

Developing Learner Participation



A manual for teacher trainers

Prepared for:

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Puntland State Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE)

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Save the Children (SC)

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Module 7: Developing Learner Participation

A teacher training resource for teacher trainers

Version 1

This teacher training resource was developed originally as a collaboration between Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD) and Enabling Education Network (EENET) for the Ministry of Education in Zambia and Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar.



NAD – The Norwegian
Association of Disabled



This Somali edition has been created by EENET for Save the Children (SC), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), NAD and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MOECHE):



Save the Children



NAD – The Norwegian
Association of Disabled



Inclusive Learning
Approach

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Introduction

This module introduces participants to methods for further developing learner participation, including through developing peer support and involving learners in the making of decisions that affect them.

In a school context, ‘Learner participation’ means many things. For example, it could mean learners:

- being present in school;
- being engaged and active in lessons;
- learning collaboratively and contributing to their learning;
- being involved in all activities, including extra-curricular activities;
- performing roles of responsibility;
- being listened to;
- being involved in decisions that affect them.

Other modules in this series have promoted a range of inclusive strategies that promote the participation of all learners, including those with additional needs. These include strategies to support school attendance, the accurate assessment of needs, and the access and engagement of all learners through inclusive teaching and learning strategies. It is particularly recommended that when planning the delivery of the sessions in this module it should be done with close reference to **Module 6**, ‘Promoting active learning in the classroom’.

Further useful information is also contained in the Supplementary Module on **Including Learners with Additional Needs**. This includes advice and guidance on identifying additional needs, how additional needs can exclude learners, and practical tips and ideas for teachers on supporting learners with additional needs in the school and classroom environment.

Inclusive education is a process that involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of ***all*** learners in their community. Consulting learners and involving them in decision-making is an important way to make sure such changes are effective. The right to participate is enshrined in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**. Article 12 of the UNCRC sets out the right of children to express an opinion and to have that opinion considered when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them.

Learners exercising their right to a voice in how they are educated not only enables teachers and schools to plan improvements; it also encourages learners themselves to take greater responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others, e.g., their friends and peers. This helps provide them with the experiences and skills they need to become independent learners, enjoying learning and succeeding both academically and socially. Furthermore, it means teachers can draw on the cooperation and resources of the learners themselves, a particular benefit where classes are large and teachers lack resources.

As with the other modules, the training outlined here focuses on using participatory methods and active learning techniques. It follows this basic principle:

We must use inclusive training methods if we are to successfully train others how to teach inclusively.

Duration of training

Trainers should adapt this training to suit the local context and the time available to them for training. Trainers may decide not to use all of the activities, or to shorten some activities if time is limited, or to expand activities if participants need more support with understanding a particular topic. If all activities are used, without significant adaptation, shortening or lengthening, this module requires approximately 14 -15 hours of training over 2½ - 3 days, depending on the preferred length of training days, number and length of breaks, and so on.

Session 7.1: Our commitment to learner participation

This first session helps participants reflect on what is meant by learner participation and consider ways to develop learners' participation in the learning process. By the end of the session participants will have understood the benefits of further developing learner participation in their schools and some of the barriers that need to be overcome for this to happen.

'The biggest learning resource in any school are the learners. A variety of methodologies of peer support and cooperative learning need to be employed to foster a school culture that encourages learners to learn collaboratively rather than competitively. This will be of mutual benefit to them all.'
Guidelines to Full-service/Inclusive Schools, Basic Education
Department Republic of South Africa, (2010)

Activity 7.1a: 'People Search'



30 minutes

Main

This is an ice-breaker activity that is active and fun. It allows for introductions and/or re-acquaintance between participants, acknowledges the participants' experiences, and connects strongly with a key principle underpinning the promotion of learner participation: that all learners bring knowledge and skills to the classroom and have something to contribute.

Resource 7.1

People search

Give out one copy of **Resource 7.1** to each participant. There are ten statements in the left-hand column, alongside a space in the right-hand column to fill with a different person's name in each row.

Ask participants to stand up and approach each other to find someone who has an experience that responds to the requirement of one of the statements. They should write the person's name in the space provided in the right-hand column. They repeat this until they have ten names (or as many as they can find), with a different person's name against each statement.



Participants finding out about one another

[Image description: Six male participants and one female participant speak to one another while holding notebooks and sheets of paper.]

Allow 10-15 minutes for participants to collect the names of the ten different colleagues (if they can be found) and then allow time for feedback.

Acknowledge positive interactions between the participants, the interest they show in each other and explore anything people want to share that may have arisen during those conversations. Participants can be asked the following:

- Did they enjoy the activity as an icebreaker? Why?
- Did everybody feel involved? Did they feel acknowledged in anyway? If so how?
- Did any problems or confusions arise? If so, what were these?

Point out that the statements of enquiry in the left-hand column of **Resource 7.1** relate to the world **outside** school. They mainly focus on experiences and skills participants may be bringing to the training other than those related to their professional roles. If participants had difficulty finding anyone with any particular experience it may be interesting to discuss if there are any implications for this. For example, if there were only a very few people who have lived in the same place all their lives, it may be interesting to discuss if this is because people, especially teachers and other professionals, are much more likely to be working and living away from their home area than they used to be.

Also mention that this activity can be used successfully with learners in the classroom. The statements of enquiry can be adjusted and tailored to some of the likely experiences of those learners. It can therefore help learners' peers and teachers recognise the experiences they have outside school and the skills and knowledge they bring to the school community. It can also help learners have a stronger attachment to the school community and feel more confident by having their experiences outside school acknowledged and validated.

If they plan to use this activity in school, participants therefore need to consider how the statements in [Resource 7.1](#) may be adjusted to match the experiences of their own learners. Some suggestions may include changing 'run a business' to 'helps the family by making or selling things', 'has done voluntary work' to 'helps their family and/or neighbours with work around the home', etc.

Note for the trainer:

This activity can be run as a competition where the winner is the person who completes all ten names first, though this means less time would be given for the introductions and the conversations that ensue between participants.

Activity 7.1b: What do we mean by 'learner participation'?

Main



25 minutes

Ask participants to discuss in pairs what they think 'learner participation' means and give examples. Drawing from [Module 6](#), give the following as examples if they are needed:

- active learners (participating because they are engaged in the learning);
- learners helping organise and run groups (participating because they are helping the learning process).

After 10 minutes participants feedback their thoughts; collect key points on the board or flipchart.

Now explain the narrative that underpins this module by making the following points, acknowledging any points already made in participants' feedback:

- 'Learner participation', in a school context, can mean a range of things; several of these have already been looked at in earlier modules, for

example, learners accessing school and being punctual, accessing the learning, being engaged and actively joining in the lesson, being involved in all the activities including extra-curricular ones, and performing some roles of responsibility.

- There are further ways learner participation can contribute to and improve learning, for example, developing peer support through peer tutoring and peer assessment.
- Learner participation also needs to be understood in the context of children's and young people's rights. This equates 'participation' with how all learners, including girls and learners with additional needs, are listened to and whether they are involved in decisions that affect their learning and wellbeing. Note that information about the barriers faced by learners with specific impairments in the supplementary module on [Including Learners with Additional Needs](#) may be useful background here.
- **By fully participating in the learning process and their school community, learners are able to flourish independently, and develop autonomy through actively engaging responsibly with their peers and adults in their learning community, acquiring the knowledge and skills they need, and taking responsibility for their own learning.**
- As independent learners, they use their increased confidence, knowledge and skills to help in their homes and community.

Session 7.2: Developing peer support

This session promotes ways that participants can further develop learner participation through peer support.

Activity 7.2a: What is peer support and what are its benefits?

Main



40 minutes

‘Peer support’ refers to learners providing each other with knowledge and skills, or emotional, social and/or practical help.

For teachers to effectively promote peer support they need to acknowledge the range of skills and experiences all learners bring to the classroom. **Mention** that **Activity 7.1a** (‘People Search’) above connects strongly with the key principle underpinning this session, that:

all learners bring experience and skills to the classroom and have something to contribute.

Explain that this is an important understanding to have when considering what is fully meant by ‘learner participation’.

Ask participants to, together, remember specific examples of where previous modules promoted peer support, and write these down on the board or flipchart. If examples are needed, mention examples of collaborative learning, such as group work, or of practical and social support offered by their peers to learners with additional needs.

Resource 7.2

Types of peer support

Give out **Resource 7.2** to each group.

Groups discuss the types of peer support listed, whether learners will need training to provide any of these, and what types of peer support are already provided in their own classrooms and schools.

Resource 7.3

Benefits of peer support?

Now give **Resource 7.3** to each group, allocating each group to one type of peer support so that all the types of peer support are being discussed. Ask each group to give a detailed example of the type of peer support they have been asked to look at and think of ways that type of support could benefit learners.

For example, a detailed example of **'befriending'** could be where a teacher encourages some more socially confident learners to invite their classmate, who has yet to make any friends, to join in with their playground games.

The benefit of this is a learner who is isolated makes friends. An example of a school promoting **roles of responsibility** can be the appointment of 'prefects'; a role that develops learners' communication and leadership skills. An example of **peer tutoring**, such as learners helping each other learn to read, can develop the peer tutors' own skills and confidence as learners.



A group discussing the benefits of peer support

[Image description: Three female participants are in discussion sitting at a table. In the left-hand bottom corner can be seen the arm of another woman holding a marker pen writing on flipchart paper. On it are drawn three columns titled 'Type', 'Example' and 'Benefits'.]

After about 15 minutes, ask for feedback on each type of peer support in turn, for discussion by the whole group who can also add their own ideas.

Summarise how these types of peer support promote achievement by stating that they contribute to:

- the promotion of a positive and inclusive school ethos;
- improved relations among learners, including those from different groups;
- increased confidence and self-esteem;
- better understanding of new concepts;
- the development of communication and social skills.

It can be stressed that all these benefits are likely to lead to improved attainment.

It is important to emphasise that schools should make sure that the support they ask learners to give each other is age-appropriate and that adequate training is provided where necessary. The inclusion of all groups in providing peer support, for example, girls and learners with additional needs performing roles of responsibility, also needs to be emphasised.

Activity 7.2b: Peer mentoring



35 minutes

Main

Peer support can help learners who are facing problems such as bullying, or difficulties making the transition from home to pre-school/school, or from one school to another, friendship difficulties, or general difficulties accessing learning. This kind of support is sometimes known as 'peer mentoring'.

Peer mentoring is about helping learners feel safe, respected and supported by other learners. This can only happen if teacher expectations of a safe and supportive environment are made clear to learners from the moment they join the school. From day one in their new class, learners therefore need to be able to talk openly, and about themselves and each other, and about how they feel when they are learning.

Resource 7.4

Promoting a supportive environment

Give out **Resource 7.4** to pairs of participants and ask them to read and discuss these guidelines for teachers that are to help them promote a supportive environment in a new class at the start of the school term/year.

After 5 minutes ask for any feedback, whether anything could be usefully added to the guidance and whether or not participants think that the resource is useful.

Introduce the next activity as one that can support good relationships and trust between learners. This activity takes about 10-15 minutes. Blindfolds should be available if possible. Try to find a different 'space' to do this activity, e.g., outside the workshop 'space', to encourage participants to think about using all available spaces for learning in, especially when classrooms are small and overcrowded.

- Ask participants to stand up and walk around the room/space making eye contact with each person they pass.¹
- After about a minute, direct participants to stop as they pass each person and shake hands warmly with them, or use another form of acknowledgement, while smiling a greeting. They then carry on to the next person they pass and repeat the process.
- After a few more minutes ask participants to STOP and talk to the person next to them. This person will be their partner. They then share something positive with their partner about the training session so far (e.g., how friendly people are, how hard someone in particular has worked, something their partner has contributed, etc).
- Participants then blindfold their partner (or, if no blindfolds are available, they close their eyes). They then lead their blindfolded partner around the room/space, guiding with their hand. After about two minutes direct them to swap roles.
- Participants can feedback how they felt to the main group.

¹ Participants with visual impairment should be assisted by a colleague (peer support).



Participants guiding their partners who cannot see

[Image description: Eighteen male participants are in pairs clapping their hands together. One of the pair leads the other one with his eyes closed around the room. In the centre of the picture two women are doing the same thing.]

Resource 7.5

Creating a safe space

Give **Resource 7.5** to each participant for them to look at briefly now, and in more detail in their own time. It provides a variety of friendship/trust-building activities that can be used to promote the classroom as a safe space, including the activity above. Some 'alternative activities' are suggested for large class sizes if there is not enough space for the main activity.

Activity 7.2c: Developing listening skills

 35 minutes

Main

Resource 7.6

Listening to each other

This activity allows participants to further explore ways to promote peer support through developing group management and listening skills. Distribute **Resource 7.6** to each group and give the following instructions:

- Read through the resource.
- Appoint a Chair/chairperson to ensure everyone gets a turn and is listened to.
- The nominated Chair reads out all of the unfinished sentences in turn and asks everyone in the group to spend 5 minutes thinking about how they would finish off each sentence.
- The Chair then reads out all of the sentences again, completing them for her/himself, speaking as openly and honestly as she/he can in this setting.
- Then each member of the group takes turns to speak to the whole group, doing as the Chair did and finishing off each of the sentences for themselves. Encourage participants to be as open and honest as they can be in this situation.
- If anyone is uncomfortable speaking about one or more of the sentences, then they can 'pass' on these.

After about 15 minutes, when all participants have had time to speak to their group, encourage a whole-group discussion of the activity, and ask these questions:

- What was it like doing this activity?
- Were any sentences particularly difficult to complete and share?
- What could people in the group do to make each other feel freer to talk openly and honestly?

Collect key points on the board or flipchart, especially points made in response to the last question: What could people in the group do to make each other feel freer to talk openly and honestly?

Encourage participants to describe specific behaviour that encourages trust building, such as listening carefully, being respectful of different views and experiences, looking receptive and friendly, supportive body language, etc.

Emphasise the important role of the Chair during this activity, and that the Chair can model the behaviour needed to promote a supportive classroom environment where learners listen to each other. This behaviour includes:

- keeping order and people on task;
- encouraging people to contribute;
- making sure one or more people do not dominate the group;
- drawing out shy members of the group;

- making sure people are attentive and respectful of each other's contribution.

Activity 7.2d: Peer mentoring role-play



80 minutes

Main

Participants are now going to role-play interactions between a learner offering mentoring support (a 'peer mentor') and one who has a pressing problem (a 'mentee').

Resource 7.7

Mentee scenarios

Give out an envelope containing a set of cards, [Resource 7.7](#), to each group of 4-6 people and give the following step-by-step instructions:

- Participants to get into pairs.
- If the group is made-up of an odd number, then one person plays the role of 'observer' who will walk round each pair and observe their role-play.
- Participants in each pair decide who will first role-play the peer mentor, and who will role-play the mentee. Remind participants that in school settings a peer mentor is a fellow learner of the mentee, which means the peer mentor would usually be from the same year group or an older year group to the mentee.
- Participants have 10 minutes to prepare themselves to get into their role:
 - a. The participants each take one card from the envelope given to their group, without showing it to anyone else.
 - b. The participant role-playing the **mentee** first reads their card while the participant role-playing the **mentor** first puts their own card in their pocket or in a safe place.
 - c. The mentee card explains a particular problem the **mentee** is having. The **mentee** can decide a name for themselves and what school year group they are in. They then tell this to their partner who is role-playing the peer **mentor**. The mentee then thinks in detail about the problem and how it might be affecting him/her.
 - d. The participants role-playing the peer **mentor** first must not look at the card but instead think about how a mentor should behave, not to offer solutions to their mentee's problem or tell their mentee what to do, but, instead, how to listen and how to encourage confidentiality (where

possible) and trust (keeping in mind **Activity 7.2c** and what was decided people need to do to make each other feel freer to talk openly and honestly).

