

Part A

Principles

*Last night I heard the bookworm lament to the moth in my library:
I have lived inside the pages of Sina's works
And have seen many volumes of Farabi's writing;
But I have failed to grasp the secret of life,
And my days are still dark and sunless!
The moth replied in a most fitting manner:
You cannot find this secret in a book.
It is yearning that quickens the tempo of life
And endows it with wings to soar.*

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)
from *Message of the East* (Saiyidain 1977)

Chapter 1

Perspectives

1.1 Key Concepts

How to design and deliver training that helps participants to learn? Really learn? Of all the research conducted, training courses delivered, and books and articles written in search of an answer to that question, I find the most profound insight consists of just nine words, attributed to Confucius, the Chinese sage (c. 551-479 BC):

Hear and forget...see and remember...do and understand.

Value that sole nugget for its rich insight. But don't ignore the gold seam hidden below the surface. In this first chapter we dig down into that wealthy lode, exploring how perspectives of learning merge into the practice of training. Those principles shape the terminology we use and the roles of those who facilitate learning. They also influence the Learning System, the way in which training is designed, delivered and managed. Finally, we will take a moment to investigate the implications of the learning patterns of individuals, professions and vocations, and culture.

Although brief, our exploration brings us to the conclusion that learning is a collaborative process in which learners and facilitators of learning are both objects of learning as well as agents of learning. Collaborative learning is at the heart of the Transitional Learning Model, the training model that will dominate our attention. But we start with the development of theory and practice.

1.2 A Little History

At the risk of superficiality, let us scan the history of training theory and practice to understand the undercurrents that edged us to where we are now.

Non-formal Education

Contemporary training processes and methods had their beginnings in a response to social injustice. Down the ages, knowledge and education have been instruments of power and control over social roles and class structures. Bernard de Mandeville (Hopkins 1985) wrote these words in 1714 AD:

To make the society happy and people easy under the meanest circumstances, it is requisite that great numbers of them should be ignorant as well as poor. Knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our desires, and the fewer things a man wishes for, the more easily his necessities may be supplied.... Every hour those of poor people spend at their book is so much time lost to the Society.... Men who are to remain and end their days in a laborious, tiresome and painful station of life, the sooner they are put upon it, the more patiently they'll submit to it for ever after.... Should a horse know as much as a man, I should not desire to be his rider!

Extreme views! Can you imagine any person publicly airing such opinions in our era? Yet, albeit in different forms, similar restrictive attitudes and practices continued into our present age, subjugating many in miserable social conditions.

Throughout the centuries, reformers, indignant at prevailing social inequality, attempted reforms in education and training to bring about change. In the 1970s, in both industrialised and non-industrialised countries, dissatisfaction increased over the role of formal education and how it related to social and economic development goals. Intellectual unrest led to efforts to strengthen education and training methodology. Arguing from his work amongst the poor, Paulo Freire, a Brazilian, articulated and led the criticisms of the effects of formal, structured, didactic teaching, in which participants passively take in information provided by a teacher who decides what is worthwhile and what should

be taught. Freire called it the “banking” approach in which teachers, in the dominant role, deposit knowledge into the mind of the student. Like money deposited in a bank it is controlled and regulated by the depositor.

Other voices were heard at that time but, for our purposes, it is enough to acknowledge Freire as the one who largely influenced non-formal education, particularly when his signature work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was translated into the English language. Non-formal education is distinguished from *formal* education (the structured, organised education system extending from primary school to university) and *informal* learning (the lifelong process of learning by daily experience and exposure to the influences of family, other people, media and so on). *Non-formal education*, an alternative to formal education (Brennan 1997), assumes a training or education methodology that delivers functional knowledge, skills or attitudes to be applied immediately in the day-to-day activities of those who require it.

