

# **i-WOBAL**

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### **References**

## **T.G.1: Adult Learning**

### **1.1. Personal and professional strengths**

In the research literature, adult learners are described as a very distinct group. This entails that no two individuals are alike, due to their previous learning experiences inside and outside of various institutions and organisations. Adult learners are seen as autonomous, independent and self-directed learners, which means that they can deal with content in very different and elaborate ways. Their learning is usually goal-oriented and aimed at achieving results, relevant outcomes and practical applications, because they usually start a learning process to achieve a specific end. They want to achieve something; gaining knowledge to enhance either their personal or their professional lives.

Adult learners' main strength lies within their motivation. They are voluntary learners and their motivation is often intrinsic (they are personally interested in the subject). However, extrinsic motivation such as an expected increase in salary or a bonus may be an important motivator in the professional context (Kapur, 2015; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014; Pappas, 2013, Tight, 2012).

Before committing to starting training, adult students thoroughly analyse the labour market and have their professional projects validated by the relevant actors (company, funding source, other professionals...)

Prospective students need to know the implications and benefits of their future training. They are also often more autonomous and motivated in their learning processes. That's why 'learning' should meet to their real needs in a specific, efficient and rapid manner.

### **1.2. Career prospects**

Adult learners usually have a clear purpose when they decide to study, and this influences their motivation levels. Their motivation seems to be based on their context that is, it is instrumental. Professional training meets the real needs of the labour market. Professionally trained learners have a better chance of finding work. At the end of their training, initially they often work for temporary work agencies, before moving on to permanent contracts.

There seem to be four main reasons why adults join study programmes (Burns, 2020; Hegarty, 2011; Pavi, 2018):

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- They need to fulfil a job requirement. Some adult learners need additional qualifications or certificates to comply with their job requirements. Their motivation to learn is therefore directly tied to an occupation.
- Some adults want to earn a degree. This degree may help them to progress in the job they currently have by improving their job skills and developing new ones. This may also enhance their chances to find a better job outside of their current company, but within the same profession.
- Another reason may be to gain new learning because they want to change their profession.
- Adults simply learn on an ongoing basis. This is an intrinsic motivation, which means that adults engage in learning in order to fulfil a personal need to enhance their knowledge.

### 1.3. Professional experience expected

Adult learners are most often persons who have already started a career. They already have professional, social and personal responsibilities and will therefore already have acquired some techniques on how to deal with the different demands made of them. They also know how to organise their learning and can integrate new content quickly into their existing knowledge.

Having work experience is a major advantage for adult students. Whether or not their professional experience directly relates to their studies, it can help understand the relevance of classroom lessons in a real-world context.

When adults understand that age and life experience are resources for further learning, they become better learners. They are highly successful when they develop learning objectives for themselves that directly match their language needs. It also makes a difference if course content is closely related to an individual's past experiences and present concerns.

In all cases, before starting a training programme, adult learners must meet professionals in the field and carry out business surveys, and therefore engage in an internship (observation or practice) in a company in this field for a few weeks.

### 1.4. Support system needed

Since adult learners have vast experience, they can be less open minded and therefore resistant to change, which means that facilitators should help them link old concepts to new ones and support adult learners to integrate the new learning contents into their existing knowledge.

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Facilitators must respect adult learners' great amount of experience and knowledge. This must be tapped into as a resource during the teaching-learning situation.

Opportunities should be provided in the teaching-learning setting that allows adult learners to express their beliefs and values. The curriculum should be so designed or selected that it reflects their opinions, values and beliefs.

Adult learners are characterised by maturity, self-confidence, autonomy and solid decision-making; they are generally more practical, able to multi-task, purposeful, self-directed and experienced than younger learners, and less open-minded and receptive to change. All these traits affect their motivation, as well as their ability to learn, which needs to be addressed.

Learning must always be relevant to life experiences and immediate communication needs. Learners always need to see the reasons why they are taught something, and they enjoy performing general tasks and problem-centred tasks (Kapur, 2015; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014; Pappas, 2013)

The training institution supports learners in the hosting company by following up their development and providing them with permanent and individualised support.

During the training process, a member of the teaching team will be appointed to support the learner in their career progression and integration into the company.

On a pedagogical level, there is also a need to individualise the learning path of each learner, following the prerequisite tests, and then offering refresher sessions if necessary.

In parallel, a 'distance learning' platform with educational resources is made available to learners. They can access as and when it suits them.

## **1.5. Target group needs (specific personal barriers, health issues, technical issues...)**

Often people undertake professional retraining because they have health problems that do not allow them to continue with their initial profession.

