The teaching and learning environment, behaviour and respect, equality and diversity

This handout will cover:

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- Physical, social and learning aspects
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Teaching and learning environments

A suitable learning environment is crucial for effective learning to take place. Teaching and learning can take place anytime and anywhere, for example: the workplace; colleges, adult and community learning centres; training organisations; within the forces or prisons; public, private and voluntary sectors. This involves not only the venue, but the rooms and resources used:

- rooms can include: classrooms, workshops; the workplace; outdoor environments
- resources: equipment; teaching, learning and assessment materials.

You may be restricted by the availability of some rooms or resources; therefore you need to be imaginative with what you do have. Your learners don't need to know any problems your organisation has, as your professionalism should enable you to teach your subject effectively. However, you do need to take into account any health and safety issues and let your organisation know of any concerns.

You need to establish a purposeful learning environment where your learners feel safe, secure, confident and valued. The venue, toilets and refreshment areas should be accessible and suitable to everyone. If your session includes a break, make sure you tell your learners what time this will be and for how long. If you don't, learners may not be concentrating on their learning but thinking about when they can go to the toilet or get a drink.

If you are teaching a practical subject, you will need a suitable environment so that you can demonstrate and your learners can practise. If you are teaching a theoretical subject, you may be fine in a classroom but you might need a computer, projector and interactive whiteboard. You might be delivering a seminar in a venue you have never visited before. If this is the case, it would be useful to telephone or visit in advance to check what facilities are available.

Creating a good first impression, being organised and professional should help your learners feel they are in getting a quality service.

Room layouts

If you are teaching indoors, an important influence upon the way your session progresses and how you and your learners can communicate will be the room layout. You may not be able to control this if the furniture is in fixed positions.

If you can, it is best to create an environment where learners can communicate with each other and see everything you are doing. Whilst you may be very good at teaching your subject, you might have no control over the environment and will need to create a suitable atmosphere. If you can make your session interesting and varied, your learners will enjoy the experience and remember more about the subject and you, rather than the environment or lack of facilities.

Room layouts will have an influence on the teaching and learning process and the way learners interact with each other and the teacher.

Example layouts:

• Desks in rows - classroom style layout
• Desks in groups – e.g. a few chairs around a table, known as a cabaret or cafe style
• Horseshoe style – U shaped table with chairs outside
• Boardroom style - a large table with chairs all the way round
• Other styles e.g. informal, seminar, no tables, lecture style.

Physical, social, and learning aspects

The environment has three aspects: *physical, social* and *learning*.

• Physical - the room and resources should be appropriate and safe i.e. ensure the seating arrangements are appropriate; enable access to learning resources, refreshments and toilet facilities, check heating, lighting and ventilation.

- Social - learners should know that you, their peers and others if necessary, will make their time supportive and productive i.e. ensure all learners can work comfortably together.
- Learning - your session should have a clear aim and convey how your learners will be supported towards achievement i.e. set clear targets, recap regularly, encourage, motivate and praise learners.
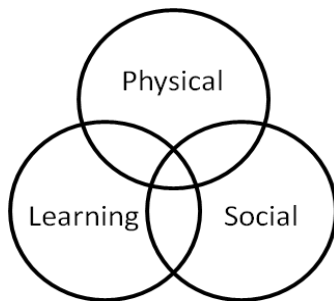
Each aspect has an impact on the others and is equally important when planning your sessions.

The *physical* environment is about the surroundings within which learning takes place, this need not be a traditional classroom but could be outdoors or another setting. The temperature, lighting and the area designated for learning can all affect the learning that takes place.

You may need to close blinds to block out the sun, open a window to let in fresh air or even tidy rubbish away that has been left by the previous learners.

The *social* environment is about how you put your learners at ease, establish a rapport with them and help them work together.

The *learning* environment is concerned with giving your session a sense of purpose and direction by having clear aims, using suitable teaching and learning approaches, resources and assessment methods.

Health, safety and learner welfare

Learners are entitled to learn in a safe and healthy environment. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASAWA), health and safety is your responsibility as well as your organisation's. If you see a potential hazard, do something about it; don't wait for an accident to happen.