A Common Thread

If it appears that non-formal education and informal learning and their implications for training are modern, then that is a misconception. Recent history has merely produced a contemporary manifestation and terminology. The premises of non-formal education and informal learning are not new. As The Teacher said, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Socrates (469-339 BC) and Plato (427-347 BC), Jesus Christ, Rousseau (1712-1778), Dewey (1859-1952) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997) are linked by the common thread of viewing learning as instrumental, enabling learners to develop powers of thought and reasoning rather than being passive recipients of knowledge. Discussion, questioning, thinking, drawing conclusions to acquire knowledge, and reconstructing and classifying personal experience, they agreed, are desirable for learning.

An interesting case study is that of Islamic reformers in the Indian sub-continent, who implemented what we would today regard as classic non-formal methods (this was prior to the British Raj, the colonial era that introduced more formal, didactic methods of education). In a lucid

examination of Islamic education Khalid (1983) cites scholars such as Ibne Khaldun (1332-1406) who pursued an educational philosophy of ‘social efficiency’ to ensure that education was related to life, an early version of concepts that were widely promoted in the latter period of the twentieth century. Ibne Khaldun was notorious for criticising the prevailing methods of teaching that demanded students memorise the writings of others. He lamented the curbing of initiative, originality and the power of creation and invention when opportunities were not provided to develop thinking and reasoning. Travel, by the way, was an appealing method he advocated for enriching the first-hand experiences of learners!

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), sometimes called the “thinking poet”, stressed the development of the potential of the learner, to foster originality and uniqueness, self-respect and self-reliance. To kill initiative, he said, spoonfeed learners with theoretical and abstract knowledge through verbal methods. Here is a section from *Message of the East*, a poem in which Iqbal argued that true learning awakens and develops a questioning attitude, refusing to take anything on trust:

Cut your path with an axe of your own
 It is a sin to tread the beaten paths of others!
 If you achieve something unique and original,
 Even a sin becomes a virtue! (Muhammad Iqbal) (Saiyidain 1977)

Empowerment

Iqbal’s poetic word-power lifts us to the pinnacle of awareness that he and others before him had scaled and where others after him would arrive—and where we now sit. At that peak of realisation, we see training from a new perspective. It is more than method (how we do it) or educational psychology (understanding why we use such methods with a given group of learners). Critical to methodology is the purpose or end towards which method is applied. Over time, non-formal education became an

...explosive power process (to assist) the poor and down-trodden majority of the people to organise themselves so as to end the state of injustice in which they have been forced to live. We can call this ‘dialogue and action’, ‘conscientisation’, or, as in India, ‘redistributive justice’. No matter what term we use, non-formal

education is people's power—the power to change society and make it move towards the paths of justice, tolerance, understanding and charity. (Adiseshiah 1980)

Enabling and empowering human beings to achieve their potential is our concern. Training is merely a tool in that process.

1.3 Merging Principle into Practice

Having delved into the seam of gold that is the non-formal education experience we find support for the notion that we cannot eliminate empowerment from the process of learning, opportunities for developing initiative, or of making mistakes and learning from them. That, at least, is the principle and we will merge it into practice

- through the terminology employed throughout this handbook;
- through our role in the training experience; and
- through the Learning System, a complete circuit of learning for both facilitator and learner.

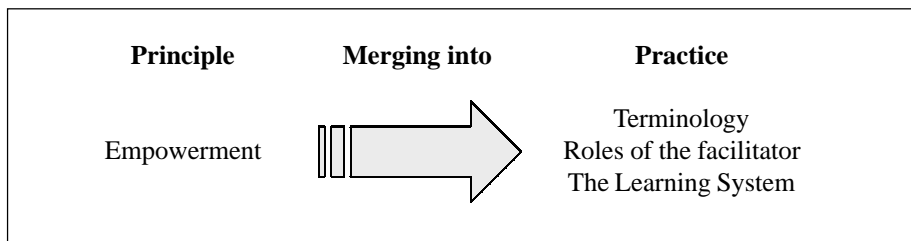


Figure 1.1 Principle Merges into Practice

Terminology

In the following chapters what will we mean by adult education, training, transformational learning, learners, facilitators, transitions and Quality Checks?

