

REPORT ON
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITATION
TRAINING COURSE (1992)

BY

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C O M B A T P O V E R T Y A G E N C Y

INTRODUCTION

Meitheal

Jane Clarke and Patricia Prendiville work together under the group name of Meitheal in the areas of planning, evaluation, personal development, management training, group development and community development. Meitheal aims to enable people to gain skills and confidence in order to identify their needs, plan for action and work towards change. Meitheal takes a needs-based, experiential and participative approach to facilitation and training.

The Report

Between September 1991 and April 1992 Meitheal ran a pilot training course in Personal Development Facilitation Skills for nine women from community based groups. The Combat Poverty Agency asked the course trainers, Jane Clarke and Patricia Prendiville, to write a report about the course. The purpose of the report is:

- (i) to provide information about this pilot course
- (ii) to place the course in the context of on-going work with women in locally based groups
- (iii) to promote this kind of innovative work
- (iv) to promote discussion on the issues that have arisen from the work

There are four sections to the report.

Section 1

- 1. Background to the course
- 2. Setting up of the course

Section 2

- 1. Course Structure and Content
- 2. Course Evaluations

Section 3

Key Issues

Section 4

Recommendations

Appendix 1

SECTION 1

1. BACKGROUND TO THE COURSE.

Personal development courses have been a feature of the development programmes in locally based women's groups and projects for the past number of years. They are an integral part of people taking on more active roles in their own lives and in their communities. Meitheal sees Personal Development as

- knowing ourselves, our strengths and areas for development
- being able to communicate effectively with people
- valuing our relationships with ourselves, and with others
- exploring aspects of our past as a way of increasing self-awareness and changing our behaviour patterns
- building confidence
- providing the basis from which women can make changes in their lives, within their families, groups and communities.

In general the experience of doing personal development has been a positive, empowering one for women. (See Hayes, 1991; McVeigh, 1988; Mulvey, 1992.). This has led to an increased and continuing demand for personal development within women's, family and community projects around Ireland.

Questions about the aims and objectives of personal development have been raised, by some leaders, participants and funders even while the courses have been running. What is personal development for? Where does personal development leave women? - these are examples of the types of question being raised. For the participants, the aims of personal development are as outlined above. By raising the questions of 'Where does this leave women?' participants are illustrating the effectiveness of the courses. Women in numerous projects are ready to go on to something that challenges them again, because they have become more confident. These women are targeting an area of work in which they would like to operate. Because women are recognising their skills, abilities and needs for further challenge and training they are raising the questions for themselves.

Secondly, course organisers and funders are raising the questions so as to balance the needs of the women expressing a high level of demand for the courses, the requirement to make the best use of scarce resources and their community development. Another factor is the employment of local people once they have been through courses. We discuss this matter below.

The importance and relevance of personal development work is evident in the fact that women find what it is they want to move on to because of doing the courses. For some, it is continuing to do

more personal work, for others, taking on leadership within their communities or projects, for yet others, it is to move towards further training in areas they are interested in. And this is where the idea for this Meitheal course arose.

Through working with women in various projects, the need to provide training in facilitating personal development courses was identified. Many women were at a stage in their lives where they were ready to move on to facilitating these courses themselves if they received the appropriate training particularly in the areas of:

- a) course design and planning
- b) facilitating personal work
- c) monitoring and evaluating own skills
- d) developing skills in relation to group work.

Facilitating personal development requires particular skills, and it is important to develop these skills through specific training and continuous practice. As with all working practices, creating a training setting where good practice is passed on is important. The basic skills of facilitation are required, as are

- the ability to use some basic counselling techniques
- the ability to work on topics with people in a way that encourages them to explore these further
- the ability to deal with emotional expressions of sadness, joy, grief, anger etc. without becoming defensive or burdened by them
- the ability to make connections between women's individual experiences and the experiences of women in general, or in particular settings.
- a belief in the function of personal work in relation to development of self-esteem, self-acceptance and self-direction
- a belief in the importance of personal development work, the importance of each individual, and the links between personal development and political development/change
- the ability to communicate these beliefs through practice, methods used, inputs, attitude and manner.

In recognising and responding to the need for training from local women, by designing a training course in Personal Development Facilitation Skills, Meitheal aimed to further the empowerment process of community training and leadership for women.

