

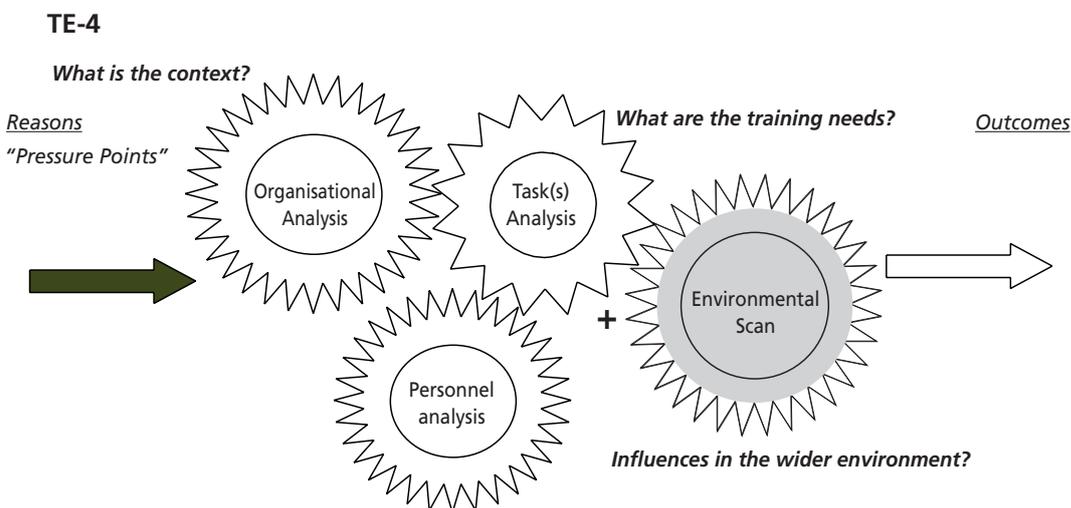
3. Training in Motion



3.1 Needs assessment

Needs assessment is the first step in the process of training, and a fundamental one. It refers to the initial analysis done to determine if a training is necessary and whether or not it answers to the perceived needs. This is a crucial point that often seems to be neglected in youth organisations. Undertaking a serious needs assessment within youth NGOs and their immediate environment requires a lot of effort, knowledge and money. This kind of research should not be confused with research conducted on different issues pertaining to youth all over Europe. In a needs assessment the emphasis is on the needs that the youth organisations, their active members and their immediate target group have in order to improve and consolidate their work. This section briefly outlines several different aspects of the needs assessment process.

3.1.1 The needs assessment process



(Adapted from R.A. Noe, 1998, p.51)

It is important to note that a needs assessment process in organisations ordinarily entails a complete analysis of what the organisation is working on, what its members want to accomplish, and what they need (in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes) in order to be capable of reaching it.

- *Organisational analysis* means considering the framework in which the training will occur. This involves analysing the youth organisation in context, its ongoing developments, its membership, volunteers and staff continuity and turnover. A needs assessment process aims at identifying the organisation's main areas of concentration, the needs this highlights, and the necessary strategy to address the highlighted issues. A brief example is that of a youth organisation which decides to emphasise human rights education during its next semester. Clearly this organisation will need to acquire more knowledge on the subject, and undertake general organisational adjustment to manage the specificity of the subject it plans to prioritise
- *Task analysis* identifies the tasks that must be fulfilled within the organisation in order to achieve its goals. If we continue to use the example from the previous paragraph, a relevant task analysis will identify specific tasks, or work profiles, related to its programme of human rights education. Related to this is an inventory of the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to tackle the work profiles.
- *Personnel analysis* follows logically from the identification of tasks and required skills. It involves an initial overview of current suitability for the activities planned, and also identifies those in need of training, across the spectrum of volunteers, board members, staff or project officers and so forth. The endpoint of this analysis is examining the readiness and willingness for training within the organisation.



So far, we have mentioned three different factors, and these can be found in almost every needs assessment model you will encounter. When dealing with youth NGOs however, it is of crucial importance to add two further aspects:

- The first point is the specificity of youth organisations in relation to the three aspects mentioned so far. Because of the constant turnover in YNGOs, a personnel analysis should be conducted more often than in other organisations. Youth work tends to be very dynamic, and constant change may result in organisational strengths and weaknesses fluctuating rapidly over short periods of time. A simple example is the way in which a change in leadership in the organisation could result in either a huge improvement or disaster.
- The second point is the inclusion of another analytical factor termed the environmental scan (it is already included in TE-4). In other sectors, the environmental scan is considered as a component of the organisational analysis. In the youth sector there is a special need to emphasise this very important category.
- The *environmental scan* is an analysis of the immediate and wider environment of the youth NGO. The importance of this as a separate analysis is because of the significant influence of the outside environment on the work of youth organisations (for example state policy, readiness of major donor organisations, and so forth). This element of the needs assessment maps out the possible collaborators in the field, identifies the relevant competition, maps the key 'actors' in the field and investigates the relations between them.