Adult Education

Non-formal education refers to training or education methodology outside of the formal, structured education system. It recognises and supports informal learning and does not just replicate the formal system. While adult education shares the philosophic assumptions of non-formal education, it is applied to the vocational training of adults to acquire specific skills, knowledge or attitudes to apply in their workplace. Malcolm Knowles coined the term “andragogy” to distinguish adult education methods from “pedagogical” methods, the education of children. Associated terms for adult education include employee education, worker education, human resource development (HRD), continuing learning and life-long learning. Each implies a process of maintaining learning for specific purposes after formal schooling has ended.

Adult education recognises that:

- learners require a method of learning that accommodates their life experience and for their learning to be related to that background; they ought to be respected for the experience and knowledge they bring to the learning environment;
- adult learners undertake learning to achieve a higher goal or purpose, not as an end in itself.

Training

When we regard, for example, a radio program producer as a “competent interviewer” we are saying the producer has the ability to conduct an interview under certain conditions, to a desirable and required standard, i.e., competence. When we use the term training, we place emphasis on assessing an outcome—competence, performance—to a specific standard. When I use the term training in conjunction with and in reference to the Transitional Learning Model, I assume a methodology that is consistent with non-formal education.

What is the difference between training and education? Education is a product provided by educational institutions to acquire background

knowledge and understanding (such as a radio producer learning about the role of mass media in society, or studying journalism ethics). While this background knowledge is useful and necessary for the function of radio broadcast interviewing, it is indirectly related to the skill of conducting an interview in a specific situation, and that would be the object of training.

Transformational Learning

“Learning” is more than just acquiring information. We already know from communication theory and decision-making models that people perceive and respond in different ways to messages or communication stimuli. Individuals or communities are influenced by predispositions that affect the scope and depth of message exposure, attention, comprehension, retention and response. Similarly, in training we observe that participants do not passively receive messages.

The constructivist theory of learning helpfully explains what occurs. Constructivist theory suggests that people construct knowledge as opposed to merely collecting data. They compare prior individual or social experience and conceptions with present stimuli and refine, re-organise, change, alter and apply them to accommodate the new reality. Learning is an active process of assessing incoming information and re-constructing it. Mezirow (1991) calls this process transformational learning, by which ideas or views or values (Mezirow calls them “meaning perspectives”) are altered or transformed after reflection upon prior experience and previously-held assumptions. The purpose of reflection is to determine whether the new information can be justified and applied to present or future circumstances.

The Transitional Learning Model promotes transformational learning for both training participants and those who conduct training. I will frequently use the term learning throughout this handbook, but when I do, it assumes transformational processes.

Make no mistake about the claim that the Transitional Learning Model promotes transformational learning for both training participants and facilitators of training. The point to be grasped is that they both are objects

of learning as well as agents of learning. This is a reconstruction of Bandura's discussion of reciprocal determinism in social learning theory (Bandura 1986) where he suggests that people are first objects of change, but then they become agents of change when they influence others as they pass on what they have learnt or decided. The Transitional Learning Model regards training participants as objects of learning (a familiar role) but now also as agents of learning (a less familiar role). While we typically regard the one conducting the training as an agent of learning, we now must re-position that person as a learner also, an object of learning.

Learner or Trainee?

Are those who take part in training, students? learners? trainees? or participants? I prefer to use the terms "learners" or "participants" because they connote the active assessment and re-construction of information which is what we mean by learning. I will use both terms interchangeably. "Trainees" or "students", on the other hand, imply a more passive role in instructor-directed training.

Facilitator

The reflexive nature of learner-centredness causes the locus of control to shift in participatory training. No longer should we say that an instructor instructs, or a teacher teaches, because of the implication that instructors or teachers do not learn. My preferred term, facilitator, signals collaboration, cooperation and sharing in the learning process. It stresses mutual interaction and respect between the one organising the learning and the learners. The term resource-person also appropriately conveys the concept of accomplishing the learning needs of the participants.