Furthermore, it is very important from a policy perspective that local people are trained to run courses, lead teams or projects, and that they are recognised for this work through appropriate payments. When people are sufficiently trained, they should be paid fully for work undertaken. While the dilemma of training people in communities for voluntary or paid work is being addressed, we in Meitheal think that the training provided should be towards employment. This raises a number of issues which are addressed below in the section Issues Arising, as they affected the

participants on the 1991-1992 Personal Development Facilitation Skills Training Course. These issues include:

- the acceptance by local co-ordinators of the skill level of the women
- the recognition of this through payment for the work.
- the equal payment to the local women as is given to other trainers for similar work.
- the recognition by other local women that their peers are skilled, trained and experienced.

In terms of personal development, community development and training in both of these areas, it is important to continue discussing these pertinent points so as to develop a coherent policy on community development and training.

Given the high level of availability, funding and support for personal development courses for women in community projects, there is a need to develop and promote good practice among the practitioners to provide the best service possible. Running the course and documenting it in this report is part of the process of acknowledging and furthering this aspect of personal development work. Because it is a specialised working practice, it is useful for the practitioners to develop policy on what constitutes good practice, as well as implementing this through training new people in this style/method of working with women.

2. SETTING UP THE COURSE.

Once the need for the course was identified Meitheal applied to the Department of Social Welfare under the Grants for Locally Based Women's Projects scheme for funding for the course. We had decided the course should be free of charge to the women so as not to exclude anyone. The allocation we received covered the costs of the first term - 8 weeks of the course. Creche or transport costs for the women could not be covered from this allocation. In approaching the various women's groups, their financial support of the women through reimbursement of childminding and travel expenses was, therefore, also required. While this was not a contentious point with the projects, it has been recognised that training for women requires funding for childcare and transport costs.

Another source of funding for the second term - 14 weeks was required. Meitheal therefore applied to the Combat Poverty Agency, and were granted funding to complete the second term. The Agency also funded this report in order to document the course and to assess its relevance in the context of innovative training with women.

To gather our group together women's projects around Dublin were targeted in relation to the commitment to local leadership, and the personal development work completed by the women. We asked each project to:

- 1) suggest two women who were ready and interested in moving on to running personal development courses
- 2) help these women to set up and run a personal development course in their project during the second part of the course.
- 3) support these women financially in terms of creche/childcare and transport expenses.

We specifically asked for two women from each project so that they could support each other when running their own personal development course which we had planned as part of the training course. The benefit to each project was that they would then have two trained personal development workers in their project, to continue running courses in the future.

The response to the personal contacts to the centres was very positive, and we closed the group when 15 women had taken up places. Of this number, 11 turned up on the first day at Kinlay House, Dame Street, where we ran the course. Various reasons were given for why the other 4 women did not take up their places, including communication difficulties and family commitments. Because of this we agreed to take one other woman from a reserve list.

We began the course with 12 women:

- 2 from Tallaght.
- 2 from St. Helana's Resource Centre, Finglas.
- 2 from The Greater Blanchardstown Development Project.
- 2 from the Dublin Travellers Education, Development Group (D.T.E.D.G.)
- 1 from the Dublin Institute of Adult Education (D.I.A.E.)
- 1 from Lourdes Youth and Community Services (L.Y.C.S.)
- 2 from The North Wall Women's Centre.

During the course 4 women had to leave - again for a variety of reasons - family, work commitments, stage of development. Another woman from the L.Y.C.S. project was taken on for the second term. 9 women completed the course.

SECTION 2

1. COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The course was structured in two parts. Part 1 ran over 8 weeks from October to December 1991 and Part 2 ran over 14 weeks from January to April 1992. The sessions were on a Wednesday morning for two and a half hours and were held in a city centre location.

PART I

The tutors planned part I with the aim that by the end of the 8 weeks the participants would be ready to facilitate a Personal Development course. In order to achieve this they created the opportunity for the women to:

- explore and clarify what is meant by Personal Development
- build up confidence and skills as facilitators
- practice facilitating personal development in the group
- prepare for running a Personal Development course

The tutors aimed to create a safe, supportive environment where the women could take the opportunity to practice their skills and get careful feedback.

Session 1

The focus of the first session was on getting to know each other, giving information about the course, setting ground rules and sharing expectations and fears.