Your learners may need to wear protective clothing or use hazardous substances for some activities; you will therefore need to find out what your organisation's procedures are for these. You might be using electrical equipment which will need regular checks by an appointed person in your organisation. You also need to make sure that any floor surfaces are not slippery, that any trailing wires are out of the way and any equipment your learners will be working with is safe and reliable. If you are teaching a subject that could be dangerous or hazardous, you may need to carry out risk assessments which should be documented. You could include your learners in this process to help them identify any issues or concerns, prior to their use.

You should familiarise yourself with your organisation's Health and Safety Policy and any other relevant legislation. You may have learners who have individual needs

such as epilepsy or diabetes. It is important to know who they are, what you need to do, and who you need to contact in case of an emergency.

You will need to know your organisation's accident and fire procedures such as the location of fire exits and meeting points, extinguishers and first aid facilities. You should inform your learners of these during their first session with you. If you have any learners requiring any support for any reason, you will need to know who you can refer them to. If you have any learners who started late, you should always give them this information when they commence. You could include it in an induction handout or it may already be in a learner handbook they have been given.

Learner behaviour

Learners should demonstrate appropriate behaviour when they are attending sessions, not only towards their peers, but towards the teacher and others in the organisation.

Examples of appropriate learner behaviour include:

- adhering to the agreed ground rules
- arriving on time
- being polite to others
- bringing the correct items to sessions
- not acting inappropriately
- not swearing, bullying or belittling others
- submitting work on time.

Ways to improve appropriate behaviour

Communication is the key to managing and improving behaviour and disruption during sessions. It should always be appropriate and effective, and to the level of your learners. To get through a session without any behaviour issues or disruptions would be wonderful, but this very rarely happens. Usually, disruptions or changes in behaviour occur because a learner doesn't follow the ground rules; for example, they use their devices to send messages to friends. If this is the case, politely ask them to stop, remind them of the ground rules, and inform them how they are disrupting their peers' learning.

Other occurrences happen because learners are bored, they don't understand what you are saying, their attention span is different, or you are not challenging them enough. You could give an alternative activity to stretch and challenge learning, get them involved with other learners, or have a quick one-to-one chat to find out why they are behaving that way.

Whatever the disruption might be, you need to handle it professionally to minimise any effect it may have on teaching and learning. Don't just ignore the behaviour, address it immediately. However, with experience you will realise that some things can be ignored, providing this does not affect the safety of your learners (e.g. if a couple of learners are whispering and you know it will stop soon).

You may find it useful to maintain a record of the behaviour of your learners during your sessions to help you prepare for future incidents. For example, do certain learners become disruptive after a certain time period has elapsed; when seated in particular combinations with others, when asked to carry out a theory task, or when practical activities are taking place? This information can be useful when planning future sessions, for example, the timing of breaks, the use of energiser activities or planning group work.

Behaviour patterns could highlight the need for additional support as disruption could be a way of asking for help. This is something you will learn to notice with experience.

You should lead by example and always be polite, show respect and say *please* and *thank you* to help encourage this behaviour in your learners.

Ways to improve appropriate behaviour include:

• being well organised and enthusiastic
• challenging inappropriate behaviour as it occurs
• having a genuine interest in your learners, and passion for the subject
• including all learners during discussions and activities
• keeping your sessions active wherever possible
• not showing favouritism, losing your temper or making threats
• teaching and assessing your subject in an interesting and challenging way
• trying to have a positive approach, praising performance and good behaviour, and being consistent and fair to everyone.

Ultimately, you need to find your own way of dealing with situations based upon your experiences.

Respect

You might have your own definition, or you could research different definitions to help you understand the term further.

Respect is...admiration felt or shown for someone or something that you believe has good ideas or qualities.

Cambridge Online Dictionary http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/respect_1?q=respect

Ways to improve respect

• don't be overly judgemental
• encourage trust, honesty, politeness and consideration towards others
• listen to others' points of view
• value others' opinions and don't impose your own upon them
• treat everyone as an individual.

Motivation

Motivation is either *intrinsic* (from within), meaning the learner wants to learn for their own fulfilment or *extrinsic* (from without), meaning there may be an external factor motivating the learner, for example, a promotion at work or a pay rise. Some learners may seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need or expect you to inspire, challenge, engage and stimulate them.

Whatever level of motivation your learners have will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens during their learning experience with you. You therefore need to promote a professional relationship that leads to individual learning and trust.