Transitions and Quality Checks

A caveat is worth making here. Participatory training introduces a degree of uncertainty, because it is less "packaged" than instructor-directed methods. For these reasons—among many others that we soon discuss in detail below—people may not be ready for or prepared to accept the

facilitative role or participatory learning methods. To ease the transition, the Transitional Learning Model uses six distinct transitional stages that incrementally build on 1) the formation of attitudes, 2) the acquisition of a theoretical framework, 3) the performance of behavioural skills, 4) problem-solving, 5) collaboration and teamwork, and 6) initiative and self-responsibility.

As our purpose is for the training experience to be mutually transforming for facilitator and participants as objects of learning and agents of learning, the Quality Check will reinforce critical reflection. The Quality Check is a device that has been placed alongside each transition to foster dialogue and to evaluate the learning process and outcomes at the conclusion of each transition.

Roles of the Facilitator

A fisherman went to a nearby river. He came across a family sitting by the riverside. The head of the family explained that his wife and children were hungry. The fisherman had a choice to make.

- a) Should he catch a fish and give it to the family?
- b) Should he ask the family to help him make a fishing line and show them how to use it?

What option would you choose if you were that fisherman? Option A or Option B? Why?

How do you see your role? Is it that of provider (and catch the fish for the family) or that of a facilitator of a learning process (and show the family how to make and use a fishing line)? If it is that of provider, then you are emulating what Freire called the “banking approach”, simply depositing information into a passive student. If it is that of facilitator, then you

- give priority to the needs, prior experience and informal learning of the learner;
- develop participants’ skills in problem-solving, and in resource management to assess, choose, plan, create, organise and take initiatives;

- deliver concrete experiences that lead to critical reflection and transformational learning in order to applying new skills to day-to-day reality;
- encourage the learner to take more control of his or her learning;
- and foster this by discussion or other activities that develop the capacity for the learner to discover questions to be asked rather than finding “fixed” answers.

Reflecting upon a metaphor to symbolise your perception of your role as a facilitator is a useful, formational exercise (Vermont 1992). For example, a *centre-forward* from the sport of hockey, is responsible for directing the ball into the net but relies on others to bring the ball forward. A facilitator using the *centre-forward* metaphor would direct the experiences, suggestions, ideas or problems raised by participants into productive learning. This implies a spirit of team-ship and coordination between the facilitator and participants to achieve a common goal. On the other hand, a metaphor of a *car mechanic* assumes a role of an expert who will “fix” a training problem by providing all the resources and expertise for a passive student (car owner). The problem will be rectified but the student may need to return to the mechanic again because the student didn’t learn to resolve the problem personally. A colleague used the metaphor of a mother eagle, watching her fledglings tentatively fly their first flight. They trust her because they have already observed her skill in flight. Reassured of her care, they grow daily in confidence and new-found skill.

Metaphor is a useful way to explore the facilitator’s role, as the role, like the metaphor, is diverse and person- and situation-specific. Goad (1982) lists an extensive range of roles: subject-matter expert, counsellor, leader/motivator, learner, psychologist, manager, human being, listener, role model, friend, detail person, handy-person, synthesiser, planner, evaluator, investigator, catalyst creator, thinker, clerk, decision-maker, benevolent dictator and researcher.

Choose a metaphor for yourself from an aspect of daily life, such as business, sport, the family, religion, gardening and so on. Explain how this reflects your role in learner-centred training.

Metaphor	Explanation of role

Roles and metaphors identify what a facilitator *is*. But what does a facilitator *do*?

The Learning System

We have now explored how the principles of learning are reflected in the terms we use and in the roles of a facilitator. But how will principle merge into the practice of what a facilitator *does*? In essence, a facilitator will:

- bridge the gap between facilitator and learners by allowing learners themselves to help the facilitator first understand the learners' situation;
- relate learning to the learners' needs and situation;
- organise the learning in such a way that the participants are looked after and are satisfied with the experience;
- be responsible for the learning content, resources, participants, facilities and accommodation, equipment, time, objectives, training materials;
- assess what participants have learnt and feed that information back into the process in order to provide continuing learning opportunities.