When working on an international level, it is almost impossible for a youth NGO to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment. This difficulty is not however an excuse not to attempt it at all, as very often happens in today's youth organisations. We frequently hear statements such as 'we need more trainers for youth work' or 'We need X amount of members with negotiation skills', but how frequently do we hear the question 'why' at the same time? Every training event should be preceded by a process of establishing the needs assessment on which it will be based. There is no shame involved in ending up with an incomplete needs assessment. Be very ashamed however, if at the end of all of this you are still not convinced of its centrality in the cycle of creating good and effective training programs!

Suggestions for reflection

How did my organisation decide that topic X was of particular importance to our recent training schedule?

Who has identified the needs, and in what way?

Were the participants of the training really in need of it? How do you know?

Is the needs assessment approach suggested above appropriate for your youth organisation?

Sample exercise: How to do an environmental scan²

Rationale: Many training needs in an organisation are directly or indirectly influenced by external factors. Very often the organisation needs more input (supply) for certain training activities that it can afford. The organisation may not have identified a real need in the immediate environment for such training, even discovering that the training under consideration is already being delivered by another organisation. There are plenty of opportunities and threats that can steer the training effort towards success or failure. While the organisational, task and personnel analyses look inside the organisation, the environmental scan focuses on analysing the influential factors external to the organisation.

2. We will concentrate on the environmental scan here as the other analyses described in this section are covered in the *Organisational Management T-Kit* and the *Project Management T-Kit*.



Objective: To precisely identify the external factors influencing a potential or ongoing training activity.

Time needed: 2 hours

Technical needs: flipchart paper, cards or post-it in 2 different colours, markers.

Note: This exercise can be used in various training for trainers courses where participants come from different organisations. In that situation, this is more applicable as an individual exercise, with a common ending for sharing observations and conclusions in groups of 4-8 participants. Of course, this exercise can be used on training courses where all participants come from few or a single organisation. Participants can then be divided into small groups of 4-5, creating one environmental scan per group and at a later stage sharing their observations and conclusions in a plenary session.

Steps for implementing an environmental scan

1. Define the field of analysis; what is the training concerned with?
2. List all external factors influencing your field of analysis; physical, infrastructural, technological, socio-cultural, economic, governmental, non-governmental, inter-organisational, institutional and anything else that springs to mind!
3. Identify the likely or existent influence of that factor. If it seems unlikely, strike it off the list.
4. Identify if the factor has a positive or negative impact on your field of analysis
 - if it is positive, write it on a green card or post-it.
 - if it is negative, write it on a red one.
5. Identify the type of factor, and whether you can have an influence on it or not. Then put the card on the flip chart (see TE-5 below).
 - Classify the factors according to the following zones (see TE-5)
 - Supply – input the organisation has available to put into the training activity (adequate training facilities, experienced trainers, previous experience in organising such events etc.) and what it lacks (funds to implement the training, no appropriate training aids, etc).
 - Demand – Whether or not there is a demand for such training. Depending on the type of training, demand can be both inside and outside of the organisation (volunteers in youth NGOs who have never received that type of training, low awareness among NGOs for the need of such training, high interest for the topic among the volunteers etc).
 - Competition / collaboration – other organisations that are already implementing or are interested in being involved in similar types of training (NGO X is interested in collaborating on the subject matter, NGO Y is already doing similar types of training, the government is looking for partners, etc).
 - General conditions in the immediate environment – check the range of other factors influencing the training project (for a course in Caucasus for example, one should check border situations, current attitudes of the government towards youth work, and so forth).
 - Assess whether or not you can influence each factor. If you can, put it inside the rectangle (see TE-5), otherwise place it outside. If you are not sure put it on the border.
6. Review all the factors now on the chart. Mark those that have the largest impact on your field of analysis.

7. Observations / Conclusions

What are the major positive factors? What are the major negative factors?

