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IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF LEARNING TO ADULTS

There is a degree of overlap between the question of the pedagogy and delivery of adult learning and that of adults' motivation to learn. If adults feel at ease in the learning setting, do not have external constraints (transport, child caring), feel that what they are learning is accessible and worthwhile, and realise that what they already know is valued and taken into consideration, then the incentive to enrol in a course and to follow it through is much greater.

This chapter sets out different dimensions of delivery that are key to the well-being of the learner and the smooth functioning of the adult learning system. All the components of the system, including the enterprise and the teacher, should be included in a comprehensive approach that produces an environment conducive to learning. Pedagogical methods should be focused on the learner, informed about their personality, expectations and motives, whether professional or personal, and availability. The cognitive style of potential learners should also be kept in mind when setting new programmes in motion. Interactivity between the learners and the system (through teachers or counsellors) should be encouraged in order to adjust the learning activities to all the components of the system.

Certain delivery mechanisms have proved efficient in increasing participation. Recognition of prior learning, distance and e-learning, flexible organisation such as modularisation, and certification of current learning are certainly issues to deal with urgently in order to best suit the adults willing to learn or already engaged in learning activities. Another element vital to the health and longevity of the system is routine assessment of its different components (programmes, learners, teachers).¹

1. This chapter owes much to a document expressly prepared for the Thematic Review (Chiousse, 2001 – www.oecd.org/edu/adultlearning)

6.1. Learning methods specific to adults

Adults can make education decisions if the learning supply is integrated, transparent and coherent.

The need to establish a general framework for adult learning and to provide an integrated learning plan with collateral support services is recognised and taken seriously in all the countries involved in the thematic review. At the same time, the idea of making adults responsible, free to come to their own decisions about education and training, was also widespread in most of the countries visited. There is something to be said for that attitude, though one of the underlying assumptions of this report is precisely that the ball is initially in the court of those offering learning, and it will be easier and fairer to make adults responsible once learning supply is integrated, transparent and coherent. This is true for all adults, whether they believe in the value of learning or not, although these issues are that much more important when the sections of the population targeted are not convinced or are difficult to convince.

Suppliers must recognise the factors that differentiate adult learning from children's education.

Pedagogy is by definition the science that studies the way in which children are taught. In the case of adults, we speak rather of andragogy, even though this distinction is not always pertinent and may not be generally acknowledged.² It seems more important simply to recognise that child learning and adult learning are bound to have points in common. In both cases the object is the acquisition of new skills and competencies. An adult nevertheless exhibits special qualities in terms of willingness, maturity, motivation or interest, and it is essential that they are taken into account. The object of this section is to identify the conditions that are favourable to the acquisition of competencies by adults.

An appropriate type of pedagogy

The rationale and mechanisms behind adult learning are multidisciplinary issues

The question why adults learn (Courtney, 1992) or how they learn (OECD and US Department of Education, 1999) has long been a major part of the work conducted in many disciplines concerned with adult learning. Chapters 2 and 3 have already reviewed part of the reasons why adults undertake learning. A large number of disciplines are mobilised in this task, though it must be recognised that psychology and, to a lesser extent, physiology, sociology and ergonomics often provide the theoretical basis; educational science only comes in much later (Chiousse, 2001).

The economic arguments are not enough

Economic advantages are insufficient incentive.

The point of departure here is the frequently established fact that the economic argument does not always win everybody over. Individuals will not be attracted to just any form of learning merely because it is free. Nor is it enough to justify learning in terms of the economic advantages it will confer when successfully concluded. As Chapter 5 has shown, it is only those individuals who are convinced of the value of learning who are receptive to a cost-benefit analysis in the broad sense. The fact is that a system has to be established, in which learner, teacher, course content and learning

2. The term "adult pedagogy" is sometimes used and therefore, unless otherwise indicated, the terms will be assumed to be synonymous.

environment are properly matched. It is necessary to take account of a series of factors, which are all the more difficult to determine since they vary from one type of learner to another. This is where the arguments about pedagogy and those about participation in learning activities converge: if people are to be persuaded to participate, the first step must be to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the instruction or training provided are appropriate.

What is learning?

In areas where children's and adults' teaching methods overlap, it is particularly apparent that the "cognitive" has long been given increasing priority over the "transmissive"; in other words, the teacher tends to encourage the learner to think rather than impart knowledge to her/him directly. Moreover, in both cases, it would seem that even the tripartite system "school, classroom and lesson" has suffered a fall from grace in the current conception of the teaching chain, even though it remains the dominant model. The teacher's role remains central, though even this point needs to be qualified: sometimes they are eclipsed by the machine (computer-aided learning – CAL) or they become one among many (experiments with several teachers). These points are taken up in this chapter; however, for the purposes of the exercise, the comparison between children and adults ends here – and the rest of the chapter concentrates on measures to be applied for the benefit of adults.

Macro-social and statistical studies on inequality and its manifestations (notably in work, social life and access to culture, education and health care) are increasingly giving way to studies that analyse individual behaviour and put forward strategies, including learning strategies. Equally, pedagogy is no longer really concerned with questions of classroom authority, direction or lack thereof. From a sociological point of view, for example, the critical, quantitative outlook is now being superseded by a micro-sociology of educational measures and practices. Pedagogical questions now encompass everything the individual "actually" learns, over and above the formal requirements of the programme.

In so far as they concern young adults who left the educational system early, the long-term unemployed, immigrants, people starting work again, or indeed people heading for retirement (Vimont, 2001), the objectives of training institutions have altered (Parmentier and Arfaoui, 2001). Modern training places more emphasis on the complete transformation of individuals and enhancement of their well-being and not simply their ability to regurgitate information. Questions therefore focus more directly on ways of transforming professional and social identities, and the task of preparing people for society turns out to be almost as important as that of teaching: there is a shift from the notion of instruction to that of learning.

Providing for a comprehensive approach to learning

If there is to be a move towards an overall conception of learning, which goes beyond mere teaching, it is now agreed that several references, considerations, and practices must be given priority:

- A redefinition of knowledge.
- A learner-centred approach.

Adults and children have gone from being knowledge receptors to learning how to learn, and are shifting away from the standard school setting.

Pedagogical questions now focus more on what the individual "actually" learns than on formal requirements...

... and on the transformation and well-being of individuals rather than their ability to regurgitate information.

Shifting from "mere teaching" to an overall conception of learning entails a number of considerations.

- Work on behaviour.
- An appropriate learning context.
- A differentiated pedagogy.
- A completion of training.

It involves a quest for genuinely new knowledge.

Considering the options for improving the life of the individual, it would appear preferable, in a changing world, to have the means to acquire new knowledge rather than be restricted to the same old knowledge, acquired during the initial stage of education (Berbaum, 1996; Commissariat général du plan, 2001). Knowledge quickly becomes obsolete, which often places its holder in a position of inferiority – or perceived inferiority – whether in professional circles or in the social or family environment.

But the very notion of a comprehensive approach may not be realistic given country differences.

Even if a comprehensive approach to adult learning should probably be sought, differences remain between and within countries, and it is difficult to envisage the possibility of harmonising the various approaches.

Having addressed the first question, namely “what is learning?”, the next question is whether “learning” can be learned,³ and if so how the individual can do so. The problem is once again of knowing how best to apply the most suitable approaches identified.

Learning to learn

Pedagogical theories may have changed over time...

All of the different pedagogical and andragogical theories have introduced new elements or reinforced existing ones. But although the theories have changed over the past century, the pedagogical practices derived from them have changed little and are still very like those put forward earlier by the representatives of the *Éducation nouvelle*. Houssaye (1994), defining what he calls “the pedagogical triangle”, gives a fairly accurate summary of the current situation and the different concepts adopted over time and still prevalent today, together with their merits and demerits. If adapted to the andragogical situation, the pedagogical triangle takes the form shown in Figure 6.1.

... but pedagogical practices, reflected in the three relationships of the andragogical triangle, have not.

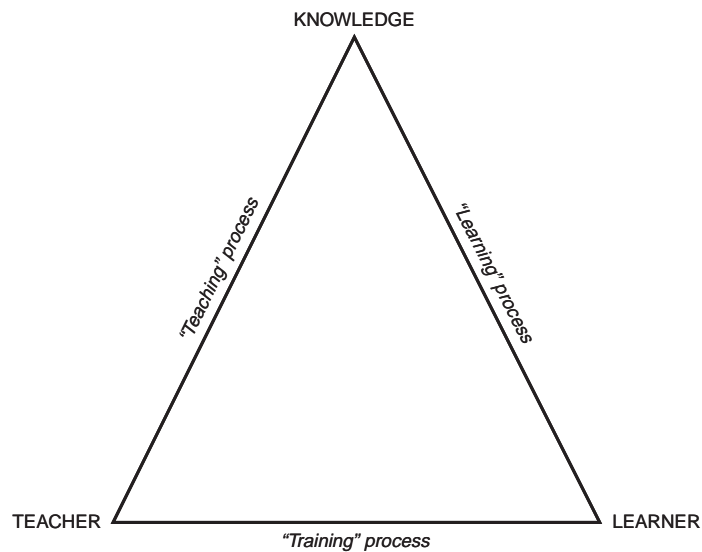
Learner, teacher and knowledge (in the broad sense as before, and thus comprising both theoretical and practical knowledge) are located at the three corners of the triangle. The sides of the triangle show how these three elements are related. The approach to the pedagogical or andragogical method differs depending on the particular relationship chosen.

The best approach would be to give all three sides equal weight.

Each of the theories considered seems to give priority to one of these relationships, stressing one of the three angles (knowledge, learner and teacher) and the method best suited to it. The most effective andragogical method would certainly be one that could encompass all three elements and all three relationships at the same time, stimulating the learner while ensuring that the right learning context was established.

3. The theory and practice of cognitive educability in this connection indicate it can be (Chiousse, 2001).

Figure 6.1. The pedagogical triangle



Source: Chioussé (2001).

Putting the learner at the centre of the learning process

There are a number of “active variables” in the learning process. They have been examined in many studies and each of the different pedagogical and andragogical movements has stressed one or another of them; they are seen as variables “providing leverage”, and likely to have a positive impact on learning (interest in learning, quality of personal relationship, importance of social interaction, etc.) as well as negative barrier variables (such as the weight of social determinism).

A number of “active variables” could have a positive impact on learning...

