

Learner-Centred Training Methods (LCTM)

Why: the rationale behind LCTM

People involved in development cooperation are usually adults (except in education programmes). Both the primary stakeholders (or beneficiaries, or rightholders) and development workers (or project collaborators, extension officers, trainers, duty bearers) have their own set of valuable experiences, knowledge and skills. Any intervention to strengthen the capacity of primary stakeholders needs to build on these experiences. Learner-centred training therefore implies a shift from instruction to construction, from teaching as instructing, presenting and explaining to construction, where learning is an active, self-directed, situational and social process. In fast-changing times, people – farmers as well as development workers – need continuously to adapt. This requires life-long learning. Therefore, rather than learning by heart, people need to be given the skills to think for themselves, solve problems and take decisions. As a rule of thumb, collective intelligence is superior to individual knowledge. So exchanging with one’s peers and working in teams results in better solutions than individual actions. This is why LCTM fosters interpersonal skills.

The following mind map (Figure 1) and note (Box 1) deal with six questions. These are the six questions that any trainer needs to address prior to holding a training event. “Training event” is understood broadly here, ranging from a one-hour lesson for university students or a one-day extension event for farmers to a two-week training course for resource persons.

Box 1: Six questions to prepare a training event

1. **Why** are we conducting this training event (rationale, learning objective)?
2. **What** is the training event about?
3. **Whom** are we addressing with this training event?
4. **How** do we conduct this training event (training methods)?
5. **Where** shall the training event take place?
6. **When** shall the training event take place?