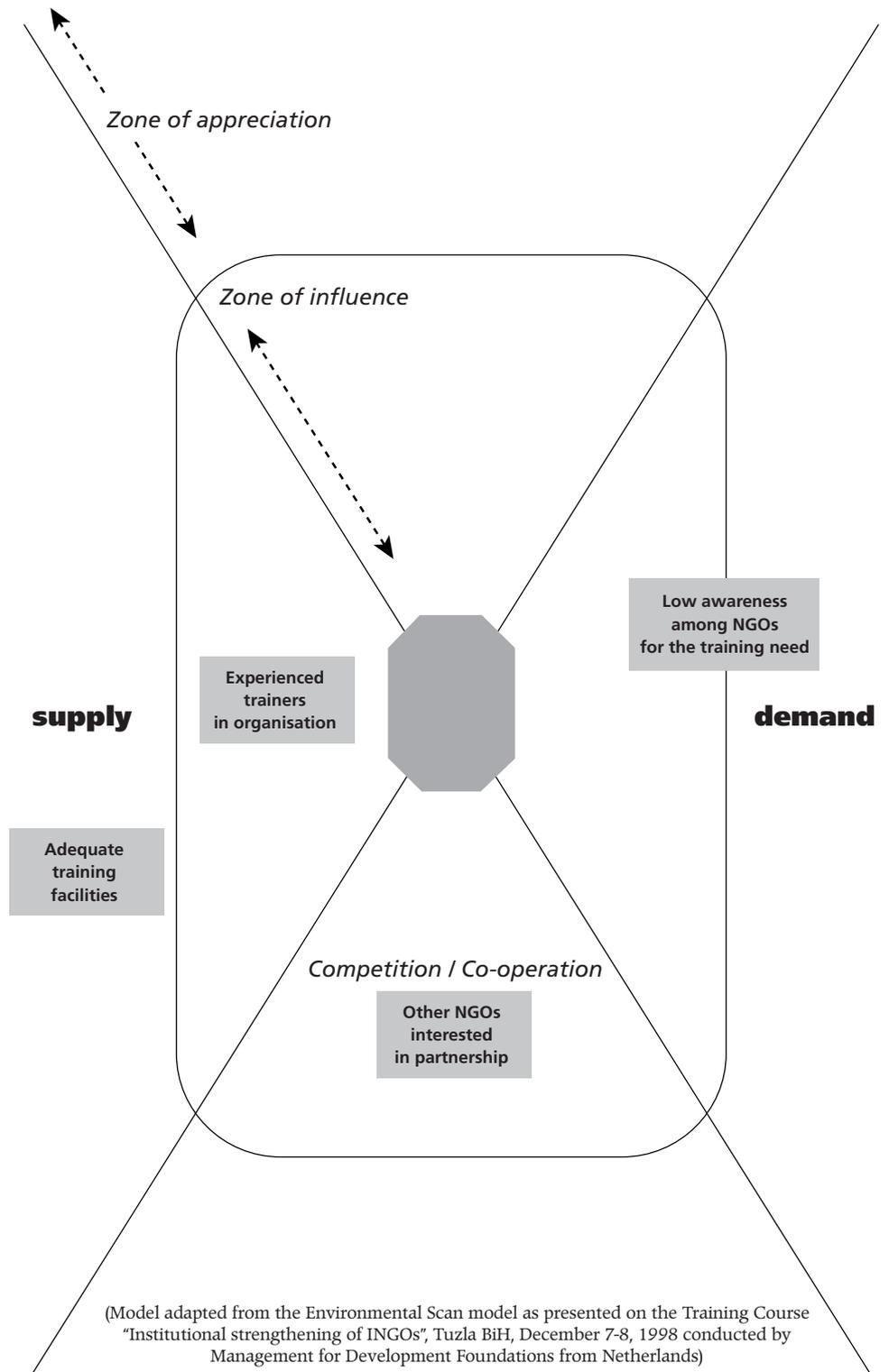
Which ones can you influence directly and which not? How could you address those factors you cannot influence directly?

Is your training activity feasible? Is there enough demand for this activity? Does your organisation have sufficient capacity?



TE-5 Environmental Scan Graph

(In this version the model is adapted to the assessment of training needs and training provision in one organisation)



(Model adapted from the Environmental Scan model as presented on the Training Course "Institutional strengthening of INGOs", Tuzla BiH, December 7-8, 1998 conducted by Management for Development Foundations from Netherlands)



3.1.2 Sanctioning training

Section 1.1 outlined many of the issues involved in youth training at the European level. This section re-visits the context of training, to link the process of needs analysis to the factors which make a training possible. A training may take place because of a variety of initiatives, and for a range of motivations. This raises some basic questions:

- Who identifies the problems and defines the needs to be addressed by training?
- Who organises it?
- What is the purpose?
- Who receives the training?