For learners with SEN (special education needs / learning difficulties), a contact person is appointed to support them upstream, both before and during the training process. This person is responsible for guiding, informing and supporting people with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties, on adapted equipment, posture, legal rights...).

Some difficulties the target groups may encounter:

- Proficient use of digital/computer tools;
- Challenging learning methods, as they will be going back to education after several years in the world of work;

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- Adaptation to the group (teamwork...)
- Family life/private life to be managed in parallel with training.

That is why teaching methods for adults strongly rely on exchanging participants' experiences. These methods must be active and make learners aware of teamwork. It is necessary for facilitators to adapt to the level of each learner, as well as to their professional and personal situation. It is also important to have pedagogical and IT support sessions.

## **1.6. Facilitators' skills & competences**

The skills to be expected of a facilitator include:

- Availability and a sense of hospitality
- An ability to adapt to different audiences/open-mindedness
- A sense of responsibility
- Knowledge of health and safety rules
- The ability to work as part of a team
- Ability to react under pressure (emergency, conflict or aggressive situations)
- Empathy
- Good communication (listening skills...)

Facilitators must understand the characteristics of adult learners and use experiential methods of teaching and learning, guiding adult learners only when required and helping them achieve the goals set out prior to entering the learning situation.

Instructors of adults often actively encourage their students to see them as co-learners and to bring their prior experiences, knowledge and perspectives into course discussions and assignments. While maintaining openness, the instructor must also hold a clear sense of self so as to not get lost in the student's experience and thus become ineffective.

## **1.7. Facilitators' objectives regarding learning outcomes**

Facilitators may learn from the professional experiences of adult learners. Facilitators may be like their students in many ways, such as in the depth and breadth of their experiences, their family situations (caring for children or parents, for example), their obligations and responsibilities, and their ages, which means that facilitators may share

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some personal characteristics with their students and benefit from the exchange of experiences.



## T.G.2: People with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties

### 2.1. Personal and professional strengths

They are monitored by specialist disability advisers.

Learners with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties are aware of their handicaps and inform trainers of their difficulties. Learners' needs are taken into account during the recruitment interview, and a specialist is appointed to be the learner's contact person.

Often the person with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties knows their limits. This information is taken into account to arrange theoretical and practical tests if necessary.

There are no professional strengths shared by adults with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties or with learning difficulties, as they are individuals with their own particularities; in addition, they may have a wide range of strengths depending on the needs they have (sensorial, physical, etc.)

### 2.2. Career prospects

Within the public sector, there are certain positions that are reserved for people with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties ([https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11066](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11066)). These posts are funded by public institutions ([https://apps.lanbide.euskadi.net/descargas/eqailancas/certificados/catalogo/SSCG\\_0109\\_FIC.pdf](https://apps.lanbide.euskadi.net/descargas/eqailancas/certificados/catalogo/SSCG_0109_FIC.pdf)). However, there is generally a very low percentage of people with SEN (Special Education Needs)/learning difficulties in the labour market, a percentage that is even more reduced among women with SEN/learning difficulties. In the particular case of individuals with intellectual disabilities, there is often a mismatch between the expectations they may have for their career paths and the job opportunities that are actually available to them and that they may be able to fulfil. It is crucial to address this erroneous perception from within VET institutions.

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## 2.3. Professional experience expected

Some adults with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties may have previously had very physically demanding jobs. These people engage in WBL for professional retraining.

Other people have a disability from birth.

As part of their retraining, professional experiences are highlighted to help learners make progress in their new profession.

## 2.4. Support systems needed

Adult students with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties are supported by several organisations in finding a job and funding services and for workspaces to be adapted.

For instance, the 98 Cap Emploi ( body reporting to the Employment Ministry) encompasses specialised placement organisations (OPS) that carrying out a public service. They are in charge of preparing, supporting, monitoring and maintaining employment for people with SEN /learning difficulties. They welcome and support more than 220,000 people with SEN /learning difficulties and more than 150,000 employers every year.

[Cap emploi - Ministère du Travail, du Plein emploi et de l'Insertion](#)

Another organisation focused on these services in France is Agefiph. Agefiph provides assistance and support for the employment of people with SEN/learning difficulties

[Agefiph](#)

In the case of people with SEN /learning difficulties who engage in an apprenticeship, the Centres de Formation des Apprentis - CFA (a body reporting to the French Ministry of Education) has set up a support system with specialised professionals. These professionals are the main contacts for apprentices with SEN /learning difficulties who encounter difficulties in training, professional integration, transport and daily life. They provide the apprentices concerned with personalised solutions adapted to their needs and their situation. They also coordinate the people involved in supporting learners in their training and in their path to employment.

