

Learning
CAFE



Teach and Lead




Resources for you who lead and teach other adults

This material is for you who are or aspire to be a teacher, educational leader, course planner, or study circle leader in non-formal adult education or civil society. You can read and use the entire learning material, or access the parts that interest you most.

Each chapter consists of a brief introduction and a more detailed, longer section. At the end of the in-depth part, you will find questions for reflection and a toolbox.

This resource material was developed in cooperation between Bildningsalliansen and SFV between 2022 and 2025.

This guide is available in Swedish online at laraochleda.sfv.fi  where you will also find this English pdf for download.



MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE

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Contents

1. You, as a teacher	4
2. Planning and preparing	10
3. Learning together	18
4. Evaluation	27
5. Digitalization	37
6. Equality and equal treatment	45
7. Sustainability	57
About us	66



1. You, as a teacher

This chapter covers:

- ✓ How to stand in front of a group of adults
- ✓ How to feel confident in the teaching role
- ✓ How to develop your competence as a teacher



SUMMARY

To stand in front of a group of adults

You are standing before a group of people. They have all chosen to participate in this course, lecture, or study circle. They are looking at you, full of various expectations. How did you end up here? What made you want to become a teacher/lecturer/course leader?

Is it your passion for the subject? Were you asked to run this course? Is this a job for you, or are there other reasons?

It could be a combination of these things.

To feel confident in the teaching role

What are you thinking about as you are standing in front of a group of people who have decided to attend your lecture/course/study circle? Do you feel nervous? Do you want these people to like you? Do you feel the need to show your specific knowledge on this subject? It is common to pick a role or a mask.

**You do not need to pretend to be someone else.
Trust your experience, expertise, and personality.**

You do not need to know it all. Trust your ability to lead the course.

To develop your competence as a teacher

There are many ways to develop your teaching competencies. Some people learn by doing, while others learn by educating themselves.

Just as we humans are different, teachers are different too. Think back on the teachers you have had in your life. Have they all been the same? Probably not. Think about which ones have been important to you. What made you like them? Is there something you can copy from them?

MORE ON THE SUBJECT

To stand in front of a group of adults

You can become a better teacher by reflecting on why you chose to enter this role. A deeper understanding of your role, abilities, and motivation can help you become a more effective teacher. It can also make your work more rewarding. Being a teacher is about both giving and receiving.

It is equally important that you feel comfortable in the teacher role and with yourself, as well as thinking about the learners' expectations and the course content.

If you are like most teachers, you excel in some areas of this role and struggle in others. That is just fine. There are no perfect teachers.



To feel confident in the teacher's role

A teacher who is secure in their role never dramatizes a situation. Such a teacher spreads calmness around them and gives learners space. They let everyone have their say, are just as good at listening as they are at speaking, and can handle unexpected situations. How will you find that confidence?

Teaching can be a stressful and intense experience. You may be wondering whether you can cope, whether the learners can understand you, and whether you can handle the unexpected. Everything does not always go smoothly. Sometimes, technical equipment fails, participants fall ill, or something else forces you to change your initial plan. When this happens, having a plan B is a good idea. Refer to Chapter 2 for more information on planning.

It is when the unexpected happens that you are put to the test. How do you react? Do you get angry if someone hasn't completed their tasks? Do you get irritated when someone asks

the same thing for the third time? Do you freeze when you have prepared a presentation only to be stopped by a computer that doesn't work? You cannot rehearse handling the unexpected. What you can do is have a plan B. Having lots of patience is also an asset. Here is a good example of when discussing with your colleagues is a good idea. We all encounter the unexpected sooner or later; it is part of the job. Thus, it could be good to know that you are not alone, and that it is rarely your fault if something wrong has happened.

Sometimes it is just too difficult. Everything seems to be going off the rails, or you're unable to handle the situation. In this case, there is nothing wrong with asking for help.

Bear in mind that *how* you say things means as much as *what* you say.

To develop your competence as a teacher

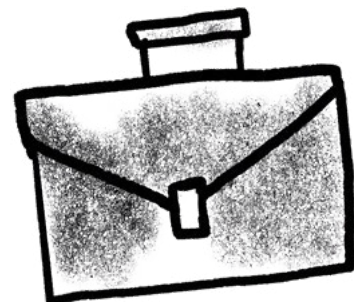
When you are standing in front of a group of people and are going to teach them something or lead a discussion, you find yourself in the spotlight. Some people enjoy this kind of attention, whereas others shy away from it. No matter how you react, it helps to practice.

You can, for example, review the material in advance or in front of others. If you are shy, you may need to practice looking people in the eye. If you enjoy being in the spotlight, consider practicing active listening and allowing others to express their thoughts and opinions.

We are all learning continuously, including you as a teacher. We will never be "done" with learning. There is a certain comfort in that thought, a sense that what we are doing is a marathon, not a 100-meter sprint. No one likes to fail, but it happens to all of us at some point. The best thing you can do in such situations is to try to learn from them. What happened? What was my role in this? What can I do differently next time?

Reflection questions & tasks

- ✓ Which teachers have meant something to you?
- ✓ What made them good at their jobs?
- ✓ What can you borrow from them?
- ✓ What can you improve?
- ✓ What are your greatest strengths as a teacher?



Different teaching tasks and roles

Non-formal adult education is a broad concept that encompasses a range of learning experiences. It also means that the term 'teacher' covers a wide range of teaching roles. Commonly, a teacher has several different "roles" and tasks. Here are some examples.

TEACHER

You work as a teacher or leader, with the primary responsibility of leading study activities. You have expertise and experience in the course content and the study activities. You use it to plan, implement, and evaluate the course materials and activities. The learners trust you and expect to develop their knowledge or skills in the course subject. Course activities usually have an overall and shared learning objective.

TUTOR

You serve as a tutor or teaching assistant whose job is to introduce, initiate, supervise, follow up on, and wrap up the activities that course participants complete individually or in groups. After a joint introduction, you will discuss with the participants and guide them in their learning process. Here, it is essential that you listen to and consider the participants' starting points and needs. Note that it is equally important for both beginner and more advanced-level learners. Study activities may have very different objectives. The course participants expect you to participate in the discussions and to provide inspiration and support.

GROUP PARTICIPANT

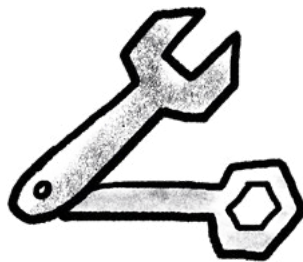
You are part of the group; you participate and collaborate during the course activities. Your key responsibility is to bring the group together and create a welcoming and safe environment where everyone can be active, participate in discussions, and learn on an equal basis. Initially, you might have a more prominent role, serve as an initiative taker, or even a moderator. However, as soon as the course participants get to know each other and the learning process starts, you become a part of the group. You need to prepare yourself to initiate processes and navigate between different ideas and opinions to create a balance,

if required. You should summarize and evaluate the topics discussed and the points the group reached.

ORGANISER

You serve as an organizer who plans and coordinates activities carried out by others. Your tasks may include inviting lecturers with expertise in various subjects or ensuring that course participants can come together to take a break from everyday life alongside others in similar life situations. You often have the responsibility of planning the overall content of the activities, contacting the lecturer, booking an auditorium, and ensuring that all the equipment works properly.

The job of an organizer typically involves collecting evaluation forms from course participants and asking them to generate ideas for creating engaging and relevant course content.



TOOLBOX

Teacher to teacher... (video) [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



EXTRA MATERIAL

The tension between the education process and measurability. [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



2. Planning and preparation

This chapter covers:

- ✓ What planning is.
- ✓ How planning is done.
- ✓ Why you need to plan.



SUMMARY

What is planning?

Planning is about making preparations. It helps you to align a course's purpose and learning objectives. A plan can have more or less detail. Sometimes, you can base your preparations on an official study plan or a course description.

How do I plan?

You can start planning according to the type of learning activity. Planning a language course, a study circle, or an individual music lesson has different requirements. We have tools and models that can help you with planning. Some of them are presented further in the next in-depth section.

Why do I need to plan?

Good planning will be of great help for both course participants and you. You will be better prepared for the lesson and able to deal with the unexpected more easily. To assess learners' knowledge, you need to plan accordingly. Sometimes your employer or the course's sponsor requires planning as well.



MORE ON THE SUBJECT



What is planning?

In adult education centers, summer universities, and folk high schools, course planning is often conducted by a course planning teacher or, in an association, by a hired professional or volunteer. Planning is done well in advance and is comprehensive. The teacher then designs and plans all course meetings (lectures). It is also common for a teacher to plan their course from start to finish.

How do I plan?

Good planning requires meeting specific criteria, regardless of who is responsible for the planning.

- ✓ What is the content of the course? The content should be aligned with its objectives.
- ✓ How is the course implemented? Some predictability is needed to plan the activities.
- ✓ Why are we doing things exactly this way? Methods and approaches need to be justifiable.
- ✓ How do I work systematically?

**Each learning session needs to relate to the course's objective.
What skills and knowledge should the course participants acquire after they complete the course?**

If there is an overall plan and specific learning objectives, incorporate them into your planning. If the course is not to be validated, teaching objectives are not mandatory; however, it is always beneficial to consider the course's goals.