Based on the divergent answers that one may have to these questions, a distinction can be made between four different reasons for sanctioning an activity:

To address the organisation's needs (a youth organisation conducts training for its members in order to address some of their own needs)

This situation is very common in non-governmental youth organisations. A youth organisation identifies its own needs and envisages a training that will respond to them. It is entirely responsible for the whole process: identification of the needs, definition of the objectives, providing trainers, fund raising, conducting the training of its own members and evaluating the results. The organisations of scouts and girl-guides, for example, have well-developed schemes for training their members on a regular basis.

Training influenced by the donors' policies

Government agencies, the big international non-governmental foundations and other governmental or non-governmental donor organisations (EU, CoE, Open Society Institute and many others) often engage in their own needs assessment in the youth sector. A frequent response is to identify and sanction the type of training that is needed. The most common strategies that they practice are:

- a) Organising the training by themselves. Well-known examples are the training courses of the Directorate of Youth and Sport (CoE), SALTO training courses of the YOUTH Programme (EU), or EU local agencies working on a local level.
- a) Funding the training activities of the youth non-governmental organisations, which apply for and may receive grants to conduct the training. See for examples the study session program for IYNGOs administered by the Directorate of Youth and Sports (CoE), and the activities financed by the Open Society Institute in central and eastern Europe.

Training organised for several organisations working in the sector (including participants from the organisation that is conducting the training)

This type of training is quite different from the previous one. In this instance one organisation (or network) applies for funds and conducts the training, while participants from several other organisations take part. This is common practice and donors tend to support it because of its wider reach and potential multiplying effect. Projects supported by the European Youth Foundation frequently fall into this category. A result of the training courses detailed in 2(a) above can often be the development of this kind of training, as members of different organisations meet and find common priorities and possibilities.

Training delivered as a service (the organisation or training agency specialises in delivering training as a service to potential customers)

Specialist organisations or agencies that offer training services also exist, and may deliver their services free of charge or for a set or negotiated fee. These training agencies are not usually concentrating on the youth field, but have professional trainers with expertise on different topics



in which they deliver workshops and training courses. At this point it is also important to mention the individuals who do not belong to any training agency, but simply deliver training to different youth organisations as freelance trainers. Some members of the trainers pools of the European Youth Forum and the Directorate of Youth and Sport operate in this capacity.

Suggestions for reflection

1. Think of the last training activity you have taken part in; who initiated the training?
2. In which of the above-mentioned categories can you place that training?
3. Who has financed the activity? Has the donor had a big say in the definition of the objectives and the outcome of the training? To what extent was the overall aim of the activity related to the vision and mission of the organisation?
4. Who were the participants?

3.2 Learning, learning outcomes and learning styles

The previous section has outlined for us the importance of thinking through the needs that necessitate a training. By linking an analysis of these needs with a stocktaking of what is required to meet them, the first steps have been taken in planning a training session or program. The needs analysis, then, raises the basic point that a training is being suggested because people need to learn something. This section continues by considering the concept of learning, and links it to the practice of conceiving and planning a training strategy and activity.

3.2.1 Learning

As a child, there were two contexts where I would be asked about learning. 'What did you learn at school today?', a ritual question, like asking about the weather. 'I hope you learned something from this' was the other, after another homemade rocket misfired. To this day, I do not remember the specifics of what I learnt in primary school, but I do remember that lighter fuel is inadequate for proper space exploration.

For anyone who cares to look back at such moments, it will be obvious that we learn in different ways, at different times, depending on situations, consequences, and stimulus. We also learn different things, depending on what we interact with in our environment. And it follows from this that we learn according to different motivations, from the conscious need to pass exams, to the almost unconscious socialisation of learning traffic signals. Learning, then, is a differentiated and complex process, responsible for equipping us with knowledge and skills, developing our capabilities, and allowing us to know our own attitudes, values and emotions.

