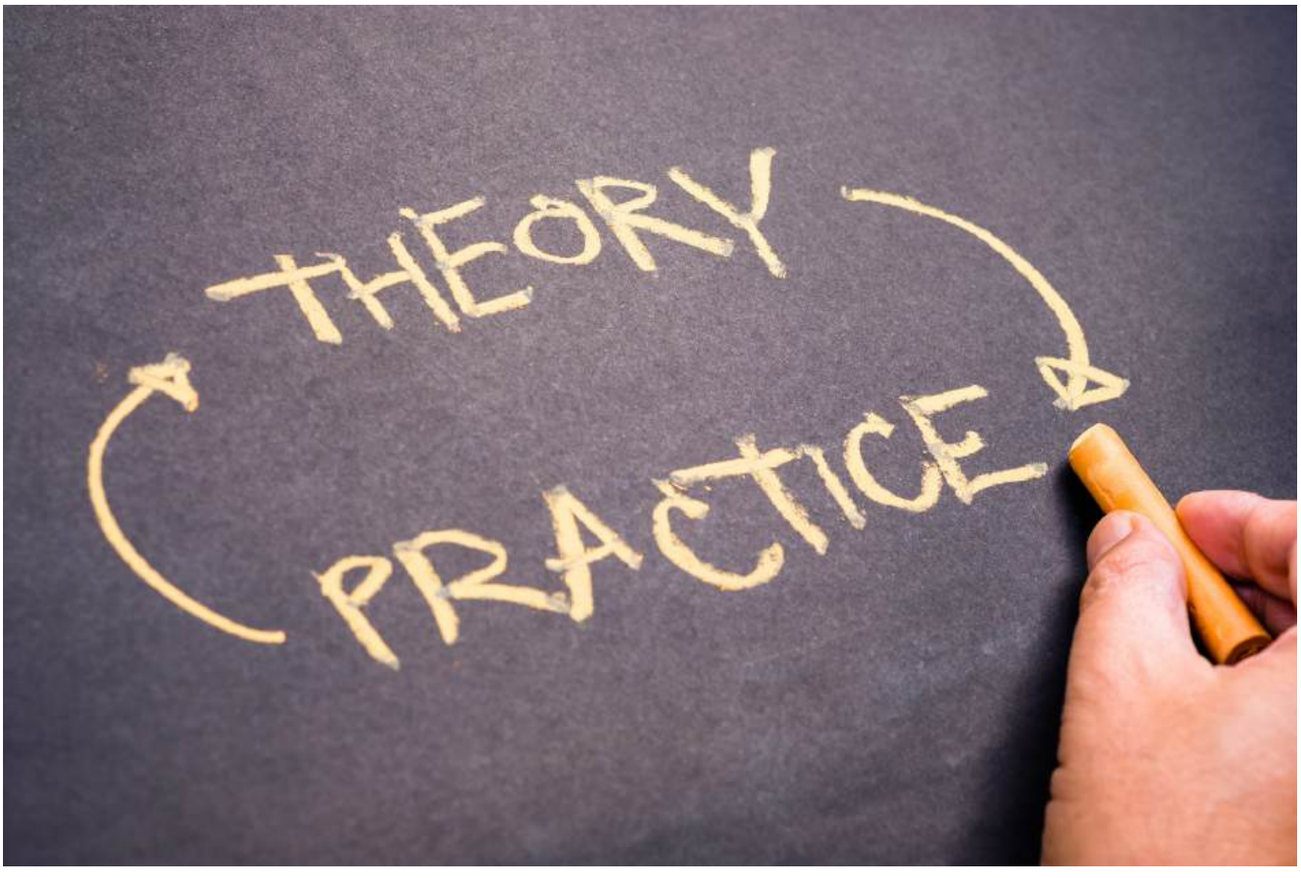
This follow-up process creates a bridge between professional development and sustained educational practice.

Final Considerations for Trainers

Democratic training is not defined by the number of interactive exercises included in a workshop. Its quality depends on how participation, dialogue, reflection and shared responsibility are embedded throughout the learning experience.

Effective trainers combine pedagogical expertise with openness to participants' knowledge and experiences. They provide structure without unnecessarily controlling the learning process, encourage disagreement without allowing intimidation, and promote inclusion through intentional planning.