Framing and guiding those activities is the Learning System (Fig. 1.2), a complete circuit of four stages. Those stages are: assess learning needs, design the learning plan, organise and deliver training and follow-through on training. While the four stages are similar to other planning models of training, the difference with the Learning System resides in the underpinning assumptions of the Transitional Learning Model. In this section I will simply introduce the four stages of the Learning System and Part B (Chapters 3-7) will detail in full the relationship between the System and the Transitional Learning Model.

Assess Learning Needs, Stage 1, analyses the working environment to identify whether any training is needed. It may be that some other action will be a more appropriate response than training, such as providing people with more efficient equipment to perform the task. If it is established that training is required, then an assessment is made of the

learner's ability to perform the task. Any findings are to be validated and confirmed.

In Stage 2, *Design the learning experience* a plan is made of training methods (e.g., discussion groups or field-visits) and training resources (e.g., videos, handouts, overhead slides). A course is evaluated in the delivery stage when we ask, What worked well? What could be improved? That evaluation, however, is designed at this point.

The third stage is *Organisation and delivery*. Facilities, resources and equipment, services, administration requirements and documentation are to be organised. Delivery involves carrying out the learning plan and evaluating the course.

Stage 4, *Follow-through*, completes the circuit or loop, forming the four stages into a system of learning. My daughter, Amy, is at the black belt level in one of the martial arts. She tells me that one of the secrets to

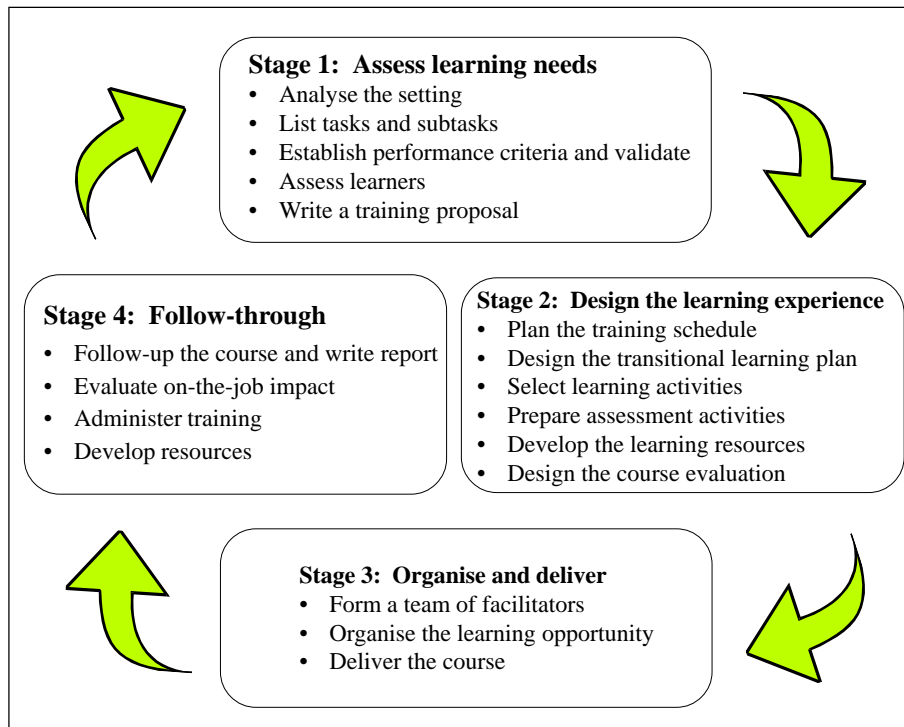


Figure 1.2 Learning System Stages

breaking a slab of wood is to follow-through—to maintain energy and momentum beyond the point of contact, after the foot or hand meets the wood. Our training task does not end with course delivery, the point of contact. We have a responsibility to follow-through, beyond the course. Follow-through involves determining what impact the learning has had back in the workplace, monitoring (to review ongoing organisational and personnel training needs) and resource development (maintaining and developing new training materials). Other activities entail administration, such as maintaining personnel training records, budget management, writing reports. Information from evaluation and monitoring is fed back into the Learning System for action to strengthen and improve future training.

From what you understand of the Learning System at this point, in which stage is your aptitude and experience the strongest?