As a trainer, we are charged with facilitating the learning of others. Before we can do this, we need to think about what kind of learning goes on in youth training. Presumably, a training continues people's social learning, as it exposes them to new environments and people, situations and attitudes, even new food and drink. In considering group dynamics (5.1), we have looked at how we can create contexts where people can integrate these new experiences. Yet trainings are not just about new ways of being, but are focused on allowing people to learn about subjects, issues, skills, needs, opportunities, and so forth. Crucially, the aim is that people will do something with this learning. While there are many competing definitions of learning, a useful definition of learning in training emphasises this relation; «A deliberate conscious process, the goal of which is some kind of persistent change in behaviour» (WAGGS, *Training Skills for Advisors*, 2.2). Therefore, to facilitate the learning of others, we need to relate the way they learn to a planned process which can achieve the desired changes. A training situation provides a potential range of experiences, and if we add a definition from Kolb (1973) to the previous one,



we can argue that learning involves a conscious reflection on those experiences; “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience. A trainer cannot assume, however, that the training process will automatically provide the stimulus and create the conditions for learning automatically. After identifying the needs that have legitimated the training, the trainer needs to consider two learning-related factors – what the learning outcomes should be, and how to cater for the different ways people will reach those outcomes.

3.2.2. Learning outcomes

“If you don’t know where you’re going, don’t be surprised to find yourself somewhere you never intended.” Are you familiar with this saying, or some version of it? Those involved in training for long time will probably groan at the sight of it, not just because it is a cliché, but because it is so often proved to be true. Carefully defining the starting points and end goals that participants will progress through is of crucial importance, and these following sections emphasise a range of factors which need to be considered during a preparation phase (and any subsequent re-workings of the program during its implementation). The first step is defining the *learning outcomes* of the training, and then conceptualising them as *objectives*.

What does a trainer really want the participants to achieve by the end of a training course? What should participants know at the end of a workshop? What should they be able to do? What should they take home with them? These are a few of the endless questions that could be asked regarding the final outcome of a training activity. Clearly, there is an enormous range of unpredictable factors in the life of a training, from the expectations and learning styles of the participants to the ways in which it is evaluated. A flexible approach to the dynamics of training and a thoroughly planned approach are not mutually exclusive however. Thinking through learning outcomes allows the trainer to maximise the kinds of learning which the program can support, and influences planning for this within the training strategy and methodology. The question still remains however – what exactly are learning outcomes?

According to Gagne and Medsker (1996), “Learning is relatively permanent change in human capabilities that is not a result of growth processes». They continue by arguing that these capabilities are related to specific learning outcomes, that is, categories of forms of learning, relating to different aspects of the mind and body. We can see them systematised below.

Learning outcomes

Type of learning outcome	Description of capability	Example
Verbal information	State, tell, or describe previously stored information	In school being asked in history class about significant dates during WWII
Intellectual skills	Apply general concepts and rules to analyse issues, solve problems and generate novel problems	Design a project proposal that meets certain requirements
Motor skills	Execute a physical action with precision and timing	Learn to climb a rope of 20 metres.
Attitudes	Choose a personal course of action	Choose to change your approach to your training sessions after participating in a training for trainers course
Cognitive strategies	Manage one’s own thinking and learning processes	Selectively use three different strategies to identify the training needs of a particular organisation.

(Taken and adapted from: R.Gagne and K. Medsker, 1996)



The need to make a distinction between different types of learning outcomes stems from the need to distinguish different levels and types of training provided. If we stick with the scheme outlined in the chart, the most common outcomes in youth training are usually at the level of attitudes, cognitive strategies and intellectual skills. It is usual that in these multicultural and multilingual contexts there is less emphasis on verbal information outcomes, and motor skills seem to be engaged less frequently, although the increasing popularity of outward bound style pursuits in youth training is changing this. Models such as this one are very often boiled down in youth work to KSA; knowledge, skills and attitude outcomes. As a point of reference this is probably sufficient, as it is not the intention here to give an exhaustive overview of different theoretical models. Instead the emphasis is on the relevance of learning outcomes to the initial planning process. Their consideration is central to the definition of training objectives, and also provokes thought on the values and purposes of learning within the training being conceived.

Another very important dimension to identifying the learning outcomes is the question of indepthness. How 'deeply' does a trainer want to explore a particular topic or issue? In other words, trainers need to consider the level of engagement and learning they want their participants to reach, and to speculate on the kind of knowledge they would like to be achieved.

This issue becomes clearer if we look at the box below:

Six Levels of Knowledge

1. Awareness – to recall, recognise, being aware of existence
2. Understanding – to translate from one form to another
3. Application – to apply or use information in a new situation
4. Analysis – to examine a situation and break it down into parts
5. Synthesis – to put together information in a new way
6. Evaluation – to judge based on explicit criteria.

(Adapted from Klatt (1999) and Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964).

The following example illustrates the levels of knowledge in relation to training in general.