Participants' Expectations

The group wanted to learn more about Personal Development and to learn new ideas and methods for Personal Development facilitation. They wanted to learn how to run a course including,

- how to set up a course
- how to structure the content of a course
- how to plan and evaluate a course

They also wanted to improve their facilitation skills including,

- summarising
- clarifying
- encouraging participation; "drawing people out"
- asking the right questions

The group also wanted to take risks and to be challenged in a supportive environment. They wanted to gain the confidence to be able to run a course. They wanted to be comfortable, to have time for themselves and to have excitement.

Participants' Fears

Most of the fears were about running the course themselves. Most women were afraid of failure, "that I won't meet the needs of the participants," or "that people will close up on me." Others were afraid of dealing with people's feelings and of taking on too much responsibility as a facilitator. A number of the group were worried about using the flipchart and writing in general. Others were afraid of not having or losing control in the group.

In relation to their participation on the training course the women feared making mistakes, not taking care of themselves and of giving up if it gets to be too much.

Sessions 2 - 8

In the following 7 sessions the training focused on:

1. Sharing what is meant by Personal Development
2. Clarifying what is the aim of a Personal Development course.
3. Developing a course design for first stage Personal Development
4. Improving Facilitation Skills
5. Dealing with Difficult Situations in Groups

The women decided what should be included in a Personal Development course. Each week two women facilitated sections from the agreed course plan, including:

Building Trust
Listening Skills
Celebrating Me
Feelings
Relationships
The Situation of Travellers in Irish Society
Assertiveness
Self-Esteem
Relaxation

The women used a range of exercises; group discussion, games, songs, drawings, poems and affirmations. Each woman was given feedback on her presentation, what worked, what did not and how it could be used again or adapted. The women also took it in turns to plan and facilitate opening rounds, closures and games for each session of the Meitheal course. This allowed the women to prepare their inputs carefully, to get new ideas and, most importantly, to recognise the skills and knowledge they already had.

Evaluation of Part I

During the final session of Part I the group did an evaluation of the course to date, answering four questions:

1. What did you like about the course?
2. What would you have liked to have been different?
3. What did you learn?
4. What do you want out of Part II?

1. The participants liked the approach taken in the course because they were asked to take risks and put their learning into practice. They found the course active and the structure of each session varied. They appreciated the encouragement to take risks and to practice the theory. They found it very important to meet and get to know women from other groups all over the city. They appreciated the support and encouragement from the course tutors and other group members. They also found that they pushed themselves because of the course emphasis on doing things themselves. They liked the warm, friendly and energetic atmosphere and they always looked forward to Wednesday mornings. Though doing the inputs in front of the group was very challenging there was a lack of pressure and a feeling that it was alright to make mistakes.
2. The participants found that the time for the course was too short. Each session was very full and they wanted more time for a number of reasons:-
 - to have more quiet time, for relaxation or for processing their learning
 - to have more information from the tutors
 - to have more suggestions of different ways of covering the material.

Two of the participants felt that they had lost some confidence through comparing themselves with others on the course who seemed, "to know so much and to be so able". They also found the constructive criticism unhelpful at times. The participants were disappointed that all the places were not taken up and also that some people had missed sessions.

3. The women felt that they had gained more confidence. They also learned to accept and value themselves, "it is O.K. to be me." Initially they found themselves competing with the others but realised that it is not about being better or worse but being different. They learned to trust themselves more. They gained a lot from the other women's input for their own personal development. In fact the course reminded them again of the value of personal development. They recognised that everyone has gifts and skills and that there is a pool of resources in the group.
"The women on this course are brilliant."

Regarding the role of the facilitator they learned how important it is to give individual attention to everyone and to prevent people from feeling left out. They also learned that the discipline of planning and evaluating and using the time effectively is very important. They learned a lot about co-working from watching the tutors.

4. In Part II the participants wanted more ideas on how to do sessions; different games, exercises, approaches, inputs. They wanted more information, more hand-outs and references to books. They wanted the atmosphere to continue and to continue to feel part of something. They wanted to get more experience and continued support. Most importantly they wanted to feel confident and well-prepared for starting to run their own course.