In which stage do you expect to have to improve your skills and/or change your approach?

1.4 The Learner/Participant Paradigm

Our perspectives of training have been greatly modified in this first chapter. We found that training methodology (the learning process) is to be regarded as an instrument of change. We learned that, when broad principle is merged into practice, it is reflected

- in a distinctive terminology,
- in clear assumptions of the facilitator's role (what a facilitator *is*),
- and in a Learning System (that guides what a facilitator *does*).

And so we are presented with a set of concepts about learning that highlight mutual interaction, cooperation, respect and collaboration.

The Learner/Participant Paradigm (Fig. 1.3) makes a sharp distinction between a learner/participant and a student/trainee. The learner is firmly positioned as a participant in and a catalyst for change, involved in the process. The facilitator's role is firmly defined as collaborative and

facilitative. The purpose is transformation, as learning takes place over time. Learners (objects of learning) are facilitators (agents of learning) and the facilitator (an agent of learning) is a learner (an object of learning). It is a “learning between equals”, as Freire perceived it, a spirit of reflection and regeneration.

Learner/participant	Student/trainee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners are participants • Learners are a catalyst for change • Listen to the learners • The facilitator facilitates learning: learning from and with the learners • Focus is on transformation: empowering, enabling • Learning is seen as a process (“We collaborate together over time”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is uninvolved • Student is an object to change • Listen to the instructor • The instructor passes on information • Focus is on transmission of information • Teaching is seen as an event (“We give them the information they need”)

Figure 1.3 The Learner/Participant Paradigm

Positioning learner and facilitator as objects of learning as well as agents of learning is a profound insight, but fraught with risk in real time and space at the interface between principle and practice.

1.5 Learning Styles

Ideals of empowerment through participatory, learner-centred training are not always realised. Firstly, if decision-making and functional roles are tightly controlled by the administration and organisational structure empowerment may not be readily implemented in the workplace. Only management commitment to training policy will allow newly acquired learning to be put into practice. But we must wait until Chapter Seven to pursue that particular point. A second reason for participatory learning ideals not being achieved may be due to mismatching patterns of learning that are characteristic of individuals, professions or vocations, and culture.

Before reading about learning styles, reflect on your past learning experiences. The right column contains typical responses to the scenarios. Write your responses in the centre column.

Scenario	Your response	Typical responses
A learning experience I enjoyed, found fulfilling and was relevant to me:		Well presented by a competent, enthusiastic facilitator. I wanted to learn the new material. It was non-threatening. My hidden skills were revealed. I got a lot of feedback. I could put it into practice.
A learning experience I did not enjoy, found it disappointing and unfulfilling, and was not relevant to me:		The instructor didn't explain what was required. The instructor didn't seem to know any more than I did. I was left to "pick up" things. There was no clear direction. Little support and interaction between the training department and other departments. No hands-on experience was provided before the practical assignment. The instructor seemed to have "favourites" among the participants. I was learning things I knew I'd never use. Content was pitched below my needs.
One thing I am good at doing:		
How I learnt it:		By doing it. Trial and error. Observation.
Why I learnt it; what motivated me to learn it:		Desire. Wanted to help others. Self-expression. Needed it at work. Wanted to improve my performance.
What the benefits were of learning it:		I was able to encourage others. Helped me improve my work. Had more control by being able to do it myself instead of relying on others. It was cheaper and quicker to do after I learnt to do it myself.

How does your experience compare with others? Whether similar or not, the point is that we learn in different ways and respond to learning situations differently, for different reasons. Learner-centred training design and delivery will strive to accommodate the range of learning styles.

Individuals

Individuals may prefer particular learning styles because of the way they personally absorb information or learn. Some will actively look for concrete experience. Others prefer to sit back and, in reflective observation, watch others do it first. Some like to start deductively with abstract concepts and theory before moving to the practical. Others prefer the inductive method to gain practical experience first and then learn theory. While some like to know everything related to a particular task, that only confuses others who want to focus on the central task. And, if there are some who want to experiment with alternative ways of doing things, others will want to learn about one, proven method, and stick to it.