Should the course be validated?

Some courses may offer credit validation. It means that a course participant can choose to have their course results put into Koski (the National Registry and Data Transfer Service for Study Rights and Completed Studies in Finland). To be validated, the course must have a recognized study plan, a description of the course, and its objectives published in eRequirements.

At the same time, the teaching, content, and assessment should correspond directly with the information given in the eRequirements system. Planning the overall course and all learning events should follow the description in eRequirements.

CHECKLIST FOR SYSTEMATIC PLANNING

1. Think about the objectives of the course:

- ✓ Which skills and knowledge will course participants acquire after completing the course?
- ✓ Are there any prior knowledge prerequisites to participate in the course?

2. Reflect on the course assessment and evaluation:

- ✓ How can the participant demonstrate that they have acquired the skills or knowledge specified in the course objectives?
- ✓ What is the scope of the course?

3. Think of the teaching:

- ✓ Which is the most effective way to learn the course content?
- ✓ Which learning materials correspond with the course objectives and assessment?
- ✓ Do teaching and other activities align with the course's scope and objectives?

4. Reflect on the course validation:

- ✓ Which is the best way to describe skills and knowledge acquired after course completion?

What kind of study form is it about?

It makes a difference whether you are leading a study circle, teaching a language course, or offering individual teaching, for example, in music. All study activities require planning and preparation, but the specific processes may vary.

What kind of group are you leading? Different groups and activities also require different planning and preparation.

What equipment do you need to bring, and which do you leave at home? You need to plan the necessary and purposeful tasks to include in the planned study meetings and activities.

Who does not need to plan? What do you not need to plan?

Some activities do not require planning, while others may require some preparation. In a study circle, the leader's primary duty is to engage the course participants and lead the discussion. You can use preparation as an alternative to planning. This can involve handling practical tasks, such as setting up a learning space or preparing tea and coffee. Preparations can also involve considering possible learning activities and reading about the Timeout method. [↗](#)

There are specific questions that you could even repeatedly reflect on concerning the planned learning activities. These questions might be the following:

- ✓ What can I do? What do I believe?
- ✓ What do I want to know?

As the questions remain the same, your responsibility as a leader will be to ask them and give space for answers. That does not require any planning whatsoever.

If a study meeting does not involve a teacher, consider another possible role. Think of yourself as a tutor or a co-participant with additional responsibilities.

A good tip is to keep notes on what is discussed during the event, so that different things that come up during different study meetings and activities can be easily linked back to previous meetings. You don't plan for this; you do it in the moment. If planning feels strange to what you are leading, maybe that is precisely what it is: You do not need to plan!

- ✓ Do you have a "toolbox" to draw on when needed?
- ✓ How do you need to prepare for the study meetings?

What should be included?

You plan to answer two questions: What should the participant know or be able to do after completing the course/circle/meeting, and how will this be achieved?

The answers to these two questions become part of the preparations for the course activities/meetings.

If the course description or marketing promises something, ensure you deliver on those promises throughout the course. Your planning should be specific and concise, allowing you to deliver on those promises.

Please do not keep the course planning and preparations a secret; make them available to everyone who might be interested. You can hand them out during the first meeting, show them where they can be found online, or inform anyone interested of where they can obtain a paper copy of the document.

A good plan specifies how the course will be implemented, outlines the methods to be used, and describes the specific content that you will cover. Ensure that you describe the course level, for example, whether the course requires prior knowledge and which skills or knowledge participants will acquire upon completion. A good plan makes it easier for the course participants to choose the right course for themselves.

- ✓ What should the participant be able to do after the course? This is described as learning outcomes, and there are typically 2-3 in a course. Learning outcomes are designed to be evaluated and validated.
- ✓ What level is the course at? Keep the course content aligned with the appropriate knowledge level.

- ✓ How will the learning objectives be achieved? Possibilities include offline studies, distance learning, hybrid studies, individual hand-in assignments, group work, group exercises, etc.

How committed am I to the plan?

Your plan is not to be set in stone. It lives and develops both during the course and in between courses. Adapting the course to learners is essential; you may also need to adjust the entire plan.

How flexible am I? Feel free to deviate from the plan when it feels relevant.

What can the course participants contribute? Allow the course participants to influence the course, its content, and learning methods. Remember, if there are clear learning objectives, you must also reach them.

Should I be an expert in everything?

The course participants have extensive knowledge and experience. If you can use it, you and the course participants will gain a great deal. You do not need to be an expert in everything. The more study activities that activate and engage the course participants there are during the course, the better.

Regularly offering learners opportunities to discuss and reflect among themselves is always a good idea. You can also ask a question or make a statement that the learners can discuss or reflect on.

Are you an expert as a teacher? The teacher doesn't have to know everything or just be the only one holding the strings.

How do you engage course participants during and between course meetings? Prepare some tasks and consider different ways to divide the learners into groups. Present the tasks in a creative and varied manner to encourage and maintain learner interest.



TOOLBOX

Examples of different ways to plan [↗](#)

(In Swedish)



EXTRA MATERIAL

What is competence-based learning? [↗](#)

(In Swedish)



3. Learning together

This chapter covers:

- ✓ How we learn together.
- ✓ How and why we need to create safe learning environments.
- ✓ How to lead groups.



SUMMARY

How do we learn together?

Non-formal adult education and associations serve as gathering places for individuals who want to learn, develop, or socialize. The course participants are of different ages and come from different living environments.

Each group comprises individuals with diverse experiences, opinions, and expectations. Some are beginners, while others have been learning for a long time. Some are eager to get started and learn more about the subject that interests them. For others, socializing is the most essential aspect.

The varying expectations influence how a learner relates to the course and what they derive from it. Despite the differences in background and expectations, the learners come together to learn and grow.

How and why should we create safe learning environments?

Regardless of how the course has developed, been planned, or is implemented, it is essential that everyone feels welcome, safe, and respected. Every participant should be able to be active and motivated, share their life experiences, and be involved in shared learning processes. Both you and the learners should gain an understanding of the study group, its needs, and interests. You need to discuss the course's aims and objectives together. Working this way contributes to an inviting and safe learning environment.

How do you lead groups?

You lead a group by being transparent about what you plan to do and how you intend to do it. You lead by listening to the group but being transparent about the decisions. You

lead through the working methods that you have chosen.

A standard method is various group activities. They engage course participants and help them develop their knowledge and skills.

Some courses are entirely based on group activities, while others incorporate them from time to time. The activities can be short-term and focused on a specific theme or content. You can use activities to build long-term goal-oriented cooperation. The purpose, learning objectives, and nature of the course determine which forms of group activities are most suitable.

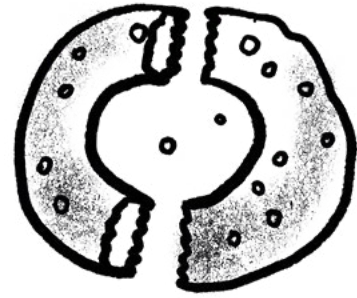
MORE ON THE SUBJECT



Group activities should always have a precise aim and clear objectives. You should only use group activities that support learning and development. This applies both to a short group discussion during the course and to an entire course built up through group activities. Inform the course participants about the group activities that you will use and the reasons behind their selection. For example, the group activities help course participants support and learn from one another. Group activities can also bring knowledge and skills that you, as a teacher, lack. The study group itself and group activities are essential resources. Group activities also help develop our social skills, which nowadays is a valuable competence.

How do we learn together?

The more you know about the group, the better you can support individual and group learning processes. Start by asking yourself questions: Who are the participants in this course? What are their expectations? What are their preconditions for learning? Think about it all from the point of your own experience and expertise, as well as the learning objectives, content, and activities that you have planned for the course. If the course requires the course participants to register in advance, they may have provided some information about themselves. If so, read through it and think about the group and its composition. Then consider the preconditions for learning together. What group activities are suitable, and which are not?



How and why should we create safe learning environments?

A safe learning environment requires that you and the course participants get to know each other. It is about meeting each other as fellow human beings and understanding the course's content and goals. You also need to explain how and why you will use different types of joint activities.

Begin by introducing yourself, your background, and your experience with the course's subject matter.

Briefly explain why you became interested in the course theme, how your interest has developed, and what you have gained from learning together with others. It is a good idea to prepare the presentation in advance. Keep it appropriately short and focus on what is essential for the course.

After this, ask the course participants to introduce themselves. If the course requires registration, you already have an idea of how many learners are enrolled. That information will help you estimate the duration of each presentation. You can help the course participants by asking one or more of the following questions:

1. What brought you here today?
2. Have you participated in similar activities before?
3. What did you get out of them?
4. What are your expectations for the course?
5. Have you met any of the other learners in the group before?

TEACHER TO TEACHER (VIDEO)

In the video, Elin Blomqvist talks about meeting new groups. [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



To be treated with attention and respect

Another way to start the course is to divide the course participants into pairs or small groups. Doing so can work well if the group is large or if there are shy people. It is usually a good idea to ask the groups to share the outcome of their discussions with the whole group.

In art subjects, you can replace a verbal introduction with a sketch, picture, or a short piece of music. Why not?

