

Managing mixed groups.

Acknowledging the issues

Adult learners are '*messy learners*' (Alan Tuckett)

'A person learns significantly only those things that are perceived as being involved in the maintenance of or enhancement of *the*

'Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: *teacher-student with students-teachers*.'

(Paulo Freire *Pedagogia do oprimido* 1968)

Two kinds of teaching



Controlled teaching and learning: 'imposed from above and from outside' (John Dewey). Learners are expected to receive and believe fixed answers. Teachers are the instruments by which this knowledge is communicated. They direct learning and plan how the course should proceed. The

Collaborative teaching and learning: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills, and regular self-assessment. The teacher is 'the guide on the side' while the learners take centre stage. The main purpose is mutual support to achieve the learning goal.



Every adult group will be a 'mixed' group where individual differences will impact on the learning that takes place. Among these differences: motivation; expectation; learning style; learning history; use of language; experience; confidence; personality.

The mix can be aggravated by external factors that impact on the creation of learning groups: funding criteria; limited choice of learning opportunities; learners' perception of competence; unsympathetic management.