- When instructed participants will have 5 minutes for the **mentee** to share and discuss their problem with the mentor, and for the **mentor** to listen and respond in the way the participant in that role feels a peer mentor should.
- When instructed, they will then swap roles, with the participant who was the **mentor** now becoming the **mentee**, and the **mentee** becoming the **mentor**. The process is repeated: the new mentee takes the card from their pocket or a safe place, reads it and prepares to get into role and then shares and discusses their problem with the new mentor.

Walk around the room, and listen to various pairs to get a sense of topics discussed and how the activity is proceeding.

After the two role-plays ask each pair to return to their main group of 4-6 people.



Role-playing peer mentoring

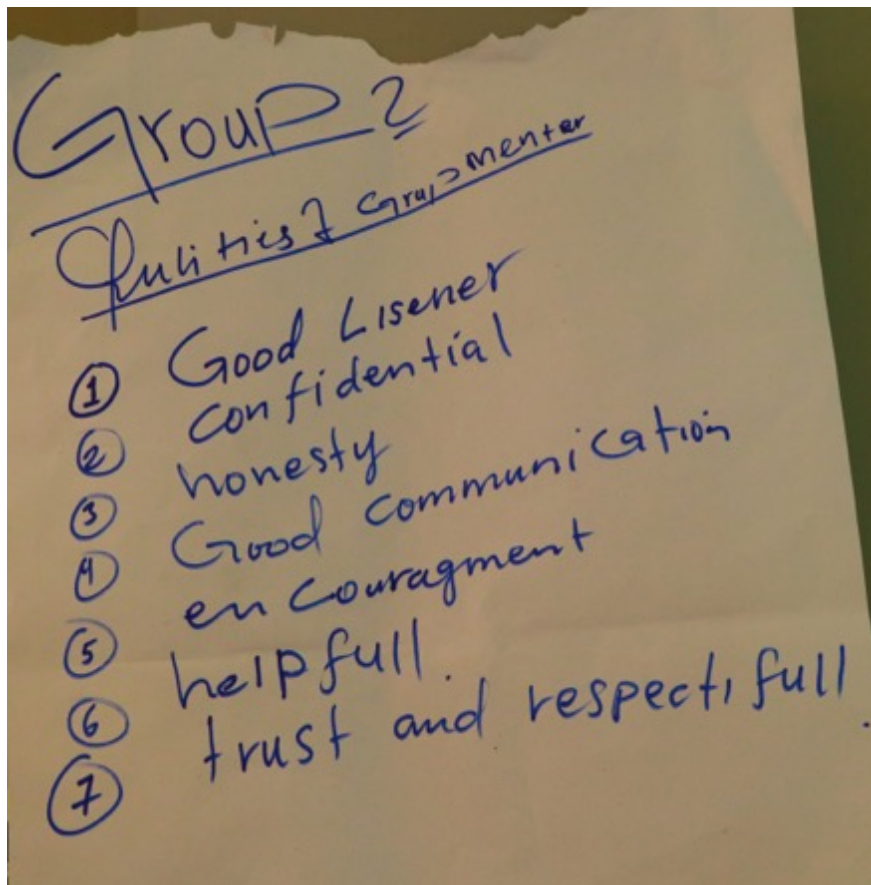
[Image description: Two female participants are sitting together at a table in close conversation. The one on the right is talking, and the one on the left is listening intently. In the background other pairs are working together.]

Each group now has about 20 minutes to discuss their role-plays with each other, sharing anything interesting about their exchanges, and any problems or difficulties encountered. If there is an 'observer' in the group they share what

they witnessed. The following questions guide their discussion and need to be written on the flipchart/board, or displayed on PowerPoint:

- Were any of the scenarios/issues raised very difficult for the peer mentor to respond to?
- What qualities did the peer mentors exhibit that were particularly helpful?
- What comments were made by them that were not necessarily helpful?
- Were there any outcomes to the conversations? Should any outcomes be expected?

Then ask each group to feedback their discussions to the main group. Further discussion can be encouraged and responded to.



Feedback notes on mentor qualities

[Image description: A sheet of flipchart paper notes showing feedback from a group's discussion about the qualities needed in a mentor.]

Give out **Resource 7.8** and ask the participants to read through these important points about peer mentoring:

- Listening and sensitively asking questions are vital to effective mentoring.
- Other important attributes include approachability, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion and fairness, and being respectful towards those of a different gender or who have different beliefs and backgrounds.
- Peer mentors should not be expected to solve the problems that their mentees share; in fact, suggesting solutions may not be helpful.
- Mentors should never tell their mentees what to do.
- Confidentiality should not be promised if it cannot be kept, for example, if there is a child- or young person-protection/safeguarding concern.
- Some of these scenarios show us that learners can only support each other if they have full support from teachers, the school and, if necessary, the community.
- Some of the scenarios require peer mentors to be specially trained in how to listen, how to ask questions, and to know when and how to refer the problem to a teacher or other professionals in the school.
- In some schools, learners are specially trained in conflict resolution and at helping groups or individuals resolve disputes. This is sometimes known as 'peer mediation'.

Finally, ask participants which of the above activities in this session so far do they feel they can adapt to use in their own schools to train learners and develop peer support.

Resource 7.9

Role-play

Remind participants how useful role-play is as a teaching tool and give out **Resource 7.9** to each participant to read later. The handout explains the benefits of role-play.

Activity 7.2e: Peer tutoring



35 minutes

Main

Peer tutoring can be especially helpful for embedding learning through providing opportunities both for learners who are peer tutoring – to reinforce their understanding and develop their language and thinking, as well as for the

learners they help – who need further explanation and support. Therefore, the personal and social skills of both those being helped and of the helpers themselves are being strengthened (e.g., communication skills and self-esteem, learning to negotiate with each other, and asking for help and support).

Remind participants of **Session 6.4** of **Module 6: ‘Promoting Active Learning in the Classroom’**, which provides ways to plan and run group work. Structured group or pair work provides opportunities for learners to teach each other (the ‘jigsaw’ strategy described in **Resource 6.21** is a good example).

Ask participants to discuss how peer tutoring can be used to benefit their learners in their own classrooms. Brainstorm ideas and collect them on the board or flipchart.

Resource 7.10

Peer tutoring activities

Give out **Resource 7.10** and ask participants to work in pairs. Each pair writes down examples of how peer tutoring can be used to respond to at least one, and more if they have time, of the ‘tutoring needs’ that are given in the first column. They are also to provide suggestions as to how they can organise this in their classrooms. **Resource 7.10** gives an example (‘learners with reading difficulties’) to help participants with this activity, though they need to think of their own.

After 15 minutes the pairs feedback their thoughts; collect key points on the board or flipchart.

Note: The following provides some examples of tutoring activities that relate to the tutoring needs given, if the trainer wishes to share them:

Tutoring need	Example of how peer tutoring could be used and organised
Learners with reading difficulties	Paired reading, with able reader paired up with less able reader. For example, a ‘Lunchtime reading club’ in the library/quiet area with able readers trained and rewarded for their work.

Tutoring need	Example of how peer tutoring could be used and organised
Reinforcing learning from a particular lesson	More able and confident learners prepare and present to small groups within their class. For example, the class is divided into groups. A confident and able learner is assigned to each group to explain material previously taught to the entire class by the teacher. This activity could finish with a quiz where the peer tutor and the winning group get a prize.
Learning how to use science equipment safely	Older learners help out. For example, older more experienced learners from other year groups support each group doing their first practical once the teacher has explained how to use the equipment.
Learning about drug misuse	Information communicated from peer-to-peer. For example, learners learning about drug misuse undertake a project on it, including research and inviting expert speakers and those with relevant experiences into school. The learners then relay what they have learned to other classes through displays, presentations, etc.

Emphasise that learners can only be expected to ‘tutor’ if they are fully prepared and supported in the role. The task must be clear and effective, and peer tutors will need guidance and time to prepare. Effective peer tutoring should firstly be modelled by the teacher with peer tutors’ contribution always being acknowledged, and, where appropriate, rewarded.

Activity 7.2f: Peer- and self-assessment

 85 minutes

Main

In **Module 6: ‘Promoting Active Learning in the Classroom’**, using **assessment for learning** was recognised as an effective active learning strategy for inclusion.

Remind participants that assessment for learning is:

- the process of using classroom assessment to improve learning, where teachers share learning goals with learners;
- assessment criteria are used that clearly specifies the standards that must be met, and what evidence will be used to show achievement of learning outcomes;
- learners therefore recognise the standards to which they should aim; and
- there is feedback that leads learners to identify what they should do next in order to improve.

By collaboratively reflecting on their performance and progress with teachers, learners can develop skills in peer-assessment which, in turn, enable them to assess their own performance. Peer- and self-assessment are therefore powerful tools central to the assessment for learning process and are key to developing learner participation and independent learning skills.

Ask participants to brainstorm the benefits of peer- and self-assessment.

After the discussion, refer to the following benefits if they were not mentioned:

- Learners clarify their own ideas and understanding of the learning goal.
- Learners better understand the assessment criteria and how it can be applied to their work.
- Learners realise what aspects of their own work need to improve and how to better assess ways of achieving a higher standard.
- Learners get to talk about their own learning through discussing the learning of others.
- Learners increase their motivation through experiencing a wider audience to their work.

Resource 7.11

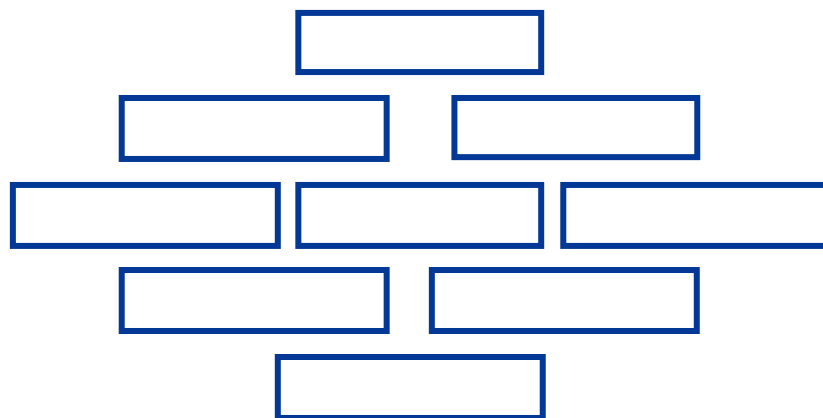
Supporting peer- and self-assessment

Ask participants to work in small groups and give out the prepared sets of the 'supporting peer- and self- assessment' cards, **Resource 7.11**, to each group. Explain that this activity looks at key practice that supports peer- and self-assessment, that is, practice that helps (contributory factors) learners to assess their own work and the work of their peers.

Ask each group to think about how they can encourage learners to comment constructively on each other's work and reflect productively on their own performance. What are the key characteristics of a classroom where learners engage effectively in self- and peer- assessment?

Each group must select nine characteristics or factors (cards) that they consider to be the most important ones. Then they arrange and rank them in a 'Diamond 9' formation (see example below), with what they perceive to be the most important factors towards the top, the less important towards the bottom, and leaving out any that in their view are least necessary. Illustrate this diamond on the board, flipchart or via PowerPoint presentation.

Diamond 9



One group of participants creating their 'Diamond 9'

[Image description: One female and three male participants are working closely together around a table trying to arrange small cards with writing on them into a 'Diamond 9' pattern.]

After 15 - 20 minutes each group feeds back their decisions and explains them. One way of keeping the discussion focussed is to ask each group to share and explain what they decided were the three most important factors, and which they discarded.

There are no right or wrong answers so allow plenty of time for participants to discuss these in detail, why they chose what they did, and whether they have any questions.

Then ask participants to discuss for a few minutes in their groups how they can promote one of the key factors that they have identified in their classroom. For example, one group might suggest that to ensure 'our learners understand why the learning is required', they always make sure the learning objectives are linked to the curriculum and wider learning goals, and they use differentiation strategies such as key visuals, so that everyone understands the learning objectives.

Feed back these ideas to the whole group.

Resource 7.12

Useful approaches – dos and don'ts

Ask participants to work in pairs and give each pair a copy of **Resource 7.12**. Participants are to read through the resource and decide which of the ten listed activities they feel to be positive and **appropriate** peer- and self-assessment activities for their classrooms, and which are less positive and possibly **inappropriate**.

To do this they need to keep in mind what is **inclusive** and improves learning. They can make notes on the sheet or, if you prefer, they can make notes separately on a piece of blank paper with two column headings – 'Appropriate' (or 'Dos') and 'Inappropriate' (or 'Don'ts').

After 10-15 minutes ask participants to share what they have decided with their group and then give them the chance to explain and discuss their decisions with the main group.

It is important that the diverse settings represented by participants are acknowledged so that where an activity is seen as appropriate by one

participant, it may be less appropriate in another's setting (e.g., due to lack of resources or the age of learners).

Note for the trainer:

The following are likely to be **Dos (appropriate)** activities (context depending). Where necessary, explanations or conditions are given in [brackets]:

1. Learners are divided into groups to hear the presentations they each prepared for homework, and they comment on each other's work. Drawing on those comments, learners then redraft their work before handing it in for marking. [As long as the learners are required to give constructive feedback.]
3. The teacher provides regular opportunities for learners to reflect on their own performance through structured individual and pair work.
4. A teacher sets a short test to check learning halfway through the lesson. She/he asks the learners to tick (✓) or cross (X) their answers (after writing the answers on the board). The teacher asks learners to put their hands up if they have the scores she shouts out in descending order. This way she/he knows whether she needs to explain any of the learning again. [This can be appropriate as long as the teacher monitors the activity and uses this method for this express purpose – as just a quick check – and also as long as learners are not humiliated or their confidence undermined by being seen to get a low score.]
5. A teacher returns essays where some errors/mistakes that are linked to the assessment criteria are underlined, but no explanation about how to correct them is given. Learners are aware of the assessment criteria. Learners are asked to look at each other's work in pairs and help each other identify how to correct the errors. [This can be a good way to improve learning and also develop self- and peer-assessment, and peer tutoring skills. It may need to involve careful thought about who is paired with who so that no learner is disadvantaged.]
7. Learners complete a science project in groups. The teacher organises a structured discussion in their group about how they think they performed both individually and as a group. They also present their displays to the whole class for comment.
9. For objective questions (requiring a specific answer) asked in tests, a teacher prepares answer sheets in advance. Once all of the learners are finished, they exchange their answers, and use the answer sheets to grade their partner's answers. The teacher then collects the tests, checks the grading, and grades whatever objective questions are in the tests. [As long

as the teacher checks the grading, this can be a useful way to ensure learners from large classes receive their results promptly. However, it again needs to be noted that there may need to be careful thought about who is paired with who.]

10. Every half-term, learners complete a paragraph in their mathematics exercise book describing what progress they have made and what they need to learn next. The teacher then adds a comment, before the book is shown to parents/caregivers.

The following are likely to be **Don'ts (inappropriate)** activities (context depending). Where necessary, explanations are given in [brackets]:

2. Instead of marking an essay him/herself, a teacher gives each learner the marking scheme and asks them to mark each other's work. [For it to be appropriate, this activity should not be done 'instead of the teacher' unless there is good cause – e.g., teacher absence or with the purpose of learners not having to wait long to see how well they performed. It may also need to involve careful thought about who marks whose work so that no learner is disadvantaged, and the teacher then checking the marking before entering any grades.]
6. Learners assess each other's work and then collaborate to draw up a list ranking the work, compiling a list from the best performer to the worst performer. [There is nothing positive about this. It could be humiliating, and it is not structured to support learning.]
8. The teacher asks learners to assess each other's work, but the teacher doesn't give any thought about who is paired or grouped with who. [Often careful thought needs to be given to who is paired/grouped with who, so that no learner is disadvantaged.]