Ultimately, the most important outcome of democratic training is not that participants can describe democratic principles, but that they become better equipped to practise and facilitate them in their own educational environments.



SECTION D

SUPPORT TO TRAINERS

SECTION D: SUPPORT TO TRAINERS

This section provides practical tools that trainers can use before, during, and after adult learning sessions. Its purpose is to support reflective practice, collect meaningful feedback, evaluate learning, and improve future training activities. The tools are designed to be flexible and may be adapted to different group sizes, training formats, professional backgrounds, and cultural contexts.

Reflection and evaluation should not be treated as administrative tasks completed only at the end of a workshop. They are part of the learning process itself. In democratic adult education, participants should have opportunities to assess their own learning, comment on the training process, identify remaining questions, and influence how future sessions are designed.

This approach reflects the overall purpose of the guidebook: to equip adult trainers with methods and tools for creating reflective, participatory, and inclusive learning environments.



1. Reflection and Feedback Tools

6.1.1 Reflection in Adult Learning

Reflection helps participants connect training content with their own experience, values, professional practice, and future action. It enables them to move beyond simply remembering information and toward examining assumptions, considering alternative perspectives, and deciding how new learning can be applied.mReflection may take place:

- individually;
- in pairs;
- in small groups;
- through whole-group dialogue;
- in writing;
- through visual or creative methods;
- immediately after an activity;
- at the end of a session;
- several days or weeks later.

Trainers should avoid treating reflection as a search for one “correct” answer. Participants may understand the same activity differently, and these differences can enrich the learning process.

Reflection Questions

The following questions may be used after an activity, at the end of a workshop, or as part of a reflective journal.

Understanding and Learning

- What was the most important idea you encountered today?
- What did you understand differently by the end of the session?
- Which concept needs further clarification?
- What surprised you?
- What challenged your previous assumptions?
- Which part of the session felt most relevant to your work?

1. Reflection and **Feedback Tools**

Participation and Group Process

- Did you feel able to participate meaningfully?
- When did you feel most involved?
- Was there a moment when you felt unheard or hesitant?
- Whose perspectives were strongly represented?
- Which perspectives may have been missing?
- How did the group handle disagreement?
- Did the session reflect the democratic values it discussed?

Emotions and Experience

- How did the activity make you feel?
- Which moment created discomfort, curiosity, or resistance?
- What helped you feel safe enough to participate?
- Was there anything that made participation more difficult?
- How did your emotional response influence your thinking?

Critical Reflection

- What assumptions did you bring into the session?
- Did any of your assumptions change?
- How did power operate within the activity or discussion?
- Who made decisions?
- Who had the most influence?
- Was participation equal, equitable, or neither?
- What might another person interpret differently?

Application to Practice

- How could you use this method in your own context?
- What would you need to adapt?
- What barriers might arise?
- Who should be involved in implementing the idea?
- What is one small change you could make?
- What support or resources would you need?
- How will you know whether the change has been useful?

Structured Reflection Methods

One-Minute Reflection

At the end of a session, participants write brief responses to:

1. The most important thing I learned was…
2. One question I still have is…
3. One idea I want to use is…

This method is quick and useful when time is limited.

Three–Two–One Reflection

Participants identify:

- three things they learned;
- two ideas they found useful;
- one question they still have.

The trainer can collect the responses or use them for small-group discussion.

Head–Heart–Hands Reflection

Participants reflect on:

- Head: What did I learn or understand?
- Heart: What did I feel or value?
- Hands: What will I do differently?

This structure connects cognitive, emotional, and practical learning.

What? So What? Now What?

This model supports deeper reflection.

What?

- What happened?
- What did you notice?
- What did the group do?

So what?

- Why does this matter?
- What did the experience reveal?
- What assumptions or power relations became visible?

Now what?

- What will you do with this learning?
- What should change?
- What is the next practical step?

Reflective Pair Dialogue
Participants work in pairs. Each person speaks for three to five minutes while the other listens without interrupting. The listener then summarizes what they heard.
Suggested prompt:
"What part of today's learning could most influence your professional practice, and why?"

Reflection Circle
Participants sit in a circle and respond briefly to one common prompt.
Examples:

- One idea I am leaving with is...
- One question I am still carrying is...
- One moment when I felt heard was...
- One action I will take is...

Participants should be allowed to pass.