Example: What knowledge can a person have with regards to training in general? ³

- Being **aware** that training as activity exists as such is the lowest possible level, lower then to know **why it** exists and **what the purpose** of it is (being a participant at a course). Knowing **how to** conduct a certain type of training activity (application) means acquiring a higher level of knowledge. Being **able to analyse** and take a training program apart is a further development and refinement of this knowledge. Following on from this is being **able to design** training programs (elements) of your own. And according to this scheme, the highest level is so called evaluation, which reflects the **ability to draw conclusions** and make decisions based on established criteria (e.g. decide whether one training program is more appropriate then the other).

3. Please note that in the following paragraph, the term evaluation is used in broader terms than in rest of the publication, where the sense is specifically related to training.



The depth of the learning outcomes is important for a number of reasons. It recalls the needs analysis, as it begins to formulate those needs in ways that can be related to the program design. On top of this, it is necessary to consider them in relation to the participant's profile (*see 4.5.4*). For now, we will concentrate on the process of specifying objectives from the learning outcomes identified.

3.2.3 Defining objectives

Defining the objectives can be seen as operationalising the different learning outcomes identified for a training activity. It should be noted, however, that this does not apply to all of the objectives that may be set for a particular activity. In discussing the types and levels of the learning outcomes, the focus was solely on individual development. In youth work (and in other fields where organisations undertake personnel training), normally two sets of objectives can be defined. The first set is composed of specific objectives on an individual level, outlining the benefits of the training for participants. The second set relates to the organisation that the individual participants belong to, and addresses the potential uses and influences of the learning in the organisation and its environment. If an aim of the course is the creation and motivation of multipliers, this second set of objectives becomes even more important.

This means that the designer of a training activity has two main tasks; translating the individual learning outcomes in training objectives, and secondly, creating objectives that address the organisational improvements that can be expected after participants start using their newly acquired knowledge. These are not easy tasks. The trainer needs a clear idea of what constitutes a training objective, and must formulate comprehensible and achievable ones. Importantly, these must be communicated to the participants as it allows them to negotiate their expectations with the goals of the training.

In our experience, the range of terms which are applied to objectives are counter-productive. Are they aims or objectives? Can we have both, and if so, what's the relationship between them? And what about goals? Or targets? And what happen when we try to translate these into other languages? Instead of getting dizzy, it is easier to see objectives as a set of statements, or projections, which you will try and achieve within the life of the training. TE-6 below suggests the main characteristics of an objective, and guidelines for evaluating them. This is a useful scheme, but there are others, and ultimately each trainer has to decide the format which is most productive for her ⁴.

⁴ A model for writing objectives called SMART is presented in T-Kit on Project Management



TE-6

SPIRO model for writing objectives

Specify	Objectives must be specific (what exactly are you going to do?)
Performance	Objectives must focus on high value results, not on activities (what do you intend to accomplish?)
Involvement	Those involved in implementation need to be involved in setting the objectives. (What is your part in the objectives?)
Realism	Objectives need to be realistic and rewarding. If they are too ambitious, they may lead to disappointment. Yet, objectives must also be challenging or there will be no pride in accomplishing them. (Can it be done given the resources available?)
Observable	Objectives need to be measurable or observable. (How will you know whether you have been successful as trainer?)

From: Pfeiffer J.W. & J.E. Jones (1972) (eds.)

Examples of objectives:

On an individual level (determined in relation to the learning outcomes)

- To enable participants to prepare, run and evaluate a project
- To develop participants' skills in the areas of human rights education, leadership and program development, project management and intercultural learning
- To increase participants knowledge and awareness of the values underlying European non-formal education
- To increase the participants competence and motivation for dealing with intercultural learning in youth activities
- To provide a basic overview of different concepts of training in non-formal education
- To support participants in assessing their own training needs and in learning from their own experiences
- To develop participant's management and leadership skills

On an organisational level (larger environment)

- To contribute to a marked improvement of communication patterns in the participants' organisations
- To foster the development of innovative local youth projects on participation and citizenship by the participants in their own organisations and environments

Note: In the *Project Management T-Kit* there is a considerable section dedicated to the issue of defining objectives (pp 52-56).

Suggestions for reflection:

- What factors do you think are most necessary for learning to occur? Why?
- How do objectives contribute to the learning process?
- Can objectives always be measurable?
- Can you think of effective ways of communicating objectives to the participants?