When discussing which peer assessment activities can usefully take place in their classrooms, encourage participants to explain how they can ensure those activities are successful. For example, for learners to comment on each other's presentations in a way that improves learning, they need to know how to make their comments constructive. Participants need to be reminded of the previous activity where they identified key ways to support peer- and self-assessment.

Finally, the whole group can discuss any further issues arising about promoting peer- and self-assessment in the classroom.



One group of participants discussing materials that support self- and peer-assessment

[Image description: Five male participants are sitting around a table in deep discussion. Behind them on other tables participants are also in discussion.]

In summary, emphasise the following:

- Activities to promote peer- and self-assessment need to be carefully planned so that they do not disadvantage any learners and are appropriate, challenging and engaging for all learners.
- When learners are able to understand the assessment criteria, progress is accelerated, especially when individuals have opportunities to apply the assessment criteria to work produced by themselves and their peers as part of planned classroom activities.
- Peer- and self-assessment can be supported by key visuals and displays that can illustrate learning objectives and the process of tasks and steps to take.
- Learners need the opportunity to prepare and practise the language used for self-evaluation and assessment.
- Once learners can engage in peer-assessment activities, they will be more able to assess their own work. **This enables them to identify any gaps in their own learning and will contribute to their developing independent learning skills.** This will be looked at in more detail towards the end of this module.
- Assessment materials that support self- and peer-assessment need to be prepared (participants can look at [Resource 7.13](#) as an example).

Resource 7.13

Progress in English checklist

Session 7.3: Involving learners in decisions that affect them

Tell participants that the focus of this session is on understanding how learners can be consulted and further involved in decision-making in their schools.

Participants will recognise that, in one sense, teachers are always consulting learners, for example, by checking whether they are able to do something, understand something, want help, have completed the task, or need additional work. Emphasise that teachers can develop more in-depth ways to consult learners to help them improve the teaching and learning that goes on in their classrooms. This can increase the engagement of all learners, including learners with additional needs, as well as developing a better understanding of any barriers to learning that they may experience.

Activity 7.3a: Principles and benefits of learner participation

Main

 30 minutes

Remind participants of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. Explain how **Article 12 of the UNCRC** sets out the right of learners to express an opinion and to have that opinion considered when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them.

In schools this means adults need to work with learners to develop ways of ensuring that their views are heard and valued and to encourage them to become more active participants in their learning and participate in improving their education. Additional information in the supplementary module on **Including Learners with Additional Needs** may be useful here when thinking through the barriers some learners will face to sharing their views and becoming more active participants in learning.

This is of course not new to participants. Remind participants of **Module 1: ‘An Introduction to Inclusive Education’** and the ‘class rules’ poster they looked at that was compiled by learners in Zambia. In this poster the learners listed what an inclusive teacher should do.

Resource 7.14

Key principles of Article 12

Give out **Resource 7.14** to each group so that they can consider the principles that can inform schools' approaches to developing participation, reading through the inclusive approach that is outlined here.

Resource 7.15

The benefits of learner participation in decision-making

Then give out **Resource 7.15** to each group. **Resource 7.15** lists some of the benefits of developing participation in decision-making, both to individual learners and to the whole school community. Each group reads and discusses the information.

Resource 7.16

Benefits activity sheet

Now give each group the cards from **Resource 7.16**. Explain that these cards go into two columns. One column is for cards giving '**examples of participation**'; *these cards are in italics*. The other column is for cards that explain the likely 'benefits' of each participation example.



Discussing which 'Example of participation' cards go with which 'Benefit' cards

[Image description: Five men, one standing up and four sitting down (one is obscured), are looking at the 'Examples of participation' and 'Benefits' cards that they have stuck on a piece of pink card in the centre of the table. In the background other groups are in discussion.]

Working in their groups, participants think about which 'Example of participation' cards go with which 'Benefit' cards and put the relevant cards together.

Note for the trainer:

The cards in [Resource 7.16](#) are arranged to show the correct answers, to help the trainer check the groups' work. However, participants may well be able to show how some of the Benefit cards may also match other example cards.

Ask the whole group for feedback on which example cards have been paired with which benefit cards.

Activity 7.3b: Approaches to listening to and involving learners

Main



40 minutes

Before going into detail on ways to promote participation, participants need to consider what kind of participatory activities already take place in their learning institutions.

Emphasise that teachers will be familiar with learners expressing an opinion; it is often evidence that learning is taking place. Listening to learners and involving them in making decisions is also familiar to teachers; enabling their learners to become independent and autonomous is a key learning outcome that teachers aspire to for their learners. Even on a day-to-day level, during the course of a lesson, for example, a teacher will guide learners so that they make informed judgements and then act on them.

However, schools will vary in how much they invest in listening to learners' views when taking decisions that affect their education and wellbeing.

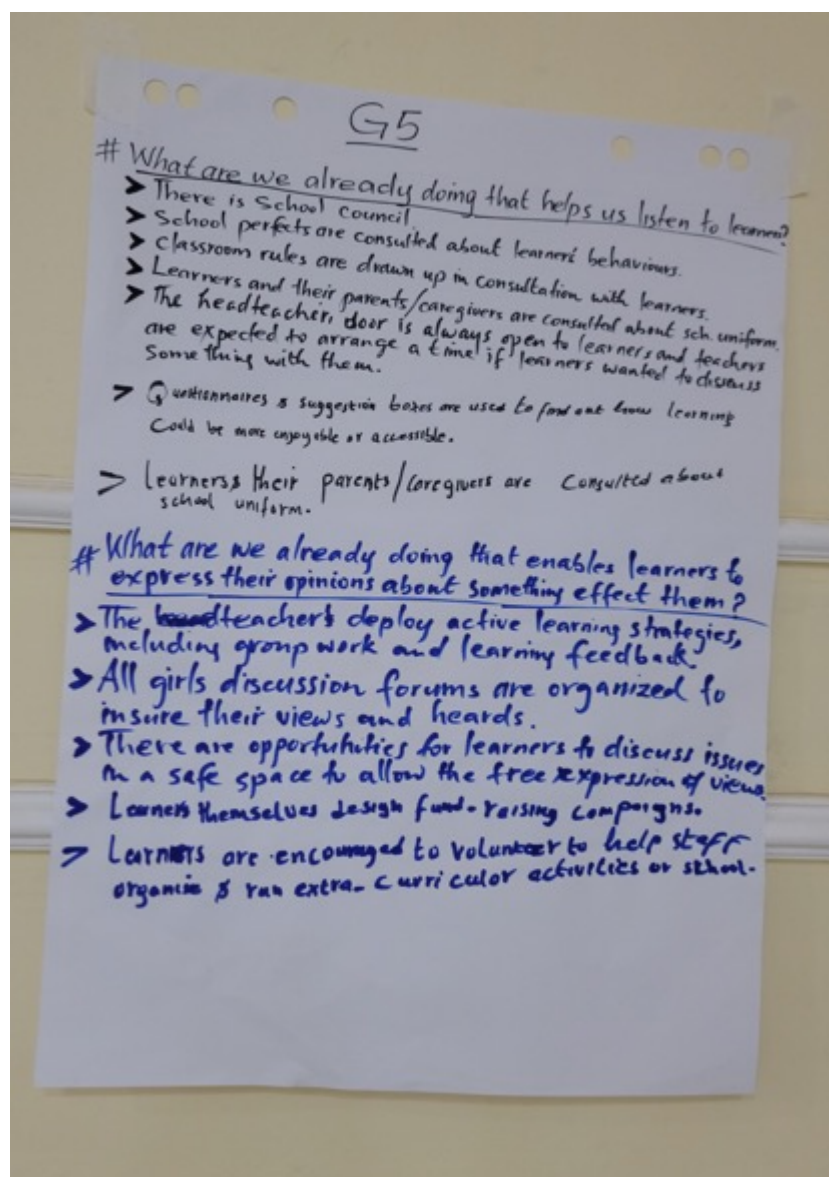
Resource 7.17

Approaches to participation

Give out [Resource 7.17](#) to participants and ask them to work in pairs to help each other to think about the approaches they already have to the participation of learners in their schools. Ask them to list some activities they

are aware of taking place in their classroom or school that helps them listen to learners, and also encourages the learners' opinions to be shared.

Point out the example approaches/activities that are listed in **Resource 7.17** to help participants and encourage discussion of them. Participants who work in early years development settings may, in addition to their approaches to learners' participation, also wish to share examples of how they encourage the participation of parents/caregivers.



One group's notes commenting on listening to learners and helping them to express their opinions

[Image description: A sheet of flipchart paper with notes showing feedback from one group's discussion about what they are doing to help them listen to learners and also enable learners to express their opinions.]

After 20-25 minutes ask for volunteers to feedback for a whole group discussion. Take every opportunity to acknowledge what participants are already doing in their schools, helping them better understand how they already may be consulting and involving learners.



Gallery walk discussion on listening to learners and helping them to express their opinions

[Image description: Eleven men and two women stand in a semi-circle looking at a sheet of flipchart paper stuck on the wall. There is writing on the paper. Next to the wall one of the men is pointing to the flipchart paper.]

Resource 7.18

The teacher as facilitator

Finally, give out **Resource 7.18** to each participant. Ask them to read through and reflect on what it says about the role of facilitator that teachers can usefully adopt when promoting participation. Participants can be asked to comment on how comfortable they are in adopting this role for certain purposes.

Activity 7.3c: Degrees of participation



40 minutes

Main

This activity allows participants to consider ways of developing greater participation in their classrooms, through an understanding of the different degrees of participation; from what is just 'tokenistic' or 'decorative', to

actions that are fully initiated by learners themselves and lead to collaborative decision-making.

Resource 7.19

Hart's 'ladder of participation'

Ask participants to work in pairs.

Give each pair a copy of **Resource 7.19**. Ask each pair to look at the resource, an illustration of Hart's 'ladder of participation'.

Explain that the diagram has been taken from an influential essay by Roger Hart, who, using fieldwork in Brazil, Kenya, India and the Philippines, identified key elements of participation where children are listened to and involved in decision-making.²

The diagram is of degrees of participation, represented by a ladder whose rungs represent increasingly participatory activities in ascending order. The top of the ladder's activities that involve 'child-initiated' shared decisions with adults are the **most participatory**, and those on the bottom three rungs are **non-participatory**.

Resource 7.20

Hart's 'ladder of participation' cards

Give each group the cards from **Resource 7.20**. Explain that these cards go into two columns. One column is for cards giving Hart's '**Degrees of participation**' (taken from Hart's ladder of participation), and these cards are to be placed in descending order to mirror how they are placed on Hart's ladder. The other column is for cards that give examples (in a school context) of each degree of participation (or 'rung' of the ladder).

Ask participants to work in their groups and think about which 'Example' cards go with which 'Degree of participation' cards and put the relevant cards together, referring to **Resource 7.19 (Hart's ladder)** to help to put them in ascending order.

Note for the trainer:

² Roger A. Hart, 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship' UNICEF 1992.

The cards in **Resource 7.20** are arranged to show the correct answers, to help the trainer check the groups' work.



A group of participants discuss which Hart's ladder cards go together

[Image description: A group of five male participants are sitting around a table, looking at pieces of paper and discussing them. In the background, other tables are also discussing the cards.]

As a whole group, ask for feedback on which 'Example' cards have been paired with which 'Degree of participation' cards. Participants can discuss what they have decided and can offer further examples to illustrate their understanding.

Note for the trainer:

It is important that there is a proper evaluative discussion following the Hart's ladder activity to ensure that everyone clearly understands what the different degrees of participation mean, and there is time for lots of questions and clarification.

Emphasise that even though degrees of participation are illustrated here through particular types of activity, learner participation is not a one-off

thing. It is strongly linked to children's developmental stages and, where facilitated and supported, develops over time through learners experiencing a range of activities and teacher interventions.

Finally, point out that there are, in addition to the benefits participants discussed in [Activity 7.3a](#) above, further important benefits to a community and society. Though these cannot be easily measured, Hart states that these benefits are of two major kinds:

‘...those that enable individuals to develop into more competent and confident members of society, and those that improve the organisation and functioning of communities.’³

Activity 7.3d: Overcoming barriers to learner participation

Main



45 minutes

Resource 7.21

Attitudinal barriers to participation (part 1)

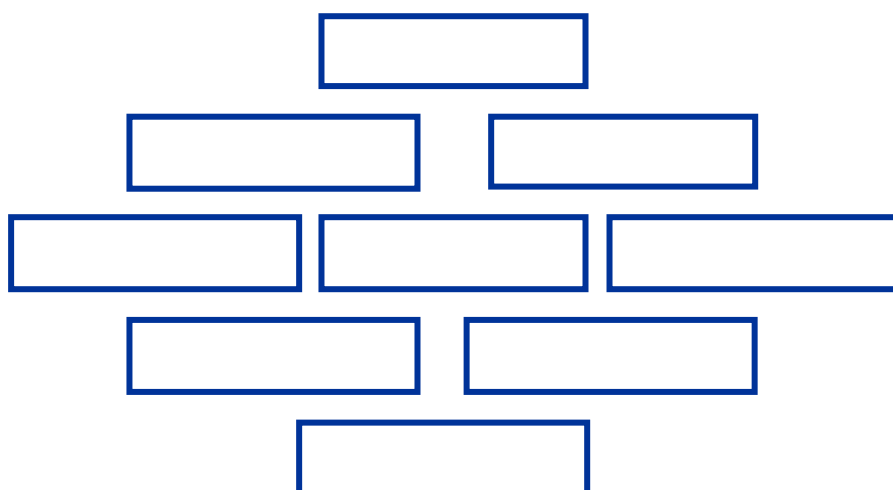
Ask participants to work in the same groups and give out the prepared sets of the ‘Barriers to participation’ cards, [Resource 7.21](#), to each group.

Invite each group to consider some of the attitudinal barriers to participation that teachers/learners may experience in their particular school. Each group must select nine that they consider to be the biggest barriers. Then they need to arrange and rank the barriers cards in a ‘Diamond 9’ formation (see example below), with what they perceive to be the biggest barriers towards the top, the more surmountable barriers towards the bottom, and leaving one out that is the least important in their view.

Illustrate this diamond on the board, flipchart or via a PowerPoint presentation.

³ Roger A. Hart, ‘Children’s Participation: From tokenism to citizenship’. UNICEF, 1992.

Diamond 9



After 10-15 minutes each group feeds back their decisions and explains them. One way of keeping the discussion focussed, is to ask each group to share and explain what they decided were the biggest three barriers. Allow enough time for participants to discuss this, sharing their own reservations and concerns about developing participation.

Participants then identify **one way** that their setting might overcome the barriers they have identified in order to increase learners' participation. Give each group a different barrier to focus on so that all the barriers are considered.

Each group then shares their ideas with the whole group.

Resource 7.22

Attitudinal barriers to participation (part 2)

Finally, give out **Resource 7.22**, a Table (some of the points are taken from Roger Hart⁴) to help further inform responses to the attitudinal barriers.

End the activity by sharing this quotation from Roger Hart:

'Children's participation does not mean supplanting adults. Adults do, however, need to learn to listen, support, and guide; and to know when and when not to speak. One should not, therefore, think of a child's evolving capacities to participate as a simple step-like unfolding of

⁴ Roger A. Hart, 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship'. UNICEF, 1992.

individual abilities. One should rather think of what a child might be able to achieve in collaboration with other children and with supportive adults.’⁵

Activity 7.3e: Listening to and consulting learners

Main



60 minutes

The rest of this session’s activities will help participants become further aware of the value of listening to learners, and how that can improve learning. The activities will support participants to plan an initiative for their own school setting.