Many factors affect a learner's motivation to work and to learn, for example, interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, a general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. Not all learners are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants. Some of your learners will be motivated by the approval of others, some by overcoming personal challenges.

To help motivate your learners you can:

• make tasks interesting, practical and relevant
• negotiate clear targets
• maintain an organised and orderly atmosphere
• treat learners with respect and as individual
• vary your teaching approaches to reach all learning preferences
• give praise and encouragement
• ask open questions (not closed questions which just lead to *yes* or *no* responses)
• be aware of attention span limits
• support those who need help
• give ongoing constructive feedback.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow introduced a *Hierarchy of Needs* in 1960 after rejecting the idea that human behaviour was determined by childhood events. He felt that obstacles should be removed that prevent a person from achieving their goals. He argued there are five

needs which represent different levels of motivation which must be met. The highest level was labelled *self-actualisation*, meaning people are fully functional, possess a healthy personality, and take responsibility for themselves and their actions.

He also believed that people should be able to move through these needs to the highest level provided they are given an education that promotes growth.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs expressed in educational terms

When learners satisfy their needs at one level, they should be able to progress to the next. Something may set them back a level, but they will keep striving upwards. It is these needs that motivate learning to take place. However, some people may not want to progress through the levels, and may be quite content where they are at that moment in their life.

Always try to establish a purposeful learning environment where your learners can feel safe, secure, confident and valued. To help your learners' motivation, always ensure that the learning environment you create meets your learners' first level needs. This will enable them to feel comfortable and secure enough to learn and progress to the higher levels. You will need to appreciate that some learners may not have these lower needs met in their home lives, making it difficult for them to move on to the higher levels.

You can help meet your learners' needs at each level by:

- first level: allowing access to refreshments
- second level: discussing any concerns they may have
- third level: using icebreakers to help ensure everyone gets along
- fourth level: making the learning relevant,

- fifth level: assessing and giving feedback.

Equality

Equality for learners is about their right to have fair access to attend and participate in their chosen learning programme. This should be regardless of age, ability and/or circumstances. However, there could be certain entry requirements which might need to be met for some qualifications or courses. Equal opportunity is a concept underpinned by legislation in most countries.

The Equality Act (2010) replaced all previous anti-discrimination legislation and consolidated it into one act for England, Scotland and Wales.

There are separate requirements in Northern Ireland: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: http://www.equalityni.org/site/default.asp?secid=home

In countries outside the UK, there will be different legislation. If this applies to you, you might like to research what the current legislation is and how it has an impact.

The Act provides rights for people not to be directly discriminated against or harassed because they have an *association* with a disabled person, nor must people be directly discriminated against or harassed because they are wrongly *perceived* as disabled. Reasonable adjustments must take place to lessen or remove the effects of a disadvantage to a learner with a disability.

Reasonable adjustments can include:

- Ensuring access to areas, rooms and toilets
- Offering facilities to meet various needs, for example, diet options, prayer rooms, handouts in different fonts/sizes/colours, adjustable desks, lifts, loop/minicom systems, interpreters etc
- Using activities that everyone can participate in and that do not exclude anyone for any reason

Diversity

Diversity is about valuing and respecting the differences in people, regardless of ability and/or circumstances, or any other individual characteristics they may have. If you have two or more learners, you will experience diversity. Learners are entitled to be treated with respect, with their differences acknowledged and taken into consideration.

Examples of differences include:

ability, age, belief, colour, class, clothing, confidence, culture, disability (physical or mental), domestic circumstances, educational background, ethnic origin,

experience, gender, intelligence, nationality, physical characteristics, race, religion, sexual orientation, social class, talent, wealth.

Combined together, equality and diversity will help embrace learners' experiences, cultures and differences. This should enable each individual's maximum potential to be achieved in a safe and positive learning environment. In a diverse and multicultural society, recognising and accepting individual differences is part of embracing equality and diversity.

Promoting equality and valuing diversity

You should be positive and pro-active where equality and diversity are concerned. You may have to challenge your own attitudes, values and beliefs. As a professional, you are first and foremost a teacher, and your personal opinions must not interfere with the teaching, learning and assessment process.

If you ever feel unsure as to whether you, or other learners and colleagues are valuing equality and diversity, just ask yourself the following:

- Is this fair?
- How would I feel in this situation?
- Would I want to be treated this way?

