

TAFAKUR

A dialogue based adult learning
approach in Jordan

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
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INNOVATION ID	4
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SETTING THE SCENE	5
-------------------	---

PROFILE OF THE INNOVATION	6
Phase 1: Tafakur Al Qabli – Contemplation	6
Phase 2: Professional Training Programs/ Community Initiatives	7
Phase 3: Tafakur Al Baadi – Thinking about Work and Life	9

INNOVATION IN ACTION	10
Development of the “Tafakur” case description	10
Implementation of the practice	10

OUTCOMES OF THE PRACTICE	12
--------------------------	----

INNOVATION REVISITED	15
----------------------	----

INNOVATION IN BRIEF	18
---------------------	----

CREDITS	19
---------	----

Innovation ID

Country: Jordan

Education sector: Non-formal adult-learning

Field of education and training: social and emotional learning such as self-awareness, critical consciousness, agency, civic education and self-/economic/social empowerment; and career learning

Setting: Face-to-face

Dimensions:

- ✓ New learning approaches
- ✓ Increasing social inclusion of learners
- ✓ Increasing the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of the learners needed for the labour market in the 21st century
- ✓ Empowerment of individuals to act in a self-directed way, and develop agency
- ✓ Changing mindsets e.g., related to disability, gender, VET, self-employment etc.

Expected outcomes of the practice:

- ✓ Increased learners' employability
- ✓ Enhanced personal and professional competences
- ✓ Increased motivation for learning
- ✓ Increased community participation and improved community life

Number of learners involved: 159 in the year 2022 and 62 in the year 2023/2024

Number of educators involved: 6 in the year 2022 and 4 in the year 2023/2024

Setting the scene

The case study describes the learning approach “Tafakur” implemented in two Adult Education Centres in Jordan. Tafakur is a learner-centred, non-formal learning approach based on dialogue, critical reflection of the community of residence, of own competences, and includes experiential learning to facilitate (re-)engagement with learning, work and/or community life. The approach aims at empowering adults, inter alia through raising self-awareness, enhancing agency and positive thinking among adult learners. Tafakur was developed and implemented by the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV International), the German Adult Education Association¹, as part of the ‘Adult learning and education for development and community empowerment’ project funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Germany. The ETF studied the learning practice within the framework of its partnership for innovation in adult learning and education initiative (PIALE) and developed the present case study to support peer learning.

DVV International Jordan implemented Tafakur through their Adult Education Centres of seven partners. For this case study, two partner centres were selected. One of the centres implementing Tafakur is the Family Welfare Affairs Association in Naja’a near Al-Zarqa, established in 1968². The association aims at enhancing family income, reducing poverty and unemployment, empowering women economically and socially, promoting community participation and improving community life of disadvantaged people, as well as advocating for human rights. The association targets all groups within the society, and is currently focusing especially on young people, graduates incl. from universities, and job seekers in general, in particular women and women with disabilities. The most important programs and services offered by the Centre are the vocational and crafts training programmes incl. the beauty salon training; small enterprises training; the financing programme ‘Credit portfolios’; fitness and weight management programme (gym); the productive kitchen programme incl. sweets and food processing; ICT trainings and a general culture and family counselling program.

The second centre is the Community Development Center in Jdetta/ Irbid, which is a governmental (public) centre under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) established in 2004³. The objective of the Centre is to provide social, cultural and economic services and to engage community members in activities that will promote and support community development and reduce poverty and unemployment in the local community. It focusses on increasing the skills and knowledge of the most disadvantaged groups to compete in the labour market. The Centre offers tours; handicraft courses; cooking, and food processing training; tailoring training to both men and women, all based on the growing demand of the community. Aiming at developing a sustainable context of lifelong learning, the centre works together with other educational institutions and government agencies.

Both Adult Education Centres presented in this case study are located in communities with high poverty, high unemployment, weak economic structures, and limited job opportunities. The objective of Tafakur is to empower individuals personally and economically, increase community participation as well as to improve the community life through improving and strengthening the professional and personal skills, knowledge, attitudes, and social networks of adult learners, as well as by promoting social inclusion, considering the personal needs and abilities of the learners as well as the needs, challenges and opportunities of the community.

¹ DVV International’s work in the Middle East focuses on the development of innovative educational programmes, the qualification of adult education specialists, the establishment of adult education centres and the improvement of the political and legal framework for adult education. Relevant projects are being implemented in Jordan and Palestine.