If training is to be effective and reasonably successful, it must at the very least:

- Be motivating, *i.e.* its objectives must be precise.
- Set goals that can actually be attained by individuals, providing a challenge though not an impossible one.
- Require the individual to draw upon knowledge s/he has already acquired – so that s/he does not feel lost – while at the same time enhancing it so that s/he has the sense of being able to reuse his/her knowledge in everyday life.
- Give the individual the opportunity to choose – so that s/he can exercise his/her new-found autonomy.
- Take place over a sufficient period of time, so that the learner’s other occupations and obligations can be catered for.
- Lead to a final achievement, *i.e.* meet the goals initially set.

We must then consider what criteria, operators and operations must necessarily be in place if all these options are to be observed and satisfied. It should be borne in mind that such measures are necessary but not sufficient; in addition to factors specific to the learner, it is necessary to take account of variables that are external to the learner and also to appreciate the influence

... but external variables and the overall learning context must also be considered.

of the overall learning context – which complicates still further the search for the appropriate methods and techniques that will guarantee effective learning.

There is no universal method

***Decisions must always
be taken
in a given context.***

Bearing all these elements in mind, and given the range of methods that have been described and analysed, it becomes increasingly apparent that there is no ready-made pedagogical/andragogical method applicable in all cases. Pedagogical and andragogical methods fall within the field of “action theory”, where it is acknowledged that accurate modelling is never possible. The main point to emerge from the study is that decisions must always be taken in a given context, and regulations are a permanent factor in pedagogical action.

***No one policy can be
the answer given
differences between
and even within
countries...***

In addition, the choices made in the learning field and the resulting systems are first determined by the history, the culture and the geographical, economic, social and political conditions in each country. Although they face similar problems (restructuring, globalisation, unemployment and exclusion *inter alia*), each country employs different training models and techniques, which are diversified still further at local level and from one training provider to another. With different demographic and socioeconomic histories and circumstances in each country, it is by no means easy to say which adult learning model is to be preferred or to identify the specific policy options that determine or should inspire the choice.

***... but a number
of recommendations
remain valid regardless
of setting.***

It is nevertheless possible to make a certain number of recommendations with a view to ensuring that training is properly conducted and the learning process is successful. These recommendations are often based on examples of good practice or on good initiatives and will have as much to do with variables external to the learning process – though active – as with the elements inherent in the process itself. Precisely because they apply at different levels, some recommendations are valid across the board. Evaluation, for example, is applicable to learners and teachers, and also to the courses and policies in place.

A conducive general environment

Some preliminary conditions

***The chief requirements
are a favourable
environment...***

Any learning initiative requires a favourable environment, one that is conducive in its socio-historical, economic, political and cultural aspects. This preliminary recommendation is certainly the most obvious one, implicit in all cases and independent of time or place. It concerns society as a whole, the state, and the nation in which a policy of promoting adult learning is contemplated. The nine countries involved in the thematic review are remarkably stable ones, in which the question does not really arise. Nevertheless, for the purpose of sustaining the argument, it might be noted that during the visit to Portugal, experts observed that the Portuguese revolution (May 1974) in a sense provided a reference point for all actors.

All laws, actions and programmes adopted there are considered – not surprisingly – in relation to that event.

Other indispensable preconditions are that structures and infrastructures are adequate and that decision makers are convinced of the benefits of adult learning, policy issues reviewed in Chapter 4. They call for development of a national policy geared to adult learning, the provision of public funding to encourage the introduction of learning schemes, and co-ordination and co-operation among the different partners involved.

Countries have developed different financial arrangements for learning, also reviewed in Chapter 4. In Denmark for example, a system of funding for training people in the labour market (*Arbejdsmarkedets Uddannelsesfinansiering – AUF*) has been introduced, in addition to the existing system for the reimbursement of employers (AER) (CEDEFOP, 2000). The Scandinavian countries provide special benefit for the unemployed – followed by supplementary training grants – to enable individuals to take a new direction during their active lives.

Where there is a general national policy to promote adult learning, it is admittedly necessary for actors and decision makers at other levels of political and public life to be able to adapt the general policy of the country to more local requirements, taking account of the labour market, the companies established, the population and the levels of affluence. This is the principle underlying the operation of the new Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in England.

Employers aware of the benefits of learning

On a still more localised scale, enterprises must be involved in this adult learning policy and review a certain number of points, such as the organisation of working time and the number of working hours set aside for the training of its staff. Generally speaking, there are many advantages to viewing staff training as a benefit, one that extends beyond the strict limits of the company itself and its financial capital. Training of staff should be seen as an investment with numerous repercussions: financial, cultural, social, individual and collective.

This may involve proposals for training made to entrepreneurs or decision makers that explain – perhaps not for the first time – the merits of learning and what might be expected of it, both in general and in the particular case of the company or its sector of activity. It has to be said that one of the problems most often encountered in the world of work is that a departmental head, or even a managing director if the company is a small one, is often reluctant to send subordinates or employees on training courses for fear of their coming back better trained than earlier and possibly supplanting her/him. This raises the thorny question of who makes the decision to send a worker on a training course: the individual employee (and this eventuality can be catered for by, *e.g.*, training leave), the senior management or the human resources department, or someone at an intermediate level. Here again there are no optimal solutions, but it is important to guarantee that the decision-making process is fair.

... adequate infrastructures and convinced decision makers.

Adult learning policy must be adapted to local requirements.

Enterprises should be involved...

... although the question of who decides to send the employee on a training course is tricky.

A targeted approach

Training also needs to accommodate not just the most favoured individuals, or those most disadvantaged...

A targeted approach, aimed at calling upon the main partner (the company for example) to give the “weakest”⁴ individuals the best possible incentive to embark upon a course, is certainly most suitable for delivery purposes. A certain number of appropriate target groups are generally recognised: those with poor qualifications, immigrants, handicapped people. To this end it is necessary to offer training that is suited to their level and allows them to develop.

... but all those who seek it.

Even if training is offered and initiated by the company, it should not be restricted to those who are most favoured (hi-tech or management programmes, for example) or most disadvantaged (literacy programmes). The company must be able to offer training to all those who ask for it, whether such training is given internally or by a specific outside organisation, and whatever the current or required level of attainment of the staff.

Indeed it is the group at the middle of the achievement ladder which is most often left out.

Attention should be drawn to an impression that formed over many of the nine visits organised in the countries participating in the thematic review. It would seem that those most in need of training – according to the definition of target groups for public action, at any rate – are very often provided for. The corresponding action will include, for example, general literacy programmes.⁵ At the other end of the achievement ladder, we find that many companies also take great care of their most qualified workers. But there is a group that falls between the two that rarely receives any attention, either from the company or from the authorities. This group is in employment; it is fully integrated into the company and is all too often paid something in the region of the statutory minimum wage. It is sometimes referred to as the “working poor”. The term is not necessarily appropriate in all cases, though it must be admitted that the workers in question represent a fringe group in society that could well benefit from more systematic learning. It must also be said, however, that they are not always very willing to learn (Chapter 5).

Portugal’s EFA programme is a response to this problem.

The Portuguese EFA programme (*Ensigno y Formação por Adultos* – a teaching/training programme for adults with a low level of school attainment), jointly established by the ministry of education and the ministry of employment and solidarity, is another response to this particular need. It offers education and training to “citizens aged 18 or more, who are without qualifications or without sufficient qualifications to make any headway in the labour market and who have not completed the four, six or nine years of basic education. Priority is given to those either in work or unemployed who are registered with the IEFP (Institute for Employment and Professional Training), those earning the statutory minimum wage, those undergoing vocational retraining and SME employees” (Cedefop, 2001). At the end of the training programme, the individual receives a certificate of adult basic education (FB) and/or professional training (FP). The latter will have entailed practical training in a real work situation.

4. For example (in the context of the company), those poorly qualified who are likely to be disadvantaged (risk of unemployment and/or lack of career prospects).
5. Or even action in favour of the unemployed.

Individuals motivated to learn

Potential learners must be enthusiastic and won over to the cause if learning conditions are to be optimal. They must have a sense of being able to acquire something useful (in terms of knowledge, know-how, knowing how to behave) and not see learning as a constraint that offers no advantage (personal, professional and/or financial). The time spent on the course must not be regarded as time that might have been better spent on other activities but as something that will bring a particular bonus in their personal and social life (including working relationships and relationships with colleagues as well as professional status). Motivating individuals to learn is one of the key issues to address in the near future. The experience of United Kingdom suggests that focusing on incentives, improving the quality of provision and promotional activity, and encouraging individuals to take greater responsibility for their own learning can be effective strategies that serve to raise investment in human resources by individuals and employers.

Motivation on the part of potential learners is key and must be earned.

Co-ordinating research and action, researchers and practitioners

If the goals and objectives set are to be attained, it is increasingly important that organisers, course planners and teachers have access to research on questions of adult learning and are able to make use of it in practice. As those who plan learning processes become increasingly concerned with understanding the “human factor”, they are required from the outset to draw upon psychological research to gain an adequate picture of the individuals for whom courses are intended. In the context of company training provision, more advanced analyses of working methods and the strategies and goals of the players might involve contributions from the fields of ergonomics and the sociology of organisations, for example. If the practical realities in the field are taken into account and more scientific approaches are adopted, it should be possible to appreciate all the variables relevant to the planning of training programmes and identify those most closely suited to the needs and expectations of each individual.

Organisers, course planners and teachers need to keep abreast with research on adult learning...

During the review visits, a frequently heard complaint was the apparent lack of research. In most cases however, the sense of frustration among practitioners clearly owes more to a lack of communication between researchers and practitioners than to an actual lack of top-level research. Similarly, researchers must be in a position to take account of tried and tested practice and pilot projects conducted with a view to stimulating thinking so that educational, pedagogical and andragogical ideas might be further refined. There is thus a growing sense that researchers should direct their work more towards the problems teachers and trainers have actually experienced and then give some feedback in order to create a virtuous circle. The latter, for their part, should acquire the habit of studying research into pedagogy to find answers to their questions (Viau, 1996).

... although the communication between researchers and practitioners is evidently less than ideal.

In the United Kingdom, for example, all new Department for Education and Skills (DfES) research reports are now available in full and free of charge on the Internet. DfES has also supported the development of the Current Educational Research (CERUK) that produces a database available free via the Internet. The National Educational Research Forum website also provides a number of links for practitioners aiming to find out about research.

In the United Kingdom, research reports are now available free of charge on the Internet.

Routine assessment

Assessment is imperative.

Assessment is imperative, the *sine qua non* of a genuine national drive to promote learning. It is essential that bodies and instruments are devised for the purpose of evaluating the arrangements introduced, so that policies implemented may be changed or adjusted if necessary. It should be possible to conduct assessments at the institutional and national levels and also through groups of independent organisations.