3.2.4 Learning Styles

In the youth field, it is common to juxtapose formal and non-formal education (see 2.1.4). Formal education, be it school or university, tends to emphasise the intellectual and what is often called 'banking' approach to learning. The teacher is the 'sage on the stage', regarding the learner as an empty vessel to be filled with useful information, and not acknowledging that the vessels are already full in different ways. As opposed to this, training, with the trainer as the 'guide by the side', encourages the learner as vessel to choose the liquid and to fill itself as it chooses. This dichotomy ignores a number of things; the development of pedagogical approaches in the formal sector that are used in the non-formal, the very diversity of the formal sector itself, and the increasing cross-fertilisation of types of education between both sectors. It also presumes that anything carried out under the name of non-formal education should be automatically valued. Remember, somebody in a campaign t-shirt and sandals can bore your head off too.

What does characterise non-formal education is that it is *participant-centred*, and that the participant is usually motivated to be there. The aim is to create a process where the individual can learn from themselves, from the group, and from the training. Given this participant-centredness, training involves an emphasis on personal development (see 2.1.2), and on learning in as many ways as possible. This is often described as the *4H* approach; learning with head, hands, heart and health, and emphasises the interconnectedness of the intellectual, instrumental, emotional and holistic ways of learning. Even without reference to more specific theories, this shorthand description acts as a valuable checklist for any training, as it makes the point that learning is enhanced by continually engaging the different ways that we learn. The rationale of this checklist is that the more dimensions the training addresses, the deeper the level of learning that is engaged. It also suggests that we have to think about the way that we learn, consciously address these different ways of learning, and work on our relevant capabilities.

Thus far we have discussed different ways of learning and related them to experience. It goes without saying that experiences differ, but also that people differ in the ways that they learn. There are many influential theoretical approaches dealing with learning styles, in particular the work of Honey and Mumford is widely applied in the youth field. As their approach is discussed in detail in the *Organisational Management T-Kit* (pp19-22), we will concentrate here on D.A. Kolb's experiential learning cycle, the basis of Honey and Mumford's work.

Kolb essentially breaks down the maxim of 'learning from experience' into distinct yet inter-related stages which form a cyclical process. Learning is related not just to experience, but to what we do with that experience. It needs to be translated into a learning experience and its value distilled in different ways. The cycle moves from doing, to reflecting on what has happened, to generalising and conceptualising the experience and applying the new knowledge to doing once more. The more learning dimensions that are engaged, the more heightened that experience will be. But the experience is useless without reflecting on what has happened, and translating that reflection into practice when relevant. This is what the definition previously quoted referred to as a persistent change in behaviour (4.2.1). To return to the example of my failed space rocket, the experience of a visit to the hospital was wasted unless I reflected on why I was there, and how I could avoid a return trip while still continuing my experiments. An example from a training situation might be a simulation game for intercultural learning, where participants are asked to take part in an organised experience. Crucial to learning from this is debriefing, analysis and transfer, which begins the process of learning about society from a structured learning situation

In many of the theoretical approaches likely to be encountered, an ideal 'integrated learner' would benefit from each stage in the experiential cycle. However, personal reflection may indicate that we all identify ourselves more with some styles than others, although this may vary according to situation, motivation and stimulus. On the negative side, a reliance on one style may benefit us in the relevant stage of the cycle, but prove to be a disadvantage when other skills are required at other stages. A key aim of engaging with theories of this nature is learning to learn; in other words, concentrating on identifying the contexts where we benefit least, and attempting to improve on that. It is worth bearing in mind in relation to this that the concept of



style also involves the question of speed – people learn according to different rhythms, depending on their individual pace, the program design, and the momentum of the group. It is important when discussing theories of this nature to re-state one of the fundamental premises of this publication. Theories can only act as orientation, and do not provide a blueprint for training. Nobody fits neatly into these categories, and the actual training reality introduces factors which are unpredictable and influential in terms of people's learning. Categories like these, if over-emphasised, can stereotype and limit the scope of learning.

Suggestions for reflection

1. Think of the last training you took part in, and evaluate what you learnt in relation to the *4Hs*
2. As a trainer, have you ever considered the relationship between how you learn and how you train? Consider one of your training sessions in relation to your preferred learning style: does it cater for other styles and approaches? How could you re-design it to maintain your strengths and increase the field for others?