Resource 7.23

‘Young Voices’ video

Resource 7.24

Interview on video transcript

Resource 7.25

Identifying positive approaches

Introduce participants to ‘Young Voices’, a 14-minute film from the Norwegian Atlas Alliance made in partnership with EENET ([Resource 7.23](#)), which documents young learners’ views about the quality of schooling they receive. If the video cannot be accessed online, give a copy of the video transcript ([Resource 7.24](#)) to participants in small groups.

Give each participant [Resource 7.25](#) and these instructions:

- Watch the film ([Resource 7.23](#)) or read through the transcript extracts ([Resource 7.24](#)) whilst thinking about, and taking notes of, the **main points the learners make** and **the strategies** used to give them a voice. This film shows that, with careful facilitation, young learners can provide useful insights on a wide range of education issues that can help their schools plan improvements.

⁵ Roger A. Hart, ‘Children’s Participation: From tokenism to citizenship’. UNICEF, 1992.

After showing the film, ask participants if they were surprised to see young learners talking in this way about their schooling? Why or why not? Were the points they raised useful?

Using [Resource 7.25](#), ask participants to try to remember the main points the learners made, and also identify the approaches for helping learners to share their views that they see in the video/read about in the transcript. They should recall the activities, resources and strategies used.

After 10-15 minutes of group discussion, collect feedback and write on the board or flipchart key points the participants make about strategies used. Link the discussion to what participants have already learned in earlier activities about key principles of, approaches to, and degrees of, participation.

Note for the trainer:

Some of the learners' main points about inclusive education:

- The importance of understanding and using sign language;
- Inclusive education is not just about improving physical access;
- Inclusive education is about including more than just people with special educational needs and/or disabilities;
- Learners consider resources like food and water to be very important for their inclusion;
- Friendship and supporting each other is a key part of inclusion for many learners;
- Inclusive education does not always require lots of financial or material resources.

Some of the approaches/strategies used to facilitate consultation seen or mentioned in the film:

- Taking place in a school where the head teacher is committed to listening to learners (e.g., open-door policy);
- The learners themselves conducting the research;
- Taking photographs or drawing pictures of places in school that make them feel happy and places that make them feel unhappy;
- One-to-one interviews;
- Interpretation and translation, including using sign language;
- Group discussion.

Some other strategies that could be used:

- Questionnaires (if accessible);
- Suggestion boxes (if accessible);
- Other creative activities including the use of art, media such as photography and film, role-play;
- Small focus groups;
- Newsletter planning and publishing.

Ways of promoting learners' confidence:

- Use of creative and collaborative activities;
- Listening to learners and taking their views seriously;
- Creating a safe environment for learners to share their views, especially with adults.

Finally, give out **Resource 7.26** and introduce it as a list of some strategies for supporting and promoting consultation with learners. This is not a comprehensive list.

Resource 7.26

Some strategies for consulting learners

Activity 7.3f: Planning to consult learners in your own school setting

Main



120 minutes

This activity is designed to help participants further develop their confidence to consult learners, by giving participants the opportunity to creatively plan a consultation activity together.

Remind participants that they have already discussed how they already consult their learners or may want to in the future (see **Activity 7.3b** above).

Resource 7.27

Things learners may want to be consulted about

Give each participant a copy of **Resource 7.27** and ask them to work in groups.

Explain that **Resource 7.27** offers a range of examples of things learners may have something to say about that might, if listened to, lead to improvements at participants' schools.

Give the following instructions:

- Look at **Resource 7.27** and discuss the first row together (examples of issues) and then look at the second row and decide if there are any other issues relevant to participants' schools/classrooms.
- Each participant to individually complete the last two questions on the sheet themselves, in relation to their own school and classroom setting.

After about 15 minutes give out the following resources:

Resource 7.28

Planning a consultation activity

Resource 7.29

Guidance to planning a consultation activity

Ask participants to work in groups, introducing the activity as one devised to support their planning a consultation with learners in their own schools.

Go through the planning sheet **Resource 7.28** so everyone understands what they need to do.

Ask participants to refer to the previous activity and **Resource 7.26** for ideas.

Ask participants to look at **Resource 7.29**. This provides guidance for completing the activity, and also a checklist to make sure that the activity will be participatory. The groups' ideas are to be written on flipchart paper.

After about 40 minutes, ask each group to nominate one of their members to take their plan to a neighbouring group. Each group now hears about their neighbouring group's plan from the visiting participant. Ask each group to discuss the other group's plan over the next 20-30 minutes. They can ask questions to the visiting representative, and then, referring to **Resource 7.19 (Harts' ladder)**, decide which degree of participation each group's plan meets.



Participants plan their consultation activity

[Image description: Two male participants are sitting at a table and are actively involved in a discussion. Behind them other participants are sitting around tables.]



A group of participants evaluating another group's consultation activity

[Image description: Two male participants are standing listening to a third male participant who is explaining what is written on a flipchart piece of paper that is stuck on the wall.]

Then hold a feedback session where each group describe their consultation plan to the whole group, and then the neighbouring group who evaluated it against Hart's ladder announce their decision and explain why they came to it. **Their decisions can be further discussed and debated.**

It is important to emphasise that the level of participation needs to be appropriate to the aims of the consultation and the context of the school setting.

Finally, explain that learner participation is often seen as a series of projects, introduced by those staff who have a commitment and interest in involving learners. But there is a very strong argument to be made that learner participation cannot be limited to times and opportunities organised by staff. Allowing learners to be heard only in particular lessons, or on particular issues, can lead to:

- confusion, for learners and possible disruption as they attempt to be heard in other places;
- token participation, with only certain learners able to participate, and only token issues deemed reasonable for discussion;
- unrealistic expectations, with learners believing that they have more power than is possible or desirable.

Introducing particular projects may be a good place to start, but it cannot remain at this level. If listening to learners and encouraging participation is important then it should be recognised that **it will underpin everything a school does**.

Activity 7.3g: Gender equality case study



30 minutes

Main

This activity can be done in pairs. It provides a case study to help participants consider in greater depth some key inclusion issues. Key inclusion issues inform schools about what to prioritise for consultation with their learners or the wider school community.

Resource 7.30

Gender Case Study

Resource 7.30 is an extract from an article by an international non-government organisation (NGO) working in Somalia, and provides an example of an initiative to increase girls' participation in education.

Using coloured pens/pencils, ask each pair to use a different colour to highlight a) the barriers/problems girls face, and b) some things that can be, are being or

should be done to help the girls overcome them. If no coloured pencils/ pens are available, then circle or underline the relevant text.

Collect feedback from the whole group and discuss any issues arising. Finally, ask the following questions for general discussion:

- What barriers do girls in your school and community face when trying to get a school education?
- If you had to choose **one** issue to consult girls about, what would it be?

Session 7.4: Promoting independent learning skills

Independent learners are able to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own learning activities. They are motivated and confident enough to take decisions and act on them. They are able to reflect on their learning, think critically and identify their weaknesses and how to improve. Independent learning skills are important, for succeeding in education and for entering the world of work.

Roger Hart points out that developing participation skills is key to developing independent learning skills. Working collaboratively, engaging with and encouraging the participation of others, and talking through problems can be an effective way of becoming more independent as a learner.

This session focuses on developing skills of reflection and critical thinking to further support learners' independent learning skills.

Activity 7.4a: Reflecting on our own learning

Main



30 minutes

This activity is designed to help participants think about what it means to reflect on their own learning. We can develop important independent learning skills by understanding how we learn, which helps us improve our performance.

Resource 7.31

Thinking about how we learn

Give out **Resource 7.31** to participants in small groups and ask them to read the information and then carry out the task. This should take no more than 5-10 minutes.

Then ask one group to share what they decided were the sections about **'what'** the girl learned, and **'how'** she learned (as explained in the task). The other groups discuss the ideas, seeing if everyone agrees.

Note for the trainer:

- **What** the girl learnt were three local factors influencing climate change (but she couldn't explain them properly).
- **How** she learnt was by finding somewhere quiet, keeping on writing and crossing out words and putting in new ones (but she was nervous doing it that way without a plan or knowing what to do, and she was crossing out words all the time).

Then ask if participants understand the difference between thinking about **what** they are learning and **how** they are learning, that is between the content of their study and the process of doing it.

Ask participants to discuss the second paragraph in the learner's account in [Resource 7.31](#), where she reflects on what to change about **how** she learns. This should take no more than a few minutes.

Point out that only when learners begin to examine **the process** are they likely to consider whether there might be other more effective ways of studying.

Being aware of the two dimensions of study (what they are learning and how they are learning) and being able to analyse both of them is an important part of learning how to learn.

To emphasise this, if there is time, ask participants to think back to an example of study they have done in the past, or any fairly structured learning opportunity they remember. They are to focus on a particular activity or task when they were consciously engaged in learning. Working in pairs, ask them to briefly tell their partner **what** they were learning – what was the subject, topic or task? Having reminded themselves of that, they are then to briefly recall **how** they learnt it.

Finally, emphasise that there is **no single method of learning that guarantees success**. What works best for one of us will not necessarily be the same as the approach used by other learners, even when studying the same thing. We are all unique as learners. We need to find out what works best for us, and it will be different for different purposes and contexts.

Resource 7.32

Ways to promote reflection on learning

Give out **Resource 7.32** to participants and ask them to read through the ideas for encouraging their learners to reflect on their own learning. Ask them to discuss these and also add any further ideas they may have.

Activity 7.4b: Developing critical thinking skills



30 minutes

Main

Reflecting on our own learning involves:

- **Thinking for a purpose** – in this case improving the way we learn.
- **Analysing** – how we learn, and making judgements on our own performance.
- **Being critical** – not in a negative way, but through questioning and examining what and how we learn.

Throughout their time at school, learners are expected to compare, contrast, evaluate, understand, organise, and classify information – in other words, think critically. This empowers them to make decisions and deal with problems confidently, which are essential skills in school and the rest of their lives. Many people would say that the most important characteristic of an effective and independent learner in education is that they are capable of critical thinking – actively challenging both themselves and others.

People do not necessarily become wiser as they become older! Emphasise that **thinking needs to be developed**, and learners gain from teaching methods focusing on the development of their thinking skills, engaging them in meaningful conversations and motivating them.

Point out that critical thinking skills are promoted through many of the participatory strategies already considered in this module, including collaborative learning and peer support, peer- and self-assessment, and the involvement in decision-making.

Resource 7.33

Building a foundation of critical thinking with very young learners

Give a set of cards cut up from **Resource 7.33** to each group. Explain that critical thinking skills need to be nurtured from a very early age, using very small steps, and **Resource 7.33** gives examples about how to do this.

Participants decide which '**How to promote critical thinking**' cards, that are in bold, go with which '**examples**' cards.

Note: The cards in **Resource 7.33** are arranged to show the correct answers, to help the trainer check the groups' work.

After about 10 minutes, the groups' decisions can be shared with the whole group who can then discuss whether the resource is useful for planning, and whether any participants can add further examples of practice that build a foundation for critical thinking skills for very young learners.

Emphasise that allowing time for a learner to navigate problems is central to developing a learner's critical thinking skills. There are of course situations where an adult needs to step in. At these times, it is helpful if the adult models their own critical thinking by verbalising what is happening inside their mind as they try and solve a problem. Learners learn from observing how adults think.

Resource 7.34

Activities to promote critical thinking

Give out **Resource 7.34** to participants seated in pairs and ask them to discuss the activities. They decide if the resource is useful for promoting critical thinking skills in their classroom, and if they can add any activities themselves.

Finish by emphasising the following:

- Ask for answers that go beyond repeating information or expressing likes or dislikes.
- When making quizzes and tests, make sure that questions are designed to show critical thinking skills, as opposed to just memory. Sometimes, a wrong answer with an imaginative explanation shows stronger critical thinking skills than a correct answer with no explanation.
- Most importantly, create a supportive environment in which learners are free to use their critical thinking ability without fear of getting the wrong answer. **Praise effort as well as accuracy**, ask learners for their opinions and encourage learners to give reasons for their choices.

Session 7.5: Using action research to promote learner participation

Remembering previous action research undertaken, it is important to re-emphasise how every school has a unique set of challenges and strengths in education, requiring a unique set of responses. Teachers, therefore, cannot simply rely on ‘experts’ from elsewhere to tell them how to make their school inclusive. Teachers – along with the learners, parents/caregivers and other members of the school community – need to be experts in their own situation. They need to be able to investigate what is happening in their school and community, and identify barriers to inclusion that need tackling, or inclusion solutions that need expanding. With the help of others, they then start taking relevant action. Action research is very useful for this. It helps stakeholders to look at their situation, analyse the problems, propose solutions, and then act.

Action research gives participants a golden opportunity after completing this module, Module 7, to further develop learner participation, through consulting them and involving them in planning and implementing the research.

Activity 7.5: Deciding the focus



60 minutes

Main

Resource 7.35

Enabling Education Review Issue 7 2018 ('Children as researchers' pages 22-33)

Participants need to decide what they want their action research to focus on.

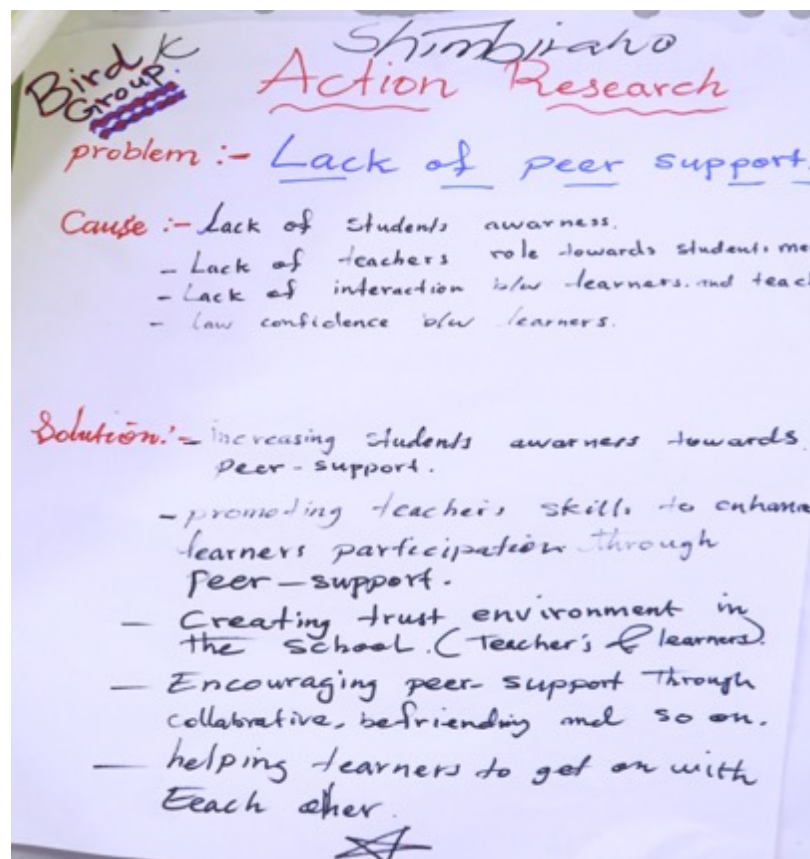
Tell participants that they will be conducting observations and interviews in school. Give participants the following instructions:

- Individually look back over the work you have done throughout this module and make a (mental) note of what each session was about.
- Thinking about all the sessions, decide what you might like your action research to focus on. Think of reasons why and think about whether it is a focus that you will be able to observe in your school. You may wish to consider what peer support, participation in decision-making processes or explicit promotion of independent learning skills already take place at your

school, and where there are significant gaps. This may help you decide what you want to explore further.