[RÉFÉRENTE / RÉFÉRENT HANDICAP EN CFA](#)

Moreover, learners with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties are supported during their training process by our disability specialist (Icam), who acts as a liaison with the other stakeholders involved.

## **2.5. Target group needs (specific personal barriers, health issue, technical issues...)**

It is important to be aware of the different types of disabilities, and the needs of each person with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties must be examined carefully before the start of the training. Thus, it may be necessary to make technical arrangements in the classroom and in the workshops. It may be necessary to appoint a support person to be present in some classes. For example, a hearing-impaired person may need to have the lessons translated into sign language. During assessments, additional time can be given to the learner.

An occupational therapist can conduct an evaluation and diagnose any adaptation needs. This professional will provide support advice and a list of materials to make the necessary adaptations.

A unique aspect of people with SEN / learning difficulties is that they may need support in grieving the loss of their former profession. They may therefore experience a decline in motivation during training, so it is important to monitor their progress regularly by conducting individual interviews.

## **2.6. Facilitators' skills & competences**

- Communication skills are very important, both oral and written. Individual interviews must be conducted with learners, and good listening skills are essential in this process. Facilitators should establish trust with students and must have specific training to support learners in those aspects related to their disability.
- The type of disability will influence the decision as to whether a regular individual follow-up is necessary and to anticipate any problems that may arise. The support person must be familiar with all the support structures (Agefiph, CAP employment and relevant websites) to initiate any necessary processes to ensure that appropriate assistance is provided.  
A follow-up document is needed which contains a history of the actions taken for each person since recruitment,
- Facilitators must be in contact with the entire teaching team in order to anticipate any potential problems.
- Conflict management skills.
- Time management skills.
- Attention to detail.

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## **2.7. Facilitators' objectives regarding learning outcomes**

Facilitators can improve their social skills, including empathy, communication and critical thinking skills, so that by adapting the environment to everyone that wants to engage in these programmes, more people can be included.

People with SEN (Special Education Needs)/Learning Difficulties can be psychologically challenged and this can result in crises of self-confidence and conflicts with trainers or other learners in the group.

Courses are offered on the change curve so that they understand the processes involved. Thus, during the individual interviews, this process can be relied upon to help the learner.

Starting from recruitment and reception, we need to show our ability to listen and to establish effective communication. It is essential to adopt a proactive, preventative approach.

## T.G.3: Students seeking a Bachelor's Degree

### 3.1. Personal and professional strengths

The students in this target group who participate in dual training programmes generally have suitable personal and professional skills to simultaneously attend classes at the training institution and work in the company. In the case of University Degree students, all students must complete the dual training programme, and there is a greater variety in terms of their levels of competence.

The target group has personal strengths in reading, mathematics and science, according to PISA Results from 2018.<sup>1</sup> As the target group consists of sub-groups depending on where they obtained their qualification to enter the Bachelor's programme, they may have little professional experience if they obtained a general high school diploma, or they may have specific skills depending on their prior vocational training if they completed a VET course and vocational upper secondary education.

### 3.2. Career prospects

Students who participate in dual training programmes join companies which, as a general rule, have identified their future staffing needs. In addition, the training they receive is of a higher level and more adapted to the needs of companies than that received by a student in non-dual pathways. For these reasons, the professional prospects of these students are very good. In fact, between 90-95% of these students, are hired by the same company in which they did their training after completing their dual training programme.

The target group has wide career opportunities after finishing WBL, including joining a small-, medium-sized or a large company, starting their own business, continuing their academic career with a Master's Degree programme, or joining the public sector or an NGO.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (OECD (2019), PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>.)

<sup>2</sup> [Paths after university | Study in Germany \(study-in-germany.de\)](#)

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### 3.3. Professional experience expected

Two different situations may be encountered:

- People who have not had previous professional experience, as it is their first time in higher education. This profile usually requires greater support and supervision by the tutors and instructors of the training institution and the company. The target group's professional experience is very varied, from secondary school graduates with typically less than one month's professional experience to people who have completed their vocational training and often have more than two years' professional experience.<sup>3</sup>
- People may have already had some professional experience (internships in a company or dual training) because they have previously completed a vocational training course, or because they have returned to the educational system after a period of work in a company. Their incorporation and adaptation to the dynamics of the dual training programme and the company is easier. Most students that choose this option can be characterised as being highly resilient and able to handle the significant work involved in shifting from a VET course to a dual training programme.