² <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066515297814&mibextid=ZbWKwL>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/judittacommunitycenter?mibextid=ZbWKwL>

Profile of the innovation

Tafakur is based on participatory methodologies, in the spirit of Popular Education⁴. The Tafakur approach starts off with empowering individuals through dialogue, critical reflection of community life and self, and offers adult learners in a next step to choose between two tracks:

- The 'vocational track' with emphasis on increasing the employability of adult learners,
- The 'community track' with emphasis on improving community life.

Both tracks aim at benefiting learners and their community at the same time: increasing learners' employability will likely have positive effects for the community, and working for community life improvements likely contributes to skills development of learners. This shall contribute to increasing social inclusion and reducing poverty and unemployment of the most disadvantaged groups.

Both tracks consist of three phases:

Phase 1: Tafakur Al Qabli – Contemplation

Each Tafakur starts with phase 1, called Tafakur Al Qabli (contemplation). This phase lasts for 6 days, with 3 training hours per day. Tafakur Al Qabli supports learners in developing a critical understanding of themselves in the context of their community through facilitating a dialogue about opportunities and challenges in the community in daily life and about weaknesses and strengths of themselves. This helps the learners in identifying needs of daily life at two main levels: at the personal level (Individual level needs), and at the community level (Collective level needs).

Awareness about how investing in learning can help both improve one's own life situation and the community life situation is a result of this phase. It therefore builds the ground for increased intrinsic motivation and self-directed decision making about engagement in further personal and vocational learning activities and for seeking employment or self-employment or engaging in community initiatives.⁵

More concretely, in the beginning of Tafakur Al Qabli learners are involved in activities in small groups (3-4 participants), in pairs and in larger groups (more than 5 participants) aimed at getting to know each other and the Tafakur facilitator, at supporting learners to become comfortable in interacting with each other, in expressing emotions, fears, hopes, and in gaining confidence to speak in front of other people. This group building is a key success factor of Tafakur as it helps learners become part of a network that supports each other in continuing the learning pathway and identifying opportunities and overcoming challenges.

Tafakur Al Qabli further aims at identifying the learners' expectations concerning Tafakur which is done through a short self-assessment about expectations, needs and demands, personal goals and objectives. This supports assessing the learners' progress and satisfaction during and after the completion of Tafakur. The assessment results are revisited at different stages of Tafakur to see if and how they change or need to change.⁶ Also, a presentation of the Adult Education Centre and its activities and offers is part of this introductory phase. The aim is to make the centre a part of people's life in the community, a support centre, a friendly place for them to grow and connect with others.

⁴ DVV INTERNATIONAL *Tafakur for Development and Community Empowerment Manual, 2019* (google-translated from Arabic to English), <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-762011/popular-education-and-reflect/popular-education-and-pedagogy>

⁵ DVV INTERNATIONAL *Tafakur for Development and Community Empowerment Manual, 2019* (google-translated from Arabic to English)

⁶Description based on interviews with staff and trainers (Exploratory Interview and Reflection Interview)

Throughout the six days (18 hours of intensive learning), learners are engaged in developing different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes, based on their needs - specifically⁷:

- Life skills: (1) learning to be, (2) learning to know, (3) learning to do, and (4) learning to live together. This also supports the development of (a) time management skills, (b) problem-solving skills, and (d) decision-making skills;
- New attitudes and values (mindset), such as readiness to engage in volunteering;
- Critical understanding of oneself in the context of the community.

Facilitators of Tafakur illustrate the potential impact of Tafakur by sharing success stories of learners who completed the Tafakur phases, focusing on the impact on themselves and their communities. For instance, facilitators showcase different initiatives conducted by previous participants to encourage new learners to create a difference and change for themselves and their community.

As outcome of the first phase of Tafakur, learners can identify their personal and professional needs and the needs of their community and are able to choose one of the two tracks and suitable professional learning offers allowing them to enhance their skills and increase employability or design and implement a community initiative.

Phase 2: Professional Training Programs/ Community Initiatives

After completing the first phase of Tafakur, learners chose between two different tracks.

TRACK 1: COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

In this track, learners start by engaging in trainings that help acquire skills to plan and implement community initiatives. This includes skills to identify community needs, to plan and communicate. Initiatives benefit both, learners and the community. Different methods are used to develop such initiatives, like brainstorming with other learners, facilitators, community leaders and influencers. The participatory approach and broad involvement of local stakeholders aims at assuring that the solutions for the identified challenge/gap are adequate and meet the community needs. Subsequently, learners start the process of planning and organising of the initiative in cooperation with the Adult Education Centre. Table 1 below contains a list of community initiatives developed in 2022 that continued in 2023.