Conflict will arise within a facilitator who is disposed toward a particular style. One colleague whose preferred training style is informal, tried to adopt a more formal approach where it was expected but she found her poise, confidence and delivery was affected by the internal tension that arose within her.

Professional/Vocational

Some professions or vocations give priority to particular learning methods because of the way they use information. The creative arts tend toward experimental, reflective learning. Biological and mathematical sciences need equations, formulae and classifications to be programmed through rote learning. In Pakistan health educators and radio programmers differed in the way they perceived the relevance of learning methods to their vocations (James 1996a). Respondents generated a list of 15 methods and rated them according to their perception of professional relevance. Health educators and radio program producers rated only four of the 15 methods equally. The remaining 11 methods were rated quite differently. For example, a checklist was the first choice of radio producers but was rated tenth by health educators while role-play was the second choice of health educators but the eleventh preference of radio producers.

Cultural

Culture is central to learning processes. Some societies actively encourage problem-solving, initiative and self-responsibility for learning. In other cultures, learning systems and methods tend to be more formal, instructor-directed and content-oriented, primarily relying on lecturing and rote-learning. The extremes are contrasted as, “Here is the information, take it if you think it will benefit you” (learner-centred) and, “Here is what you need; take it and remember it” (instructor-centred).

<p>Instructor status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A loss of status is perceived if the instructor does not remain as the source of knowledge to be acquired. • Participatory learning approaches may be perceived as incompatible with their status or job. • Some may have strong expectations that neither they nor their authority are to be challenged and that their authority is lessened when they are listening rather than talking.
<p>Knowledge status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High values may be placed on academic or intellectual achievement (learning <i>about</i> the subject by rote-memorisation of facts, being able to reproduce the knowledge) while practical learning (the ability to demonstrate <i>how to do</i> it) may be disdained or neglected. • Where individual performance or individual success is valued, group work can be a threat and lead to inadequate and unsatisfactory group participation.
<p>Change in the relationship between learning-provider and learner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-centred methods assume co-responsibility for learning between the facilitator and the learner. This change in relationship, however, can confuse participants from an instructor-directed background who are more dependant on “packaged” lectures being handed down. • It may be perceived that the facilitator, who has expert or specialist knowledge, is deliberately withholding information. • There is strong evidence that learners who are more familiar with the close direction and guidance of instructor-centred methods become disoriented by the less-directive role of a facilitator who employs problem-solving methods.

Figure 1.4 Cultural Dimensions to Learning

While contrasted positions usefully make a point, they also mislead. It is wrong to assume that orientations to learning or expectations of learning cannot change. Indeed, studies prove the contrary. Researchers find learning orientation is more influenced by the learning environment than as inherent characteristics of individuals or groups. Learning style differences between ethnic groups can vary as much between individuals within groups, as between ethnic groups (Dunn and Griggs 1990). Clear differences existed between health education officers and radio program producers but within those groups, individuals varied in their learning preferences (James 1996a).

The current picture of participatory training within cross-cultural frames of reference is rather sketchy, because not enough research has been conducted in the field. More information is needed. We do know, however, that prevailing attitudes or values influence perceptions of the status of instructors, knowledge and the relationship between those involved in the learning process. Figure 1.4 summarises cultural dimensions to learning, extensively discussed elsewhere (James 1996b).

To what extent is your own training situation influenced by issues of instructor status, knowledge status or relationship? What other cultural issues are involved?

Misunderstanding and frustration will occur when participatory methods are transferred without accounting for cultural considerations. The following three accounts are based on actual experiences reported by practitioners working cross-culturally.

Not Prepared?