In handicraft subjects, you can ask learners to discuss something they have previously created.

Feel free to respond to and encourage the course participants' presentations. Focus on topics that align with your experiences and the course objectives. Ask the learners to reflect on their interests and explore opportunities to learn from one another. If the group contains both beginners and more experienced course participants, note this.

After the introductory presentation, you must underline the following:

- ✓ Everyone in the group should feel welcome and heard.
- ✓ Everyone should feel safe, respected, and relaxed.
- ✓ Everyone should have the opportunity to be active and motivated.
- ✓ Everyone should be able to share their experience and opinions.
- ✓ Those with experience and knowledge have a lot to offer those with less experience.

Remember and consider that not everyone feels comfortable speaking in front of a group.

The importance of the physical learning environment

The physical learning environment, including the room and its furnishings, is crucial when learners meet for the first time and get to know one another.

The room and how you stand or sit in relation to each other affect how you feel seen and heard.

The physical learning environment affects the opportunity to participate in and engage with the group and joint activities. If your course is outdoors, it is essential to find a quiet, safe place for the introduction and activities.

CONSIDER:

- ✓ How you stand and sit in relation to the course participants. You should be close enough for everyone to see and hear you. Preferably at the same level as the course participants.
- ✓ How the course participants are positioned, standing or sitting, in relation to each other. Especially at the beginning, it is essential to see and hear each other clearly, preferably with your faces facing each other.
- ✓ How is the lighting in the room, and can you ensure you are not disturbed by unnecessary noise from the surroundings?

This list gives some indications of how the physical environment can affect learning. Sometimes, there isn't much you can do about the room. Often, you must accept the space allocated to you. When that happens, and the room is not suitable, you must make the best of the situation. It's good to have a plan B in reserve.

To delve into the goals and content together

Depending on the nature, content, and goals of the course, the first introduction, where course participants get to know each other, can be supplemented with an introduction to the content and the types of activities you have planned. Doing so helps participants gain a deeper understanding of the course's goals, content, and methods.

Consider how the course has been marketed and what information participants have received in advance. Describe your plan for the course as clearly as you can. Ask course participants for their views and comments.

FOCUS ON

- ✓ The core content – WHAT will course participants learn?
- ✓ The core activities or methods – HOW will the content be learned?
- ✓ The framework and resources – in terms of time, space/environment, materials, and other resources.
- ✓ Your plan for organizing the whole course – content-wise, activity-wise, and time-wise – WHAT will be done WHEN and HOW?
- ✓ What are the course learning objectives (if any)?

Feel free to ask the participants about their experiences (and expectations) regarding the course presentation.

Will the participants have the opportunity to influence the course's content and activities?

Allowing for input from your participants makes it easier to agree on frameworks and expectations for participation and involvement. Furthermore, it can be used to clarify the division of responsibilities and tasks between you and the learners, or between the learners themselves.

During the presentation, we recommended that you introduce and welcome course participants to a shared learning process. Such an introduction also helps create a learning environment in which people are engaged and know where they are going as a group.

How do you lead groups?

What is a study group, and how can you use group activities?

A study group usually consists of at least three people. The optimal size varies depending on the content and purpose of the group activity. In groups of 5–6 members, everyone can be active and involved. The larger the group, the more diverse the experiences, perceptions, and opinions will be. Group size can make working in a group easier or more challenging.

Remember that participants have different experiences, perceptions, and interests in group activities. Not everyone feels comfortable participating in group activities, especially in the beginning when they do not yet know each other.

For everyone to feel comfortable and safe, it is essential to allow the group time to get to know one another. Take it easy, use methods that allow everyone to have a say and be seen and heard.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

In the video, Ann-Charlotte Rastas discusses activating groups. [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



YOU CAN USE GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES AND AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE COURSE

- ✓ At the beginning of a course, for orientation and to create cohesion, so that course participants become familiar and safe with each other and have the opportunity to discuss and react to the course's aims and learning objectives.
- ✓ During the course, participants can share their experiences and perceptions, support and guide one another, solve problems, and plan further activities.
- ✓ At the end of the course, to evaluate or make a summary. You use this evaluation to present and discuss general views on the content, working methods, and lessons learned.

What is group work?

You use group work to carry out assigned tasks together or to achieve a specific goal that individual course participants cannot accomplish on their own. Successful group work requires that learners complement each other, supporting, helping, and guiding one another throughout the process. All group work activities require a proper introduction and orientation, as well as a clear division of work and responsibilities. Furthermore, group work requires a plan for implementation and agreement on when you have achieved the goal or what you set out to achieve.


What is a group discussion?

You can use group discussions to address and discuss themes or questions related to the course's aims and objectives. You can also use group discussions to share different experiences and perceptions, solve problems, or develop a shared understanding of an issue. You need to present the theme or question for discussion in a way that everyone can understand and relate to. Group discussion work is based on the idea that everyone should have the opportunity to share their experiences, express their opinions, and offer suggestions regarding the theme or issue being discussed.

A GOOD GROUP DISCUSSION

- ✓ Begins with everyone in the group taking turns speaking and deciding who will lead the discussion and summarize it.
- ✓ Follows up with shorter speeches that focus on a specific aspect, such as one's own personality or practical experience in the matter.
- ✓ Continues by deepening and narrowing the discussion to include different opinions and alternatives.
- ✓ Does not run away into specific details or sidetracks (you can give someone in the group the task of keeping track of this).
- ✓ Ends with a summary, as well as suggestions for how questions or problems can be handled or solved.


TOOLBOX

Group processes over time 

(In Swedish)



TOOLBOX

Examples of organizing group activities 

(In Swedish)

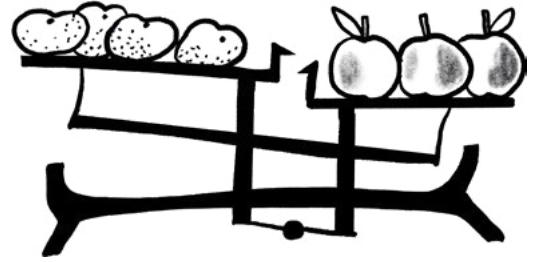


4. Evaluation

This chapter covers:

- ✓ What is an evaluation?
- ✓ How and why we evaluate.
- ✓ When we evaluate.



SUMMARY

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a means for the course organizer to receive feedback and responses, and for course participants to express their opinions about the course they have taken. Participants pay a participation fee or spend their free time on the course, so it is important that the training meets the expected standard.

How and why do we evaluate?

There are different ways to evaluate, depending on the needs and type of study activity.

The evaluation can, for example, focus on the study content itself, the methods, the teacher's role, or the practical arrangements.

You will find examples of frameworks and starting points for different types of evaluation in the in-depth section of this chapter.

When used correctly, evaluation is a powerful tool for developing, improving, or changing operations.

Evaluation provides a broader perspective on how a course or training is designed. It is common to follow a model that includes planning, implementation, evaluation, and development. The different parts flow into each other, providing new information and knowledge for the subsequent work phase.

It is also important that the organizers receive information about both positive and negative aspects of the content from the course participants. Getting that information supports the quality assurance of the training and attracts new and returning learners.

When do we evaluate?

You can evaluate during the course, at the end, or at some point later. The advantage of assessing during the course is that you can more easily adjust according to the wishes of the course participants. The disadvantage is that the feedback may not be comprehensive, covering the entire course, and may be challenging to use for a more in-depth analysis.

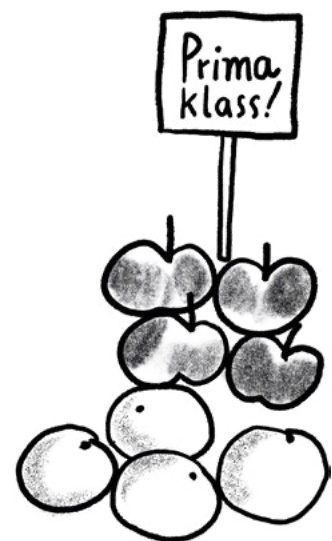
The advantage of evaluating at the end of the course is that participants have received everything the course was supposed to provide, while it is still fresh in their memories. The disadvantage is that the feedback cannot be used to improve the course for the same course participants.

A course or training often strives to impart knowledge that participants can benefit from and enjoy long after the course. An advantage of evaluating sometime after the course has ended is that participants can focus on the effect the training has had on them and on the results in the longer term. The disadvantage is that it can be difficult to obtain responses, and learners may have already forgotten things they would have otherwise responded to.

MORE ON THE SUBJECT

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is about valuing something and starting from your own values. An assessment is a systematic and well-thought-out process. You have chosen methods and tools to implement it. You have planned when the evaluation will take place. You make a critical review and interpretation during or after the course and share an opinion. With the help of assessment, we can describe, map, and measure attitudes, but also contribute to conscious self-reflection or change at the organizational level.



How and why do we evaluate?

Evaluation can occur at various levels, depending on the scope and whether you have the opportunity to influence the design of the evaluation from the outset. There is often a ready-made evaluation form to use or a model to start with.

In an evaluation, it is good practice to ask course participants how well they think the course was implemented and whether the teacher was successful. You can also link the evaluation to the course's learning objectives and get feedback on how they correlate. You can ask questions that assess the course's working methods and content. As a teacher, you may also want to gather direct feedback from course participants to identify ideas or tips for improving the course. Finally, evaluation can also reveal the changes and/or learning that have occurred.