Table 1. Overview of community initiatives

<i>Family Welfare Affairs Association – Adult Education Center in Zarqa</i>	<i>Community Development Centre in Jdetta/ Irbid</i>
School drop-out Initiative: addressing high drop-out rates from school	Heritage Revival (Reef Bread)
School bullying Initiative	Hydroponics
Yes, to Life without Drugs	Heritage Revival (Basket of Cakes)
Safe Families	
Your health is our priority Initiative	
Don't steal my phone...Don't Take my life	
Do not kill me with your happiness	

⁷ Description based on reflection interviews with staff and trainers

Citizenship	
Religious Coexistence	
A beautiful Environment	
Traffic Safety Guidelines for School Students	
Sow with Your Own Hand	
My bread, my fortune	

TRACK 2: VOCATIONAL TRACK

Learners who chose the vocational track, select one or more training programs from the professional programs offered by the adult education centre (see Table 2) based on their interests and needs.

Table 2. Overview of training programs offered by the two adult education centres during the 2023 - Tafakur training programmes

<i>Family Welfare Affairs Association – Adult Education Center in Zarqa</i>	<i>Community Development Centre in Jdetta</i>
Pastry and Dessert-Making	Soap making
Aesthetics/ Beautician Classes	Photography
Food Processing	Hairstyling and beauty training
ICT Training Program	Sewing and tailoring
Beauty Training Program	Drawing on glasses
Embroidery and hand craft training program	Rizayn making (cooking)
Tailoring and sewing	
Sweets Production	
Marketing	
Neatening the Shemaghs	
Traffic Awareness	

The professional classes offered are based on the learners' and their communities' needs and respond to the needs of women and adults with disabilities. The professional classes provide learners with basic skills and knowledge developed through work-based learning activities, work simulation learning, and through following the logic of letting learners complete a holistic action (informing, planning, deciding, executing, controlling and evaluating). This supports developing competences not just increase knowledge, by learning practical and methodological skills. It also strengthens learners' confidence in task performance and potentially utilisation of newly learned skills for income generation. The duration

of the professional training program depends on the needs of the learners, but on average they last for one month.

Phase 3: Tafakur Al Baadi – Thinking about Work and Life

This third phase of Tafakur lasts again six days (3-hours per day).⁸ Learning outcomes are aligned with learners' and community needs that had been identified in the first Tafakur phase, but also align with needs stemming from learning activities during the professional training programs or community initiative related activities. The third phase focuses on very specific content and is therefore implemented by external experts. The following are examples of specialized topics which were discussed during Tafakur phases in 2023:

- Creating job opportunities by developing a start-up
- Writing CVs and conducting professional interviews
- Project management
- Marketing including digital marketing
- Economic feasibility study
- Building a social and professional network including networking with the local labour market (including with relevant units of the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Development, which might assist in job searches, and with universities)
- Communication, leadership, negotiation skills
- Building new attitudes toward e.g. gender and disability
- Development of an action plan.

At the end of phase 3, learners are encouraged to start searching for income generation opportunities (employment/ self-employment) or engage in community work, and to continue their learning process to upgrade their vocational skills in specific sectors. This can be done by signing up for formal programs of vocational education and training (VET) schools under the guidance of the facilitators, who can also support learners throughout VET attendance.

In any case, facilitators continue to follow-up on learners and offer support where needed, mainly during business plan development or by connecting learners to appropriate stakeholders and main players in the labour market or supporting community initiative design and implementation. Facilitators usually set up a follow up meeting with learners 2-3 months after the Tafakur has formally finished in order to stay connected and to offer additional support.⁹ This also allows to check effects of Tafakur and progress of learners.

⁸ Reflection Interview with Staff and Trainers

⁹ Exploratory Interview and Reflection Interview with Staff and Trainers

Innovation in action

Development of the “Tafakur” case description

DVV International initiated the Tafakur approach in different Adult Education Centres and has continuously enhanced it since then by using inter alia pre-intervention assessments, post-intervention learning assessments, and partial learner tracking. To construct this case study, the ETF in close collaboration with DVV International and a local expert,

- Organised a 1-day workshop with learners and facilitators of the two centres to identify context-sensitive competence elements of employability. The following working definition for this initiative has been developed based on literature review:

‘Employability is defined as the knowledge, skills and attitudes (competence) as well as availability of social networks empowering individuals to access and sustain decent work and successfully manage transitions within and between learning and decent work, within the limitations of contextual factors – like jobless growth, access to support services (from active labour market measures, to career guidance and social services etc.), quality of the education and training offer, labour market conditions and trends at national, regional and local level such as aging/demographic shifts, digitalization, globalization, offshoring and climate change as well as cultural aspects such as those related to gender, age and ethnicity.’