Part II

The aim of the second part of the course was for the participants to gain confidence and experience from running their own courses with the back-up and support of the tutors and other women during the Wednesday morning sessions. For purposes of clarity the report will refer to the women's own courses as the "community courses" as distinct from the Meitheal training course and the women taking part in the community courses will be referred to as the participants.

Sessions 9 - 10

During the first two sessions the course focused on: - preparations for organising the community courses

- sharing their fears and hopes for the community course
- clarifying community course aims and objectives
- agreeing a community course outline
- planning the first two sessions of the community course in detail

Agreed Plan for the Community Courses

1. Why we are here
2. Getting to know each other
3. Sharing Common Experiences
3. Celebrate Me
5. Feelings
6. Relationships
7. Situation Awareness
8. Goal Setting and Evaluation

It was important to agree this plan so that all the community courses would be covering the same topics concurrently. There is no set format for a personal development course so in planning this one the women concentrated on what they thought was most important to cover with their target group, i.e. women who have not done a personal development course before.

The session on Situation Awareness is not usually included in a Personal Development course. An underlying theme for the tutors was the need to look at the issue of how personal development is related to political issues for women and therefore ultimately to a process of change at both personal and political levels. This comes from a concern that many of the personal development courses

being run throughout the country do not make the links between women's personal situation and their political situation. This has been highlighted in Chris Mulvey's evaluation of the Allen Lane Foundation's funding programme.

" There is a lack of available tutors who are trained in a social and political analysis which would enable them to place the personal experience of individual women in the wider context of a society which marginalises and oppresses them." - Changing the View

One of the course participants who is a Traveller contributed to this on-going discussion in the course by making the links between traveller women's situation and the discrimination against Travellers as an ethnic minority. As her facilitation presentation in Part I of the course she introduced Situation Awareness; a presentation of the situation of Travellers in Irish society. As a result of the consequent discussion and the tutors' concern to promote the links the group decided that it was very important to include a session on Situation Awareness in their own course. They decided that the aim of the session would be:

- that women will be more aware of themselves as a group that is treated differently in Irish society
- that women will understand the connection between their own lives and society's treatment of women or other groups

Sessions 11 - 18

From the third week when the women started to run the community courses each of the next 8 sessions followed a consistent format. The session began with the women evaluating the previous week on their course, discussing difficulties and exchanging ideas. They then went through their detailed plan for the next week. Finally they clarified the aim of the following week and exchanged ideas for how to do it. Subsequently the co-facilitators worked out their own plan in detail and timed it accurately. Putting this amount of time into the preparation for the community courses helped the women feel more confident about their role and encouraged them to plan carefully.

The tutors also gave short inputs and handouts on particular topics as requested by the group;

Introductory Exercises

Sexuality

Grief and Bereavement

Throughout Part II the women continued to lead the opening and closing rounds at each session, thereby building up a bank of knowledge and experience. The women also wrote up and exchanged games and exercises they had used. Books were shared so that the women got a broad sense of what resource materials were available.

Session 10

In session 10 the women did a thorough evaluation of the community courses, which were due to be finished. They had run 6 courses in all. Two were in the North Inner City, one was with a group of Travellers who are based in the North Inner City, and the others were in Blanchardstown, Finglas, Clondalkin.

Participants Evaluation of the Community Personal Development Courses

1. What the co-facilitators hoped the participants would get out of the course.

They hoped that the participants would get more confidence, become more aware of themselves and of their right to be themselves. They also hoped that the participants would learn to value themselves more and to be aware of their own needs and rights. They wanted the participants to have a new and enjoyable experience. Breaking down women's isolation and providing an opportunity for women to support and encourage each other was also important. It was also important that the women would learn how to tune into their feelings and have the opportunity to express past hurts.

2. What the participants got from the course.

On the basis of the feedback they had got from course participants the group felt that these hopes had been fulfilled and more. The women got confidence and courage from the support in the group to make changes in their lives. In one group whenever the word "me" was written up the participants insisted that it was underlined, emphasising how important the "me" had become for them. The women made new friends and learned to accept each other's differences. There was great togetherness and bonding in the groups.