3.2.5 Intercultural Learning

In the brief discussion of intercultural learning found earlier in this T-Kit, it was argued that understanding intercultural situations demands the development of learnt competencies in the trainer. This is because intercultural learning brings into opposition social learning (socialisation) regarding our perceptions of reality, and very often our values, and conscious learning regarding the negotiation of realities and value systems which this kind of education facilitates and values as a positive resource. Many researchers in the field argue that there are indispensable socio-cultural skills that can be learnt, and which are central to a process of learning how to adapt to, evaluate and communicate in intercultural situations. They not only provide a valuable form of reflection for the trainer, but also a set of qualities that a training can actively facilitate:

- *Empathy*: the term involves a number of related meanings. Normally, it is seen as the ability to put yourself in another's shoes, to appreciate the common humanity of the other, and to attempt to understand the processes of enculturation which make you differ. Since the end of the second world war, some sociologists have maintained that increasingly complex modern existences require empathy as a basic condition of living together. As we continually encounter difference that we may have no experience of, *empathy enables us to actively and creatively cope with the otherness of the person with whom we are dealing during an intercultural encounter* (Service National de la Jeunesse, p32). Empathy must be differentiated from sympathy – you can be empathetic without being sympathetic. Reflecting and developing empathy allows us to begin negotiating different values, work with different systems of interpretation, and relatedly, communication. It is also important to consider the limits to empathy; it is not a recipe for understanding, but rather a process of learning and approaching difference.
- *Role Distance* implies attempting to see yourself from the outside, while again recognising the limits to this. Enculturation centres the self; our perceptual, interpretative and evaluative frameworks are normal, natural and stabilising. An intercultural situation (or indeed, any group situation) brings together many such systems of certainty. By de-centering the self we can begin to analyse ourselves as encultured beings – to reflect on ourselves in terms of those qualities which ascribe difference to the other. Role distance should not be confused with cultural relativism; this kind of self-reflection allows us to interrogate our normatives, prejudices and stereotypes, but also to concentrate on those values and cultural aspects which are central to our identity and cannot be negotiated. It is worth considering this skill in relation to the discussion of roles in 5.1.



- *Tolerating Ambiguity*: an intercultural situation can create a state of flux, where the norms, assumptions and patterns of communication which we take for granted are not recognised, shared or accepted. Yet at the same time, a training situation demands our involvement in a process where communication and interaction must continually happen. Intellectually and emotionally, this kind of process can involve insecurity and frustration and the adoption of defensive positions. Developing a tolerance of ambiguity is a way of reflecting on and operating with uncertainty, it is a prerequisite for ridding oneself of a reassuring vision of the world without immediately providing the security of an alternative vision (ibid, p35). It involves active tolerance and analysis, learning to accept insecurity while putting those elements which create insecurity under the microscope.

In the *Intercultural Learning T-Kit* you will find different approaches to structuring intercultural activities (pp 21-32). The following points are nearly always addressed by intercultural pedagogies, and a reflexive consideration of them is central to the self-development of these key skills, not to mention facilitating their development in others:

- Learning to know oneself in one's social and cultural context.
- To actively learn about the world and the possible interconnections of different realities.
- To reflect on one's attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviour in relation to both general social analysis and specific group interactions.
- To approach communication as a negotiated cultural process which requires constant attention to both verbal and non-verbal aspects, as well as the development of new skills.

Suggestion for Reflection

Consider TE-10 in section 3.5.3 in relation to your experience of intercultural learning

1. *Comfort Zone*: what makes you define the chosen situation as comfortable?
2. *Stretching Zone*: what stretched you? Can you relate it to any of the factors above? How did you cope with the situation?
3. *Crisis Zone*: How did you react to this crisis? Which of the key competencies outlined above are relevant to the situation?

3.3 Strategies and Methodology

3.3.1 Training strategies

The next step in the building process is to design a training which reflects your desired learning outcomes, and caters for a variety of learning styles and speeds. A training strategy can be looked upon as the way that you plan the flow of the program; the logic by which the content will be developed and the methods assembled with consideration to the development of the group dynamics. There are elements to this which are clearly not rocket science; for example, not beginning a course with a plan for future action, when the aim and project have not even been defined. Yet a training strategy is important, as it brings together for the first time the interconnectedness of the training elements. TE-15 (see 5.1.3), the theme-centred interaction model, illustrates this interconnectedness.

It could be seen as illustrating training in general (5.1.3) but in this context it signals the specific and interdependent elements which need to be considered in a training strategy. The *topic* is the aim of the training, the reason why everybody is there. It represents the themes and form of the meeting. *I* is each separate person involved in the training, be it team or participant, who bring with them expectations, different learning biographies, knowledges and experiences in relation to the topic, and so forth. *We* is the group, and represents more than just a physical