It must be performed at all levels and at different times.

Assessment of what has been, is being or will be done is certainly crucial in the construction of a coherent adult learning system. Routine assessment must be encouraged at all levels of the training and learning processes and rank among the top transversal priorities. It must be possible to assess learning at different times – before it is finished, for example, especially if a course is long or if other courses of the same kind are starting up and stand to benefit from lessons from the one in progress. It is also important to consider whether the objectives of the learner and the company (in the case of professional training, for example) have been attained and also, in a much broader sense, whether the goals set are in line with local or national policy (to encourage or develop a particular sector or system, etc.). Assessment must be present all along the training and learning process, and concern the learner, the employer, the training course and the teacher.

Company needs should be established beforehand...

Projects, objectives and needs must be clearly defined. In the case of employment-related training, a precise study of company needs should be conducted beforehand, either internally by heads of departments and divisions, or by an external body in the form of an audit. The study should establish the nature of the training that would help the company meet those needs.

... as well as the needs of potential learners.

Naturally, early attention must also be paid to learners as well. Following internal consultation (with the director of human resources, heads of departments and other staff members concerned in the case of a company, for instance), the individuals expected to undergo training should be designated on the basis of several criteria: their desire to learn, their motivation, their real need for training, their expectations, their performance, and the relevance of the training to the work they do, if any. All these criteria must also be taken into account in determining the nature of the training.

Input from different actors and representatives will give organisers a clearer picture of those needs.

A company wishing to organise training for its staff – or a category of its staff – must do so in consultation with the different actors and representatives, because it is necessary to learn as much as possible about the individual. That way, the training proposed will correspond most closely to their expectations, and they will be less likely to drop out of the course before it is finished – always a costly eventuality.

The learner's own evaluation is essential, as is a non-judgemental assessment of the learner's results.

The individual must also be able to check whether their training is in line with their expectations, notably in terms of content, context, relationships formed, and monitoring. They must also have the benefit of an assessment of his/her results. Rather than being a (cardinal) measure used to judge them, this assessment should be educational and should help them make progress, or even improve their capacity for self-assessment.

Encouraging the spread of good practices

People must be encouraged to enter into broad partnerships – and observatories must be set up at all possible levels – for the purposes of detecting good practice in learning delivery, providing information, promoting the sharing of experiences and aiding co-ordination and assessment of the operations undertaken, as well as supporting the development of such operations. Problems in adult learning can then be better identified and the best advice can be given in the light of national cultures and circumstances.

Good practices should be detected, and shared.

To this end, the best way of introducing mechanisms to promote the widespread adoption of good practice would no doubt have to be determined for each country and culture. It should be noted that some major success stories have been dependent on one-off factors: sudden large-scale recruitment by a company or sector; a rarity of much sought-after qualifications, with the consequent guarantee of employment; strong political commitment on the part of a local official; the existence of a charismatic national figure, etc. At the same time it must be recognised that there have been fruitful experiments about which nothing is known. At the very least, an e-mail address could be provided (“good.idea@educ-labour.org”), to which individuals could send messages describing a particular experience and the reasons for its success or failure. Of course it would be possible to go further and provide an address to which anybody could send a question and be certain to receive a response, the same week for example. There are already numerous Internet sites devoted to adult learning; there is no question of adding more to them; rather, an interactive link could be established between all those working along the same lines who are unaware of each other’s existence. It is also worth mentioning the recent effort at the European level with the European Commission Communication on “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”.

It is not always possible to establish, let alone duplicate, the factors behind good practice.

Enterprise-based training

The company is no doubt the most relevant of all training providers. It is also clear that training within the company has a particular quality, being frequently geared toward professional goals or higher productivity on the part of the individual and the organisation as a whole. In any event it is an area of fundamental importance, which has been amply described in Section 5.2 of Chapter 5 and which also merits a section of its own in this chapter.

Promoting learning and training throughout professional life

Just as the state should have a strong political message and send out clear signals to citizens about the value of learning, the company should establish a system that adequately promotes training so that the individual willingly agrees to it – and on a regular basis – inside or outside the company. Company policy on this matter should be clear, consistent over time and unequivocal as to the value of lifelong learning. The more the staff knows about training opportunities and the more this knowledge is promoted, the greater will be the incentive to take advantage of them.

Companies should be the top training promoters.

Organising work in a way that facilitates the provision of training

The scheduling and conditions of training should not place constraints on the worker's private life.

Setting aside a specific number of working hours for training and establishing the particular conditions in which such training would be most effective would facilitate provision. The corresponding measures are generally taken under collective agreements negotiated between the different social partners. The idea is that employers have to create an environment that allows room for learning, so that the learner does not have to put up with too many constraints on private life and activities outside the workplace.

Providing for regular updating of knowledge

Training should not be seen as a one-off event.

A training session should not be regarded as an end in itself. The company must be able to ensure that the individual is not limited in their pursuit of training and is not obliged, for example, to wait a certain number of years before being able to proceed with further training. It is essential that a person who has embarked upon a training process is able to pursue and build upon it (if such a step is necessary, or felt to be necessary).

For the purpose of setting limits and safeguarding against unreasonable behaviour, it is always possible to devise systems in which each individual is allocated a certain number of working hours for training. The number of hours would be renewed regularly, in much the same way as paid holiday.

Enabling individuals to make progress in their job through training

Training related to work performed could advance the worker's situation in some way.

If the individual is to be aware of the value of training, they must be able to derive some advantage from it if they so wish. If the training followed is related to the work normally performed, it must enable the learner to make progress in their job. It should result in the company's giving them greater autonomy, perhaps more responsibility, a change in status, a promotion or a pay rise. The experience of training should ultimately increase their sense of self-worth.

Promoting personal development

Training should also advance the worker in personal or social ways.

The company should not see the purpose of training as being limited to improving the professional performance of its staff. Training should also enable the individual to acquire knowledge and skills, including behavioural skills, for purposes that are purely personal, in order to promote their general well-being; moreover, there may be social and professional repercussions, and indirect benefits for the operation of the company.

Establishing partnerships

Partnerships should be formed to further effective learning.

Partnerships should be established both within the company and with other companies, and also with bodies that are not companies (universities, schools, associations). They should be formed at local, regional, interregional, national and even international levels. They should be found at all professional levels, including the level at which attainments are validated. In the United Kingdom, a network of 101 Learning Partnerships has been in place since early 1999. These are non-statutory, voluntary groupings of local

learning providers ranging from the voluntary sector to higher education institutions and others such as local government, Connections/Careers Service, trade unions, employers and faith groups. They were originally responsible for developing local targets linked to National Learning Targets and for co-ordinating local action in pursuit of them. Their objectives now involve working closely with local Learning and Skills Councils in order to:

- Deliver greater provider collaboration so that learning becomes more coherent, relevant and accessible to local people and employers.
- Help ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to provide feedback on the quality and accessibility of learning from both young people and adults.
- Encourage providers to work collectively with users to identify local learner, community and employer needs and to respond to them through their own actions and by influencing local LSCs.

The promotion of partnerships is also one of the strategic objectives identified by the Council of European Ministers of Education and Youth at their meeting in Brussels in February 2001. Their report emphasises the importance of “improving the teaching of foreign languages, promoting mobility and exchanges, and enhancing European co-operation on systems of accreditation and the recognition of qualifications and diplomas, in order to strengthen ties with the world of work and research” (CEDEFOP, 2001). It is necessary, for example, that knowledge and skills acquired in a company be recognised elsewhere.

These can range from intra-company to international.

The learner and the learning methods

Encouraging adults to follow courses and acquainting them with the idea of lifelong learning

Chapter 5 shows that the system of incentives that needs to be introduced is not simple. It involves other elements, such as extensive and exhaustive communication on the subject of the training options. It is also necessary to acquaint the learner with the idea of lifelong learning as soon as they embark upon education and initial training. This process often consists of proposing training with attractive content; encouraging the individual to regard learning as an opportunity to improve their personal, social and/or professional situation; and lastly, making them aware that any competency can be improved. This involves explaining that the opportunity to improve knowledge and skills is open to everybody at all times. The “adult learners’ week” organised in many parts of the world seems to have made a positive contribution to the task of encouraging learning among the population.

Communication is all-important in winning workers over to the idea of lifelong learning.

Instilling or restoring confidence, whatever the initial level or the challenge

If future learners are to be made to feel confident or if their confidence is to be restored, it is vital that the training proposed takes account of their diversity and of their different experience. It is necessary to think in terms of a potential level of development which, given various forms of mediation, will make access to a higher level of development that much easier. The learning provider must therefore be in a position to propose the type of learning that will enable the individual to progress, and have a sufficient range of training programmes on offer to allow each individual to find a suitable course and to

Workers’ existing and proposed levels of development should not be over- or underestimated.

select with perfect assurance the one that will enable them to flourish and to increase their knowledge and skills. The learner must be given maximum support and should not be under- or overestimated. Establishing a pedagogical relationship that respects the learner is of primary importance.

***Taking account
of the availability
of learners,
their motivation
and expectations***

Not all adults follow courses to gain knowledge. The cognitive dimension nearly always has priority, though not exclusively. Equally, not all adults follow courses in order to improve their professional situation. There are a great many reasons and arguments for embracing or rejecting a learning experience, and it is important to be able to define them in order to be able to deal with them properly. The individual should therefore have to the extent possible the benefit of a preliminary assessment of competencies or proper advice from specialised bodies.

***Training should also
prepare older workers
for their coming
retirement.***

People preparing for or going into retirement feel the need to follow courses that help them to readapt to the new conditions of their lives and to examine their new role in society. For course planners who deal with this older population, adult learning must not be seen merely as a pleasant way of filling time but rather as something people take up at a special moment in life, intended to fill gaps (making up for lost time) and make them better prepared for the new phase they are entering.

***It should in all cases take
full account
of what the learner
wants and is able
to achieve...***

Learning, even if it is required by the company, should not be seen as a constraint by the individual. The training offered must therefore take full account of what the learner wants and is able to achieve. With respect to the motivation and personality of the individual, several variables must be considered, along with the possibility of their being modified in the course of time and the individual's social, psychological, financial and/or personal development.

“The motivation or the internal psychological motives behind learning evolve through the individual's unique life process in interaction with societal conditions and the individual's own interpretation of the process and of the interaction. [...] In the period of adulthood up to the life turn, learning is usually goal-directed on the basis of the individual's own aims and strategies, which are typically based on a weighted interaction between desire and necessity. Adults often have trouble stepping out of the accustomed pupil role, while at the same time they also expect to manage their own learning” (Illeris, 2000).