3. What the co-facilitators wanted to get from the course ?

Confidence and experience were the recurring hopes. They also wanted to get recognition as local leaders and to be paid properly for their work. They wanted the opportunity to put their skills and theory into practice. They wanted to move from seeing personal development facilitation as something the professionals do to knowing it is something, "I can do. "

4. What the co-facilitators got from the course?

The group members found that they had got more than they had hoped for. Again increased confidence and higher self-esteem stood out for everyone. They learned not to take on other people's feelings. They began to believe in their own skills and to value themselves as facilitators and leaders. For many of the women earning money was a very important outcome in terms of building their self-respect. They got a tremendous sense of achievement and satisfaction as a result of their very hard work and commitment. Some were surprised to find that they were admired as leaders by the local women. Women said to them, "I wish I was like you, that I had your confidence and courage." This was very affirming and changed how women saw themselves. The women also said that they learned a lot from working with a co-facilitator and that it was so important for support.

5. How the co-facilitators felt at the beginning of the course and how they felt at the end?

Everyone spoke about their anxiety, nervousness and fear. They also felt excited and challenged. At the end the resounding feeling amongst the group was pride. They were full of pride that they had done it, that they had succeeded in running a personal development course. Most of the group members felt tired too as a result of the enormous commitment. They felt very emotional at the end and sad that this first course which was so special to them was over. All the women felt that they were now ready for more, to move on to become all the more skilled and confident.

6. What the co-facilitators would do differently in their next community course?

The majority thought that eight weeks was too short and would prefer 10 weeks. They said that they would spend more time on trust-building and listening in the beginning. They would spend time explaining why it is important not to give advice in the sessions. They would use more games. There was general agreement that it is essential to have two sessions on feelings. A session on assertiveness was also considered important. Some women wanted to improve how they timed their sessions and others wanted to move the order of sessions around. Many of the women said that they wanted to learn more about social analysis in order to facilitate Situation Awareness well. Others wanted to have more quiet time in the group.

Here is a poem written by one of the group after the last session of her course:-

SHARING

*We shared our hopes, we shared our fears
We shared some laughs, we shed some tears*

*We learnt to listen and communicate
To find our love and let go of hate*

*We shared our experiences, the good and bad
Now we look to a great future we deserve to have*

*We made new friends, gained their trust and support
I'm happy and sad it's the end of this course*

SECTION 3

KEY ISSUES

During the course various important matters for further discussion, modification and development arose. These can be categorised under 8 headings, most containing a number of points.

1. The women on the course
2. Special groups
3. Local leadership
4. Good practice
5. Operation of the training course
6. Further training
7. Funding.
8. Certification.
9. Network of personal development facilitators.

1. The Women On The Course

The decision that the course participants should have completed personal development courses themselves was vindicated during the course. Having experience of personal development, assertiveness, leadership and counselling training ensured active and equal participation of the women. In fact 2 women who left the course did so because they were not at the stage where they could facilitate personal development of other people, because of their own needs in this area. We need to have worked on ourselves before working with other peoples' empowerment.

Some of the women had co-facilitated other courses. And some women had facilitated other types of groups, for example, situation awareness and parenting skills. This experience also proved beneficial in terms of confidence, skills, self-awareness and facilitation.

Secondly, the women on the course pointed out how they would like and need ongoing experiential sessions for themselves so as to be good personal development workers. Suggested themes were assertiveness, sexuality, group work. The women spoke of their enjoyment and benefit from the first part of the course - which had a strong experiential component. They recognised how personal development is an ongoing process and while they are trained to run courses now, they would still require further work on and with themselves.

Further, the women recognised the need for training in these areas so as to broaden their skill base and to enhance their personal development facilitation. Suggestions for further training were assertiveness, sexuality, social and political analysis, situation awareness. These needs are discussed under future training needs.

A third and related theme is the importance of ensuring the women are challenged both theoretically and in terms of their own assumptions. For the participants on this course the mix of settled and travelling women challenged both groups. Connections were made between similar experiences. The group members' understanding of the effects of how discrimination operates was enhanced. Information on the travelling people was also included in a session on Travellers during the course. The inclusion of other groups with particular needs featured strongly in the discussions e.g. people with disabilities, lesbians and gays, lone parents, people living in rural areas, young women, older women. This discussion was used to create links between personal experiences and discrimination and to increase awareness of the commonalities between marginalised groups.

Making political connections and doing social analysis are both necessary features of personal development in the context of empowerment and change. This is how we see personal development being a fundamental part of community development programmes. Moving from the personal to the political so as to encourage change is a vital feature of this work.