- You may also wish to consider ways to involve learners in the action-research and in responding to the findings. Look at [Resource 7.35](#), the 'Children as researchers' section from pages 22-33, to see if it gives you any ideas. Please also explain that the article was published before the war in Ukraine (that began in February, 2022) and that our thoughts are very much with the Ukrainian learners and teachers that contributed to the article.
- Pair up with another participant and discuss your decisions with each other to make sure they seem practicable. Think of creative ways to involve learners in conducting the research.

Write each participant's chosen research topic on the board or flipchart. The whole group can discuss whether the chosen topics seem practicable. Finally, ask participants to present their research focus **in the form of an enquiry or a question**.



Groups' notes on possible action research activities

[Image description: A sheet of flipchart paper with notes showing feedback of participants' ideas of action research activities.]

Note for the trainer:

The following enquiries could arise from the main session topics covered in this module:

- Can peer support be realistically developed in my school? If yes, which type and why? If no, why not?
- Do teachers use any peer support strategies? If yes, what are they? If no, what teaching strategies are most commonly used?
- Is peer- or self-assessment evident? How effective is it? How do we know?
- Do teachers and the school consult learners? If yes, give examples and evidence of how it affects learning. If no, what steps can be taken to consult them?
- Are learners given roles of responsibility? Are girls and boys equally represented in those roles? If not, why not? Can it be redressed?
- Are learners involved in decision-making? How? If not, how could they be involved?
- What are the main concerns of learners? Can they be involved in finding solutions? How?

Grouping activity that can be used during the training

 15 minutes

This is a fun warm-up activity that allows groups to re-organised so that participants are working with different people. Module 3 also includes another activity that can be used for the same purpose.

Resource 7.36

Group activity

Shuffle the prepared animal cards from [Resource 7.36](#) and give them out, one to each participant. Explain that each participant is to go into action when told to, **making the action and noise of the animal they have been given** until they find all the other participants who are the same animal as them.

They can only make the action and noise of their animal, they cannot speak, or say the name of their animal.

When everyone finds all the participants who are the same animal as them, they are to stand together quietly.

Acknowledge those who put their heart and soul into the activity.

Participants are told that they are with the group they will be working with for the next few activities and they should now go and sit with them.

Resources

Resource 7.1: People search

Find someone who.....	Name
...speaks at least three languages fluently.	
...looks after young children at home.	
...has lived in more than three places.	
...has a parent or grandparent born in another country.	
...has run a business.	
...has done voluntary work for a charity or their community.	
...plays team sports.	
...cooks for their family.	
...lives in the same village/town that they were born in.	
...knows first aid.	

Resource 7.2: Types of peer support

There are many different types of peer support. Peer support initiatives often include:

- **Peer-mediation:** Learners help groups or individuals resolve disputes.
- **Befriending:** Examples could include: 'playground pals', mentors, and 'buddies'.
- **Performing roles of responsibility:** These involve learners performing roles to help the running of a lesson or of school facilities.
- **Peer education or 'tutoring':** These involve learners passing on their skills and knowledge to others. This can include peer assessment, supportive reading schemes or being educators on specific topics, such as stereotyping, discrimination or drug education.
- **Peer advocacy:** These involve learners representing their peers in forums, such as a school council or school inclusion team (SIT).

Resource 7.3: Benefits of peer support

Type	Example	Benefits
Peer mediation		
Befriending		
Roles of responsibility		
Peer tutoring		
Peer advocacy		

Resource 7.4: Promoting a supportive environment

Be clear about your expectations

- Clearly explain requirements and procedures.
- Make sure learners quickly know what behaviour and effort is expected of them.
- Always acknowledge positive behaviour and effort.
- Encourage learners to be open about their feelings whilst being at all times respectful towards others.
- Listen to learners: encourage their questions and answer them patiently.

Help learners to get on with each other

- Plan friendship-building activities at the start of the term/year.
- Make activities collaborative, challenging and enjoyable.

Quickly allocate roles of responsibility

- Ensure that all learners have the opportunity to perform roles of responsibility in the classroom as soon as possible.
- Support those who are less confident, or have additional needs, to exercise some responsibility for their peers.

Model the behaviour you expect

- Treat all learners with respect.
- Challenge any attempts to ridicule or tease or embarrass others.
- Listen to all learners equally, showing you value all their contributions.
- Be fair at all times.

Resource 7.5: Creating a safe space⁶

Activity One: Trust-building

Blindfolds should be available if possible. If they are not, then those participants required to wear blindfolds should keep their eyes firmly closed.

- Ask participants to stand up and walk around the room/space making eye contact with each person they pass.⁷
- After about a minute, direct participants to stop as they pass each person and shake hands warmly with them, or use another form of acknowledgement, while smiling a greeting. They should then carry on to the next person they pass and repeat the process.
- After a few more minutes ask participants to choose a partner and stand opposite each other. They should then share something positive with their partner about the training session so far (e.g., how friendly people are, how hard someone in particular has worked, something their partner has contributed, etc).
- Participants should then blindfold their partner (or they close their eyes tightly). They should lead their blindfolded partner around the room/space, guiding with their hand. After about two minutes participants should then swap roles.
- Participants can feedback how they felt.

Activity Two: Finding connections

Main activity

Participants moving around the space have to quickly get into “a group of...”, which is whatever the trainer chooses, e.g., same age, same length of hair, support same football team, shoe size, same number of brothers and sisters, etc.

It is important to start with simple groupings but can move into more complex ones that require the participants to question each other in greater depth.

⁶ These activities are taken from ‘I am Here: Teaching about refugees, identity, inclusion and the media’ Save the Children 2004.

⁷ If visually impaired participants are present, they should be assisted by a friend (peer-support).

Alternative activity

Participants sit at tables/desks in groups of 4 - 6. They should discuss in their groups what they might have in common, e.g., same age, same length hair, same football team, shoe size, same number of brothers and sisters, from the same place/region, how they feel about something, etc. They can then each write down what they share in common with other members of the group, and who those members are.

The trainer should get feedback on this to the whole class/group.

Activity Three: Sharing happy memories

Main activity

In groups of 4, each person thinks of a time that they were happy and with family or friends. Without explaining their memory or talking to the others, they should place each member of the group into a frozen picture representing their memory, with themselves as themselves. If there is time everyone should do it.

The trainer should select a group to show their frozen picture (maybe one frozen picture from each group if there is time). The rest of the participants should try to guess answers to three questions after seeing it:

- How could the people in the memory be connected (e.g., family? friends?)?
- What might be happening?
- If so, why could that be a happy memory?

Participants are **not** expected to then explain what was really happening.

Alternative activity

Each person should be asked to think of a time they were happy and with family or friends. They should write a few sentences describing the occasion. They need to explain:

- How are the people in the memory connected? (e.g., family? friends?)
- What happened?
- If so, why is it a happy memory?

The trainer can ask for volunteers to read theirs out.

Activity Four: Our communities, our connections

Groups can brainstorm what groups, other than friends and family, they feel they belong to (e.g., town, church, mosque, sports team, market-seller community, livestock owners, farming community, fishing community, Scouts Association, Girl Guides Association, etc).

They should list them down on flipchart paper and then display them on the walls.

Resource 7.6: Listening to each other

Read through the following five unfinished sentences:

‘One thing I enjoy is.....’

‘One thing people like about me is.....’

‘I can be unhappy when.....’

‘In ten years’ time I want to be.....’

‘One thing I would like to improve on is.....’

After everyone has read through the unfinished sentences, appoint one person in your group to chair the activity.

The nominated Chair/chairperson reads out each unfinished sentence in turn and asks everyone in the group to spend a couple of minutes thinking about how they would finish off each sentence.

The Chair then reads out each sentence again, completing them for her/himself, speaking as openly and honestly as she/he can in this setting.

The Chair then goes round each member of the group and asks them to complete each of the sentences, speaking to the whole group.

If a person does not want to finish any of the sentences, then they can ‘pass’ on these.

Resource 7.7: Mentee scenarios

Copy and cut out a set of these cards and place in an envelope; one set for each group.

I am always getting into trouble and I don't know why.	I am really interested in sports, but the teacher won't select me for any teams.
This girl is disrespecting me all the time. If she doesn't stop, I am going to beat her.	I am always too nervous to put my hand up in class. Now my teacher says I am too lazy to join in.
I find reading really difficult and I never understand the textbook.	Some of my classmates make me do their homework for them.
My best friend told my secrets to some other girls in the class. Now I don't want to come to school anymore.	I don't understand my teacher very well.
Some boys keep asking me for money. I am scared of them and of their friends.	I am always too busy at home to do any homework.
I am much older than my classmates. They laugh at me.	I need help in class as I can't see very well. But my teacher says other learners mustn't miss out by helping me.

Resource 7.8: Peer mentoring information

- Listening and sensitively asking questions are vital to effective mentoring.
- Other important attributes include approachability, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion and fairness, and being respectful towards those of a different gender or who have different beliefs and backgrounds.
- Peer mentors should not be expected to solve the problems that their mentees share; in fact suggesting solutions may not be helpful.
- Mentors should never tell their mentees what to do.
- Confidentiality should not be promised if it cannot be kept, for example, if there is a child- or young person-protection concern.
- Some of these scenarios show us that learners can only support each other if they have full support from teachers, the school and, if necessary, the community.
- Some of the scenarios require peer mentors to be specially trained in how to listen, how to ask questions, and to know when and how to refer the problem to a teacher or other professionals in the school.
- In some schools, learners are specially trained in conflict resolution and at helping groups or individuals resolve disputes. This is sometimes known as 'peer mediation'.

Resource 7.9: Role-play

Role-play can be an effective learning tool, but it can also make participants feel uncomfortable. If your learners are not used to role-play then, before starting, it is important to explain how it works and its benefits.

- Role-play is a powerful active learning strategy that should be conducted in a safe space where social and ethical issues can be openly explored.
- Role-play is participatory and helps information to be retained and utilised.
- The more authentically learners engage in their role the more they will learn.
- Role-play is a useful teaching and learning tool. By tackling social and ethical issues in a safe non-threatening way, participants can think through the issue and practice some skills and tools to use.
- Scenarios need to be based on real-life situations that learners encounter.
- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers in role-plays.
- After the role-play it is important to discuss the experience, any outcomes, and what outcomes participants might expect.
- An observer role can be allocated to those who are uncomfortable to participate in the role-play, perhaps because issues are being raised that have personally affected them. These observers should take notes as they watch others and then provide comments to the other participants during the discussion after the role-play.

Resource 7.10: Peer tutoring activities

Tutoring need	Example of how peer tutoring can be used and organised
Learners with reading difficulties	Paired reading, with an able reader paired up with less able. For example, 'Lunchtime reading club' in the library/quiet area with able readers trained to read with and support less able readers. These able readers are rewarded for their work.
Reinforcing learning from a particular lesson	
Learning how to use science equipment safely	
Learning about drug misuse	

Resource 7.11: Supporting peer- and self-assessment

Copy and cut out a set of these cards for each small group. Put the sets into envelopes.

Our learners are eager to find out what progress they are making.	Our learners understand that supporting each other's work helps them improve their own work.
Assessment activities usually take place in time for feedback to be given and discussed.	Our learners want to know what they need to learn next.
Our learners understand the importance of clear and accurate feedback and how to give it.	Our learners know how to work cooperatively and to respect each other.
Our learners know the importance of taking responsibility for their own learning.	Our learners understand why the learning is required (how it fits into the course of study, etc.).
Our learners understand the learning objectives.	Our learners are regularly required to reflect on their own performance.
The whole class have high expectations of each other's behaviour and effort.	Our learners understand the assessment criteria – sometimes they are involved in creating it.

Resource 7.12: Useful approaches - dos and don'ts

1. Learners are divided into groups to hear the presentations they each prepared for homework, and they comment on each other's work. Drawing on those comments, learners then redraft their work before handing it in for marking.
2. Instead of marking an essay him/herself, a teacher gives each learner the marking scheme and asks them to mark each other's work.
3. The teacher provides regular opportunities for learners to reflect on their own performance through structured individual and pair work.
4. A teacher sets a short test to check learning halfway through the lesson. She/he asks the learners to swap their papers and tick (✓) or cross (X) their neighbour's answers (after writing the answers on the board). The papers are handed back so each learner can look at how well they did.
5. A teacher returns essays where errors are underlined, but no explanation about how to correct them is given. Learners are aware of the assessment criteria. Learners are asked to look at each other's in pairs and help each other identify how to correct the errors.
6. Learners assess each other's work and then collaborate to draw up a list ranking the work, compiling a list from the best performer to the worst performer.
7. Learners complete a science project in groups. At the end the teacher organises an activity where they have a structured discussion in their group about how they think they performed both individually and as a group. They present their displays to the whole class for comment.
8. The teacher asks learners to assess each other's work, but the teacher doesn't give any thought about who is paired or grouped with who.
9. For objective questions (requiring a specific answer) asked in tests, a teacher prepares answer sheets in advance. Once all of the learners are finished, they exchange their answers, and use the answer sheets to grade their partner's answers. The teacher then collects the tests, checks the grading, and grades whatever objective questions are in the tests.
10. Every half-term, learners complete a paragraph in their mathematics exercise book describing what progress they have made and what they need to learn next. The teacher then adds a comment, before the book is shown to parents/caregivers.

Resource 7.13: Progress in English checklist

Skill Area	Activity	😊 ✓	😐 ○	😞 ✕
Speaking and Listening 	I can have a short conversation.			
	I can talk about school life using sentences.			
	I can talk about past and future, too.			
	I can understand when people explain something simply.			
Reading 	I can read a story or text that I have not seen before.			
	I use my knowledge of the letters and sounds to work out how to read new words.			
	I can talk about poems or stories or information that I have read.			
Writing 	I can write in sentences, but I still make grammatical mistakes.			
	I am still learning how to spell unfamiliar words.			
	I use full stops and capital letters and form my letters clearly.			
Now I am at Level				

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20210410225943/https://www.ealconsulting.co.uk/> (accessed 12.6.2025)

Resource 7.14: Key principles of Article 12

Article 12 of the UNCRC sets out the right of children to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them.

In inclusive schools there is a clear and visible commitment to consulting and involving learners.

Inclusive schools recognise that low self-esteem can be one of the biggest barriers to participation.

An inclusive approach to participation means that:

- when seeking learners' views, ways are found to involve those who may appear to lack confidence or motivation;
- no learner is excluded or prevented from getting involved on grounds of their ethnic origin, gender, language, additional need, culture or sexuality;
- extra support is given to those who might face particular barriers to getting involved, such as learners with additional needs;
- feedback on the benefits and outcomes of participation is regularly provided to learners and their parents/caregivers.

Resource 7.15: Benefits of learner participation in decision-making

Learners who participate in decision-making have been shown to:

- enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation;
- be able to better communicate their needs;
- gain important personal, social and organisational skills;
- become familiar with group and democratic processes.

For **schools**, this has supported:

- better staff-learner and learner-learner relationships;
- more inclusive school classrooms, where needs are better understood;
- more relevant and effective policies;
- learners showing greater responsibility and improved behaviour;
- improved learner engagement, well-being, and learning.

In the best-case scenarios, learners and teachers work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Learners are involved in their own learning and feel that they have a stake in their learning community.

Resource 7.16: Benefits activity sheet

Copy and cut out a set of these cards for each small group. For the trainer's reference, the 'benefit cards in the right-hand column are arranged next to the 'examples of participation' cards they explain.