Visual Reflection
Participants select or create an image, symbol, colour, or simple drawing that represents their learning.
They may complete the sentence:
"This image represents my learning because..."
This method can support participants who prefer non-verbal forms of expression.



1.2 Feedback Forms

Feedback helps trainers understand participants' experiences and identify improvements. A useful feedback process should gather information not only about satisfaction but also about relevance, participation, inclusion, learning, and practical application. Participants should know why feedback is being collected and how it will be used.

Short Feedback Form

Session title: _____

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

Please rate each statement from 1 to 5.

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The objectives of the session were clear.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The content was relevant to my work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activities supported my learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had meaningful opportunities to participate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Different opinions were treated respectfully.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The trainer created an inclusive environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel able to apply something from the session.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The pace of the session was appropriate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The materials were clear and useful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open Questions

- What was the most useful part of the session?
- What could be improved?
- Was anything missing?
- What would help you apply this learning?
- What topic would you like to explore further?
- Is there anything else you would like the trainer to know?

1.2 Feedback Forms



Democratic Learning Environment Feedback Form

This form evaluates whether the training process reflected democratic values.

Please indicate your level of agreement.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt respected throughout the session.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I could express disagreement safely.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The trainer listened to participants.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Different forms of participation were supported.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The group agreements were applied consistently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No single voice dominated the whole process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My experience and knowledge were valued.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The session encouraged critical thinking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The training methods reflected democratic principles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Reflection

- When did the session feel most democratic?
- When did it feel least democratic?
- What could strengthen participation and inclusion next time?

1.2 Feedback Forms

Exit Ticket

Before leaving, participants complete three short statements:

Today I learned...	
I am still wondering...	
My next step will be...	

Exit tickets may be completed on paper, sticky notes, or digitally.

Plus-Delta Feedback

Participants identify:

Plus (+) — **What worked well? What should we continue doing?**
What supports learning and should be maintained?

Delta (Δ) — **What should be changed, improved, or done differently?**
What should be changed or improved?

This is more constructive than asking only what participants "liked" or "disliked."

Anonymous Question Box

Participants may submit:

- questions they were hesitant to ask;
- concerns about the training;
- suggestions for improvement;
- topics requiring clarification.

The trainer should review and respond to the questions before the workshop ends or in a follow-up communication.

1.3 Evaluation Tools

Evaluation examines whether the training achieved its intended outcomes and how the learning may influence future practice.A complete evaluation may consider four levels:

- Reaction: How did participants experience the training?
- Learning: What knowledge, skills, attitudes, or awareness developed?
- Application: What did participants use in practice?
- Impact: What changes occurred in professional or organizational settings?

Not every workshop requires evaluation at all four levels. Trainers should choose methods that match the duration, scope, and objectives of the training.

Pre- and Post-Training Self-Assessment

Participants rate their confidence before and after the training.

Example Scale

1 = Very low confidence
2 = Low confidence
3 = Moderate confidence
4 = High confidence
5 = Very high confidence

I feel confident that I can...	Before	After
explain key democratic values;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
facilitate respectful dialogue;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
manage disagreement constructively;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
use participatory methods with adults;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
identify barriers to participation;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
design an inclusive training activity;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
reflect critically on my own facilitation;	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Note: The results should not be interpreted as objective proof of competence. They indicate participants' perceived confidence and can be combined with observation or practical tasks.

1.3 Evaluation Tools



Observation Checklist for Trainers

The trainer or a peer observer may use the following checklist.

Session Structure

- ☐ Objectives were clearly communicated.
- ☐ Activities were connected to the objectives.
- ☐ Instructions were clear.
- ☐ Time was managed flexibly and effectively.
- ☐ Reflection was included.

Participation

- ☐ Participants had multiple ways to contribute.
- ☐ Quiet participants had opportunities to engage.
- ☐ Dominant participation was managed respectfully.
- ☐ The trainer avoided unnecessary interruption.
- ☐ Participants' contributions influenced the session.

Inclusion

- ☐ Language was accessible.
- ☐ Materials were readable and inclusive.
- ☐ Cultural differences were respected.
- ☐ Accessibility needs were considered.
- ☐ Stereotypes and discriminatory comments were addressed.