### 3.4. Support system needed

Members of this target group need tailored support depending on their socio-demographic origin, focusing on their individual academic situation and organisational study programme.<sup>4</sup> A support system should account for performance-based issues (e.g. weaknesses in foundational subjects for engineering such as Mathematics), organisational/personal challenges (e.g. little experience in time and self-management) and socio-economic areas (e.g. financial support and social integration). In particular, the last factor has been found to be decisive for students to select specific study programmes at given places.<sup>5</sup>

Further, WBL programmes should consider 'phasing' students into 'adulthood', e.g., by offering them information on how to submit a tax statement (which has been very welcomed in 'Hochschule Dual' in Bavaria).

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<sup>3</sup> Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung. (2020). 'Bildung in Deutschland 2020'. Doi: 10.3278/6001820gw

<sup>4</sup> Key and Hill. (2018). „Modellansätze ausgewählter Hochschulen zur Neugestaltung der Studieneingangsphase“.

<sup>5</sup> Hill and Key. (2019). Orientierung und Unterstützung zum Studieneingang – Umsetzungsstand an deutschen Hochschulen“.

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### 3.5. Target group needs (specific personal barriers, health issues, technical issues...)

The main barriers and needs have been found to be the following:

- Adapting to the work dynamics and the processes of the company in which learners complete their dual training programmes.
- Smoothly integrating into the work teams and areas of the company where they engage in their internship.
- Difficulties in identifying the communication and relationship mechanisms with other workers in the company and with the managers involved in their training process in the company.
- Difficulties in coping with the added difficulty of combining training in the training institution and in the company, compared to the ‘traditional’ model that involved only training in training institutions. This can sometimes cause academic performance to be somewhat reduced compared to the ‘traditional system’.

The target group’s needs may be determined in multiple ways, e.g. by capturing the reasons for students’ dropouts. These reasons may be reframed as needed. Students who perceived their studies to be overwhelming often had issues with learning competences but also financial shortages. Dropouts who selected the wrong programme largely experienced a shift in their interests, as they became attracted to a more practical programme with less theoretical components, while having different expectations about their future professional life. Disappointed students were often unsure whether they could pursue a Master’s programme afterwards. Those students who had made a ‘strategic change’ reported that they had dropped out of the programme and they had succeeded in securing a place at their initially preferred location of choice for completing their course.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.6. Facilitators’ skills & competences

This target group's facilitators should have specific skills based on their role:

- Extensive knowledge of the company's processes and activities and the ability to relate them to the knowledge and skills to be acquired by students through dual training.

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<sup>6</sup> Blüthmann, I., Lepa, S. & Thiel, F. (2012). Überfordert, Verwählt, Enttäuscht oder Strategisch? Eine Typologie vorzeitig exmatrikulierter Bachelorstudierender. Zeitschrift für Pädagogik, 58 (1), S.89-108.

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- An ability to plan the training activities to be carried out by students in the company.
- Good communication skills.
- Empathy and an approachable attitude in order to appropriately support students' progress.
- Good conflict and emotional management skills.
- Knowledge and skills on how to evaluate students' learning process to promote their development and progress.

Their teaching will benefit if they are open to adapting new topics to their 'teaching', and aptly use new information and communication technologies for conveying state-of-the-art experiences.<sup>7</sup> More specifically, academic facilitators should have the ability to deliver application-oriented teaching, ideally based on academic qualifications and professional experience obtained outside of higher education. Company facilitators should have skills in action-oriented didactic methods.

### **3.7. Facilitators' objectives regarding learning outcomes**

Thanks to their direct contact with dual-training students, facilitators can develop personal skills related to managing people, such as empathy, communication and motivation.

In addition, as young people with new ideas and concerns join the companies, they can draw on them for innovating some of the company's processes and procedures, or to bring in new forms of organisation or new technologies.

Facilitators should be open to new information and communication technologies and their use, which may be observed from students. Academic facilitators may benefit from adopting such practices in their counselling and teaching. Company facilitators may learn from students and even capitalise on these insights and introduce them into their companies, e.g. setting up state-of-the-art social media channels and strategies.

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<sup>7</sup> Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany. (2021). 'The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2018/2019'.



## **T.G.4: Master's Degree Students**

### **4.1. Personal and professional strengths**

This target group is made up of students who have achieved a good academic record, which has enabled them to enrol in a Master's programme. It is normally a personal choice to study for a Master's degree, and students are motivated to succeed and make the most of their education years. They are open-minded and have an interest in sciences and technologies, and in other cultures.

On the professional side, except for adults who are returning to education, students have limited professional experience when they enter a Master's programme, which they have usually obtained by engaging in one or two internships in companies during their Bachelor's degree. This does preclude them from being able to make valuable contributions to the companies where they conduct research and an internship at Master's level. Companies look for, and appreciate, the profile of our young students.