<i>Examples of participation</i>	Benefit
<i>Every classroom has a 'suggestion box' for learners to leave notes in, suggesting improvements.</i>	Learners are better able to communicate their needs because they are regularly consulted.
<i>Learners plan a sports competition themselves.</i>	Learners gain important personal, social and organisational skills by being involved in organising something together.
<i>Learners are elected to represent their peers on the school council.</i>	Learners become familiar with group and democratic processes.
<i>Learners are consulted about when the school day should start, and the time is adjusted to maximise attendance and punctuality.</i>	Learners' views being listened to means that school policies become more relevant and effective.
<i>Learners are listened to, their views on teaching and learning are sought and teachers see how learners can contribute.</i>	Because the views of learners are sought, the classroom and the teaching are better organised to meet their needs. So, there is improved learner engagement, classrooms are more inclusive and there are excellent staff-learner and learner-learner relationships.
<i>Learners are asked to organise hosting visitors on a school open day. They model excellent behaviour on the day, and it was felt they represented the school.</i>	Learners enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation because they are <i>treated</i> as responsible members of the school community. As learners are involved in decision-making they learn to behave more responsibly.

Resource 7.17: Approaches to participation

What are we already doing that helps us listen to learners?

What are we already doing that enables learners to express their opinions about something that affects them?

Examples:

- The head teacher's door is always open to learners, and teachers are expected to arrange a time if learners want to discuss something with them.
- The expression of feelings is encouraged. For example, through play, including messy play, art or role-play.
- Teachers deploy active learning strategies, including group work and learner feedback.
- Classroom rules are drawn up in consultation with learners.
- All-girl discussion forums are organised to ensure their views are heard.
- There are opportunities for learners to discuss issues in a 'safe space' to allow the free expression of views.
- Learners are encouraged to volunteer to help staff organise and run extra-curricular activities or the school library.
- Learners and their parents/caregivers are consulted about school uniform.
- Questionnaires and suggestion boxes are used to find out how learning could be more enjoyable or accessible.
- There is a school council.
- School prefects are consulted about learners' behaviour.
- Learners themselves design fund-raising campaigns.

Resource 7.18: The teacher as facilitator

An effective teacher will employ a range of strategies.

When promoting participation, teachers will want to adopt the role of **facilitator**. A facilitator is someone who helps learners to initiate an enquiry, or understand their objective, and assists them to plan an activity to achieve that objective.

In doing so, the facilitator remains "neutral", meaning she/he does not take a particular position.

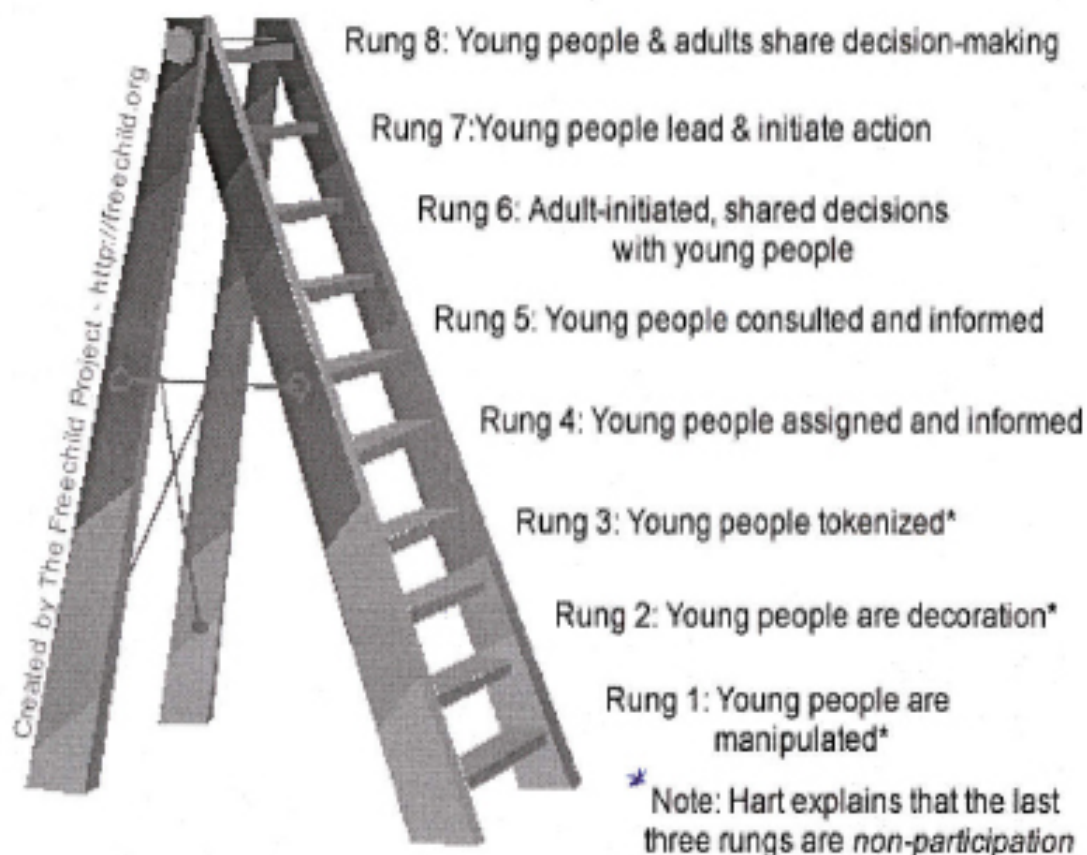
Employing skills of facilitation means teachers can put the responsibility on the learners to manage their own learning process, with the guidance of the teacher.

The facilitator's role is to introduce ideas, encourage the sharing of perspectives and show learners' actions in a collaborative and enabling way, guiding but not controlling the outcomes.

Similarly, promoting other inclusive strategies, such as active learning strategies, means a further shift in the role of teacher, from providing answers to raising questions, stimulating thinking, encouraging exploration, making associations and prompting reflection and evaluation.

Resource 7.19: Hart's 'ladder of participation'

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

The ladder metaphor is borrowed from Sherry Arnstein (1969). The categories are from Roger Hart.

Resource 7.20: Hart's 'ladder of participation' cards

Copy and cut out a set of these cards for each small group. For the trainer's reference, the 'example' cards in the right-hand column are arranged next to the 'degree of participation' cards they explain.

Degree of participation	Examples
Manipulation	When learners do not understand the issues or their role. For example, a teacher uses drawings by children in her Year One primary class to advertise a private nursery business she is starting-up in her spare time, even though the drawings are nothing to do with the business and the children know nothing about it.
Decoration	Learners are aware of what they are doing and there is no pretence of an event being inspired or run by learners. However, they have little idea of what it is all about and no say in organising the occasion. For example, learners are given T-shirts related to a cause they have little knowledge of or involvement in, and they are asked to sing or dance at an event in such clothes.*
Tokenism	An appearance of learner participation only. For example, learners are selected by teachers to make a speech to parents/caregivers on behalf of the 'student' body, but with little or no preparation on the subject and no consultation with their peers.

Assigned but informed	Learners are assigned a project to do without initiating it themselves, but they are fully informed about it and there is a real purpose to the project. For example, a science project set by the teacher.
Consulted and informed	Although a project is designed and run by teachers or other adults, the learners' views are taken seriously. For example, teachers conduct a survey of learners' views about the quality of school meals. The learners are informed about the results.
Adult-initiated shared decisions with young people	Learners are <i>to some degree</i> involved in every part of the project. Teachers make no assumptions about what the learners want and the learners are fully briefed, and understand how and why compromises are made. For example, learners are taught desktop publishing so they can design a school newsletter for parents/caregivers and the local community to read about the school. They develop skills in decision-making, collaborative working, research, interviewing, etc., whilst drawing on technical support and sharing editorial decision-making with teachers.

Young people initiated and led	Learners have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge. For example, a group of learners set-up an indoor games club. They involve a teacher who agrees to support them if necessary, and they reach an agreement with the school to have access to a classroom on Thursday lunch-times and on that day bring in cards, a Bao set and other indoor games to play.
Young people shared decisions with adults	Learners initiate, design and run the project and inform themselves fully in order to proceed, but they are competent and confident enough to understand the need for collaboration and that in asking adults for their input, the project may be strengthened. There is abundant trust. Adults serve as listeners, observers and sounding boards. For example, learners design and direct a video report on climate change and give advice to other learners about how to protect the environment in their day-to-day lives. They consult their teacher throughout the filming and she shows the video at a national teacher conference on environmental education that she is organising.

** Example taken and adapted from Roger A. Hart, 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship' UNICEF 1992*

Resource 7.21: Attitudinal barriers to participation (part 1)

Copy and cut out a set of these cards for each small group.

Our learners are too young to influence decisions.	There is no time, our classes are large, we don't have the resources and there is no space in the curriculum.
I don't see how it can improve learning.	In our culture learners' obedience is more highly valued than independence or autonomy. Girls and those from poorer families can see an unquestioning attitude as vital for social respectability or economic survival.
This is not how we do things in our schools. Teachers are the experts. Learners must listen to and respect their teachers.	Teachers should not be judged by learners.
Learners sharing their views might lead to disagreement and conflict.	The loudest learners will be the only ones listened to.
Our learners don't have the skills to make decisions cooperatively and our teachers don't have the skills to teach them how.	Our learners are too aware of their rights already! We should be focusing instead on getting them to listen to us.

Resource 7.22: Attitudinal barriers to participation (part 2)

Resource 7.21 Card	Some points to make in response
Our learners are too young to influence decisions	• Even during their early school years learners are intellectually capable of working with adults and can express their feelings and thoughts. • Teachers need to develop activities that are appropriate to learners' stages of development. • For example, they must be sensitive to some of the limitations learners have in understanding the perspectives of others.
There is no time, our classes are large, we don't have the resources and there is no space in the curriculum.	• Participation should be developed in a way that improves learning and enriches the curriculum, rather than overburdening teachers. • Keep things as simple as possible. Develop participatory activities step-by-step, aim to achieve realistic goals and always share the outcomes with colleagues, senior staff and parents/caregivers; if appropriate so they can be aware of the benefits. • Developing participation should not create more work but should rather allow teachers to work more effectively by using learners' knowledge and experiences in the classroom. It is a way of delivering the syllabus more effectively.

Resource 7.21 Card	Some points to make in response
I don't see how it can improve learning	• Listening to learners' needs leads to improvements. Acting on what they say makes their involvement meaningful. • Learners gain in self-confidence when listened to and when taken seriously. It is important that they are supported to enable them to listen to each other and to others. • Learner participation supports the development of strategies for problem-solving and research, making learning more independent and deep-seated. • Participation initiatives are most likely to succeed where they are supported by management and sustained and embedded in the school organisation. Meaningful participation is a process, not simply the application of isolated, one- off participation activities or events.
In our culture children's and young people's obedience is more highly valued than independence or autonomy. Girls and those from poorer families can see an unquestioning attitude as vital for social respectability or economic survival.	• Being listened to and able to share an opinion doesn't promote disobedience. In fact, in school, it needs to be part of a learner's engagement with the learning process. • Parents/caregivers and communities may need to be educated in the benefits of their children learning skills so they can be more independent and autonomous, and so access more meaningful and rewarding employment. • Teachers need to work hard to facilitate the participation of girls, learners from poorer families, and other marginalised and disadvantaged learners so that their voices are heard. • Schools need to recognise the different ways girls are treated in different cultures and discover how to address the barriers to their participation. For example, in many societies it is still assumed that boys will be decision-makers and girls will not. Integrated programmes, with girls and boys participating equally, may therefore be beneficial.

Resource 7.21 Card	Some points to make in response
This is not how we do things in our schools. Teachers are the experts. Learners must listen to and respect their teachers.	Teachers will always be the experts in teaching but, by allowing learners a voice, teachers can better identify the needs, difficulties and learning skills of each learner.
Teachers should not be judged by learners.	- When discussing improvements to lessons, there is no question of 'judgments' being made. Where teachers invite learners to give feedback about their learning experiences, this should include preparation or training, so that learners understand the boundaries, and comment on their learning constructively. Through such involvement, learners are actively learning about the learning process. - Teachers must be supported to deal with negative feedback constructively and must have confidence that an individual learner's views will not be allowed to distort the bigger picture.
Learners sharing their views might lead to disagreement and conflict.	Teachers need to decide how any disagreement between learners sharing their views will be managed, and whether to seek consensus or majority, or to take learners' views into account in some other way. This process must be transparent.
The loudest learners will be the only ones listened to.	- Inclusive teachers will already be ensuring quieter, more reticent learners have a voice. Putting too much emphasis on the views of a vocal minority can offer a distorted view. - Therefore, teachers need to ensure that all learners are represented in discussions and decision-making, and, in particular, make sure that it is not only the articulate, well-behaved or loudest learners who are listened to.

Resource 7.21 Card	Some points to make in response
Our learners don't have the skills to make decisions cooperatively and our teachers don't have the skills to teach them how.	• Some areas of the curriculum already teach cooperative decision-making; for example, drama, practical science, sport and PE, class-tutoring. • Inclusive teaching skills, including promoting active learning strategies, complement teaching skills needed for fostering participation. • There needs to be a commitment from senior management to provide flexibility within the curriculum and to focus on teachers' training needs related to inclusion and participation.
Our learners are too aware of their rights already! We should be focusing instead on getting them to listen to us.	• In developing learner participation, it is important that learners understand their responsibilities as well as their rights. They can learn how rights can conflict, and how they can begin to address those conflicts through collaboration and consensus. • Learners need to view their involvement as part of collectively making things better, rather than a focus on 'what I want'. • According to Hart's research, the most effective participatory activities, though child-initiated, share decision-making with adults who provide support and wisdom.

Resource 7.23: ‘Young Voices’ film

Go directly to

www.facebook.com/50837772141/videos/1040666268376/ (accessed 12.6.2025)

or

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPONNwPLUpw (accessed 12.6.2025)

The film is 14 minutes long.

A guide for facilitators wishing to use the film in training or advocacy is available from:

www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/YV%20DVD%20booklet.pdf
(accessed 12.6.2025).

A note about the participating schools

The schools featured in the film all have boarding facilities. Despite offering residential facilities, they are *not* special schools. All three schools are mainstream schools that enrol a range of students. Rock High School and Bigwa College cater for learners from quite a wide area, and so daily travel may not always be feasible, particularly in the case of Bigwa, which enrolls mostly rural students.

Resource 7.24: ‘Young Voices’ film transcript

Juliana Atwine: I think inclusion means being part of something.

Pauline Awori: Education is for everybody.

Emmanuel Papaok: Inclusion it is a form of education that is extended to people who might not have the privilege to learn.

Narrator: On behalf of the Norwegian Atlas Alliance we visited three schools in Uganda and Tanzania. All of the schools are in the process of developing inclusive education, and they enrol students with and without disabilities.

We used photography and drawing to help the students tell their stories. We asked them to take photographs or draw pictures of places in school that make them feel happy and places that make them feel unhappy. Ismail chose his dormitory as a happy place because that is where he spends time with his friends.

Facilitator: Can you explain how your friends help you in the dormitory?

Ismail Ibrahim Etyang: When I want to go somewhere, they show me the road.

If there is something wrong, they help me and warn me. All of that.

Facilitator: How do you help your friends?

Ismail Ibrahim Etyang: I help my friends who have physical disability.

Facilitator: What makes you happy about coming to school?

Blantina Nyachwo: Where I sleep. I can read my books where I sleep because there is electricity. I can read seriously and be ready with my homework, and I understand it well. My teacher teaches me volleyball and I like it. I play together with my friends.

Narrator: A friendly environment and the opportunity for students to communicate and interact with each other and with teachers is crucial to make a school inclusive.