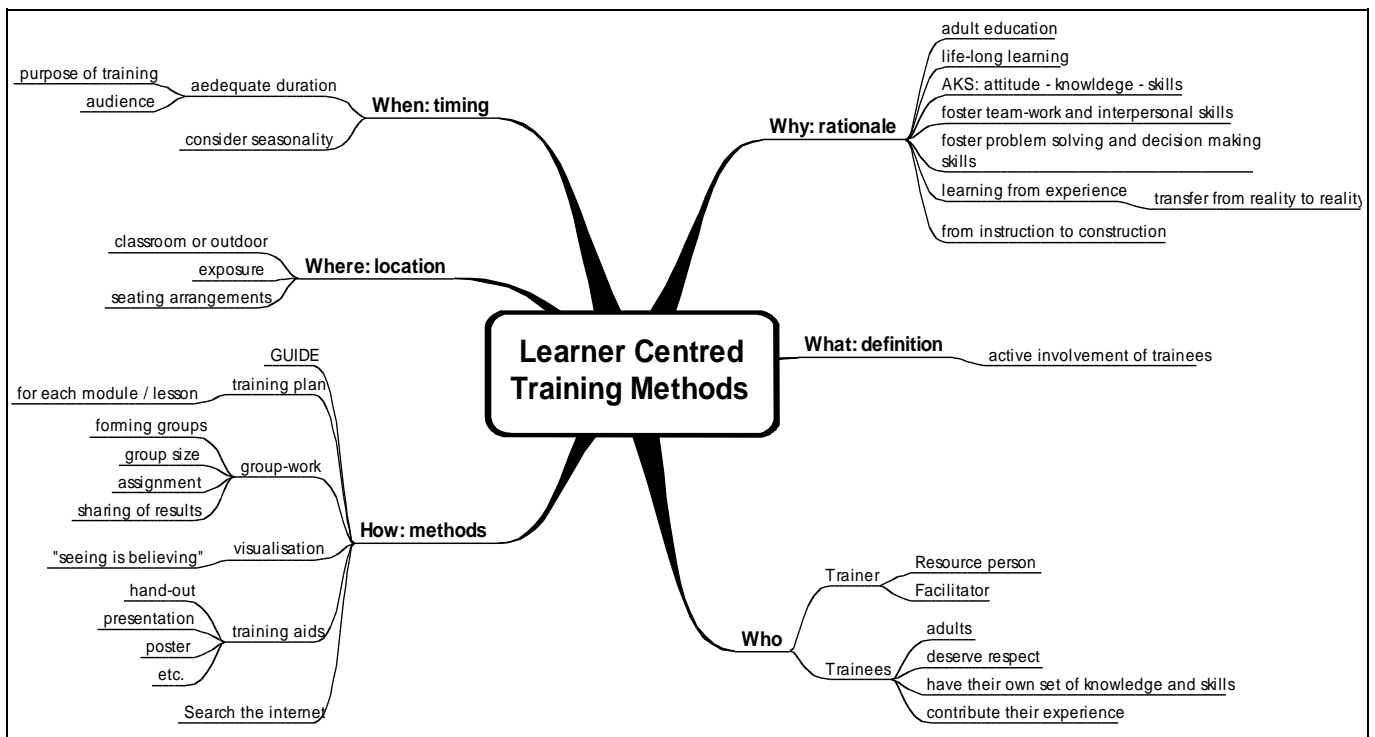


Figure 1: An overview of Learner-Centred Training Methods. The six questions to address prior to a training event.



Figure 2: Interaction and joint learning through group-work are in the centre of LCTM (Schroeter, 2007)

What: a definition of LCTMs

By Learner-Centred Training Methods (LCTM) we understand all kinds of training strategies that give the participants the opportunity to become actively involved in the training session and learning process. The trainer remains an important source of information, but he or she also acts as a facilitator for the participants to learn. The time during a training event is mainly used for processing the key knowledge and for practising high-level thinking skills such as argumentation, application, problem-solving, creativity and decision-making. “Ordinary” knowledge like simple facts, the participants are supported and expected to acquire themselves from the Internet, hand-outs and other sources of information (adapted from Batliner, 2001).

LCTMs address attitudes (e.g. respect), skills (e.g. problem-solving) and knowledge (e.g. nutrient requirements of wheat).

Who: trainers and trainees

On the one hand, trainers are resource persons providing training content. Alternatively, specific resource persons may be invited to give special content. On the other hand, the trainers are facilitators asking stimulating questions, assigning clear and relevant tasks for individual reflection or group work, moderating discussion and exchange among the participants, and thoughtfully summarising the topics dealt with (see Box 3). The trainer talks for less than 25% of the training time, whereas for the remaining 75% of the time the trainees work alone or in groups on challenging assignments, share their experiences or discuss topics in-depth.

The trainees or participants are adults who deserve due respect for their knowledge, skills and experiences. They understand the purpose of the training and feel responsible for their learning and progress.

Box 2: What do participants typically see, hear, do and feel:

- Trainers talk less than 25% of the time.
- Participants feel respect and appreciation for their contributions.
- Participants work alone and in groups on challenging assignments.
- The training offers space for an exchange of experiences and in-depth discussion.
- Trainers provide short, well-illustrated inputs.
- Participants feel responsible for their learning and their own progress.

Source: Batliner, 2001

Box 3: The trainer as a facilitator has:

- To establish agreement on expected results
- To propose procedures and choose methods
- To guide and manage a group
- To lead discussions
- To motivate participants
- To summarise contributions
- To ensure results
- To create a friendly atmosphere in the group

Source: Bolliger and Zellweger, 2007

How: selected methods of LCTM

Constructing instead of instructing

“GUIDE” is a tool for structuring and phasing a single lesson, a training module or even an entire course. It activates and builds on the participants’ experience, includes a teaching part and deepens new knowledge and skills through individual reflection or group work (see Table 1, Lehmann/Vogt, 2013). A set of tools such as a provocative question, quiz or vote, discussion in pairs or in buzz groups is used to activate the participants’ prior knowledge and experiences.