Taking account of the individual's personality and cognitive style

***... as well as his/her
personality...***

The training provided and the method chosen must also take account of the personality of the individual. A shy, self-conscious person will be not at ease in a very competitive learning situation, for example. It is therefore necessary to begin – as we have seen – with training that will first restore their self-confidence and help them adopt a positive attitude towards the learning process.

***... for s/he too brings
input to the pedagogical
process.***

The teacher must take account of the motivation, the cognitive learning styles and the aptitudes of the learner when choosing the appropriate pedagogical method, bearing in mind that the individuals being taught will have a more or less elaborate contribution to make in any developed

pedagogical process, and that they will find it more or less easy to contribute depending on their confidence in their abilities and on their personality.

In project-based pedagogy used for getting the individual back to work, for example, the learning activity is intense and a fairly high level of motivation and ambition is required if it is to be successfully concluded. Virtually all of the work on the project is done by the learner: researching it, developing it, testing it, acquiring the skills and competencies it calls for, making it relevant and modifying it. The activity of the teacher consists in raising the expectations of the learners, and encouraging them to draw upon the time and space allotted for training purposes.

The objectives of training should be clearly defined

It is necessary from the outset to ensure that training has a precise objective and that there is a goal to be reached. Training must therefore provide for and lead to a final result, on the basis of which it will be possible to assess what has been achieved. In the same way, the objectives of training must be explicit and shown to be in line with the expectations of the learners. Training must take account of the social realities of the learners and the environment, so that learners are able to satisfy the specific desires they had when embarking upon the course.

Training must lead to a result that is clearly established beforehand...

There is one type of training that might be put forward as a notable exception to this rule. As we have seen, and it must be re-emphasised here, the object of some types of training may simply be to bring the most sceptical individuals round to the idea of returning to learning. In that case the objective of learning may be less clearly defined and it may not be possible to describe the final purpose since it may represent a first step towards other forms of training whose objectives are better defined. In a sense the general rule still applies, since the final objective of the learning process has been tacitly defined. But it can only be spelled out at a subsequent stage if the individual is to retain the reassuring impression that the learning process presents no real challenge and is little more than a game (Section 5.1 of Chapter 5).

... except in cases where the goal is simply to encourage sceptics to return to learning.

This idea of developing mental suppleness is particularly relevant to individuals who gave up formal education a long time ago and/or gave it up with a sense of having failed. They must be encouraged to rediscover a spontaneous approach to learning, and should begin by following a method that develops their confidence and increases their desire to make progress.

Producing clear, tangible, recognised results

If a learning process is to meet its objectives, the individuals must have the sense of having made favourable progress and must be able to show that they have. At the end of the training process there should therefore be some special recognition of their achievement, whether in the form of a promotion, a diploma (a certificate), or at least a public acknowledgement. The recognition thus gained should be broadly valid, transferable, applicable and negotiable in other contexts. Since one of the objects of learning is to gain a qualification, the qualifications must be recognised outside the company if, for example, the corresponding training was given on the job. A specific

Training must lead to tangible results that are recognised outside the company.

nomenclature is therefore needed to establish levels of achievement recognised at national or even international level.

Learning to learn, emancipating

Its first objective must be to give the individual greater autonomy in achieving the goals defined.

Whatever the training followed, its first objective must be to give the individual greater autonomy in achieving the goals defined. Thus, a form of training that equips the individual for subsequent autonomous learning is to be preferred to one that simply imparts knowledge in the traditional way.

Adapting the methods to the participants: open, flexible and individualised

Several teaching methods should be employed in a flexible programme.

As far as possible, teaching should be planned in such a way that several teaching methods are used during the same course and the programme can be modified at any time according to the needs of the participants and their progress. It is therefore necessary to provide for diversified input and (particularly if the course is long or made up of several sessions) a process whereby lectures or work in large groups alternate with individual tutorials or work in small groups, for example.

Learners must feel comfortable with the process.

The methods chosen must make the learner, or the group, feel comfortable with the learning process: they must not be made to feel unsettled by a method that is too abrupt (lectures for an individual with a low level of academic attainment, or a situation that is too personal for one who is shy and lacking in initiative), or be left behind and excluded by a process that is too rapid.

The pedagogical method chosen must fit the learner.

Among the most important considerations in choosing a pedagogical method is its ability to be adapted to the participants. It must be compatible with the participants' level, their personality, their motivation, their aptitudes and their expectations. This simple list is in itself an indication of the complexity of the problem. The fullest possible consideration must be given to the advantages and disadvantages of each method; among those most often cited in the nine visited countries are:

- *The ICTs and learning via the Internet*, which are taken more and more seriously. The Internet certainly offers an interesting way of learning but it is not as democratic or effective as some would maintain, and learning is only possible under certain conditions: the individual must already be accustomed to using a computer and must already have learned how to learn. There is also some doubt as to whether the knowledge is adequately assimilated. The nature of the network and the speed with which information can be called up does not allow the time needed for the sound acquisition of new knowledge. On the other hand, a computer is infinitely patient and pinpoints all errors without making fun of the learner.
- *Distance learning*, which makes learning available at a time, place and pace that may suit the learners better in relation to their needs. The lack of "real" contact with the teacher and the autonomy of the individual in determining the pace of learning lead more often than one would wish to a certain lassitude on the part of the learner. Distance learning is abandoned more often than any other type of learning. Furthering the

debate on the relative merits of traditional distance learning (paper and mail through the post) and the electronic kind (hypertext, word processing, and email), it should be pointed out that the Open University in the United Kingdom has expressly chosen not to use – or more precisely, not to require access to – a computer, since it is felt that this would tend to exclude the most socially disadvantaged or those most out of step with modern technological trends. It seems likely that this debate will disappear with the total democratisation of modern means of communication. It also seems likely that this will not happen tomorrow and that the question merits more detailed consideration.

- *On-the-job training*, which presents distinct advantages. Learning takes place *in situ* and the learner is able to acquire the precise skills needed. Investors in People, in England, does recognise on-the-job training to meet the skill needs of the business. However, this type of learning is often completely informal and is rarely recognised by the company as a means of obtaining the kind of additional knowledge and skills that might merit a special award in the form of promotion, a pay rise or greater responsibility. Moreover some forms of training on the job are simply intended to enhance performance (by developing working reflexes that lower the time needed to perform a task) and take no account of the individual or the personal advantage the individual might derive from such training. If the time spent on such training is regarded as genuine training time, the situation is particularly worrying, since the individual might then be deprived of another form of training.
- *Cognitive methods*. The individuals must have the motivation to learn and the training must enable them to reach a precise goal and not be too long about it. If cognitive learning methods enable the individual to learn how to learn, it is better to offer them to people who have chosen to devote a relatively long time to their training. These methods generate very little in the way of practical skills and may produce a feeling of lassitude in the learner, who will therefore not feel inclined to persist.
- *Methods employing project-based pedagogy*, which should be used more discriminately with individuals who have chosen their training as part of a programme to get themselves back to work. The introspection and preliminary analysis of their personal career might discourage, disorientate and destabilise people who are already demoralised by a series of failures and do not have sufficient energy to embark upon a new path.
- *Methods involving group interaction* as the goal of training (role play, etc.) must be aimed more at individuals with a positive outlook on training (not those who view it with anxiety following previous failure – at school, for example).

Teacher training

Teacher training for adult education is undoubtedly the element in the overall structure that is least adequately provided for. It would seem that the specific character of adult education is denied or given insufficient prominence in the planning of teacher training. In any event, special training

***Teacher training
has been the most
neglected aspect
of adult learning...***

for those who are to be responsible for teaching adults is rarely to be found. Adult education is not even identified as such in most cases. In Switzerland, the FSEA (*Fédération suisse pour l'éducation des adultes* – Swiss Adult Education Federation) has had to take responsibility for awarding adult education diplomas, and has adopted a very interesting approach (Box 6.1). In England, from September 2001, there is an objective that all new further education teachers will work towards a teaching qualification that includes literacy and numeracy among its key elements, to raise their awareness and allow them in turn to help people in their courses, who have literacy and numeracy skill needs. In Spain, many adult teachers hold special teacher certificates. These are available through the training networks established by the educational

Box 6.1. Adult teacher training pathways in Switzerland

There are four levels of teacher training for adult education: two FSEA diploma courses (Level 1 and Level 2); a continuing education university course for adult education, including a certification course; and a degree course in adult education (LMEA). All are based on a common strategy, namely to supplement teacher training with skills related to pedagogy or educational management. Teachers recruited as specialists in a particular field, for instance, may supplement their expertise with other skills more closely related to education.

FSEA diploma courses cover:

- The skills required to structure, analyse and evaluate teaching.
- Group management skills.
- Different forms of learning.
- Educational project-building skills.

The Level 1 certificate comprises a 130-hour course, combined with one year's practical work experience in adult education and a personal coursework project on teaching practice. Teachers can also enrol on another longer course for Level 2. Since 1995, 6 000 people have passed Level 1 and 1 200 Level 2. Furthermore, 44 teacher training institutions have obtained certification.

Since 1998, a working group has been engaged in an effort to modularise the Level 2 certificate as part of a general move to modularise vocational training. The ultimate goal is to provide an adult education training certificate corresponding to 1 200 hours' training. On the initiative of the FSEA, efforts are under way to set up a system that recognises and validates prior learning, leading to the award of a Level 1 certificate.

The University of Geneva runs a continuing education diploma course for teachers working in adult education, aimed at:

- Upgrading the skills specific to teachers in adult education: teaching, organisation/management, and context analysis.
- Building the capacity to analyse current practice in continuing education and training, in particular self-evaluation.
- Increasing the capacity for project research and development.
- Strengthening the unity, versatility and code of ethics of the education profession.

The University of Geneva also offers a degree course in adult education (LMEA), covering the three groups of skills required for work in adult education: teaching (teacher/student relations), organisation (educational engineering) and management, *i.e.* policies and policy implementation.

Source: OECD (2001b).

administrations themselves, or through the universities in courses of varying scope and duration. The one with the greatest scope is the postgraduate course in adult education, developed by the National Distance Education University (*Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia – UNED*) more than a decade ago.

The problem is clearly rooted in a failure to appreciate the issues related to adult education. However, the fact that this question does not rank sufficiently highly in the list of public priorities is not the only reason for the failure. The problem is further complicated by the extra costs that would have to be met by the training system. It would be necessary to establish new training cycles specifically catering to those who wish to go into adult education and to provide for corresponding qualifications. At present, such cycles would involve a very small number of candidates compared with the great many going into children's education.