While writing the assessment survey questions, you need to consider whether it is the course and its content you want to evaluate or whether it is the teacher's competence and skills to implement the course that are relevant, or both.

As a teacher, you can also conduct a self-evaluation, in which you ask individual course participants to reflect on their own efforts and what they have contributed. Conducting a self-evaluation also highlights that participants have a responsibility and must consider the prerequisites for participation. A precondition can also be the level of knowledge you are at, i.e., what prior knowledge is required for participation (according to how you have planned the course). You can ask questions about the course participants' current knowledge level or previous experiences.

If you decide to conduct the evaluation in writing and individually, you can allow the course participants to remain anonymous, and the assessment can be documented. Evaluation in the form of a discussion can provide deeper insights and the opportunity for more constructive criticism. As a course participant, you cannot simply offer a general opinion; instead, you should support your opinion with evidence.

You have several options for conducting evaluations, such as reflection tasks or portfolios. There are also many other ways to carry out an assessment specifically and directly, such as asking the participant to write notes, stand up, stand in different ways, show notes, or show thumbs up/down/straight, and point at smileys.

You need to consider the purpose of your course evaluation method and ensure you can effectively process the evaluation results. When collecting information through an evaluation, clearly communicate the evaluation's purpose and how you will collect, save, and store the data.

An evaluation provides us with statistics and information that are useful to our organization and the course's sponsor. Evaluation can also help to reflect on trends and development opportunities.

The questions we ask are of great importance because they significantly influence the answers we receive.

By evaluating the course and the activities, we gain information about the course's information flow, the course arrangements (time, space, scope, length, catering), teaching methods (lecture, discussions, practical experience) and the course leader's ability to create an open and safe learning environment (if the teacher is knowledgeable, inspiring, knows their subject, makes interaction with the audience, creates a safe atmosphere).

An evaluation can also provide information about changes at the individual level, for example, regarding behavior (such as feeling better, increased mobility, or broader social interaction). At the societal level, we can observe changes in attitudes; for example, course participants may change their attitudes after the course (so that more people realize they feel better with good social relationships). An evaluation can also provide indications of changes at the organizational level (for example, that many older adults are lonely, which leads to a course that addresses loneliness).

WE EVALUATE

- ✓ to find out if we have achieved our goals.
- ✓ To see if the course content corresponds to what you promised.
- ✓ To evaluate the learning that has taken place.
- ✓ To create self-reflection and support personal development.
- ✓ To develop study programs further.

- ✓ To size resources correctly.
- ✓ To obtain systematic follow-up and statistics.
- ✓ To be able to communicate the results of the organized study activities to society and sponsors.

SAMPLE DIGITAL EVALUATION SERVICES:

- ✓ Google forms
- ✓ Webropol
- ✓ Lyyti
- ✓ Polly
- ✓ Jotform
- ✓ Mentimeter
- ✓ Answergarden
- ✓ Microsoft forms
- ✓ Flinga

SAMPLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

About the course in general:

- ✓ Give an overall assessment of the course.
- ✓ What did you gain from the course as a whole? (knowledge, ideas, motivation, affirmation, social interaction)

Competence of the course teacher:

- ✓ How do you assess the teacher's competence in relation to the content of the course?

- ✓ In what ways has the teacher increased the course participants' commitment and participation?

Learning objectives:

- ✓ What is your opinion on how the course objectives have been met?
- ✓ How will you use what you have learned during the course?

Methodology and content:

- ✓ In what way did the content of the course meet your expectations?
- ✓ How did the used methods and approaches work?
- ✓ What other methods would have supported your learning?

Knowledge level and previous experiences:

- ✓ Which of the following options best describes your current level of knowledge? (discovers, reproduces, understands, applies, problematizes, evaluates, creates)
- ✓ What are your previous experiences in the course subject?

Course development:

- ✓ What did you learn during the course?
- ✓ What do you take away from the course?
- ✓ Did the course meet your expectations?
- ✓ How could the course be even better?
- ✓ What worked less well?
- ✓ Who would you recommend the course to?
- ✓ Would you participate again?
- ✓ Do you have any requests for other courses?

Knowledge application:

- ✓ What will you be able to apply from what you have learned during the course?
- ✓ How will you apply it?
- ✓ How will this benefit you in your further...
- ✓ How did your view of... change?

Personal involvement:

- ✓ How have I been involved as a participant?
- ✓ What has my contribution been?

Community and togetherness:

- ✓ Do you feel that you have become part of a community?
- ✓ Have you met people outside of your everyday life?



When do we evaluate?

You can hold an evaluation during the course and/or at the end of the course. If you evaluate the course while it is still ongoing, you can make changes in line with the wishes of the course participants.

The goal of the course is often to provide participants with knowledge that they can apply and benefit from long after the course. Measuring the course participants' experiences immediately after the course ends may not give a complete picture of how well you have met this goal. An evaluation conducted after some time has passed can focus on the effect the training has had and on the results in the longer term.

Sample questions;

What will you be able to apply from what you learned during the course? And how will you do it?

A good description of how to divide evaluation into different levels, both in the short and long term, is the Kirkpatrick model. The Kirkpatrick model was developed as an explanatory framework for evaluating adult learning, specifically after the completion of a training or a course. Donald L Kirkpatrick, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, published his model as early as 1959.

The model is divided into four levels, of which levels 3 and 4 focus on a long-term evaluation.

Level 1: Reaction – How did the course participants experience the training?

Questions at level 1 concern how the participant experienced the training in terms of the practical arrangements. How was the training environment – time, space, scope, length, serving-wise? Was the teacher inspiring and competent?

All of these questions are important, but they do not address the learning outcomes or the knowledge the course participants can use after the training.

Level 2: Learning – In what way did the course participants' level of knowledge and competence increase?

Questions at level 2 provide information about the content, significance, and quality of the training.

Have the course participants learned anything? The questions provide essential information, but they say nothing about how course participants apply the knowledge in their everyday lives.


Level 3: Behavioral change – In what way have behaviors and working methods changed?

Questions at level 3 concern how the participant has applied their new knowledge and skills. The results indicate whether the training content has been effectively used.

Level 4: Results – What has been the effect of the training?

Questions at level 4 help to evaluate the degree to which the training leads to change and lasting results.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

In the video, Thomas Ingo talks about how he works with evaluation. 
(In Swedish)



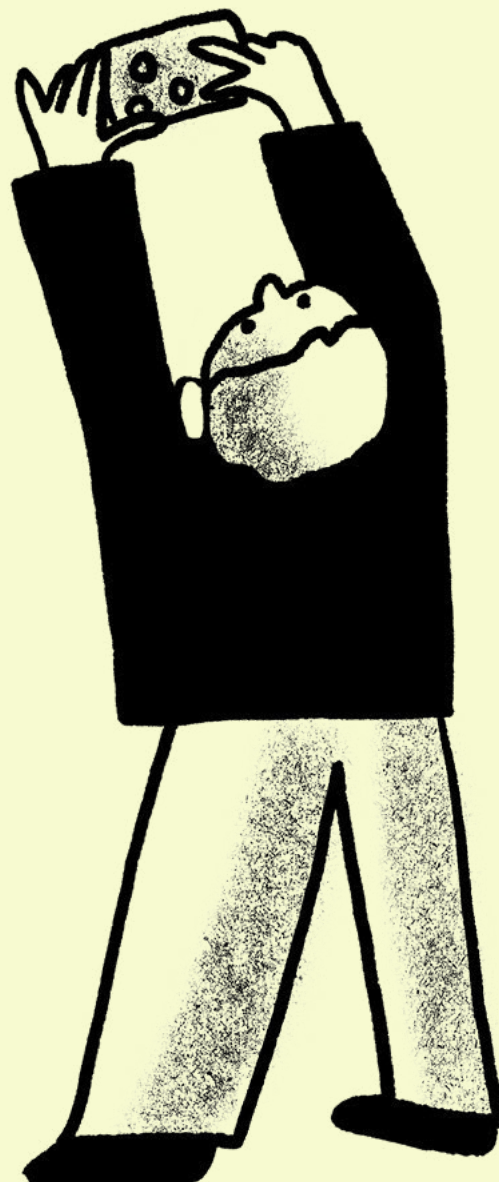
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ✓ What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- ✓ What evaluation forms and methods are appropriate for your course?
- ✓ Are there alternative ways to evaluate the course as a whole?
- ✓ When should you hold evaluations to get relevant feedback for your course?
- ✓ Would you like to know the course's impact and its long-term outcomes?
- ✓ What type of feedback do you need to develop your course?
- ✓ What other feedback could be helpful for you/the association/organization?
- ✓ How will you process the answers/results afterward?
- ✓ Can you make the evaluation feedback visible for communication and marketing purposes?

5. Digitalization

This chapter covers:

- ✓ What digitalization is.
- ✓ What it means for learning.
- ✓ What I need to be able to do.



SUMMARY

ChatGPT partly wrote the text in this chapter, which was then supplemented, edited, and quality reviewed by us.

What is digitalization?