Democratic Practice

- ☐ Power and decision-making were transparent.
- ☐ Disagreement was treated constructively.
- ☐ Group agreements were respected.
- ☐ The trainer modelled active listening.
- ☐ Participants were treated as contributors rather than passive recipients.

Learning

- ☐ Participants connected theory with experience.
- ☐ Critical thinking was encouraged.
- ☐ Participants practised relevant skills.
- ☐ Feedback was provided.
- ☐ Practical application was discussed.

1.3 Evaluation Tools

Follow-Up Evaluation

A follow-up evaluation may be sent four to eight weeks after the training.

Suggested Questions

- Which ideas or methods have you used?
- What happened when you used them?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- Did you adapt the method? How?
- Have you noticed changes in participation or dialogue?
- What further support do you need?
- Have you shared the learning with colleagues?
- What would help sustain the change?



Action Plan Review

Participants review the action plan they created during the training.

Action	Completed ✓	Partly completed ◐	Not started ✗	Evidence or comment
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

Additional Questions

- What supported progress?
- What barriers emerged?
- What did you learn?
- What will you change next?
- Who could support the next step?



2. Templates and Annexes

Annex 1: Workshop Planning Template

Workshop Information

Workshop title: _____

Theme: _____

Trainer(s): _____

Date: _____

Location/platform: _____

Target group: _____

Number of participants: _____

Duration: _____

Purpose

What is the overall purpose of the workshop?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1.
2.
3.

Participants' Needs

- What prior experience may participants have?
- What barriers to participation may exist?
- What language, accessibility, or support needs should be considered?
- What expectations may participants bring?