Table 1: GUIDE – a tool to structure a training (Lehmann/Vogt, 2013)

G et into the course	First contact, warm up, motivation, concentration, orientation, inform about objectives and intended program
U se and activate prior knowledge	Show relevance of the subject, activate pre-knowledge, get to know about experiences, interests, opinions, show main points of the new subject
I nform (main part)	Impart new knowledge and skills
D eepen	Work through (question, discuss, repeat), apply new knowledge and skills to new situations, exercise, establish routine
E valuate, E ncourage	Assessment, encourage to transfer, round up

Training/session plan

GUIDE can be used to structure a whole course, a module or a single lesson. Each of these units needs a plan, which includes the learning objectives (considering attitudes, skills and knowledge), the training content, the methods to be applied and the resources required. Figure 3 shows an example of a training plan.

TIME	MIN	GUIDE	ACTIVITY/CONTENT	METHODS	MATERIAL	RESOURCES

Figure 3: Example of a training plan to structure a training (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, 2014)

Group work

Group work is a good method for activating participants and maintaining a high level of attention. Aspects to consider are the **size** of the group and the **forming** of the group (Bolliger, 2007, p. 73ff). Group work needs a clear assignment (Bolliger, p. 75) and a smart method for exchanging the results of the group work (Bolliger, 2007, p. 80 ff).

“Seeing is believing”

Learning processes are clearly enhanced when several senses are stimulated. Thus **visualisation** is one of the key methods of LCTM.

Visualisation:

- facilitates thoughtful engagement with and better assimilation of the subject matter
- improves focus on the point under discussion
- allows for an overview and makes the context, structures and processes more easily recognisable
- makes the content easier to remember

- requires more thorough preparation
- forces the speaker to use precise and concrete arguments
- reduces emotional involvement implications
- serves as documentation by recording statements, ideas, results and to-do lists (Bolliger, 2007, p. 41 ff).

Training aids

A training event and its units needs to be supported by training aids such as hand-outs, presentations, films, posters, demonstrations, etc. Their level of detail, language, visualisation, etc. needs to be adapted to the audience and the situation.

Search the web

The worldwide web (www) offers an incredible amount of information. The challenge is to retrieve the information that is relevant to the topic and the training context. The “How to Note” *web search* provides guidelines on how to search the web most efficiently.

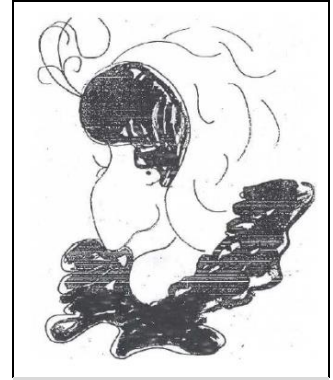


Figure 4: Do you see a young or an old women? (Schroeter, 2007)

Where: location

Where a training event takes place depends on the content, the learning objectives and the target audience, and may be a classroom or a farmer’s field. Following the motto of “seeing is believing” again, a training event should include as much exposure time as possible. The criteria that influence the choice of location include cultural habits, transport, facilities, cost and security. **Seating arrangements** (Bolliger, 2007, p. 26) shape the atmosphere of a training event and need to be decided upon very deliberately.

When: timing

Decisions about the timing of a training event (duration, season) obeys similar considerations to the choice of location. Particular consideration about availability (absence from the farm) is needed when the training event is being organised for farmers.

Author(s): Peter Schmidt, April 2014

Further reading

- Bolliger, E. and Zellweger T., 2007: Facilitation – the art of making your meetings and workshops purposeful and time-efficient. AGRIDEA, Lindau, Switzerland.
- Steinlin, M. and Jenkins, C.W., 2010: Knowledge Sharing for Change, Facilitation Handbook. IngeniousPeoplesKnowledge, Cape Town, South Africa, available at: http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/ipk_trainingmanual_midres.pdf
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References

- Lehmann R. and Vogt B., 2013: Lecture notes, Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL), (unpublished).
- Schroeter, A., 2007: Cartoons and Pictures for Extension Methodology. Helvetas Laos



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