The facilitator decided to model participatory methods in the Training of Trainers workshop. Rather than merely follow her own prepared plan for the opening session, she asked the participants to suggest components they had experienced during opening sessions attended in the past. “Get to know you exercises”, said one participant. “Decide the start and close times, and times for breaks,” a second contributed. With all suggestions written on the board, the facilitator asked for their help to sequence them. Finally, she began the opening session—following the order of the components suggested by the participants themselves. At the end of the four-day workshop she was surprised to learn that the participants had (at first) been uncomfortable with the opening session. They thought she

was unprepared. After all, here she was, asking them questions as to how to start a training course! Only afterwards did they realise she was modelling a style they had not previously experienced—participatory learning. (In fact, the facilitator had her own plan for the opening session in case the participants did not participate.) Later, the facilitator realised she should have first prepared the participants by making them aware of traditional non-formal learning patterns in their society, such as stories, nursery rhymes, proverbs etc. Drawing out and discussing these methods could have been followed by an explanation of participatory, learner-centred training and its benefits.

What else could the facilitator have done to prevent or settle this situation? Have you experienced a similar incident? How was it resolved?

Protest!

At an in-service training course, the facilitator persevered with problem-posing and participatory learning techniques as best he could. The participants weren't responsive and they went on strike, protesting at the unfamiliar methods. They were in class to learn, they said, by listening to a lecture, taking notes and receiving a handout of the lecture. How could they pass the examination if there was nothing to memorise? They returned to class after the institution's management explained that the learning methods were a part of the new training policy and that it had the support of line-management. The participants were assured the new methods would help them learn more effectively, and that the assessment of their work would be appropriate to the methods. The participant who organised and led the protest later became the facilitator for that same training course.

The facilitator realised he could have avoided misunderstanding by arranging for management to explain and sanction the new methods at the beginning of the course. Participant fear of failing an exam driven by rote-learning would have been reduced if the facilitator had shown how new competency-based assessment would accompany the new learning methods. The facilitator also adjusted his delivery after talking over his problems with others who understood the culture. He now understood the reluctance to answer questions was because the participants felt threatened by the possibility of losing "face", or esteem, if they got an answer "wrong". Earlier, he had been frustrated that only one man was answering questions and sometimes only after discussion with other participants. Other participants frequently whispered the answers across the room to him. The facilitator now understood this man was from the highest social class and so was regarded as the spokesman by the other participants, who were from lower levels in the hierarchical social structure. Another puzzling issue was explained. The facilitator had been unaware that, in this culture, it was not appropriate for the females in the class to reveal they had more ability and understanding than

the males. That, he realised, was another factor causing females to remain silent when he'd asked a question. He tried two methods to introduce a climate of openness that would allow females to contribute. The first method was to ask for anonymous, written answers to some questions, in the initial stages of the training. He soon found he could organise males and females into separate groups. It did not take long for all participants to freely participate in discussion and problem-solving.

*What else could the facilitator have done to prevent or settle this situation?
Have you experienced a similar incident? How was it resolved?*

A-grade Student!

The participant burst into the facilitator's room. He stood in the doorway, trembling. His face was livid with rage. He waved his newly-graded assignment in the air then flung it to the ground. "What's the meaning of this?" he demanded angrily. "I'm an A-grade student! I don't get C's! I'm more senior to the others in the class." The facilitator explained that the assignment was not correctly completed. Unplacated, the participant stomped off down the corridor, leaving the assignment strewn on the floor. The facilitator realised he had not considered that senior, more experienced participants would be threatened by loss of face if they did not perform well or better than their juniors and subordinates, attending the same course. He took three decisive actions. Firstly, he cancelled the grading system and changed the assessment to pass/fail based on whether the assignment was done or not. Secondly, one-to-one tutorials with individual participants were introduced to privately discuss and remedy weaknesses in their submitted work. Thirdly, participants were organised to work with each other at their level of seniority. The facilitator resolved to ensure that future training would more closely consider the issue of mixing senior management and junior staff.

*What else could the facilitator have done to prevent or settle this situation?
Have you experienced a similar incident? How was it resolved?*

1.6 Pulling it Together

Following chapters will revisit issues raised in these case-studies. My purpose in drawing attention to them at this point is to demonstrate the disorientation and misunderstanding that can affect both facilitator and learners, when participatory learning methods are inappropriately applied. Any uncomfortable fit, however, is resolved by the Transitional Learning Model, the organising framework or structure that carries theory into practice.