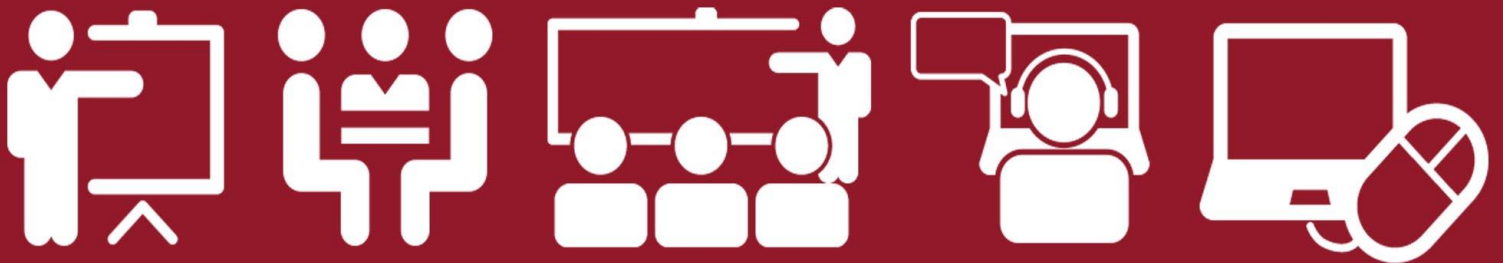


# Handbook on Impactful Skill Development and Vocational Training

## TOP 3 SKILL SETS EVERY TRAINER MUST HAVE TO MANAGE ADULT LEARNERS



# Introduction

**B**eing a vocational trainer in the skill development space could be an exciting job if you love your area of expertise and if you are passionate about bringing a positive change in the lives of your learners. However, many a times, in spite of sincere efforts at training, you may find that the learners drop out of the training course or may not work towards achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Depending on your subject or technical expertise, you may plan your training delivery as per the guidelines in the Qualification Pack (QP) and the course books. Let's assume you are delivering a training program for entry level skilling - it could be in Beauty Skills, Agriculture Skills, Construction Skills, Retail Skills, Automotive Skills and so on - the main challenge is to ensure that the learners get interested in the subject and continue to complete the course till they get certified. Since they are adults, the learners need to be managed differently.

Training and teaching adults is not the same as teaching children or adolescents. Adults learn differently from children, it is useful to get acquainted with Adult Learning Principles (ALP). This will help in learning how to communicate with the learners, how to deal with their problems, ensuring that they are engaged in the learning process with sustained motivation and interest. Let's look at the most important skill sets every trainer should have for managing adult learners.

## Top 3 skill sets in managing adult learners

Skill-based training is result-oriented and works in tight alignment with the industry in order to meet their current talent requirements. Hence, as a vocational trainer, you should constantly remember the training goals like productivity at workplace, quality etc. to meet the industry needs while engaging in some of the challenges of adult learning programs. Let's look at few principles of Adult Learning and understand how you can integrate them in your training environments. Following are the top three skill sets for making training impactful:

- 1. Learner engagement skills**
- 2. Learner involvement skills**
- 3. Learner empowerment skills**

# 1

## Learner Engagement Skills

Let's assume the skill development or vocational course has been developed after a thorough assessment of learning needs. It could be following frameworks like NSQF and meet the requirements listed in the Qualification Packs (QPs) or any curricular framework. Still, it is absolutely essential to adapt the syllabus and training style to suit the adult learners.

Adults don't like one-sided teaching or training where the trainer simply lectures and 'fills them with knowledge and skills'. A trainer-trainee relationship is highly important in a learning process, and it is expected of you build a friendly rapport with the learners, without losing sight of the training program. Adult learners expect an exchange of ideas with someone who can be their mentor and guide.

### Know your learners

Find out what they want and what they already know: Adults bring knowledge and experience to each training program. Interact with the learners to understand their existing knowledge and skills, seek their ideas and make them feel a part of the learning process.

#### Try this...

- ✓ Have a conversation and ask questions, understand their needs, problems they face and current solutions they follow to resolve their issues .
- ✓ Allow them to draw on their past experiences to build on the future knowledge.

### Create a friendly environment

Adult learners are often self-conscious and concerned that their participation in a group may make them look weak in front of their peers. Encourage participation without being judgmental, everyone should get an equal opportunity to participate in the learning process. However, individual feedback should never be given in the group.

#### Try this...

- ✓ Encourage the learners to speak up their mind and NEVER criticize them in front of their peers; individual feedback should be given in person.
- ✓ Build a positive learning environment with constructive feedback and trust among the trainees.

## Respect their existing knowledge and skills

All adults have a rich real-life experience that can be valuable in supporting the skilling process. When adult learners feel that they are not respected or their views are not taken into account, their motivation, morale and engagement would be badly affected.