In addition to those already discussed relating to the respect of the learner and training adapted to the learner needs, certain principles or guidelines may be put forward if an effective system of teacher training for adult learning is to be established.

The teachers must be in touch with the realities of the labour market and be able to give the learner effective counselling. They should also be able to suggest modifications to the training programme on the basis of the learner's expectations and demands. This too presupposes a modular, adaptable pedagogical method.

A job that is clearly defined and properly recognised; regular review of practice and knowledge

Teachers need to be sufficiently well trained to be able to cope with the range of adult learning processes and the attendant difficulties, and they must be able to choose the andragogical method(s) most suited to particular learners. To this end it will no doubt be necessary to consider, not only teacher training *per se*, but also the regular review of teacher training and its recognition, at least at national level and preferably at international level.

At the present time, teacher training is very diversified, ranging from the absolute minimum necessary to highly specialised courses. Some adult education teacher training programmes attach particular importance to the delivery of teaching, others place more emphasis on the theoretical aspects of methods that have to be employed. For example, in Canada there is a form of training that combines theory and practice, in Switzerland there is a very practical training process and a corresponding federal teaching certificate.

If society is changing, so are jobs. Given the growing complexity of social systems and social intercourse, the interest in knowledge, and the developments in criteria for assessing competencies, it is also necessary to reassess teacher's jobs and skills, provide a clear definition of (new) responsibilities, and redefine priorities in terms of practice, approaches and the skills needed to fully develop their adult learning experiences.

The nature and content of teacher training courses clearly illustrate the trends of the past few years; much greater emphasis is placed on group

... partly due to costs.

Certain guidelines could help remedy the situation.

Teachers must themselves be in touch with the realities of the labour market.

They need to be aware of and able to choose from among the range of teaching methods.

Their skills and responsibilities also should be subject to ongoing reassessment.

learning, but there is also individual support based on the identification and development of individuals' projects, wishes, needs and expectations. The prospects are very promising.

The RAAPFA in Canada provides a concise description of what adult teaching should be.

Canada's RAAPFA (*Regroupement des associations d'andragogues et de professionnels de la formation des adultes*) no doubt gives the best formal account of the tasks to be assumed and the corresponding competencies required. It also gives a description and a definition of andragogy and of what the andragogue's work entails:

"The andragogue is a person who specialises in continuing education and whose role is to foster the development of skills in adults. His/her activity takes the form of providing support in learning, and such is the very basis of andragogy. Continuing education confers an additional asset which may serve both personal and organisational ends. The andragogue works in the workplace, in teaching establishments, in public and semi-public institutions and in the community. His/her functions include planning courses, analysing needs, drawing up training programmes, producing teaching materials, teaching, carrying out assessments, and managing or monitoring training. S/he might also work as a counsellor and take part in research and development in the field of andragogy." (www.raapfa.qc.ca)

Moreover, the Council of European Ministers for Education and Youth, meeting in Brussels in February 2001, agreed that "improving the education and training of teachers and trainers, developing and defining the competencies needed in the cognitive society" (CEDEFOP, 2001) was a priority strategic objective.

6.2. Delivery mechanisms to suit the learner

Meeting the learner's needs often means no more than accommodating scheduling and practical needs.

It may not come as much of a surprise, but in the countries participating in the thematic review, placing the learner at the centre of the learning process often meant no more than offering them training outside their normal working hours (weekday evenings and Saturday morning) and taking care of their most immediate practical needs: looking after children, providing a meal on the premises, providing transport, etc.

This is fairly positive in a sense, for it means that most training providers and players are conscious of the practical problems associated with organising training. It also means, on the more negative front, that the question of specific pedagogy has not yet been fully assimilated into their way of thinking – hence the importance of the findings in the previous section.

It also has to be said that there are still providers of training who remain impervious to the idea of offering adults services that go beyond what is strictly educational. This section includes good practices in this area.

Beyond setting, access and services, there is the question of context.

Most thought is given to scheduling, the location of training centres (in the suburbs, near to stations, etc.), access, and the nature of the buildings and classrooms, just to mention the most basic aspects. Some thought is also given to the services that might be offered to learners, as mentioned above. This section re-examines the context into which learning can and must be fitted, which is directly linked with the local level.

The general organisational framework

More in touch with social realities and demands

Organisers and planners must be adequately informed about social realities, innovative, and conscious of the needs and expectations of all parties (public authorities, companies, individuals). The training offered must be taken up by as many people as possible if the expected gain is to be achieved. It is therefore recommended that the environment and socioeconomic context be taken into account and that maximum benefit is obtained from the local neighbourhood. This should lead increasingly to the abandonment of “ready-made” courses in favour of more individualised training, taking full account of the circumstances and routine of the client company or the individuals that request it.

Organisers must be in touch with social realities and the needs of all parties involved.

Creating conditions favourable to learning

This idea is fairly general and applies in all areas. Every effort must be made to give the learner a setting that best suits them and the type of training they want. This point is relevant to everything associated with the course, whatever form the learning process may take, whether in the workplace, in another centre or at home. It also follows that any constraints on the learning process (in terms of free time) must be reduced to a minimum so that the individual is highly motivated to take up a course and to follow it through to the end.

Everything associated with the training must suit the learner and minimise their constraints.

By way of example, the Canadian study conducted by Dessaint and Boisvert (1991) considers what it is that motivates people aged 55 and over to follow a distance learning course rather than another kind. It would seem that physical restrictions, transport problems and financial considerations make distance learning a more practical proposition for this age-bracket; moreover, it does not tie them to a particular timetable or pace.

For instance, distance learning may best suit the older learners.

Organising training in such a way as to minimise obstacles that might cause the learner to give up

All the elements required to create a setting that encourages quality learning must be brought together. Whether learning takes place at work (in the case of courses held on company premises or organised by the company) or at a specific centre, it is necessary to consider all the constraints associated with the period the individual devotes to it. It is necessary to consider the cost, both in financial terms and in terms of the time spent (impact on time devoted to work, leisure, the family). This has as much to do with getting to the training centre (if the course is not given in the workplace) as with the timing and duration of the training sessions.

Positive features will help dissuade workers from abandoning the course before it is finished.

If impediments are to be limited, it is also necessary to consider the way in which the course itself is structured and the relations between the members of the group. Attention should be given to the size of the place where the training is to take place, the atmosphere, and any features that may make it a more pleasant place to work (heating, lighting). Lastly, it is necessary to find ways of dissuading people from abandoning the course before it is finished – by providing financial compensation, for example, or a genuine gain that makes the learner appreciate the benefits of completing the course.

Courses tailored to the level of the learners

Participants entering the course should have roughly the same level of attainment.

In addition to the discussion about the homogeneity of the group (to create or avoid some form of competition between learners) it is particularly important to consider the content of the courses drawn up by the planners in relation to the level of attainment of the participants. It seems more advisable here to plan a training programme for individuals with a comparable level. If weaker individuals find a training programme too difficult to come to grips with, they are likely to be unsettled and will tend to abandon it at an early stage. A training course should stretch the individual, but the difficulties should not appear to be insurmountable: any training envisaged should take the existing level of the participants as its starting point.

ANEFA's initiative in Portugal is an interesting example of a tailored programme.

In this connection, the initiative of the ANEFA (National Adult Education and Training Agency) in Portugal offers an interesting perspective. Those who follow these courses are able to study for a professional diploma and at the same time obtain qualifications corresponding to their 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels of initial education. Classes are very informal and flexible; they are especially aimed at unqualified adults and consist of individualised programmes that take account not only of each person's personal and professional experience, but also of their socioeconomic background.

Spain offers programmes and workshops that upgrade basic educational attainment.

In Spain's craft school workshop programmes, trade schools and employment workshops (Box 6.2), students who have not attained compulsory secondary education have the possibility of specific study arrangements to upgrade their basic educational attainment. This will later allow them to go into the labour market or pursue studies in the various upper secondary education programmes.

Box 6.2. Craft school workshop programmes, trade schools and employment workshops in Spain

The *craft school workshops, trade schools and employment workshops* integrate training, experience and information, together with techniques for employment and self-employment searches for people who are unemployed. In the first two, students receive hands-on training and learn through jobs at public works (rehabilitating public monuments, the environment, parks, etc.) or through community service of public or social usefulness (serving senior citizens, nursery schools, etc.). When they complete their programmes, the student-workers who have not found employment during the programme have already acquired qualifications and professional experience and know how to look for a job or become self-employed. Students also take vocational training and theoretical classroom courses.

The fundamental methodology and principles of the craft school workshops and trade schools' programmes have also been applied to adults with similar labour integration and reintegration difficulties through the *Employment Workshop Programme*, with specific focus on the concrete characteristics of adults.

For participants who have not attained compulsory secondary education, there are complementary specific programmes geared to offer them basic learning and vocational training that will allow them to integrate into active life or pursue studies in the various secondary education programmes.

Source: OECD (2002a).

Compliance with, and going beyond, quality standards

Complying with quality standards must not be neglected. Above all, the quality of the teaching must be recognised by the learner (and/or the instigator of the training, *i.e.* the company) and it must be experienced in practice as something that enhances personal and professional well-being. Quality standards should be improved whenever possible by proposing innovation and offering additional criteria, depending on a company's training requirements for example.

The establishment of groups of teachers or course planners, or other associations accredited by Portugal's Institute for Innovation in Professional Training (INOFOR) is certainly to be encouraged. By way of example, it is worth mentioning one such Portuguese association, Talentus (the national association of teachers and teaching technicians). One of its main tasks is to induce training institutions to establish groups to improve the quality of teaching and thus become part of a strategic culture of continuing improvement in the quality of service. These groups encourage teachers, course planners and organisers to think about teaching and to perform practical work connected with course planning, methodological experimentation and good teaching practice.

Recognition of prior learning and certification of current learning

Recognition of previous learning (of any kind, whether it has been acquired through experience or in a formal learning situation, within the company or elsewhere) and certification come at the beginning and end respectively of the same learning process. Recognising an individual's previous achievement amounts to giving him/her the right of access to training at a higher level than they might be entitled to on the basis of formal diplomas.

Certification for a course successfully concluded marks the end of the learning cycle. It looks to the future, unlike the recognition of previous learning, though the principle is the same in both cases: certification of knowledge/skills acquired that can be used on a future occasion. But in this particular case certification serves a dual purpose. On the one hand the individual might wish to capitalise on his/her new competencies in the labour market and must therefore prove possession of them. On the other hand they will be able to make use of their achievement, formally recognised by a certificate, whenever they wish to return to learning.