Blantina Nyachwo: I came to this school. They asked me good morning in sign language. I don't know, I had a communication barrier. That's what I hated in school. I was taught and now I know sign language. Now my parents are very happy with me because I'm in school and I can read.

Narrator: Winny explained that very often when she goes to class there is no sign

language interpretation.

Immaculate Ikiror: One challenge is that we are few trained teachers and we have a heavy workload. Some children with disabilities need one-to-one teaching, one teacher to one child, which sometimes becomes difficult. Another challenge is large class sizes. You find that the number of children is large and assessment becomes difficult.

Sign language interpreter: How do you feel when you are in class and the teacher doesn't use sign language?

Winny Auma: I feel bad, but I keep quiet. They only speak without using sign language.

Narrator: Resources like sign language interpretation and Braille books are not the only things needed to make a school inclusive. Winny chose the water tank as a happy picture that makes her feel included.

Facilitator: Can you explain why you took that photo?

Winny: Because when it rains we get water there. It's good.

Facilitator: Why do you think it's good?

Winny: Because we use the water for drinking, bathing and mopping. When there is no water or rain we go down to fetch water.

Facilitator: You have to go from school to fetch water when there is no rain?

Facilitator: When we talk about inclusion do we mean just people who are disabled or do we want to talk about other people who need to be included?

Florence Asabit: Even illiterate people who cannot read and write also need to be included.

Anna Mukite: I think the poor can be included.

Juliana Atwine: People who cannot help themselves like the young. Even the old.

Narrator: Inclusive education is more than just making schools physically accessible. It can be about the way the classroom is organised, or the way teachers encourage their students. Some students told us that it's about finding a quiet place to read and relax.

Scovia Awino: I took this photo because here is the library where they keep books. During your free time you can go there and pick any book you like. There is

no noise. You read safely. That's why I took this picture.

William Osinde: I took this photo in a Senior 5 class. Some students don't concentrate. There is one student behind here. He is walking in class at the time when his friends are concentrating on the lesson. Those who are seated behind end up not understanding what the teacher in front is saying.

Facilitator: How does this affect the students' education?

William Osinde: Those who sit behind don't concentrate and in the end they don't perform well. Others end up dozing in class, sleeping. One enters class in the morning and leaves to go back home and has not grasped anything.

Narrator: Some students were concerned about health and hygiene issues in school.

Facilitator: Can you say why you took a picture of the latrines?

For my friend, if he wants to help himself he has to put his crutches down, and he can't hold on when it's dirty because first he has to put his hands down to touch the floor where you find urine all over the place.

Juliana Atwine: I took it at the school kitchen, which means in our society here we lack health and cleanliness and sanitation. And it's because of this that sometimes we get disrupted in education in class. Maybe after eating this you get a stomach ache you have to run to the toilet there and then and you miss what the teacher teaches.

Narrator: Inclusive education in Bigwa means first of all a friendly environment where the students feel safe and the head teacher's door is always open.

Emma Machenje, Principal: The door should be open for them (the students) whenever they feel like coming. I can't say that I am tired or I don't want to see them. Even in the street when they see you they want to tell you something, you have to be patient and listen to them. Otherwise if they get frustrated you destroy everything.

Narrator: Bigwa has a system where students with and without disabilities are paired. The arrangement is voluntary.

Emma Machenje: We create awareness on people with disabilities and how we should help them and not overprotect them. We tell them that they have their own physical ability, they can do some things, but what we need is to guide them what to do in the school compound and in the classrooms and things like that. We say that those students who feel that they can assist the students with disabilities

should volunteer, and then you find out that they come up to help them.

Omari Chota: It's very important to have a friend in the college, because sometimes you do exercises together. I'm going to get busy with tailoring.

Dickson Msemo: I don't have any problem helping them. It doesn't affect my progress. The college here I really like it because the way it welcomes people with disabilities. What is done here is to make sure that people with disabilities do not feel isolated. We help them participate in any kind of activity so that we can be together. That's why we talk about inclusive education.

Mariam Abdallah: During break we play together and in class we study together. Whatever we do we do together.

Narrator: We asked the students to draw three pictures of themselves showing what they did before they enrolled at the college, what they like doing in college, and what they want to do in the future.

Omari Chota: With this one I was farming. In the second picture I am playing football. In the third one I'm doing some exercises of tailoring. I was very happy to join the college because I was feeling that I was going to learn something. I really want to learn tailoring.

Narrator: All of the students involved in the 'Young Voices' project were able to share their experiences of education and their feelings about being included or excluded. They offer inspiration to students and teachers in other schools in other countries. Many of the inclusive education ideas they talked about do not involve complicated or expensive solutions. Instead, the students felt that working together and helping each other can be one of the most important steps in developing inclusive education.

Aron Nducha: To me a good teacher is someone who's close to his students.

Alex Owori: We are meant to relate to each other.

Pauline Awori: Disability is not inability.

Resource 7.25: Identifying positive approaches

List at least three of the main points made by learners in the film?	
What strategies did the facilitators use to encourage and support the young learners to speak out?	
What other strategies could they have used?	

Resource 7.26: Strategies for consulting learners

- Questionnaires or suggestion boxes.
- Creative activities including the use of art, media such as photography and film, role-play.
- Training learners to share their views and conduct consultations.
- School council.
- One-to-one interviews.
- Focus groups.
- Newsletter planning and publishing.
- Teaching about children's and young people's rights, responsibilities, laws, justice and democracy in the curriculum.
- A focus on the learning of social skills of communication, negotiation, assertiveness and collaboration.

Resource 7.27: Things learners may want to be consulted about

<i>Discuss in your group:</i>	
Some examples of issues that learners may have something to say about	• What helps them to learn? • What gets in the way of learning? • What makes a good lesson? • What did they gain from an activity? • Are the girls treated fairly? • Could school meals be improved? How? • Are school rules fair? If not, why not? • How can we make cleaning duties fairer? • What physical barriers in school do learners with additional needs face?
Can you think of any other issues that your learners could be consulted about that would help you plan improvements?	
<i>Complete individually:</i>	
Which of the above are particularly relevant to your school setting?	
Which of these would your school agree to consider implementing?	

Resource 7.28: Planning a consultation activity

Propose an issue you would like to consult your learners about and why. Which learners?	
Is this something your learners could have initiated themselves? If so, how?	
Do you think this is something that your school is ready to listen to and do something about?	
Suggest one particular benefit that consulting learners about this would bring.	
Propose a strategy/activity that could successfully engage learners to kick-start the consultation (i.e., think of a creative way to start consulting your learners about the issue).	
List some next steps you need to take to move this consultation forward.	

Resource 7.29: Guidance to planning a consultation activity

- Do the activity collaboratively, in your group.
- Agree an issue that is relevant to as many of your school settings as possible, and is an issue that your learners could in some way already have initiated (either through complaints or suggestions you know they have made, or through their behaviour: e.g., learners regularly asking for a study space after school and for help with their homework, girls remaining quiet and being reluctant to offer their thoughts or opinions, learners with additional needs dropping out of school, or significant numbers of learners getting sleepy during afternoon lessons).
- Choose an issue that you think your school management, or the class teacher, is ready to listen to and do something about.
- If learners are not used to being consulted, then plan to consult just individuals and/or a small group.
- Use a strategy to kick-start the consultation that the learners are familiar with, or easily able to engage with (i.e., think of a creative way to start consulting your learners about the issue).
- Consider if learners will need any training to participate.
- Make sure no one is excluded or prevented from getting involved on grounds of the gender, language, additional needs, ethnicity, culture or sexuality.
- Make sure the planned activity or project is participatory. That is:
 - ✓ The learners understand the intentions of the project.
 - ✓ They know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why.
 - ✓ They have a meaningful (rather than 'decorative' or 'tokenistic') role.
 - ✓ They volunteer for the project after the project is made clear to them.

Resource 7.30: Gender Case Study

Extract from “Education as an emancipator: the case study of Somalia” – by Bangio Ali Adan (AVSI Foundation Kenya)

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20 August 2019

<https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/education-as-an-emancipator-the-case-study-of-somalia/>

Accessed February 2024

Quality education – from childhood to adulthood – is an absolute necessity for girls to become contributing members of their communities. For Somali women, education provides a much-needed refuge from the severe hardships they face on a daily basis – particularly in refugee camps. This was my own story. Education got me to where I am today. Born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1991 to a Somali family hailing from Garissa County, I was given the rare opportunity to study. Had I not been educated, it is more than likely that I would have been married off and become an illiterate mother. But my fate was different, I had a mother who encouraged me to go to school. My family’s support gave me the chance to improve my place in the world and help the rest of the community as well.

Somali girls face numerous obstacles when attempting to get an education. These include socio-cultural practices like female genital mutilation or child marriages that hinder their ability to attend school or causes them to drop out. Often, they also have to face – be it at school or at home – emotional abuse, sexual harassment and physical violence.

In fact, the United Nation’s Development Programme’s (UNDP) latest statistics place Somalia as the fourth most gender unequal country worldwide. 45% of women aged 20 to 24 are married before the age of 18. Adult literacy for women is still at 26% and 74% are unemployed.

There is a glimmer of hope though. Through AVSI projects, refugee Somali women and girls are empowered and encouraged to gain agency over their own lives. This work is driven by the motto: “educating a girl is like educating the whole society”.

Hafsa Abdi Ibrahim is one of these girls. She was born in Dadaab refugee camp, and has been a member of its 'Scout Group' since primary school. This group is an AVSI project that works to empower young refugees through education, skills development and community service. Hafsa faced many challenges but has overcome them all to become a brilliant secondary school student. She has attended AVSI trainings on women's rights and this year was named 'the best girl scout in Dadaab'.

She uses the skills she has gained to support her community by organising activities like cleaning days at school and in her neighbourhood. She has also led the recruitment of 32 girls to the scout movement, and worked to bring out-of-school children back into class while campaigning to raise awareness among her fellow girls about the importance of education.

The international community can play a crucial role in promoting girls' equality. Here's how:

First, make sure to involve the whole community in addressing questions of protecting girls' rights, empowering civic education on social-cultural practices, and fostering a community dialogue on how to solve domestic violence. It is also important to engage men and religious leaders in these efforts, as well as in those designed to promote positive parental roles.

The economic empowerment of women is another key component of any tangible plan to address gender inequality. Supporting income-generating activities for women is a stepping-stone to securing their independence.

It is clear that women tend to be the strongest advocates for Girls' Rights, therefore promoting their active role in leadership and governance is a strategic choice. This is also the case in the education system. More female teachers, hired with equal wages and trained in child protection, would allow for schools to become a safer reference points for girls.

Resource 7.31: Thinking about how we learn

This is an account by a learner reflecting on an essay that she completed for geography:

‘We had to write an essay for homework about factors influencing climate change in my home area. I was nervous because I find essays really difficult. I started to panic a bit because I only had the weekend to do it. I usually think that if I keep on writing, I might get there in the end. Luckily, I found somewhere quiet to work, but it still took me ages – I kept changing the words round over and over again. It wasn’t productive and for a lot of the time I had no idea about what I was trying to do. In the end I managed to identify three factors influencing climate change, but I didn’t satisfactorily explain them.

Now that I’ve thought about it, I can see that I was trying to write the essay without planning how I was going to do it. That’s why I couldn’t get started. When I got my feedback from my tutor, it was clear that I hadn’t actually answered the question.’

Task: In your group, **in the first paragraph** highlight in one colour where the learner describes WHAT she learnt about the topic, and highlight in another colour the sections where the learner writes about HOW she went about the task (that is, how she learnt).

Resource 7.32: Ways to promote reflection on learning

- Make time in lessons, for learners to reflect on feedback. Build reflective practice by stopping work periodically and encouraging learners to record their thoughts about what they've learned or share their thoughts with a peer.
- Use language about learning so learners get used to using it, e.g., always explain why you are asking learners to do things, how it will help their learning, communicate (e.g., develop a visual display of) the outline of the topic and learning objectives, regularly facilitate peer- and self-assessment
- Ask learners to recall one good/enjoyable/effective learning experience, and one that was less effective and enjoyable; then ask them why they think the first was more effective. Encourage learners to give importance to how they felt.
- Use writing, drawing and silence as tools to slow down thinking and allow for silent reflection. By using these, learners can focus on other viewpoints.
- Once a week, learners write down one reflection they have about their learning during the week on a sticky note/post-it. They then stick their reflection statement on the wall somewhere at eye-level in the classroom. Learners then do a gallery walk where they explore the reflections that were placed around the classroom. Once they have had the chance to view the reflections, as a class, discuss what and how they have learned. Younger learners can draw happy or sad or confused faces and then talk about why they felt like this.
- Outside the classroom, mark out a lake/river/swimming pool on the ground, making one end the deep end and other end the shallow end. Ask learners to reflect on how they felt about a particular learning experience or activity and position themselves somewhere along the length of the pool depending on how they felt about the experience (shallow end if it was too easy for them and/or they were bored, and deep end if they felt it was too difficult or confusing, in other words they felt 'out of their depth').
 - a. Ask learners if, when learning something new, they like to take it slowly and be sure of themselves (staying in the shallow end of the pool), or they like to throw themselves into an activity and literally 'jump in the deep end'!

- b. Ask learners to look where others put themselves along the pool.
Does seeing someone at the opposite end from themselves help them to understand why that person may behave in the way they do when learning something new?
- Use learning diaries or journals.
- Use exit questions. For example, before learners leave your class, ask them to quickly jot down a new way of doing something that they have learned on a sticky note/post-it (or answer another reflection question).

Resource 7.33: Building a foundation for critical thinking with very young learners

Copy and cut out these cards and give a set to each group. The 'Examples' cards in the right-hand column are arranged next to the 'How to promote critical thinking' cards they explain.

How to promote critical thinking	Examples
Provide opportunities for play	Letting the child test how things work by playing with water and sand
	Enabling the child to explore cause and effect when dropping things off a chair....'what happens if I....?'
Pause and wait – don't intervene immediately	Silently counting to 60 before intervening while child is attempting a task
	Giving time for the child to readjust and manoeuvre to grasp a toy effectively or to think and maybe refine without completing the task for them
	Giving time to observe what the child is doing
Ask open-ended questions	Responding to a child's questions with a question
	Respecting child's answers even if incorrect, e.g., 'that is interesting, why do you think that?'
Help child develop hypotheses	Asking 'if we do this, what do you think will happen?'
	Saying things like: 'Let's guess what will happen next'
Encourage thinking in different ways	Asking 'what other ideas could we try' [to help develop problem-solving skills]
	Suggesting 'let's think of all the possible solutions'

This activity draws on guidance from Bright Horizons' 'Developing thinking skills in kids' (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210625031709/www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/developing-critical-thinking-skills-in-children> [accessed 12.6.2025])

Resource 7.34: Activities to promote critical thinking

- **Problem-facing questions:** Give learners questions that they should use when faced with a problem, such as, 'How would someone else feel about this?' 'Is it fair?' 'What can I do about this?' These, and other questions, can be displayed around the classroom for learners to see and use throughout the lesson, until they are in the habit of using them automatically. [This gives learners tools in order to think critically.]
- **Fact or opinion:** Create some statements that are either fact or opinion. Learners look at the statement and have to write down 'fact' or 'opinion' and then a sentence to explain how it can or can't be proven. They then compare their answers with their peers and discuss. [For differentiating between fact and opinion.]
- **Café discussion:** Learners each choose a character to create a persona – they decide a name, age, gender, marital status, occupation, education level, etc., for their character. Next, the class should be given an historical event or current issue related to the lesson to discuss. They should also get some time to do some research, and to think about how they want to represent their character's views. The class splits into groups. What follows is a 20-minute 'cafe-style' conversation about the chosen topic. Be sure each learner practices being open-minded and disagreeing respectfully. [For role-playing and interpersonal communication skills.]
- **Words that count:** Ask learners to imagine they live in a world where there are only 10 words they can ever use. They can repeat them as much as they want, but they can't ever use any other words. They write down the 10 words they'd choose. Next, ask them to make up to 10 sentences with them in order to communicate something to their group. They should write the actual intended meaning below each sentence for their own reference. They can use feeling and gesture to help their group understand. [This works on some skills using metaphor and choosing words carefully.]
- **Questioning common situations:** Ask questions as a way of exploring assumptions and some common situations in life that we take for granted. For example:
 - What are games and why do we play them?
 - Why do sports seem to get more attention than other matters, such as disease or poverty?