Digitization is a collective term for various technologies and processes. Originally, digitization refers to the process of converting information or data from an analog format to a digital one. Today, we often use the term to describe an activity or process that is becoming more digital. In this context, it means that the process becomes more automated, easier to manage, and accessible to users who utilize digital technology.

Digitalization is evident everywhere in today's society. It affects almost everything we do. For those of us who work with learning, it is both a challenge and an opportunity.

There are new ways to communicate and share information. The Internet also offers us new ways to learn at our own pace and in our own way. The current situation presents a challenge for all teachers, as we compete with platforms like YouTube for learners' attention.

What does this mean for learning?

Digitalization has several different effects on learning. It can affect how, where, when, and what we learn. Despite the rapid digitalization of society, we have only seen the beginning of the digital transformation. Therefore, it is crucial to be critical of both the doomsday prophets and the technology saviors. We know that things are changing, but we do not yet know how, when, or to what extent.

What do I need to know?

You need to be familiar with and comfortable with digital learning tools. You also need to be able to adapt digital resources, methods, and tools to support your course participants' learning.



MORE ON THE SUBJECT

Non-formal adult education is all about meetings between people. The most common form of "folkbildning" (non-formal adult education) remains a face-to-face meeting in a shared physical space. Online courses have been a part of non-formal adult education since the 1990s, but have never really taken off. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the situation. Today, many learners expect to be able to participate remotely if they become sick or are unable to attend the study location. The new situation partly places new demands on you. Various hybrid course formats, where some participants are on-site, and others are remote, have also become more common. The range of purely online courses has also increased. The mix of delivery formats also places new demands on you as a teacher and course leader.

When working with distance learning, it is essential to create a safe space that enables learners to participate and share their thoughts and ideas. For example, not all platforms are equally good at enabling group-based learning. Not all web solutions are similarly easy to use or effective at creating social spaces for learners.

When using digital tools or services, it is essential to consider carefully how and why you are using them. Do they provide added value? Does an external party collect data or content? Does participation in the course require special skills or access to specific equipment?

What is digitalization?

Everything in our society is affected by digitalization. When digitalization first became a common term, it referred to the process of converting physical objects into digital formats. Since the emergence of the Internet, we have witnessed several phases of development. We are not "there" yet. The latest trend in Finland is the digitalization of public services. To survive in today's digital society, you need to have digital skills.

We may have many opinions about the development and what it brings, but digital everyday life is not a passing trend. Therefore, those of us who work with learning need to consider the consequences of the changes.

How does this affect learning?

Digitalization is a collective term for various tools, behaviors, services, and production. Digital development continues all the time. We do not yet know how this will affect all the different aspects of learning.

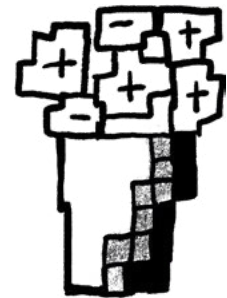
Here are some examples:

1. **Access to information:** Through digitalization, we have access to an enormous amount of information. We have witnessed a revolution in learning that has given people the opportunity to learn about almost any subject, at any time, and from anywhere. One consequence of this is that everyone needs to be able to distinguish between credible and false information. In addition, the amount of information requires everyone to be able to navigate, for example, on the Internet, which involves learning to search, delimit, and formulate questions and requests.
2. **Interactivity:** Digital tools and platforms enable interactivity in learning. Learners can interact with the content more engagingly, making it easier for them to learn and retain the information. This place demands social skills. For you as a teacher, this means, among other things, that you must think about what kind of interactivity you want to achieve, why, and when. Digital does not automatically mean interactive.
3. **Adaptation:** Digitalization has also enabled the creation of tailor-made educational programs adapted to each learner's unique needs and prerequisites. These programs can help people with special needs to progress on their learning path. This may mean that you need to broaden the range of study activities offered and individualize your teaching. A broadened range means that not everyone learns at the same pace or in the same way. Those who want more and work faster may need more tasks. You need to consider how you lead the group and how you maintain its cohesion.
4. **Collaborative learning:** Digital tools enable collaboration and joint learning between people from different places in the world or different parts of the country. These tools can support learning by enabling course participants to share their experiences, ideas, and thoughts. Digital solutions or tools are not automatically adapted to this type of learning. An example of collaborative learning is the Communities of Inquiry model. Read more about the method here. [↗](#)

5. **Automation:** By utilizing digital tools and platforms, you can automate certain aspects of the learning process. By doing so, you get more time to focus on more complex or interactive elements of the learning process. Here, we are talking about things like instructional videos or reusing tasks created for previous groups.
6. **Flexibility:** Digitalization enables flexible learning formats, including distance learning and online courses. Flexible formats allow individuals to learn at their own pace, regardless of their location or schedule. We call this asynchronous learning. For those who work with self-study courses or writing-based study circles, this can be a suitable option. For those of you who work with group-based learning, it can be more challenging if everyone is not present at the same time. Additionally, it is often more difficult to create a social community if the group never meets in person.

What do I need to know?

The examples of the impact of digitalization require that you pause and consider new possibilities and alternatives.



1. Access to information

Your job will be easier if you know and are confident in using the Internet's search functions to find relevant material, if you can handle larger amounts of information, and can navigate the flow and assess the credibility and level of expertise of sources. To gain these skills, you can either apply for various further training courses, ask colleagues about how they do it, or test your skills online. When you put yourself in the same situation as your course participants, it is easier to identify with them, and their questions will be easier to answer.

2. Interactivity

Interactivity is nothing new. The digital world offers several tools that can facilitate interactivity when used correctly. Here again, it is about trying it out for yourself, and above all, choosing tools with care. What function do they have? How easy or difficult are they for course participants to use? Used correctly, interaction can become an essential part of the course.

3. Adaptation

Do you have course participants with special needs? How can you adapt teaching to individual needs? Can you offer more and deeper content to the learners who work quickly?

4. Co-creative learning

Course participants possess a wealth of knowledge and experience, a goldmine from which you can benefit. Digital tools can lower the threshold for course participants, providing them with a space to share their thoughts and ideas. You need to consider how you will handle various situations that may arise. For example, someone is starting to take up too much space. An online forum can be a valuable platform for course participants to share, but it requires moderation and clear rules of engagement.

5. Automation

Do you save your plans and tasks from previous courses? Can you reuse them? Are there introductory materials and other similar ones that are the same from time to time that you can, for example, make a video (or introductory material) with?

6. Flexibility

Flexibility and individualization go hand in hand. After gaining experience in leading courses and meeting different people, you can develop your course by offering alternative activities, content, or materials. You develop different versions of your materials, make them available via a website or on YouTube. You adapt them for course participants with different interests and preconditions.



Here are some specific skills and competencies that may be valuable to develop:

Communication and collaboration: The ability to utilize digital tools for communication and collaboration with participants and colleagues is essential. Here we are talking about being able to use email, chats, video conferencing, and social media.

Digital pedagogy: Adapting your teaching to the digital environment requires an understanding of digital pedagogy. You need to know how to create engaging and interactive learning materials, as well as how to support participant learning using digital tools.

Information search and evaluation: Being critical of sources is important when using digital resources. It is crucial to be able to find reliable information online and assess its relevance and credibility.

Technical support: Being able to help course participants and colleagues with technical issues is also an important skill. It can range from basic technical support, such as assisting with connecting to the Internet or installing software, to more advanced support, such as troubleshooting problems with software or devices.

Digital security and privacy: Having an understanding of digital security and privacy is also essential, as it protects participants' personal information and prevents them from being exposed to cyber threats.

Finally, you must be prepared to learn about digital tools and technology continually. Technology is constantly evolving, and it is necessary to be flexible and open to learning new things. Developing these skills and competencies can help you function effectively in a digital environment and maximize participant learning and engagement.

TOOLBOX

Learning Platforms, Digital Tools,
and Copyright [↗](#)

(In Swedish)



TOOLBOX

Introduction to AI [↗](#)

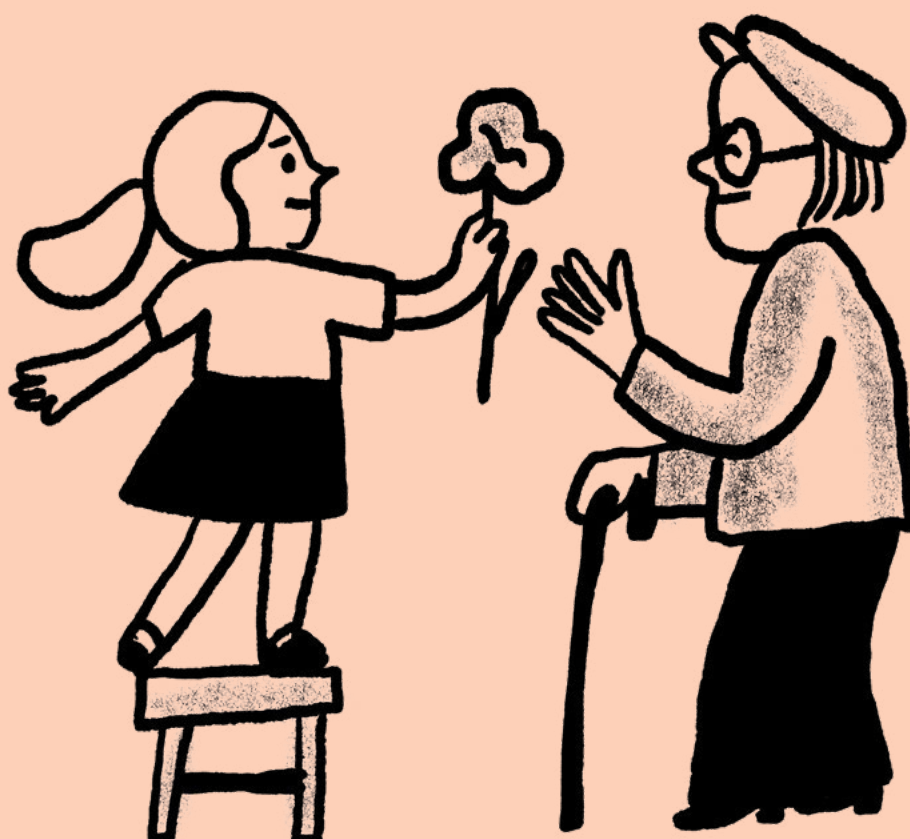
(In Swedish)