The principle

Course planners must take account of the learner's level in terms of whether their knowledge/skills were obtained in the educational system or by other means. A learner with an ISCED Level 2, for example, and twenty years of professional experience might, and in some cases should, be considered to have a general level higher than ISCED Level 2. Experience gained at work often goes beyond strict professional parameters and also gives the individual a level of maturity that enables him/her to aim higher than his/her school level would normally entitle him/her to.

The quality of training must be recognised by the learner as well as the learning supplier.

Groups of teachers or course planners can have a positive influence.

Recognising previous learning may place the participant at a more accurate level than their diploma would have done.

Certification of the training offered paves the way for labour market entry and future training.

The levels of entering participants should be based on professional experience as well as education.

Even acquired skills not related to the worker's normal activity should be taken into account.

When training is introduced for a precise purpose (to improve performance at work, for example), planners must take account of the skills workers have already acquired, *even if they are not essential to their normal activity*. In this way it is possible to avoid beginning a course with a long series of lessons on points already assimilated, which might cause the individual to drop out through boredom and the sense that the course is pointless.

At the outset, the individual who wishes to follow a course must be made to feel sure that it corresponds to his/her level and will take account of his/her previous experience. Professional acquirements and diplomas are not the only things to be considered. It should also be possible to take account of the personal experience of the individual applying for training, and of the social and economic circumstances. This is the point where problems arise and, in the interests of giving our discussion a coherent structure, we should address three forms of previous attainment: formal attainment, recognised by the award of a diploma or certificate; attainments derived from work; and attainments derived from experience.

Formal attainments are nearly always taken into account when individuals apply for courses

Formal attainments are on paper and generally recognised.

In the first place, there are the formal credentials in the form of diplomas or certificates obtained in the past. The value of these qualifications is fully recognised and they are easily taken into account in the countries participating in the thematic review, except in the notable case of a large number of migrant workers. For them, the problem tends to be one of identifying the real substance, in terms of competencies, that a certificate or diploma represents.

The problem of establishing equivalencies can discourage foreign workers from pursuing further learning.

This difficulty in establishing equivalencies is clearly prejudicial to lifelong learning, since it is recognised that the prospect of taking up a course beginning at the individual's true level is in itself a strong incentive to learn. On the other hand, the need to start again from scratch dooms the learner to failure in virtually all cases. To underscore the point further, it may be observed that even the European Union, though very eager to enhance its system of equivalencies and encourage the circulation of students and the assimilation of different EU languages, has made very little headway in the area of the equivalency of formal qualifications. Clearly, there is still a long way to go in the recognition of informal education and attainments derived from work and personal experience.

Professional experience is widely taken into account and many programmes exist

Professional experience is much tougher to quantify as previous attainment...

The second form of previous attainment is much more difficult to quantify, though the idea has been recognised for many years; the problem lies in the accreditation of what individuals have learnt and/or gained in the context of their work. In Finland, for example, the system of qualification based on competencies (*Näyttötutkintojärjestelmä*) provides for the accreditation of previous attainment and for the recognition of informal training. This practice is exemplary since it is fully geared to the system of qualifications based on competency, and this system is firmly rooted in practical attainments. The system gives real value to professional qualifications, both at upper secondary school level and at further education levels. In other words, Finnish experience shows that a system of certification of previous attainments that is fully

incorporated into a system of national qualifications, just as it is in the United Kingdom, is more likely to win over individuals and workers. Norway's Competence Reform (*Kompetansereformen*) also explicitly allows previous attainments to be taken into account. Lagging slightly behind other countries involved in the thematic review in this respect, Sweden has just begun work on the development of a general system. There are however local initiatives, such as the SWIT (*Swedish Information Technology*) programme, which have gone so far as to evaluate the previous attainments of 80 000 individuals. The interesting point is that recognition of previous attainments is quite closely linked to the provision of counselling and information in Sweden. Experiments carried out show that the exercise is not an easy one, but this demonstrates that the evaluation of previous attainment is worthwhile: it is still a very useful source of information when a future training plan has to be devised.

This initiative is contemplated in Denmark, where special provision is to be made – as part of the adult education and training reform (VEU reform) – to give adults in the labour market the same opportunity to complete their education as young people. Moreover, this initiative needs to be seen in conjunction with the idea that adult education should be a continuation of initial education, as the initiative ties continuing training and further education programmes together into a coherent and more transparent adult learning system. Clearly, one of the main goals of the Danish reform is to establish a consistent system of accreditation for the training provided in the labour market. Tentative measures to achieve this goal have been adopted as part of the VEU reform but it would seem that here, as in other areas, the work comes up against the problem of evaluating time spent with the company: should it be inferred from the fact that somebody has worked for a company that they have acquired specific competencies? In Switzerland too, one of the priority goals of the FSEA is to develop a new co-ordinated continuing training system and to provide for the accreditation of individual attainment, whether professional or experiential. The recognition of experience gained outside educational institutions is also one of CIRFA's suggestions for adult education. More specifically, the idea is that the cantons should collaborate with the confederation in drawing up a system for the validation and accreditation of attainments derived from experience gained outside schools or colleges, whether professional or personal.

Portugal first introduced schemes as part of the National Action Plans in 2000 and 2001. The object is to identify both the knowledge and the skills of members of the workforce whose school attainment is weakest. For workers over 35, the national accreditation system is intended to give formal recognition of competencies actually gained through professional experience; it is also intended to facilitate the organisation of a training programme, providing a benchmark for the competencies needed in a certain type of job in a given sector. For unqualified young people aged between 16 and 18, the agreement between social partners in Portugal stipulates that 40% of working time must be devoted to education (Box 6.3).

In Spain, the new Vocational Training and Qualifications Bill is expected to establish a national system of professional qualifications, taking EU criteria as a reference in order to facilitate movement of workers. It will include the recognition of various means of acquiring professional qualifications, including work experience and informal apprenticeships.

... although the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, for example, have programmes or initiatives for evaluation and accreditation of attainment.

Portugal has schemes to identify the knowledge and skills of workers whose school attainment is weakest.

Spain is planning a national system of professional qualifications.

Box 6.3. A national system for the accreditation, ratification and certification of competencies in Portugal

In addition to giving adults an incentive to take up courses, the Portuguese system is expected to provide an assessment of the teaching work that remains to be done to satisfy the benchmark standard of knowledge needed for future jobs. The system is aimed at adults aged 18 or older, who did not complete school, have no professional qualifications and are often unemployed. It is organised at local level by the ANEFA in partnership with CRVCCs (Centres for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences). These centres are hosted by local public and private institutions accredited by the ANEFA, such as municipal and cultural associations, local development associations, business associations, municipalities, trades unions, schools and professional training centres. The national system defined by the ANEFA covers three central areas:

- The system of key competency benchmarks with directives on the process of recognising and validating four key competencies (language and communication; ICTs; everyday mathematics; employability and citizenship).
- The methodology of assessing competencies.
- A portfolio of personal competencies.

Six pilot CRVCCs were set up in December 2000; by 2006 there should be 84 of them, covering the whole of Portugal. The Seixal Centre is currently the only public CRVCC. The technical team comprises three people: a psychologist, a specialist in training from the ministry of employment and solidarity and a specialist in education from the ministry of education. The centre is open to anybody who wishes to have their competencies validated. The centre at the Minho industrial association in Braga, on the other hand, is mainly geared to meeting the needs of companies. Three people work there: a manager, who keeps in touch with the companies, and two psychologists who interview the workers, either in the workplace or on the association's premises. The idea is to encourage managers to join so that they will involve all of their staff in the project.

The most notable effort, pioneered by Portugal, involves two complementary measures. First, professional and school attainment is certified simultaneously in the context of continuing vocational training under the aegis of the *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* – IEFP (Institute of Accelerated Vocational Training). Second, certification of various levels of basic training can now be obtained from assessment centres established under the responsibility of the ANEFA. As to the first measure, based on a system of credits, the vocational training institutions not only certify technical competencies – their primary concern – but also the corresponding educational levels. There has been a call throughout the western countries for a closer link between vocational and general training, and in Portugal real progress on this long path can be observed. As to the second measure, a system for the recognition and validation of attainments has been established. The system is based on an original competency benchmark, devised in Portugal and implemented through the assessment centres. This benchmark identifies several groups of competencies, designated “key competencies”, which are essential to civic responsibility and enable the individual to reach a suitable threshold of employability. Competencies acquired in various ways are validated as being equivalent to a corresponding school level. This bold system of equivalency represents an essential step forward in enabling adults with low school attainment to get back to the professional training system. It also serves to reveal hidden competencies for which no certification exists and thus to reduce the observed lack of competencies in Portugal among people over 35.

Source: OECD (2001a).

Attainment through experience is still at the experimental stage

Experience as a form of prior attainment is valuable but mostly ignored.

The third form of prior attainment is derived from experience, *i.e.* from simply having been involved in domains of activity in the past. The possibility of taking account of such experiential attainment is discussed in many countries participating in the thematic review but real, credible advances are

rare. The idea is worth mentioning here even if little can be written on the subject, since experiential attainments are a valuable complement to professional attainments. Bearing in mind that the latter are an indispensable complement to formal attainments, in initial education for example, we begin to grasp the importance of recognising attainment in the overall learning sequence, not just in school and/or formal learning. At present, experiential attainments are quite often ignored since they are difficult to identify and even more difficult to quantify; or else they are mixed up with professional attainments in an approach that attempts to ascertain what the individual already knows (portfolio of competencies).

It must be acknowledged that it is difficult to evaluate the direct results of the consideration given to professional and experiential attainments in terms of number of participants. The results in terms of a higher level of participation in training arise mainly from the fact that adults do not start from scratch when they begin a training programme. They are able to begin at a higher level than they would if they had to show formal education certification. This system then is obviously more attractive and can be less expensive.

The difficulties are immense

Although the value of taking account of prior attainments no longer needs to be demonstrated, the difficulty of such judgements is nevertheless considerable. The idea that the real competencies of individuals were worth more than their most recent certificate or diploma was quite probably in the minds of teachers and employers long before it was formally enunciated by theoreticians of adult education. The economy nevertheless relied for a very long time on a market of diplomas rather than a market of competencies since diplomas could be observed and competencies could not, or not easily – and even if they could, they could still not be measured. The practicalities of recognising professional and experiential attainments therefore involve the enormous task of establishing benchmarks. If there is no yardstick by which to evaluate each person's individual experience, it will not be possible to advance to the stage where such consideration becomes standard practice. The problem no doubt lies in the fact that this benchmark is being developed very gradually, from observation of the experiences and competencies of the very individuals who come forward.