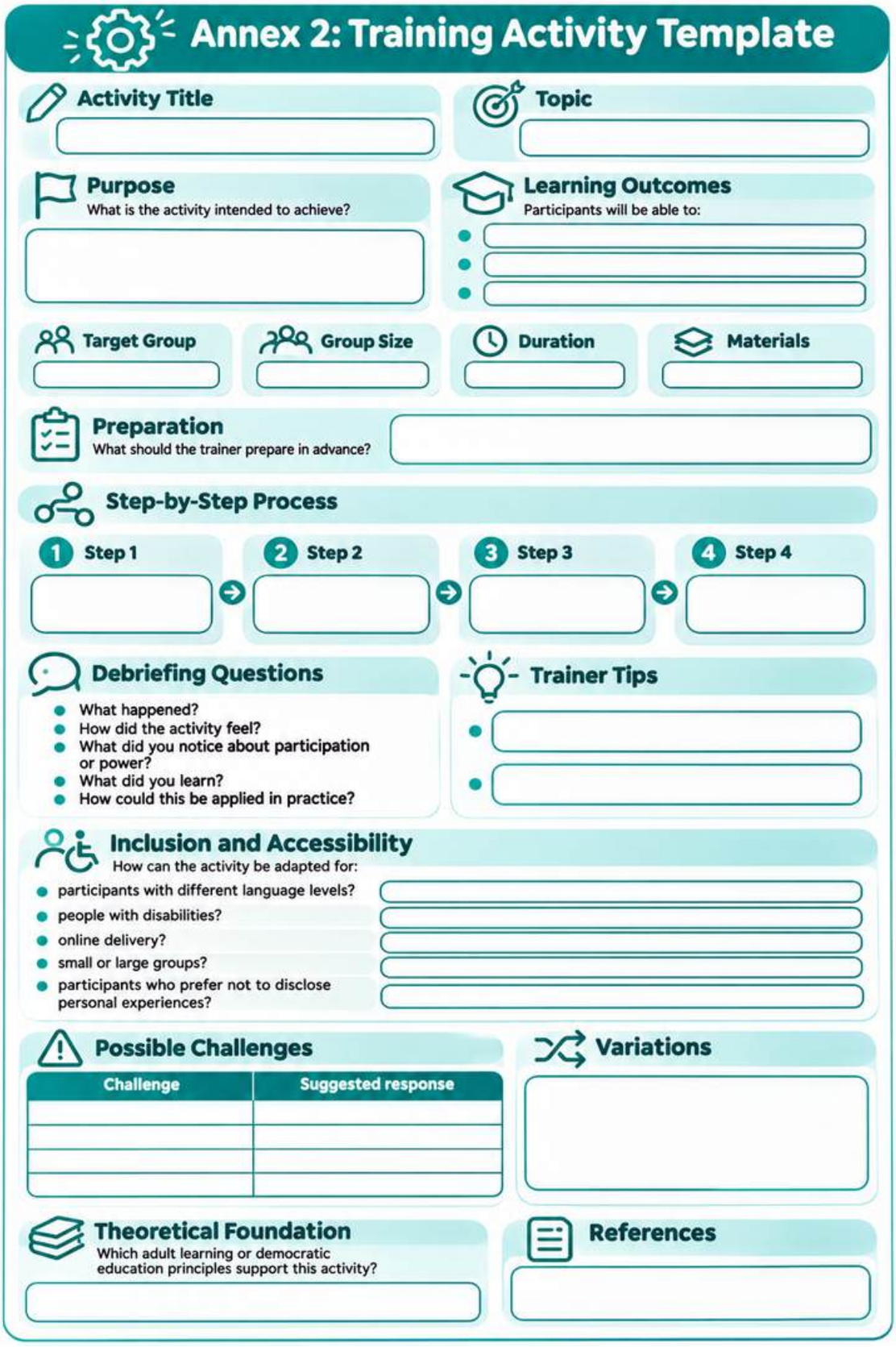
Materials and Resources

-
-
-

Workshop Agenda

Time	Session stage	Activity/method	Purpose	Materials	Trainer notes
	Welcome and introduction				
	Group agreements				
	Main activity 1				
	Reflection				
	Input/theory				
	Main activity 2				
	Application				
	Evaluation and closing				

2. Templates and Annexes



Annex 2: Training Activity Template

Activity Title

Topic

Purpose
What is the activity intended to achieve?

Learning Outcomes
Participants will be able to:

-
-
-

Target Group

Group Size

Duration

Materials

Preparation
What should the trainer prepare in advance?

Step-by-Step Process

1. **Step 1**
2. **Step 2**
3. **Step 3**
4. **Step 4**

Debriefing Questions

- What happened?
- How did the activity feel?
- What did you notice about participation or power?
- What did you learn?
- How could this be applied in practice?

Trainer Tips

-
-

Inclusion and Accessibility
How can the activity be adapted for:

- participants with different language levels?
- people with disabilities?
- online delivery?
- small or large groups?
- participants who prefer not to disclose personal experiences?

Possible Challenges

Challenge	Suggested response

Variations

Theoretical Foundation
Which adult learning or democratic education principles support this activity?

References

2. Templates and Annexes

Annex 3: Individual Reflection Sheet

Name, optional: Session: Date:

My Learning

- The most important idea I learned was:
- The idea I found most challenging was:
- Something that surprised me was:
- A question I still have is:

My Participation

- I felt most involved when:
- I found participation difficult when:
- One contribution from another participant that influenced me was:

My Practice

- One connection with my professional experience is:
- One idea I would like to test is:
- The first step I will take is:
- The support I may need is:

Critical Reflection

- A belief or assumption I reconsidered was:
- One question I should continue asking myself is:

2. Templates and Annexes

Annex 4: Trainer Self-Evaluation Form

Workshop: _____ **Date:** _____ **Trainer:** _____

Planning

- ☐ Were the objectives realistic and clear?
- ☐ Did the activities align with the objectives?
- ☐ Was the timing appropriate?
- ☐ Were accessibility and inclusion adequately planned?

Notes:

Facilitation

- ☐ Did I listen carefully?
- ☐ Did I speak too much?
- ☐ Did I respond constructively to disagreement?
- ☐ Did participants influence the process?
- ☐ Did I notice who participated and who did not?
- ☐ Did I explain decisions transparently?
- ☐ Did I model the democratic values discussed?

Notes:

Group Dynamics

- ☐ Who spoke most frequently?
- ☐ Who spoke least?
- ☐ Was anyone interrupted or overlooked?
- ☐ Did status or professional role influence participation?
- ☐ How did I respond to tension or conflict?

Notes:

Learning

- ☐ What evidence suggested that learning occurred?
- ☐ Which activity generated the deepest reflection?
- ☐ Which part remained unclear?
- ☐ Did participants connect learning to practice?

Notes:

Improvement

- ☐ What worked well?
- ☐ What would I change?
- ☐ What feedback should I act on?
- ☐ What do I need to learn or practise further?

Next steps / Actions:

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