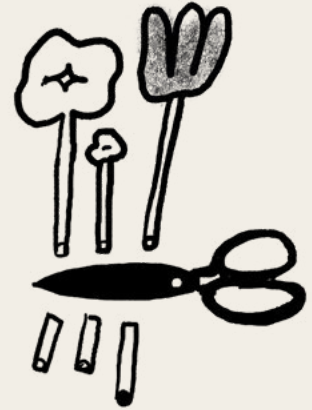
6. Equality and equal treatment

This chapter covers:

- ✓ What equality is and why it is important.
- ✓ How to promote equal treatment.
- ✓ How to promote equal teaching and an accessible learning environment.



SUMMARY



What is equality, and why is it important?

Equal education provides all course participants with the same opportunities for safe learning, regardless of gender, background, or other characteristics.

Discrimination can involve feeling unfairly treated, being uncomfortable, or feeling ignored. You have a responsibility as a teacher or leader to create an equal, open, safe, and welcoming environment for everyone.

How to promote equal treatment?

Equal treatment means that all the course participants have an experience of justice, of being seen and heard, of being of equal value, and of being treated equally. When we succeed in creating an environment based on equal treatment, we also provide the best conditions for participants to learn. We need to be aware of how our unconscious beliefs about the world and our learners contribute to the unfair treatment of them. These beliefs are often rooted in the social power structures.

Both you and the course participants need to become aware of how everyone can unconsciously contribute to unequal treatment or discrimination. Something that may be perceived as polite or humorous by one person may be perceived as a microaggression by someone who belongs to a minority or underrepresented group. More equal treatment requires self-reflection on unconscious beliefs, and that both you and the course participants are prepared to change.

How do you promote equitable teaching and an accessible learning environment?

In equitable teaching, all participants feel included; the material contains representations of diverse identities and perspectives on the world, and these are presented in an equal manner.

Accessibility here is about the opportunity to participate on equal terms. You should consider this when planning, implementing, and evaluating the study activity. You need to make both digital and physical environments accessible to all types of participants. This applies to both methods and approaches when conveying and processing knowledge.

As a teacher/leader, you need to critically examine the material you use in teaching from an equality perspective.

To promote equality, you need to reflect on equal treatment, what inclusive material can look like, and what an inclusive learning environment can mean.

MORE ON THE SUBJECT



What is equality?

The goal of equality work in learning is to provide all course participants with equal opportunities for a safe learning environment. You should actively create and make room for diverse perspectives and all course participants. Everyone should feel included, treated fairly, and valued equally, as part of the group. Equality work is also about ensuring that everyone can effectively absorb the teaching.

Equality means that no one is discriminated against based on age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family circumstances, health condition, disability, sexual orientation, or any other circumstance that applies to the individual as a person.

Discrimination can involve feeling unfairly treated or differently, feeling uncomfortable or invisible, or having one's needs for adjustment not being taken into consideration.

Equal or equivalent treatment?

One method that promotes equality is equal treatment, where we consciously or through various methods focus on treating everyone equally. We are talking about things like giving everyone the same amount of time to speak, asking everyone the same questions, or praising learners in the same way.

Equal treatment can also contribute to discrimination or experiences of discrimination. Let us say, for example, that we demand the same thing from all the course participants, even though one has ADHD and another is neurotypical. It is therefore essential to identify when equal treatment is necessary in the teaching situation and when it is necessary to contribute to equality. Sometimes, positive discrimination and reasonable adjustments are needed to achieve equality because people have different conditions or face particular disadvantages due to their background.

Sometimes, the terms "equal treatment" and "equality" are used synonymously; you should remember that it is not about treating everyone equally in all situations. Working with issues related to equality involves being aware of these differences and making conscious choices to secure and promote equality among learners.

It is your responsibility to create an environment that is equal, open, safe, and welcoming for everyone.

READ MORE:

[Equality.fi](#) ↗



READ MORE:

[Ekvalita: Equality, gender equality, or equal treatment?](#) ↗



How can we promote equal treatment?

It is impossible to meet a new person like a blank sheet. Our treatment of others is influenced by who we are, our background, our experiences, and our beliefs about society and the world. To examine ourselves in those situations, we need to become aware of how social norms affect the way we treat others.

Norms are something we take for granted. They are often implicit and unspoken “rules” for, and expectations of, how we should or should not behave in different situations, as well as how various things are perceived. For example, it can be about what we unconsciously expect, wish, or demand from our course participants, as well as from our colleagues.

Organizations often use a core set of values to help staff create and maintain positive norms in everyday life. For example, it can involve supporting teachers and participants in being more considerate of one another and in creating a sense of well-being and security together.

We also carry harmful norms that are often rooted in society’s power structures. These norms may contribute to creating inequality between us humans.

In a teaching context, it can mean that some course participants or subjects are seen as more important or better, that we assume that our participants have the exact same needs or knowledge background, or we wish Merry Christmas, but never Eid Mubarak, or we assume that someone’s partner is of the opposite sex, or that everyone can stand up and stand.

We contribute to maintaining and recreating these types of norms in our activities both consciously and unconsciously.


We may be partly aware that we have stereotypical prejudices about groups of people, which clearly affect our discussions and our language.

We also have unconscious beliefs about others and the world around us. These unconscious beliefs are the result of mental processes, also known as mental shortcuts, for how we process information. We all carry them, regardless of how much knowledge we feel we have about issues surrounding equality. These prejudices and beliefs manifest in the form of behavioral mistakes in what we say and do, often without our awareness.

We are often sure that we have left these prejudices behind us, or we are not even aware of the prejudices we carry, because they are part of larger societal “narratives” about “how things are and should be.” Unconscious preconceptions can include, for example, the assumption that everyone has attended primary school in Finland, has a functioning body, or is part of a family with a mother and a father.

These stories of what is expected often benefit the majority because they create an idea that their identities, life situations, and characteristics are the “normal”. Stories affect how we speak, how we act, and contribute to unconscious exclusionary actions that limit others’ experience of justice, of being seen, of being of equal value, or of being treated equally.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

Non-formal adult education – equal treatment 
(In Swedish)



To become aware of the harmful norms we carry or the privileged situation we ourselves are in, we can ask ourselves the following questions.

- ✓ How often do you find yourself in uncomfortable situations or become the subject of awkward attention because of the following characteristics: age, origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, health condition, disability, sexual orientation, or another identity?
- ✓ Suppose that, in most cases, I identify with a majority or a well-represented group. How can I become more aware that I and others have not treated minorities or people who belong to an underrepresented group in an equal manner?
- ✓ If I belong to a minority in most cases, how can my experiences of living as a minority help me understand other minorities’ experiences of injustice?
- ✓ In what ways have I previously contributed to everyone not being treated fairly, in situations where conscious and unconscious beliefs have influenced my behaviour?
- ✓ How could I be more attentive to how I treat participants so that they feel that they receive equal treatment from me?

To promote equal treatment, we need to have a good understanding of norms and privileges, and to examine how we contribute to unequal treatment self-critically. Good intentions are not enough if our actions offend another person. We need to learn new ways to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for all. At the same time, it is important to face differences courageously and not contribute to a culture of anxiety. We all make mistakes sometimes and can learn from them. What is better than having our preconceptions overturned or learning new things about other cultures or social groups?

Our treatment of course participants

You are always in a position of power in relation to your course participants. With that position of power comes a responsibility that involves becoming aware of one's own unconscious beliefs and learning not to be controlled by them. For example, this may involve not taking for granted that we can see which gender our participants identify with, that everyone is heterosexual, or that someone does not have a disability just because it is not visible to the outside world.

Unconscious beliefs can take various forms, for example, through microaggression. Microaggression consists of everyday words, actions, and assumptions that convey stereotypical assumptions about groups of people, especially minorities. They are often expressed in good faith and are often associated with humor or politeness. However, the person who is the recipient of a microaggression often experiences it as offensive or uncomfortable.

Microaggressions can be expressed through questions like "Where are you from?" or "Would you like to tell me more about x since you have experience with it yourself?" They can also be comments like "what good Swedish you speak" or "we won't make anyone present uncomfortable with these discussions."