A second major difficulty is deciding who should validate professional and/or experiential attainment. Many authorities are concerned here: the different ministries, the training providers, the professional sectors, etc. It is obvious that the body certifying a given attainment or a training process already under way will need to have sufficient authority in order for the qualification obtained by an individual to have any real value. This is important, as we have already seen, if the individual wishes to take a course in the future or wishes to capitalise on their attainments in the labour market (promotion or professional mobility). The key notions would therefore seem to be partnership and the definition of common objectives, so that professional sectors will be spared the need to establish their own certification system to make up for the lack of certificates with any recognisable worth. Nor would it be appropriate to establish any

The results of recognition of attainment are difficult to gauge in terms of number of participants.

Diplomas are still preferred; benchmarks for individual experience are slow in coming.

Who should validate? Partnerships would seem the answer.

form of competition between, for example, the ministry of education and the ministry of employment. Over and above the problem of prerogatives, concerted action is clearly necessary; competencies that the education specialists might be inclined to recognise would not necessarily be recognised by the actors in the labour market, and *vice versa*. Here, as in other fields, most of the countries participating in the thematic review normally adopted solutions that involved all of the social partners.

At the end of the learning process, new competencies should be certified, recognised and properly valued

Attainment should be validated...

Generally speaking, whenever a course is followed through to the end, it should be possible to validate that attainment. Recognition of what has been learned might take the form of a certificate, a diploma or a promotion in the workplace.

... and additional competencies recognised in the workplace...

Whether training is given at the request of the company or of the individual, whether it is strictly geared to professional ends or its scope is much broader, the extra competencies acquired must be recognised in the workplace. Moreover, to the extent possible, there should be a consequent readjustment of the worker's post, function, status or salary. Even if training is not initially associated with a specific project, the individuals should be able to profit from their attainments at a subsequent stage, if they so wish.

... for instance through a pay rise.

A costly though highly motivating solution might consist in giving a pay rise to people who followed a course that is relevant to any of the various jobs in the company. The use to be made of the newly trained worker would be up to the company, but the pay rise would be granted whatever happened, provided – it must be emphasised – that the training was relevant to the activity of the company. In other words, if training has been given, the salary will no longer depend on the post but on the worker. This obviously gives the company a stronger incentive to make better use of its workers and assign them to suitable posts once they have finished training. It also gives individuals an incentive, since the pay rise is guaranteed. A similar experience has been provided in Chapter 5, Box 5.5 on a pay incentive scheme in Norway. Two points do, however, qualify the argument. First, we know that financial argument is not always decisive in inciting individuals to learn, especially those who are not convinced of the value of learning. The second is related to the consequences for the company's salary policy: the difficulties associated with basing salaries on the qualifications rather than the function of an employee are well known. In short, the idea should only be seen as a possible avenue for investigation.

Detailed certification would basically solve the problem of recognising prior learning.

To conclude this section, it is well worth noting that if all learning were certified and reflected in a document sufficiently detailed and generally recognised within a given geographical area, the problem of recognising prior learning would eventually be limited to that of recognising experiential attainment.

But certification must have consensus.

As with the recognition of prior attainment, it is important that there be a consensus between all the actors if the training thus certified is to have any real value subsequently, when the employee wishes to return to learning or

capitalise on his/her training in the labour market. Competencies acquired must be validated by the different players in the world of education and work. Finland's system of qualification based on competencies provides an example of an arrangement in which competencies are defined by employers and professionals in collaboration with educators. For the Finns, this guarantees that the certificate in question is recognised in the labour market. Moreover, because the competencies are certified on the basis of criteria that have been centrally defined, the certificate is recognised nationally.

Distance learning and e-learning

Distance learning and ITCs deserve a separate section in as much as the computer and communication networks, such as the Internet or Intranet, are often presented as a panacea for the problems of access to learning programmes, whether in terms of time or distance.

Mastery of IT is a basic competency like reading or writing

IT literacy seems to be a more important issue in some countries visited (Finland) than in others. However, mastery of the new information and communication technologies is a key issue in this comparative report on adult learning. This stage often has more to do with learning basic skills in the same way as reading, writing and arithmetic, at least in the nine countries visited. It does not necessarily come after the stages listed above. It needs to be conducted in conjunction with basic education, if only because one of the current ways of solving the shortage of training facilities in remote parts of the world or places where training is not adapted to the pace of modern life is to use electronic learning. It is worth noting that IT has brought writing back into fashion (Pont and Werquin, 2000) because it is necessary to be able to write to use e-mail or the Internet.

IT is a gateway both to the information economy and society and failure to master it can jeopardise the exercise of a citizen's fundamental rights and duties. The importance of widely available IT training for adults is thus underlined, though obviously the urgency and the problems are not the same as for the three basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic).

Though often presented as a panacea, IT and e-learning⁶ need to be placed in a broader framework that addresses the drawbacks as well as the benefits. Many of the nine countries visited are very large countries and/or countries with very low population densities. A very large proportion of Canadians live on a very small fraction of the country's territory along the border with the United States. A similar pattern is found in Finland, where virtually all the population is concentrated on the south coast. Sweden and Norway are also very thinly populated with populations tending to be concentrated in the south. The climatic factor also compounds the difficulties involved in setting up adult learning centres that are within reasonable reach of learners. Distance learning in general and e-learning in particular thus have a very useful role to play when local training facilities are lacking, especially in that employers who have relocated to remote areas for tax, economic or other

IT skills are basic, and should be taught in conjunction with basic education.

Distance learning and e-learning are indeed useful when local training facilities are lacking...

6. Self or distance learning by means of electronic tools like computers, the Internet and/or electronic mail.

reasons specific to their line of business (mineral deposits and forestry, for example) are often reluctant to support locally provided general education. However, it is necessary to look at the drawbacks of computer tools when used for general education purposes.

E-learning is still a very expensive solution for the individual

... but there are disadvantages...

First among the drawbacks is cost. This argument is twofold. First, contrary to much received opinion, the infrastructure is still not fully in place and is still fairly costly to develop. Second, in e-learning the marginal cost of an additional student is fairly close to the average cost. The first argument needs to be treated with caution given the glaring disparities between the countries concerned. While one can readily conceive that IT can be an effective way of providing advanced or vocational training of a specific type, it is difficult to see it being of use for basic education or general learning needs, at least in the near future. Even in those countries with the highest proportions of households equipped with computers, not only does a substantial proportion of the population not have access to a computer, but those that do are not necessarily connected to the Internet (Figure 6.2).⁷

... such as cost...

The second argument, which is never addressed head-on by the advocates of computer-based learning, is that in traditional teaching or training based on the idea that a group of people benefit from the knowledge of a teacher or instructor, it often costs very little to add an extra learner.⁸ It is true that when training is very advanced or requires very expensive tools, the need for funds increases with the number of learners.⁹ E-learning requires as many computers and/or hours of connection as there are users. The problem then becomes one of the number of instructors. It is clear from having visited numerous e-learning sites that contact between the learner and instructor is still considered necessary, even if it is only on a weekly or monthly basis rather than a daily basis. Increasing the number of learners immediately poses the problem of the number of computers and instructors, just to mention the most obvious material aspects. Cost may disqualify e-learning as a panacea for adult learning.¹⁰

The computer, both a tool for learning and the object of learning, must first be mastered

... and the parallel education needed, i.e. in using the computer...

There are further cultural impediments to the use of e-learning for general education. First, learners are often apprehensive about using a computer – the lower the level of education, the greater these barriers. Expressed differently, e-learning requires a minimum amount of computer

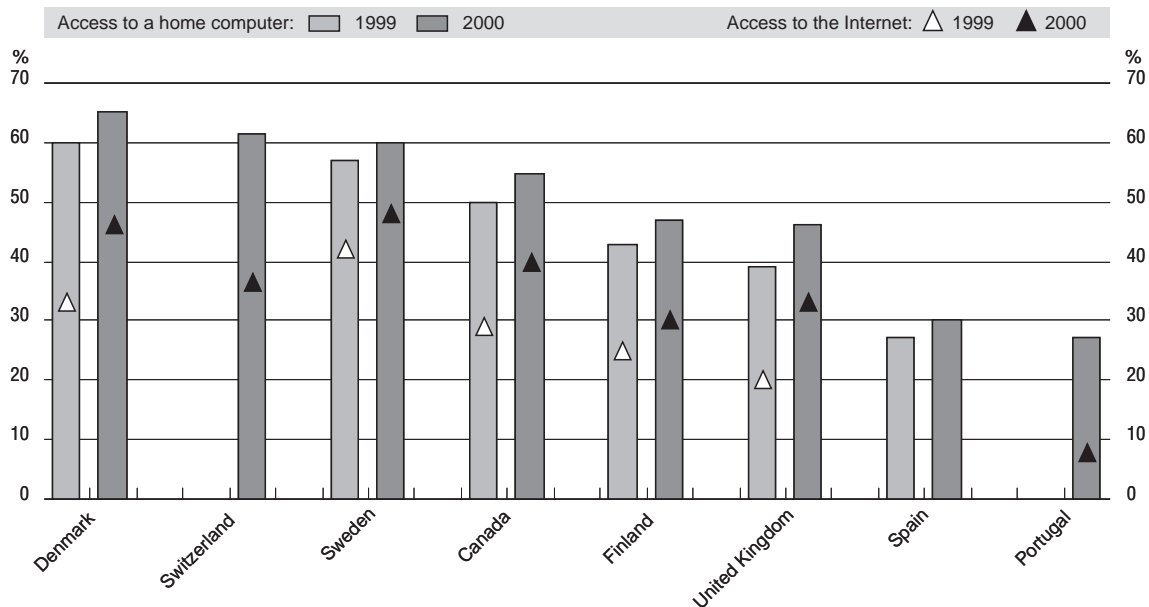
7. The cost of the connection, which is very often proportional to the connection time, also needs to be taken into account, and all the more so when the user is in a remote area. This can reduce the savings made possible by e-learning.

8. In discussions on this issue, the notions of average cost and marginal cost are frequently confused.

9. Here typically the average cost is close to the marginal cost.

10. The Wired up Communities initiative in the United Kingdom will be worth following in order to better grasp the size of the difficulties for disadvantaged groups: 14 000 households in seven pilot areas will receive the technology to have access to Internet.