2. Special Groups

When we contacted the projects to suggest people for the course, a conscious decision was made that the travelling community would be represented, if possible. Apart from inclusion policy considerations, we felt that by targeting specific needs groups everybody could develop a greater awareness of the relevant issues. Having two women from the Dublin Travellers Education Development Group (DTEDG) meant that the questions of racism and ethnicity were raised, that settled and travelling women would be working together and that the travelling women would then be running a course for other Travellers.

This is a significant factor in terms of Travellers working with Travellers rather than the usual scenario of settled people working with Travellers. This is also related to the issue of local leadership as discussed in the next section.

Different groups of women have different perspectives and needs in relation to changing their life situations. By including women from some or all of these groups on the training courses we would be expanding the awareness around these issues, and maintaining the precedent of peer work. It is important to continue with this aspect of the training and to include other groups with specific status or needs - women with disabilities, lesbians, lone parents, etc.

3. Local Leadership

Two interrelated issues that arose in this context were a) payment for running courses and b) acceptance as and by professional workers. Taking the first issue, while being trained some of the women were not paid or were paid below the average rate paid to personal development facilitators. On the course we encouraged the women to seek payment, at a rate they felt was appropriate while giving guidelines as to the rates usually applying. As a policy issue we would recognise how acceptance as and by professional workers affected the payment. The women are qualified to work as personal development facilitators now, and it is vital that this is recognised both in payment and in consultation situations. This is a challenge to all community projects, funders and policy makers. Empowerment and training should lead to change, one aspect of which is the properly paid employment of the people who have been trained.

Another two connected issues that arose from their own personal development courses are:

1. the age of their participants vis a vis themselves and
2. knowing the women personally and how this affected confidentiality in the groups.

In working through the anxieties in relation to both of these issues the women involved spoke of how often we put age and experience as barriers to ourselves and we do not take on to do something if older and more experienced people are involved. In challenging this for herself, one woman also challenged us all to look at ageism and how we are affected by it.

Secondly, knowing the women on their course meant that stronger boundaries around confidentiality needed to be developed. It is a truism in personal development and indeed all group work, that only material arising in the group is discussed. Having knowledge and information about each other from living in the same community indicated the need for an even stronger commitment to confidentiality. Having clear boundaries around confidentiality and ensuring that these are respected is imperative to good practice within personal work.

Many of the women on the course have spoken about their own participants seeing them as 'equal', 'being the same as us', being 'on the same level'. Having women from their own communities is also important and empowering for the participants on the personal development courses.

Moving on from this, the travelling woman who ran a course for Travellers, stated that she would like to run personal development courses with settled women as well as with Travellers now. And some of the other participants have been asked to run courses in other local projects, outside of their area. Such boundary and barrier breaking work would certainly be a challenge to the concerns and inequalities of community and development work that have been raised elsewhere, in terms of 'outsiders', 'middle-class working with working class'. Wanting to create reverse order situations shows how the empowerment and raising awareness process has been effective.

4. Developing good practice

Throughout the course, and again at the final evaluation, the women stressed the importance of the structuring of personal development which they were being trained to do. Knowing the overall aims and objectives for the course, but also having an aim and objectives for each session were important practice skills gained during the training. Having a standard of good practice in relation to courses includes the skills of planning and evaluating. The women have been trained to this standard, and this was reflected in the quality of the courses they ran.

A second very important issue in relation to practice is that of allowing the participants on the training course to make the shift from the personal to the political from their own lives. During the training the inclusion of this material was strongly requested by the women. From their own courses, and discussion in the group, the dilemma of when and how to raise the social analysis material became pertinent. While personal work is premised on the basis of starting from where the people are, nevertheless, the commitment to change requires the raising of such matters as poverty, discrimination, prejudice and other wider concerns. From their experience of bringing these issues to the groups, the women recognised their own needs for further training, awareness and work so as to be fully competent.

This inclusion of a wider political perspective on personal development courses also raised the question of whether it is appropriate or not in this type of work. This is obviously a policy issue in terms of the aims and objectives of personal development work, either in community groups and in general.

The Meitheal training is premised on the necessity for its inclusion, while recognising that the timing and approach must be appropriate for the participants.