- What would happen if no one could ever play games again?
- Why do humans wage war on each other?
- How do we decide who wins and loses?
- How does war affect those who do not participate?
- What is the legacy of war?

[This exercise encourages us to look at who we are both as individuals and as a society.]

- **Making choices:** Explain to the class that part of life is being able to agree a healthy balance between our needs and our wants. It's also about focusing on what we consider to be truly important. Ask them to imagine they can have any 3 things that they want. In return they must give away three things that they already have. What do they want and what will they give away, and why?
- **Talk it through:** Present scenarios for learners to discuss and debate. They should be based primarily on ethics and morality. They encourage learners to take a stand and defend their viewpoint. These can be done in pairs but are much more compelling in larger class debates where views are divided. They can also be used as individual worksheets – learners can circle an answer and then explain their choice in writing. [Learners learn the importance of being able to take a stance on an issue and defending that stance with logic, reasoning, knowledge, and common sense.]

Example scenarios

- Abdul cannot pay his school fees. One day he finds an expensive-looking watch in a classroom. It has no name on it, and is not near anyone's desk. Should he: a) Give it to the school office b) Ask around if it belongs to anyone c) Keep it and not say anything?
- Fatma's friend is stressed about a future test. Fatma already took the test and got 100%, so she knows all the answers already. Should she: a) Just give the answers to her friend b) Use her knowledge to coach her friend c) Not get involved at all?
- Mohammad overhears two boys joking about having posted a picture of a female student online without telling her. Should he: a) Mind his own business b) Report the incident to the school principal c) Confront the boys and tell the female student?

- You witness a bank robbery and follow the thief. He stops at a mosque orphanage and gives them all the money. Would you: a) Report the man to the police as he committed a crime b) Leave him alone because he did a good deed?

Most of these activities are adapted from 'The Critical thinking Workbook' by the Global Digital Citizen Foundation

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180718113230/https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/free-download-critical-thinking-workbook/amp> (accessed 27.5.2025)

Resource 7.35: Enabling Education Review Issue 7 2018 ('Children as researchers' pages 22-33)

(www.eenet.org.uk/enabling-education-review/enabling-education-review-7/eer-7/children-as-researchers/)
[accessed 12.6.2025]

22

Children as researchers

EENET recently worked with children in Armenia and Ukraine. We helped older children (aged 12-15) to learn about action research – using activities and games to investigate a situation and find solutions to problems. The older children then worked with younger children in primary school (aged 6-7) and with very young children from kindergarten classes (aged 4-5) to find out about their experiences of school.



Ukraine

Capital:	Kiev
Official languages:	Ukrainian
Population:	42,418,235
Out-of-school children:	56,000
Pre-primary enrolment:	no data available



The young researchers used lots of different games and activities to encourage the younger children to talk about their experiences and feelings.

At school we don't like ...

Teachers take our phones from us, put them in a box, and do not give them to us at breaks.

Sometimes the teacher shouts.



Sometimes the boys behave badly, they fight among themselves.

The teachers do not explain why they give us bad marks.

The young researchers discussed
“why is it difficult to express ourselves?”

We don't have the skills.

We are shy and afraid of looking stupid.

We are afraid we cannot formulate our ideas.

We do not think adults will take us seriously.

We think our opinion is not valued and will not change anything.

It's hard to find a common language with an adult.

Our parents do not take us seriously, even the older young people (20 years old), so it is important to find ways to communicate with all people.

Parents are not interested in our opinion. Or they pretend that they listen to us; nevertheless, they do not listen to what we said.





Five out of nine younger children said that teachers and adults did not listen to them. Sometimes they wanted to say something but were too scared.

Our Ideal teacher

- Should not be angry.
- Should not ask us to do homework.
- Should play with us more often.
- Should play more football in the playground.
- Should not write [bad] comments.

What was it like working as researchers with younger children?

We became more united.

It is interesting to work in a team.

We needed to listen to each other.

You need to help your fellow researchers.

We must not quarrel.

We learned a lot.



What was it like working with kindergarten children?

- ✓ They are so small!
- ✓ How do educators cope with them?
- ✓ It is necessary to give a medal to educators after one working day!
- ✓ Compared with the primary school, it is more difficult but also interesting.
- ✓ The children speak openly and sincerely; they do not think what to say, they speak it as it is. And it was cool!
- ✓ Today was an interesting and difficult day; we played a lot. Keeping children interested is hard. Nevertheless, they are so sweet, sincere, they do not know how to lie, they tell us about their relatives.
- ✓ They can cry so quickly, and we do not have time to understand why.
- ✓ Teachers do a great job working with little children.
- ✓ We think being a teacher is not as easy as it may seem; it is a difficult job.



The young researchers suggested some follow-up activities, to build on this action research:



- ✓ Conduct joint lessons. Mix students of different classes (ages) to establish mutual understanding between us and them.
- ✓ Conduct other research in the warmer weather in the playground (for example, about natural history).
- ✓ Motivate children to tell not horror stories but fairy tales, as well as write them down in their notebooks.
- ✓ Use 'Beyblade' for educational purposes, for example: contests, competitions. [Beyblades are spinning toys that the younger children were very interested in and wanted to play with a lot.]
- ✓ Show children cartoons about friendship. It is difficult to explain what friendship is and how to be friends. Involve parents so that the approach is the same for teachers at school as well as for parents.
- ✓ Allow the use of mobile phones for educational purposes, to explain the culture of communication with the gadget.
- ✓ Undertake action research with other primary schools nearby. This would help with the transition from primary school to our secondary school.
- ✓ Use project activities in school children's education. We are ready to share our knowledge and practical experience.



Armenia

Capital:	Yerevan
Official languages:	Armenian
Population:	2,924,816
Out-of-school children:	5,000
Pre-primary enrolment:	52%

In Armenia the older children worked with kindergarten and primary school children.

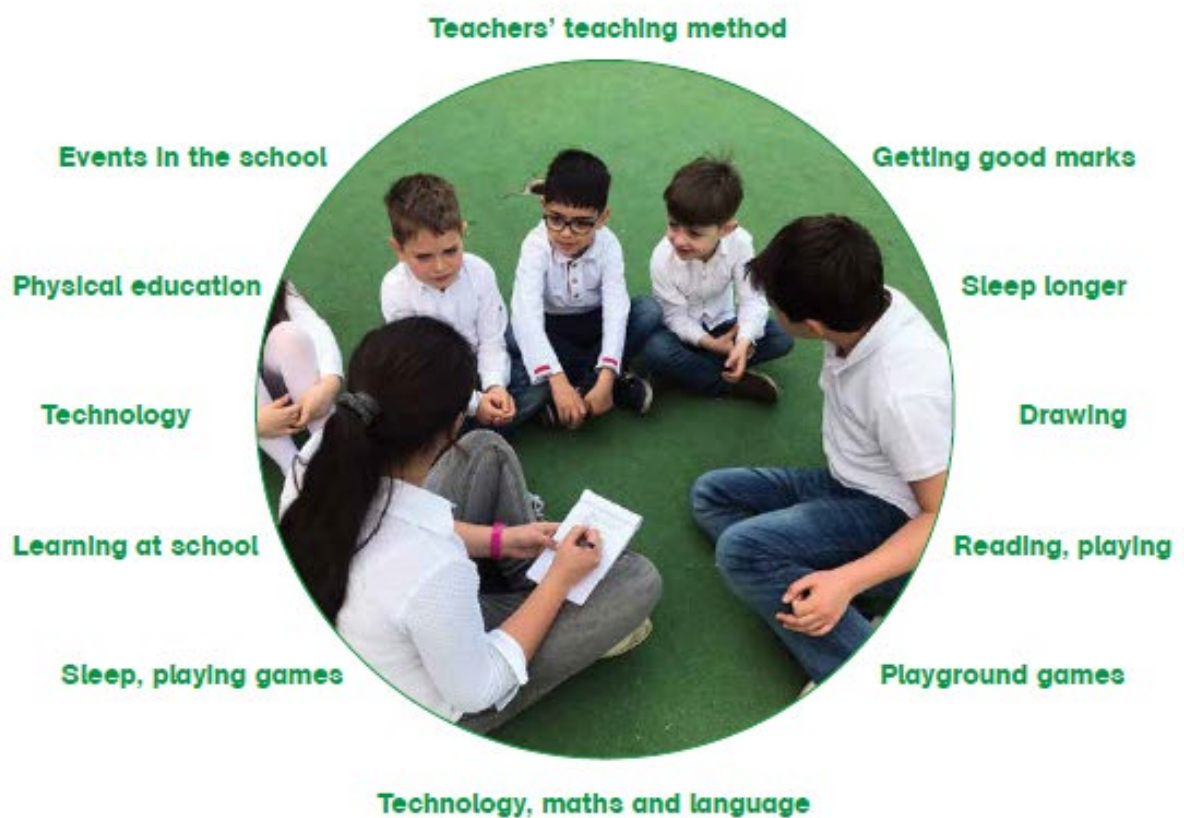
“When we visited the kindergarten, some of the younger children were excited, and some were shy. In order to create a warm atmosphere, we asked what they wanted to do. The children answered unanimously that they wanted to play in the school yard. We took into account the children’s opinions. We asked them to draw their dreams of the kindergarten and then we started asking questions.”

The older children had played games with the younger children, took photos, distributed sweets, asked questions, and took notes. Later, the older children made posters showing what they had found out during their research activities with younger children. Their research was focused on asking the younger children what they liked and disliked about school.





Primary school children liked:



Primary school children
"We don't like..."

Young researchers' ideas for solutions

Too many children in the classroom	→	Reduce the number of children in each classroom
Breaks are too short	→	Make breaks longer
Homework is too much and there is no time for rest	→	Give children less homework
We don't have enough chance to use modern smart devices during the classes	→	Give the children chance to use electronic books and devices
When I hurt my leg in PE	→	Teachers should be more attentive
When I am not engaged in the activities	→	We suggest also organising psychological games
When I am mocked by teachers	→	Teacher should try to explain better, because when she is angry, children get upset
When the teacher is angry	→	Reduce the number of children in the class so the teacher can spend more time with each of them. Don't get angry when children who do not want or do not understand something. Talk and listen.



Primary school children "We don't like..."

Young researchers' ideas for solutions

When a teacher hits a book on the table



Discuss children's rights to make own and free decisions

Waking up early



Start lessons later, not early in the morning

Sitting too long



More activities, moving around

Play with Lego



Take into account children's opinions and listen to their wishes

Classes are long



Different approaches for each child. Ask them what they would like instead

Don't like the idea of going to school



Start preparing children for school from the last year of the kindergarten

We would like to change the food (school meals)

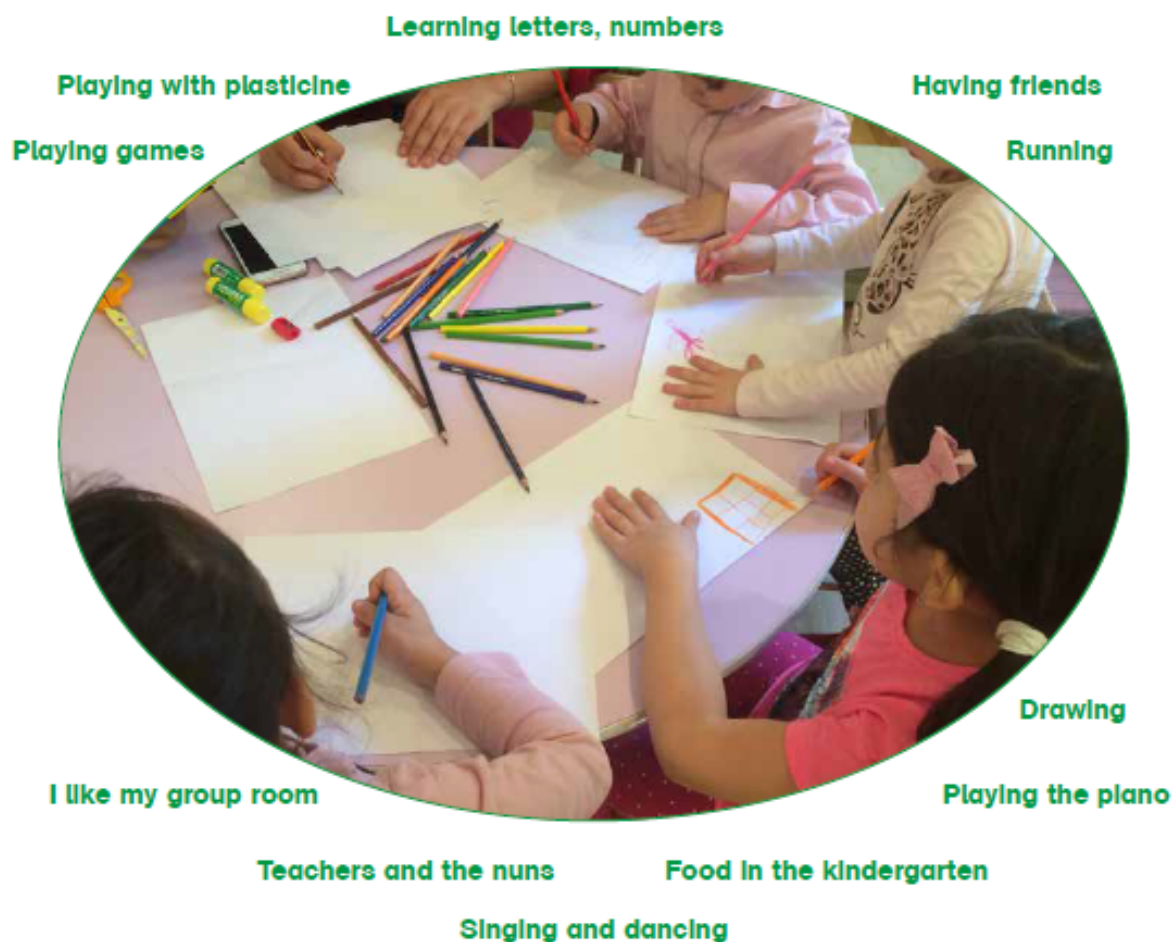


Make them more affordable and organic food / different food

The lunch is expensive and not nice



Kindergarten children liked:



Kindergarten children "We don't like..."		Young researchers' ideas for solutions
Spending long time in kindergarten	→	More games and entertainments
When they force you to eat	→	Explain to children about the usefulness of food
Some children don't like sleeping	→	Let children make choice, sleep or not
Eating soup (borsch)	→	Explain children about the usefulness of food

Resource 7.36: Grouping activity

Copy and cut out a set of these cards; one card per person with an equal balance of animal cards amongst the whole group. Choose as many animals as you want groups. For example, if you want 5 groups, and have 40 participants, then choose five animals and copy and cut out 8 cards of each animal.

Elephant	Monkey
Snake	Cow
Frog	Bird
Cat	Goat

Notes