Microaggression is about asking different questions and making different comments than those who belong to the majority. A good trick here is to ask yourself if you would ask the same question or make the same comment to a participant who was not from a minority or underrepresented group.

Microaggressions can also lead to minority stress. Those who experience minority stress carry experiences of or fear of discrimination. This can, for example, lead to pressure to be constantly on guard, to be prepared to face bullying, or to be questioned because of their minority affiliation.

You need to be clear that you do not want to contribute to either microaggression or minority stress, and that you may need help from the participants to make this visible in yourself. This is something you can, for example, address at the beginning of the course. Then discuss why this is important to you and encourage the course participants to support one another in treating everyone equally.

It is never the minority's responsibility to teach the majority; we also need to educate ourselves by reading up on other stories and perspectives, rather than waiting for this knowledge to be conveyed to us by the minority. To succeed with equal treatment, we must both be willing to accept criticism when we fail and be open to learning more and making changes.

Our treatment of others is also about how we allocate speaking turns in the group, how we divide course participants into groups, how we provide feedback, give praise, or highlight course participants' stories, thoughts, and reflections.

We often believe that our treatment of others is fair and that we view each participant as an individual with their own unique needs and strengths. However, research shows that we are strongly influenced by factors such as a person's gender or background. For example, if you have a problem with the computer or projector, who do you ask? Or do you automatically assume that the brown participant will not be able to cope with the tasks as well?

Be careful with generalizations

It is important not to think of everyone in a (minority) group in the same way. For example, the group "people with disabilities" consists of several different minorities who may have very different needs. Being blind, having poor hearing, or being in a wheelchair are not the same thing. Even if you have the same type of disability or diagnosis, your needs may be different.

It can also vary greatly how an individual approaches their minority status. Some are happy to answer questions about their origins, how a gender reassignment process works, or what it's like to live with an intellectual disability. But no one has an obligation to be a representative of a minority.

Remember that everyone is an individual first and foremost.

If you have met a representative of a minority, you have met one representative of that minority.

Support equal treatment among the participants

An important part of your responsibility in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment is to intervene in cases of various offensive actions or comments. You can do this by clearly distancing yourself from what was said or done and referring to the fact that the learning environment should be safe for everyone.

If you are unsure of what a participant said, depending on the situation, you can ask if you heard an offensive comment, ask the participant to repeat what they said, or ask, "Did you do/say x?" to give the participant a chance to explain themselves.

Course participants, like you, often hold unconscious beliefs about each other and other people, which means they may also say or do things without being aware of it. It is essential to consider this when discussing any offenses that have occurred. These beliefs may be expressed during group discussions, during group work, in pair discussions, or during breaks.

For a participant who belongs to a minority or underrepresented group, a study environment can cause a lot of stress. Your task is to create conditions for safer participant encounters. You can promote equality in the treatment of participants with different methods or tools, for example

- ✓ by using safer space principles
- ✓ increasing knowledge of norms and unconscious beliefs in dealing with each other
- ✓ clearly intervening in various offensive situations
- ✓ raising issues related to safety and inclusion during the course

To offer more equal treatment, we need to create a climate where it is acceptable to make mistakes, but where both participants and teachers take responsibility for their own actions and the mistreatment of others.



A more inclusive and accessible learning environment

To ensure that our learning environment is safe, accessible, and inclusive, we need to understand what contributes to learning and what can become a barrier to learning for a course participant.

Inclusive education

Acting equitably in education involves considering that there are many different perspectives on the world and the subjects we teach. Are we speaking exclusively from the Western perspective, is a specific gender or class dominating in the course content, or is there another traditional and limiting perspective on the topic?

Our teaching needs to include raising awareness of how we talk about "us" but also about "the others" and that we should not contribute to the valuation of such a division. Outdated norms and beliefs infiltrate the planning process, are evident in the implementation, and are reflected in the evaluation of our teaching.

The results of these outdated norms and beliefs manifest as a lack of representation in our materials and a narrow scope of knowledge transfer. Finnish teaching materials tend to recreate a white people norm and also recreate other norms, such as the functionality norm, the hetero-norm, and the two-gender norm, and confirm stereotypical gender roles. Therefore, we need to be critical in our planning and review our teaching materials, both our own and those of others, so that they do not recreate and reinforce discriminatory structures.

Sometimes, material assumes the reader comes from a particular background (white, heterosexual, and Christian), holds a specific view of the world (the Western perspective), or is a Finn and familiar with all the cultural codes and references in Finnish culture.

If our teaching only includes one or a few perspectives on ourselves and the world, the transfer of knowledge and thus our learners' view of the world and themselves is limited. Teaching that lacks representative materials and addresses participants in "we" and "them" can create a sense of exclusion or otherness in participants with minority status or who belong to an underrepresented group.

How can we open up, extend, or critique the materials and knowledge we use to create learning experiences that broaden our learners' perspectives on the world and make them feel included fairly and equitably? There are many tips online in Swedish about both challenges and opportunities to approach teaching differently, in a critical manner that

challenges limiting norms and perspectives. Read on and be inspired by the very subjects and themes that you teach.

Accessible teaching environment

An accessible teaching environment is beneficial for everyone, but it is also necessary for some participants to facilitate their learning. Accessible teaching encompasses everything from the opportunity to influence the teaching, its structure, and content to the aids used in teaching and how they are accessible to everyone.

For people with disabilities, accessibility can also be a prerequisite for receiving information in advance about the course or study opportunity, as well as for conveniently entering the study space.

What is accessibility?

You can think of accessibility as the absence of barriers. People with disabilities can face various obstacles in their daily lives as they navigate a society that is not adapted to people's different needs.

EXAMPLES OF DISABILITY BARRIERS:

- ✓ If you use a wheelchair, a staircase or threshold can be a significant barrier for you.
- ✓ If you have difficulty paying attention and sifting through impressions, messy environments can be a disability barrier.
- ✓ If you have poor hearing, a film without subtitles can be a disability barrier.
- ✓ If you cannot absorb information in standard language, difficult-to-understand text can be a disability barrier.

Accessibility is about ensuring that a place, environment, product, or service is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. Accessibility is a broad concept that encompasses several aspects, including:

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

In physically accessible environments, people in wheelchairs, those using crutches, walkers, or strollers, can easily enter and move around. Accessible entrances, elevators or stair climbers, handrails, sufficiently large spaces, and accessible toilets are needed.

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Digital accessibility refers to websites and apps being accessible, i.e., adapted in both their technical and visual design, so that as many people as possible can use them. For example, visual impairment or reduced mobility can affect the use of digital services.

SENSORY ACCESSIBILITY

Sensory accessibility refers to considering individuals who have challenges with their senses and who can easily become overloaded in noisy environments. Here, factors such as lighting, colors, and the sound environment play a central role. Tranquillity and freedom from stress are essential. People with neuropsychiatric disabilities such as autism and ADHD often have sensory hypersensitivity, or impression allergies, also kn. People with, for example, hearing impairments also need sensorily accessible spaces. If the acoustics in space are poor, it may be impossible for them to hear.

COGNITIVE ACCESSIBILITY

Cognitive accessibility means that it is easy to understand and perceive. Information should be easy to understand, instructions should be clear, websites should be easy to navigate, and they should be easy to find. Good cognitive accessibility also means that there is a person to ask questions and that there is enough time for you to think and ask questions if you do not understand. Cognitive accessibility is crucial for people with intellectual disabilities.

TOOLBOX

Questions to help you on your way [↗](#)

(In Swedish)



TOOLBOX

Funkophobia [↗](#)

(In Swedish)



7. Sustainability

This chapter covers:

- ✓ What sustainability is.
- ✓ What sustainability means for learning.
- ✓ How to integrate sustainability into learning.



SUMMARY

What is sustainability?

The most common definition of sustainability is from the Brundtland Report 1987:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainability is about balancing economic, social, and environmental dimensions to create long-term solutions that benefit both society and the planet. Therefore, sustainability is often divided into three, sometimes four different dimensions. They are economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental or ecological sustainability, and, as a fourth one, we can measure cultural sustainability separately from social sustainability.

Another way to concretize sustainability is through the 17 global goals stated in Agenda 2030, which Finnish municipalities and educational organizations have committed to working towards, and which the business community also follows.

What does sustainability mean for learning?

As a teacher, you can integrate sustainability into your course in many ways. One way is to reflect on where you stand in terms of sustainability challenges: What does the word “sustainability” mean to you? What knowledge do you already have, and in what ways do you need to develop your own understanding of the topic (in relation to your subject)? What attitudes and feelings do you have towards issues of sustainability? What challenges do you see, and what opportunities do you see? You can also think more specifically about the course’s impact on the environment, its contribution to social justice and cultural diversity, or its economic sustainability.

Another way you can work with sustainability in education is to discuss your organization's mission with other teachers and staff. Do you have a policy to follow? Are you committed to strategic and systematic work to promote sustainability? In what ways are sustainability issues relevant in your region or your context? What skills development needs are there among those who take part in your courses? In this context, there is also the question of how you, as a teacher, can support others' understanding of how they can act and live more sustainably through your work.