### Try this...

- ✓ After analyzing what they already know, complement it with appropriate training content in such a way that it enhances their existing knowledge and skills and leads them towards the desired performance at workplace.
- ✓ Always open and close your training sessions with a question or note to reinstate their confidence that you trust their knowledge and would appreciate feedback from them. This will make them feel valued and builds up their trust levels.

## Show empathy when needed

When dealing with adults coming from wide-ranging socioeconomic backgrounds, you need to be empathetic towards their struggles and domestic issues. Not everyone is assured of support from family members to continue learning by enrolling in training programs.

### Try this...

- ✓ Be open and be available for a dialogue inside and outside of training sessions.
- ✓ Do not exercise a superior role; rather reaffirm the notion of equality.
- ✓ Help trainees by counseling on how important it is for them continue learning.
- ✓ Understand and appreciate their efforts be being flexible when needed.

# 2 Learner Involvement Skills

## Create a multi-sensory learning environment

Most trainers include a combination of theory and practice in a monotonous way, often overlooking the experiential value of learning. It is advised to plan for training

activities that can integrate cognitive learning material, stimulate positive feelings and include hands on work.

### Try this...

- ✓ Make practical sessions industry-relevant with plenty of real examples, videos and industry visits.
- ✓ Plan to include quick practical exercises that can be performed in the class.
- ✓ As a softer intervention, include audio-video aids to compliment the learning session.

## Encourage team work

It is important for you to take care of social aspects of learning. Adult learners prefer group work with shared responsibility because it instills a sense of safety and boosts individual confidence. Collaboration between peers gives them a chance to discuss, debate, ask questions and gain confidence.

### Try this...

- ✓ Give them a problem to solve and set expectations on the outcome but not on the process of teamwork.
- ✓ Create an atmosphere where there is dialogue and discussion on multiple ways of doing things and make each person feel valued.

## Make them feel responsible

Adult learners are accountable for their own learning and hence it is important for trainers to be responsible for ensuring the right learning outcomes. Having clear learning objectives is the first step towards establishing accountability. In most cases adult learners are self-directed and take control of their own learning paths; trainers need to stay committed to teach what was agreed upon in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

### Try this...

- ✓ Clearly define the learning goals and charter the program syllabus.
- ✓ Periodic self- reviews of the progress i.e. of the training program.

# 3

## Learner Empowerment Skills

### Make it current and relevant

Adult learners are keen on understanding the immediate relevance of whatever they learn. Hence, you need to build a context around all the training sessions to make it relevant to real life work situations. Also, provide scope for applying knowledge and skills by creating different opportunities. Make them think and analyze the situation, which will then deepen their conceptual understanding towards application.

#### Try this...

- ✓ After every training session, pose a reflective question to think about how the learners might use the knowledge gained in the session. Provide case studies and real life examples.
- ✓ Adopt problem/task-based training, where the learners can both learn and apply the knowledge immediately.
- ✓ Invite industry experts/ guest speakers from the field. They can share their expectations while emphasizing the usefulness and relevance of the training program to their jobs.

### Make it rational and logical

Adult learners look for logic and reason and they like to see how they are progressing while learning. They learn best when they can connect with what they have previously learnt, perhaps in a linear way. Hence, sequence becomes crucial while delivering a training program. Besides sequence, repetition of key points in the content becomes quite essential for them to grasp the concepts better.

#### Try this...

- ✓ Ensure that you cover the topic in an ascending/linear way i.e, start teaching simple concepts and gradually move up to complex concept.
- ✓ Allow them to master the fundamentals so that they can interconnect the simple concepts.
- ✓ Raise questions that can help them think about the basics and progress through the next levels.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for them to revisit the key facts/skills and you may include simple revision sessions and quizzes.

## Make it result-oriented and prepare them for continuous learning

Adult learners will be keen to improve themselves when they find relevance and connection between what they learnt and what they do with the learning. Extrapolating the same idea, they will be motivated to continue their learning even after finishing your training program if they understand the significance of continuous learning i.e. to upskill themselves regularly which makes them employable and also helps them grow in their careers.

### Try this...

- ✓ Remind them that learning is a continuous process and it goes beyond classroom.
- ✓ Inspire them with successful case studies of past students or industry experts to testify the significance of lifelong learning.

## To sum up

Remember, adults are aware of real world problems; they are solution-oriented and get motivated with positive results of their learning. In this handbook we have presented most important skills for trainers in the context of training adults in skill-based courses. As a vocational trainer you may try using the tips shared and let us know if you found it useful. Also, tell us what was most useful and how do you plan to build up on this knowledge.

## Share your feedback

We would be happy to receive your feedback and suggestions in improving the contents of the handbook. Write to us at [nsnindia16@gmail.com](mailto:nsnindia16@gmail.com).

## References

- ✓ Gagné, R. M. (1965). **The Conditions of Learning and Theory of Instruction**. (1st ed.)
- ✓ Knowles, M. L. (2005). **The Adult Learner** (6th Ed.).

## About the Author



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