If your answer is a negative one, then make sure you do something about it. However, you may not always have the answer to these questions, especially where there is a difficulty in meeting the conflicting needs of learners.

Always include learners in relevant activities during sessions, and throughout the full learning process, rather than excluding anyone for any reason. The best way to ensure this is to ask them what they need. If asked, learners will usually say what their needs are, whether that is from a religious or cultural point of view, or if they have a particular need in terms of a disability or otherwise such as poor English. However, it's difficult to help learners if they don't state any specific issues, needs or concerns they might have.

You could:

- Have a positive attitude and the ability to be proactive rather than to be reactive to situations.
- Deal with any issues of harassment, discrimination, stereotyping or bullying which might occur within your sessions, as soon as possible.
- Remind learners that their point of view is not necessarily the same as others
- Ensure that all your learners' experiences are acknowledged, included and valued.
- Hold theme weeks based on different cultures, religions, disabilities etc.

- Plan your scheme of work to include aspects such as special dates/religious holidays, and plan activities around them e.g. Chinese New Year.
- Plan your sessions to use differentiated activities and resources.
- Be consistent and fair with all assessment decisions.
- Create resources in accessible fonts (most could be available in electronic format for easy access and adaptation).
- If printing handouts, use pastel coloured paper for everyone - this helps a learner with dyslexia and doesn't single them out.
- Use a range of teaching styles.
- Face your learners when speaking to them.
- Use group tutorials as a forum for activities and discussions.
- Create an environment free of prejudice, discrimination and harassment, where learners can contribute fully and freely, and feel valued.
- Agree ground rules and establish acceptable behaviour.
- Use icebreakers to help learners get to know each other.
- Share your resources and collaborate with others to create new ones e.g. quizzes.
- Know about your organisation's policies and procedures for dealing with your learners' complaints. This should have been shared with learners during the induction process.
- Treat any complaints seriously, regardless of who brings them, and investigate the complaint thoroughly.
- Deal quickly and firmly with anyone who acts inappropriately.
- Deal with matters informally and internally if possible. The solution may be as simple as pointing out to a learner the effect that their behaviour has on others and asking them to stop.
- Mix learners during group activities so that everyone has the opportunity to work with others.

Reading list

Bates B (2019) *A Quick Guide to Behaviour Management* London SAGE Publications

Cowley S (2014) *Getting the Buggers to Behave* London Bloomsbury

Ellis S (2014) *Promoting Behaviour for Learning in the Classroom Abingdon* Routledge

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE Publications Ltd

Gravells A & Simpson S (2012) *Equality and Diversity in the Lifelong Learning Sector* London Learning Matters SAGE

Hook P & Vass A (2011) *Behaviour Management Pocketbook* Alresford Teachers' Pocketbooks

Malone T (2019) *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: A Practical Guide* Independently published

Mansell S (2019) *50 Teaching and Learning Approaches* London SAGE Publications Ltd

Maslow A (2013) *A Theory of Human Motivation* USA Wilder publications

Plevin R (2019) *Take Control of the Noisy Class* Carmarthen Crown House Publishing

Plevin R (2018) *Motivate the Unmotivated* Carmarthen Crown House Publishing

Rogers B (2015) *Classroom Behaviour* (4th Edn) London SAGE Publications

Spenceley L & Wallace S (2014) *Inclusion in Further Education Northwich Critical Publishing*

Vizard D (2012) *How to Manage Behaviour in Further Education* London SAGE Publications

Wallace S (2013) *Managing Behaviour in Further and Adult Education* London SAGE Publications

Wallace S (2017) *Motivating Unwilling Learners in Further Education* London Bloomsbury Education

Website list

Behaviour Management theorists - https://behaviourmanagementreport.weebly.com/key-theorists.html

Classroom management free resources - http://www.pivotaleducation.com/free-resources/

Classroom management - https://www.weareteachers.com/what-is-classroom-management/

Disability Equality in Education – www.worldofinclusion.com/inclusion_education.htm

Equality and Diversity Forum (Equally Ours) – www.edf.org.uk

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

Motivating students - http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/motivation.html

Reading list for behaviour and motivation - www.anngravells.com/reading-lists/behaviour