Discussing the mission is about creating an open and responsive working environment where each individual feels respected. It is essential to encourage colleagues and participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. By choosing teaching methods based on dialogue and collaboration, you can welcome diverse perspectives and create a space for learning where everyone can contribute. In this way, you work inclusively, and you increase participation.

In Chapter 3, *Learning Together*, you can read more about creating safe learning environments.

How do you integrate sustainability into your learning?

You can integrate sustainability into both theoretical teaching and practical learning. For example, you can involve the group through interactive exercises and group work. You can also allow course participants to explore and discuss different sustainability issues and find creative solutions together.

MORE ON THE SUBJECT

What is sustainability?

One way to understand sustainability is to create opportunities for people to live together in ways that do not exceed the planet's carrying capacity. We must shape our economic, social, and cultural systems so that they do not endanger planetary boundaries, such as resource use, the climate, or air and water pollution. We need to help each other transform our lifestyle to become sustainable in the long term and contribute to maintaining biodiversity, ensuring that material flows are circular, or reducing our consumption. If you want to learn more about the role of the education sector and the skills that contribute to a sustainable lifestyle, you can read more about the EU's GreenComp initiative.

The four definitions of sustainability:

- 1. Ecological sustainability** focuses on preserving and protecting the environment for present and future generations. We do this by minimizing negative impacts on ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, and using resources efficiently. We adapt human economic and material activities to the carrying capacity of nature.
- 2. Social sustainability** means creating societies that promote justice, equality, and well-being for all their members. It includes protecting human rights, supporting diversity and inclusion, and creating safe and healthy communities.
- 3. Cultural sustainability** is about preserving and promoting cultural diversity, heritage, and identity. It encompasses respect for diverse cultures, preservation of cultural sites and traditions, and the establishment of a social framework that fosters cultural well-being.
- 4. Economic sustainability** means balanced growth that neither depletes natural resources nor increases debt burdens. We achieve this through the efficient reuse and responsible use of renewable natural resources. A sustainable economy is the foundation for social sustainability.

What does sustainability mean for learning?

It can be easy to feel inadequate when it comes to sustainability issues. The topic may feel abstract, or you may find it challenging to make connections to your subject of teaching. Sustainability issues can be anxiety-provoking and overwhelming to deal with as an individual.

If you feel that way, please remember that most of us are already engaged in an ongoing learning process, where as we gain more knowledge of the subject, we also gain more opportunities to act more sustainably. It is also important to seek inspiration and support from others, creating a learning community where we share our feelings and thoughts, exchange practical experiences, and explore alternative ways of acting, both professionally and personally.

Generally, we all do the best we can, given the circumstances we have. Here, we are not about blaming you (or anyone else). Most people want to contribute to building a sustainable world and creating conditions for both people in other places and future generations to live a good life. Try to view sustainability as a challenge, and start, for example, by conducting a "reality check"—an inventory of what your ecological footprint and handprint look like right now.

You may realize that you are already doing a great deal to support sustainability in various dimensions. You may get ideas for minor changes in your own everyday life or in your teaching. You may notice that you already have deep knowledge of one of the four dimensions, but need to learn more about one of the others.

Concerning the ecological dimension, it's about the environmental consequences of our actions. How do our actions affect nature? Which materials and products are as environmentally friendly as possible? What emissions do our choices lead to?

The social dimension of sustainability concerns how our actions and choices affect others, both within our local community and globally. Do you help create a sense of community and cohesion? How do you ensure that everyone feels welcome and treated equally? In what ways do you promote democracy, social justice, or gender equality?

In terms of cultural sustainability, can you focus on cultural heritage and cultural diversity? Can you intentionally incorporate diverse perspectives and promote inclusion in your courses? Can you encourage and practice respect for differences, tolerance, and openness to other views, cultures, languages, and lifestyles?

When we discuss economic sustainability, it is, of course, about using economic resources carefully, but also about thinking in a circular, resource-efficient manner about materials. In addition, one can consider how one relates to (one's own and others') human resources in the form of people's time and energy.

As a teacher, you can, for example, review your course in terms of materials and methods. What impact do the materials you choose have on the environment and people? How do they affect society? Choose sustainable materials and favor local suppliers and products whenever possible. Can you choose reused or reusable materials? If we can reduce waste from local suppliers, we reduce our environmental impact.

If you have the opportunity to choose digital products, it can also help reduce resource use. One way to make more sustainable choices is to think circularly and consider a product's lifespan, reusability, and the materials it is made from, ensuring they are recyclable. When it comes to materials and products, you can think in terms of the 7Rs: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Regift, and Recycle.

You can also consider how your teaching methods can contribute to dialogue and connection, or to exposing people to new ways of looking at the world. Can you design your course in a way that contributes to exploring what a more sustainable lifestyle looks like for individuals, or how a society can become more sustainable?

We can't change everything at once. Small steps and conscious choices contribute to a more sustainable future. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something to help make our common future on Earth sustainable.

How do you integrate sustainability into your learning?

Sustainability can be part of the teaching of both theoretical and practical subjects. Involve the group through interactive exercises and group work. Begin the course by exploring how course participants perceive and feel about sustainability. What is their understanding of sustainability challenges?

What questions do they have? In what ways do they want and can take a step in a more sustainable direction, and how do they see their own preconditions for change? What are the challenges? What are the resources? Provide course participants with the opportunity to explore and discuss various sustainability issues and collaborate on creative solutions.

Make connections between your course content and current events in society, and link them to the sustainability goals outlined in Agenda 2030 or to the EU's GreenComp framework. Discuss how your course contributes to a sustainable future, and engage with the course participants about what they want the world to look like.

In this way, course participants will develop their capacity to envision alternative future scenarios and become actively involved in transforming into a more sustainable society. Feel free to create opportunities for learners to reflect on the fundamental values and attitudes that contribute to or counteract sustainability in individuals and society.

Practical skills courses not only provide opportunities to learn new skills but also provide knowledge on how to reduce consumption, reuse materials, and make conscious choices in everyday life. Skills courses contribute to a broader understanding of sustainability that extends beyond the specific subject. In addition, course participants' ability to practically handle various challenges, solve problems, and "get by" in both everyday life and crises is strengthened, thereby enhancing their resilience.

Remember that we learn with both head, heart, and hand – holistically. Can you use culture and nature in your teaching?

By learning to repair and reuse materials, grow and cook food from scratch, and create your own objects through handicraft techniques, a holistic view of sustainability can be developed and applied at different levels.

This not only promotes a more sustainable everyday life but also a deeper awareness of and commitment to sustainability issues in society as a whole.

Linking the course subject to current events and sustainability-themed days makes it more relevant and engaging. By adapting learning materials and activities to thematic events, the group's engagement and awareness of essential topics may increase.

This not only provides an opportunity to explore the subject from different perspectives but can also help promote a sense of togetherness and responsibility towards global challenges.

Examples of thematic days:

- ✓ Equality Day
- ✓ Baltic Sea Day
- ✓ Waste Week
- ✓ Sustainability Week
- ✓ Overshoot Day – to reflect on our overconsumption.

Reflection questions:

- ✓ What dimensions of sustainability do you recognize in your teaching?
- ✓ How does your teaching affect the people and society it touches? What positive aspects does it entail?
- ✓ How do you choose materials for your teaching? Are there any special measures you take to reduce resource use and waste?
- ✓ What teaching methods do you use? Can you choose more dialogue and collaborative forms? Can you stimulate the creativity and imagination of the course participants?
- ✓ Have you identified a need for improvement measures in your teaching or the environment in which you work? What measures can be taken to change or improve routines?
- ✓ Which people can serve as role models or sounding boards when you develop in a more sustainable direction? Can you invite a community around the theme of sustainability?

Links

SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

Event week for local initiatives and activities. [↗](#)



COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Materials and current events about sustainability. [↗](#)



WORLD 2030

Ministry for Foreign Affairs materials for schools on global development. [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



GREENCOMP [↗](#)



EXTZERIAL

Podcast on sustainability [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



EXTRA MATERIAL

Can non-formal adult education give us a sustainable future? [↗](#)
(In Swedish)



This chapter has been compiled in collaboration with the Rural Policy Network's Sustainability Week – The Countryside as a Guide – and is part of the work to promote opportunities for rural actors to implement sustainable solutions.

About us

Several individuals have contributed to this handbook

You see, this is a revised and expanded version of the handbook *Me as a Teacher*, written and published by Bildningsalliansen in 2013.

The inspired and active group that made this possible consists of

- Johanni Larjanko (Bildningsalliansen)
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In addition,

- Nora Backlund wrote the chapter on sustainability.
- Malin Gustavsson wrote the chapter on equal treatment and gender equality.
- Maria Sann did the illustrations.
- Andrei Palomäki did the graphic design.
- Ant Simons adapted the web design.
- Rabbe Sandelin contributed with comments and editing.
- Christin Furu contributed with additions to the chapter on sustainability.
- Matilda Hemnell supplemented the chapter on equality.
- Viktoriia Tolpegina translated the material from Swedish to English.

Two reference groups have commented on the early drafts of the material and provided suggestions for improvement. Melania Messina, Julia Hemgård, and Andrea Hyninen have participated in the group work.

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