5. The Operation of the Meitheal Course

In the evaluation of the course structure and contents other matters relating to the operation of the Meitheal course have been discussed. (Section 2, 2) Three separate items not discussed there are:

1. recruitment of the women to the course
2. the duration of the course overall and of each session
3. the drop-out rate of women from the course.

1. Recruitment of the women to the course.

Because of time requirements, we targeted particular women's projects in the greater Dublin area. The women on the course were wonderful, skilled and experienced women. For future courses we would recommend:

- personal contact with the projects from which women were recruited
- the inclusion of two women from each project.
- the inclusion of women from special interest groups .
- the inclusion of women from as wide a range of projects as possible.
- linking into the development work and training interests and requirements of the projects.
- continue to build on this course.

There is an optimum number of participants on such a course; 12-15 women would be a realistic and viable target for similar courses.

2. Duration of the course and of each session

The duration of the course was 22 weeks in all from October, 1991 to April 1992 with appropriate breaks for holidays and family commitments with school holidays. This worked well in providing sufficient time to train in facilitation skills, participate in some experiential work, and run an 8 week personal development course, with sessions for evaluation. Overall the women received some 90 hours of personal development training, which does not include their own preparation time. This was sufficient for training women to run a first stage personal development course.

3. The drop-out rate of women from the course

A number of women who began the course were unable to complete it. Given the specific nature of the training course and the other commitments by the women, having a 75 per cent completion rate was very good.

6. Further Training

For themselves, the women have clearly identified areas for further training and experiential work. This can be generalised to the point that in order to work on courses with women who have already done some personal development, these 9 women need advanced training. Thus there is the need to provide this training, in a similar context and setting, so as to continue the process.

7. Funding

The major costs of the course were funded by the Department of Social Welfare and the Combat Poverty Agency. The women's expenses of travel and childcare were not covered. Neither did the women receive a training allowance for attending the course. Recommendations in relation to training opportunities for women in other reports (e.g. Combat Poverty Agency - Working for Change, Policy Document on Women and Poverty; Allen Lane Foundation - Changing the View.) cover these aspects of funding which promote the take up of places, and the ability of women to continue with training. Increased funding is required for a similar course in order to meet these expenses, and payments to the women to facilitate their training, and therefore employment prospects, could also be included.

8. Certification

A second factor arising from the question on the future is the issue of certification of this type of course. Evidently, the number of hours is high as is the quality of the training. Approaches could be made to the appropriate bodies to discuss the accreditation of the courses, for example, AONTAS, University College, Maynooth, National Council Education Awards, Combat Poverty Agency. This would have the effect of:-

- recognising the training received
- creating a nationally recognised qualification in personal development
- setting and maintaining standards of training for workers in this area
- furthering the empowerment for change process through the validation, and monitoring of course contents and practitioners.

9. Network of personal development facilitators

A further significant outcome from the course is the network of 9 women who are available to each other, each other's centres and to other centres for work in this area. Expanding the pool of personal development facilitators, apart from broadening it into the community, has the concomitant effect of making personal development courses more accessible to many hundreds of women.

Through this network, the women will also be able to continue with their own support, development and skills acquisition. This network could form the basis for the development of a forum to discuss policy and content of personal development courses. This could continue the process, begun in this report, of defining and developing policy and guidelines on content and methodology in relation to personal development.

It is imperative that the discussion of all of these issues occurs in the community projects, the women's centres, the training courses, amongst funders, community workers and policy makers and the personal development facilitators themselves. We will all then be recognising our role in the process of working for change, and incorporating the positive experience of this Meitheal course into practice and policy.

SECTION 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the experience and views of the group members, the course tutors, and members of the locally based women's groups represented on the course.

1. In order to promote the role of women from locally based groups in facilitating personal development courses there is a need for further Personal Development Facilitation Skills training courses in different geographical areas.
2. Participants on such courses should be paid on a similar basis to Fas trainees.
3. There should be increased funding for these courses which would cover transport, creche facilities and residential.
4. Locally based women's groups and funding bodies need to adopt policies which would ensure that local facilitators are paid for their work.
5. On a national basis there is a need for a forum for the development of guidelines and policy in relation to Personal Development, examining in particular the issue of how it contributes to the process of community development and political change.

APPENDIX 1

Meitheal Personal Development Facilitation Training Course
Participants

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