### **4.2. Career prospects**

Choosing to become an engineer with a Master's degree has many advantages. A very rapid career development, an attractive salary, and numerous job offers in different fields, sectors and companies.

When young engineers start their careers, the first few years focus on acquiring the operational skills of their trade. They rely on the experienced people in their company to learn the tools of the profession and gain confidence in what they produce.

As time goes by, they become increasingly autonomous. This means that they spend less time with more senior people and do not need to have their work validated to the same extent because they have achieved solid knowledge and experience. Depending on the job, this learning period may differ in length, but once it has been completed, this is usually when engineers seek to acquire new skills. They may choose to become an expert in a field, but the most typical development in a company for an engineer is to take on responsibility for managing people. They can then move into operational management (team coordination, project management) and later into organisational management (human resources decisions for the teams for which they are responsible). Finally, once an engineer is well trained in managerial functions, the next step is often to move into a directorship (defining the strategic development of their speciality and influencing the future of the teams working there).

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### **4.3. Professional experience expected**

They usually engage in short internships in companies to become acquainted with this environment and different jobs, as well as a 2-month training period as an assistant engineer.

### **4.4. Support system needed**

Master's students are supported throughout their programme by the Department of Studies, which makes sure that everything is going well for all of them. This Department regularly reviews their academic results and may support students on matters more related to their personal life that influence their learning process. They can communicate well with both the academic and company facilitators.

Alumni are also actively involved in the training of Master's students. Like companies, they take part in assessment panels and may teach a course module. They also take on a specific role in supporting students to help them go further in their engineering profession (sponsorship, statements at the end of the course). This intergenerational transmission is interesting in the training of young graduates.

### **4.5. Target group needs (specific personal barriers, health issue, technical issues...)**

Health-related and/or disability issues may need special equipment and may hinder international mobility (access to medical care, bulky equipment, undeveloped facilities in a company building...). Specific personal assistance can also be organised at the university and/or in the company, as is the case with AGEFIPH, a French government agency promoting the employment of disabled people.

According to the degree of mobility, some language skills may be required. It is each student's decision to develop these skills further, using the training offered by the university.

### **4.6. Facilitators' skills & competences**

The central objective is to allow Master's degree students to grow in all dimensions, within the company and elsewhere (international mission, personal projects), and to help students gradually define and align both their professional project and personal project.

Facilitators must have good interpersonal skills (availability, communication skills, commitment). They must be able to support students and offer them a series of qualities

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(respect, patience, active listening, empathy, benevolence, confidence, support, catalyst, guide, etc.). They must also be freedom advocates (impartiality, discernment, freedom of speech, respect for the other persons' wishes). Finally, they must have good training skills (training interview, ability to ask pertinent questions).

## **4.7. Facilitators' objectives regarding learning outcomes**

Company facilitators can learn new methods and new technologies taught at the training institution. Learners can bring a fresh perspective and a creative outlook to company facilitators.

In general, academic and company facilitators ask for a feedback report after students have been in the company for a few weeks. This helps them to take some distance from their work.

Facilitators 'grow' with learners: learners share with them their concerns, questions, choices, etc. Facilitators are then increasingly capable of providing appropriate guidance and advice.

## **T.G.5: NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training)**

### **5.1. Personal and professional strengths**

NEETS have no particular vocational skills, as they remain without a specific occupation after leaving school. Most, however, have a solid informal computer/social and online competence, due to the high number of hours spent using multimedia devices.

### **5.2. Career prospects**

Given the nature of their training and needs, the most common career prospects for a NEET may be in marketing/communication, catering or logistics/warehousing. However, these are non-specialised occupations, preceded by quick and undemanding training.

### **5.3. Professional experience expected**

People belonging to the NEET target group very often have limited professional experience, which mainly extends to low-skilled jobs, post-qualification internships or even undeclared work.

### **5.4. Support system needed**

NEETs have great personal and motivational deficiencies. They therefore need solid support in and orientation towards employment and the construction of a personal, professional and life project. Psychological support may also be necessary.

### **5.5. Target group needs (specific personal barriers, health issue, technical issues...)**

The needs to be met are very basic: learning to set life goals, understanding and recognising work ethics, learning to approach the work environment correctly.

### **5.6. Facilitators' skills & competences**

Facilitators who support NEETs must be trained counsellors, with psychology and pedagogy knowledge, and must have excellent communication skills and show empathy.

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## **5.7. Facilitators' objectives regarding learning outcomes**

The lesson that is soon learnt is the need for ongoing training for facilitators, as this is the only way to effectively support the different cases that arise. In this way, they can learn to adapt the approach needed for each individual.

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