Figure 6.2. **Households with access to a home computer and the Internet**
Percentage of households, 1999 and 2000



Note: Countries are ranked in descending order of access to a home computer in 2000.
Source: OECD (2001c, 2002b) and ICT database.

training. Otherwise, one can enter into vicious circles in which it is not possible to educate certain adults because they cannot use a computer or use it well enough, and it is not possible to teach them computer skills because they are undereducated. This applies to the hardware.

But it is also necessary to teach them how to use software and the Internet. While hypertext is undoubtedly an intuitive tool and the Internet is undoubtedly very convivial, it still poses barriers for a significant fraction of the population – those with the lowest level of education. A further problem, and not a minor one, is the amount of time that an individual can devote to learning. If learners have to cope with learning the use of a computer – both hardware and software – at the same time as the training itself, one can be fairly certain that the least motivated learners will be discouraged fairly quickly, so that the upshot is counter to the objective sought.¹¹ An interesting learning programme for adults to learn to use computers can be found in the Aulas Mentor in Spain (Box 6.4).

*... its software,
and the Internet.*

11. It should also be pointed out that the speed of the computer often exceeds that of the learning process. A fairly high minimum level of IT literacy is required in order to exploit the computer properly.

Box 6.4. Aulas Mentor in Spain

“Aula Mentor” (Mentor Classroom) is an open, free training system carried out over the Internet. Its purpose is to provide high-quality training using communication by computer, and so reach areas which, due to their distance from major towns, do not have any specialist courses. The main objective is that all citizens, regardless of their previous training, economic level or computing knowledge, have access to these training courses. A network of classrooms with public access to the Internet places at the disposal of adult students a “connected” computer, as well as a classroom monitor who advises and assists them. Other classrooms may be specifically for handicapped people or other groups. The training is in computer literacy, advanced computing, professional upkilling, and basic and advanced personal development.

As they have the advantage of high flexibility, the students take charge of their own learning and attend the classroom at a time agreed with the monitor according to their availability. The monitor’s role as a facilitator of learning has emerged as one of the fundamental pillars of the project. There are several aspects to monitoring work. The classrooms have several work areas:

- Computer work stations (between five and 15) where each student can carry out course activities. These computers are connected in a network and to the Internet.
- An area for group tasks that encourage spontaneous collaboration between students on the same course.
- A general resources area where commonly used materials for consultation are available.

Source: OECD (2002a) and visit to Aula Mentor, Medina del Campo, Spain, November 2002.

Modularisation of courses

Modularisation would appear a sensible approach to devising training programmes...

At the outset, modularisation is a method of constructing training programmes. Each programme consists of a set of complementary modules associated with a job function; each module corresponds to a given skill. It identifies the knowledge and know-how needed to perform an occupational activity and sets the prerequisites for following this sequence – the learning targets, operational skills, skill levels, etc. Construction of the modules is hence based on an analysis of work functions, and continues according to set rules and requires validation from the occupational world.

... with distinct advantages in terms of educational and organisational objectives.

But the modularising of courses should not be regarded simply as a technical reform. A number of educational and organisational objectives should also be pursued. One is to make the continuing training market – or at least an important segment, the market for vocational training – more transparent. Participants would be able to identify the standard of training on offer by referring to the general framework (the modules associated with the various programmes). In addition, it would be easier for participants to have their skills recognised and to chart educational pathways to supplement their training. Modularisation explicitly seeks to ensure that the management of training programmes, and of individual learning paths, is flexible. Such flexibility combines with the following benefits and advantages:

- It sets the content of vocational and trade courses on a standard basis.

Box 6.5. The modularisation of courses in Switzerland

The principle of modularising vocational courses under the responsibility of the federal government was accepted by Parliament in June 1993. An initial working party in OFIAMT (now OFFT) suggested that pilot experiments should be launched. They were co-ordinated by the Swiss Research Society in Vocational Training (*Société suisse de recherche appliquée en matière de formation professionnelle* – SRFP). Numerous people in training institution, and socioeconomic circles helped to construct programmes in this format.

Groups in various regions prepared the modules. Experiments were conducted in a number of areas: catch-up courses for basic training in commerce, computing and agriculture; training of human resource managers; training for trainers (modularisation of the FSEA, Certificate 1 course); and training in hotels and catering. The projects were evaluated, and it was decided that the process should be continued and broadened. The experimental phase was thus judged satisfactory and the process has been extended to all vocational courses.

Source: OECD (2001b).

- It assists transfers from one trade to another by comparing the modules and skills required for individual occupations; accordingly, it will be easier to identify shared skills.
- It should also assist vocational retraining without unduly lengthening the courses.
- It should enhance co-operation among all those involved.
- It will be easier to build bridges between general and vocational education.

The evaluation conducted in Switzerland (Box 6.5.) brought out a number of points worth noting:

- The advantage of a top-down approach (modules developed by the trade association and supplied to schools), which means that the content is validated without delay; the bottom-up approach, based on the schools and colleges, is not ruled out, but validation takes longer.
- Collective work by a number of training agencies took place on a co-operative footing, even though they are competitors in the training market. Other experiments showed there were difficulties in working together, as the cultures of the various agencies were too different. Importance was also attached to public events providing information about the modules, which is a key condition for the system's success.
- A wider range of people, in both quantity and level (new categories), have taken the courses; these groups include a larger number of women taking modular courses.
- In terms of standards, the experiments yielded differing results: in some cases the outcome is still unclear, while in others standards have risen.
- Modularisation means a greater workload on the administrative side, for example in running exams.

The case of Switzerland revealed several important points.

- The flexibility of the scheme appealed to participants, who considered the possibility of obtaining module credits as partial qualification a motivating factor.
- Modularisation is becoming an ongoing operation to change and develop education, which needs to alter its organisational practices.
- The evaluation also brings out the “transdisciplinary aspect of the modules and cross-recognition is still at the trial stage” (Gindros *et al.*, 1999).
- The results of the experiments indicate that a number of the hoped-for benefits are actually coming through. The question of standards was directly addressed: some experiments point to higher standards, while others seem to have highlighted steps needed to secure this. The scheme also brings further co-ordination. Rival training agencies work together to build modules, and other agencies have formed closer links with economic associations to validate the modules (bringing education and the economy closer together). Finally, the participants consider that modules will facilitate recognition of learning and the development of individual education projects.

***Modularisation
is gaining ground...***

Generally speaking, modularisation is gaining ground. It has its advantages and disadvantages (Box 6.6) and seems to have won over the institutional and other actors in countries such as Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, for example. In Spain, the system of Regulated and Vocational Training for the Unemployed is arranged in a modular format. The principal goal is not preparation for higher-level studies but receiving adequate qualifications for integration into the labour market. Validations for the professional modules corresponding to the intermediate level training cycles have been established, as well as access to predetermined first-cycle university courses, related to completed vocational training courses, for students who have obtained the higher technician qualification.

***... but it will not cure
a system already badly
integrated.***

However, there seems to be a significant risk, in these countries and those that have made less progress towards modular courses, of modularisation becoming merely a justification *a posteriori* of the relative complexity of adult education provision. If the system already in place is complex and badly integrated, then to present the whole as a set of modules is not likely to help resolve the problem of complexity and lack of integration. In other words, and this is one of the major disadvantages of setting up a modular system (Box 6.6), modules must be planned as part of a whole. Indeed the whole idea of modularisation is to plan for complexity at the outset.

6.3. Outlook on delivery

Convincing adults of the value of learning is, as established earlier, an essential factor in encouraging them to take up courses. However, for any section of the population, whether or not they are persuaded of the merits of learning, it is possible to identify factors that will make it easier for them to take up courses and so facilitate the return to learning. Throughout Chapter 6 we have seen that they have to do with pedagogy itself as well as delivery. The important point is that certain elements are not necessarily more important than others. The hours, the practical conditions (buildings,

Box 6.6. Advantages and disadvantages of modularised adult education courses

Disadvantages:

- High investment needed to overcome planning problems associated with drawing them up
- Cost of management and co-ordination of modules
- Presupposes co-operation between actors in the labour market and those in education
- The module does not necessarily provide a competency that is recognised in the market

Advantages:

- Possible gains in terms of scale and variety
- More rapid adjustment to changes in the labour market and in adults' needs
- Greater chance of return to the labour market if there is agreement between social partners
- Flexibility in the timetabling of training programmes; increased attractiveness to adult learners put off by a long, continuous course

Source: Chiousse (2001).

equipment, etc.), services such as care of children and/or invalid parents, the andragogical content and the flexibility of made-to-measure courses all help to increase the attractiveness of adult learning.

Certain ideas listed in this chapter came up repeatedly during the review: information and counselling, quality, assessment, transparency and consistency. Implementation of some ideas has already reached an advanced stage (recognition of prior learning, etc.). Some ideas are newer but a great stimulus to innovation: adapting supply to demand or introducing learning into the learners' social milieu or preferred activities. However, it is worth repeating a number of basic recommendations in the general context of adult learning policy. First of all, an initial education must give individuals the skills they need for access to further learning. The role of school is not simply to impart knowledge, but also to help learners continue to acquire new knowledge throughout life. The return to learning should never be perceived as the last resort, and initial education must not be seen as an end in itself. A second key issue is the adequate dissemination of information and anticipation of needs. All means should be used to circulate the available information: school, workplace, temping agencies, city hall, social services, media, public and private bodies, etc.¹² "Adult Learners' Week", launched in the United Kingdom in 1992 and now an annual event in about thirty countries, is intended to provide as much information as possible on the range of courses that are available. A third way of improving the system is to

12. The CRC (knowledge resource centre) established by the INOFOR in Portugal administers and responds to this need for information by working with agencies and professionals in the training sector.

provide individual counsellors to guide the individuals and assist them in embarking upon learning. Establishing partnerships is a fourth obvious recommendation. Finally, it is vital to hold routine and regular assessments of the measures implemented.

All these ideas about taking account of the specific nature of adult learning are directly linked to motivation and incentives (Chapter 5). That link would be even stronger if learners were to be monitored after their courses had finished. When all these conditions have been fulfilled, and all the fundamental practicalities (timetable, funding, and access) addressed and solved, and the specific quality of the pedagogy recognised, we will be able to make individuals masters of their own learning – and therefore, to a greater extent, their own lives.

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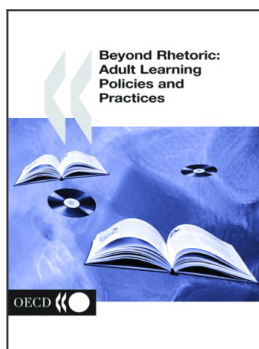
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