The workshop results were used as basis for the development of a quantitative research questionnaire for learners and one for facilitators that fits the needs of the context and can be used to capture the perceptions of facilitators and self-perceptions of learners on the learning progress made thanks to the Tafakur approach. In addition, qualitative questions were included to capture the experience of learners with the learning activity.

- Rolled out questionnaires amongst selected groups of learners and facilitators to capture the effects of the learning initiative;
- Conducted interviews with selected facilitators and the centres’ principals to collect additional information on the learning approach.

Implementation of the practice

The Tafakur approach has been implemented since 2013. It has been further conceptualised, contextualized, and developed in 2019 resulting in the current Tafakur approach. The current Tafakur approach has been implemented since then in the different Adult Education Centres, among others in the Family Welfare Affairs Association / Adult Education Center in Zarqa, and the Adult Education Centre in Mafraq and the Community Development Centre in Jdetta/ Irbid, whereas this case study covers only two of them. Tafakur is based on the pedagogy of Paulo Freire¹⁰, Popular Education.

Motivated and qualified staff and management of the Adult Education Centres were an important asset in the successful implementation of Tafakur. The proper planning, organization, and commitment of all team members¹¹ has ensured that the entire process could be contextualized, upgraded¹² and implemented smoothly, according to plan. The two centres confirmed that the experts were highly qualified as some of them are trainers in vocational institutions, some of them received a training of trainers (ToT) training from outside of the country.¹³

¹⁰ See <https://www.freire.org/paulo-freire> for more information

¹¹ The team formation depends on the initiative itself. Sometimes learners and facilitators, sometime facilitators, learners and community members etc.

¹² Upgraded to cover all adult learning centres at national level

¹³ Reflection Interview with Staff and Trainers

Only the Centre in Jdetta mentioned a challenge in recruiting suitable experts for specific topics. However, the centre has managed to reach out to experts located at further distance to cover the needed training topics. The Adult Education Center in Mafraq (that was a partner in the first phase of PIALE and not included in this case description) mentioned that **access** to the training was difficult for some of the (potential) learners living far from the Centre. Some learners dropped out because of transportation/distance and others had to bear significant travel expenses. The Family Welfare Affairs Association / Adult Education Centre in Zarqa mentioned one challenge related to the lack of the equipment, tools and machines needed for some vocational training programs. However, all three Adult Education Centres are very well networked within the community as well as with the local labour market. They **collaborate with public and private institutions, with community-based organisations, civil society organisations** as well as individuals.¹⁴

One of the limitations mentioned by both centre staff as well as learners is the **limited duration of the training programs**. Staff and learners mentioned that the courses offered are not long enough to acquire the necessary skills to take up work in that area. The length of the training program is dependent on the budget available. If there was more funding, longer courses could be offered that would likely attract more learners. With more financial resources, the centres could also extend the offer of different courses/trainings to be able to meet the diverse needs of learners. In contrast, the **short trainings** can in fact be seen **as taster trainings**, that allow for developing interest in areas through hands-on trials. Once interest is developed, such taster learning activities need to be followed up with more technical trainings to equip the learners with what they need. To this end, there is a **need to widen the scope of taster training offers**. Strategic partnerships and networking with VET providers (public, civil and private sectors) or Higher Education providers could be set up to allow for more taster options which would also already create entry points for further formal learning.

¹⁴ Reflection Interview with Staff and Trainers

Outcomes of the practice

Enhanced professional and personal skills

During the interviews, both staff and learners mentioned that the professional and personal skills of the adult learners have improved as a result of Tafakur. Several success stories of learners reflect this, for example the story of a housewife, who participated in different training programs from the Family Welfare Affairs Association / Adult Education Centre in Zarqa who was said to be shy in the beginning of her participation, because of customs and traditions. But now she manages community initiatives, and created an income generation project (dessert making) and sells products to schools in the region.

The successful enhancement of professional and personal skills is supported by the results of the pre- and post-assessments conducted by facilitators aimed at understanding the changes in learners' thinking patterns and self-understanding of themselves and their communities, as well as in their understanding of the local labour market trends. The assessment focuses on four areas: (1) readiness and willingness to work, (2) ability to compete in the labour market, (3) social learning based on dialogue, and (4) changes in the learners' and their family economic situation. Based on a dialogue and supported by a semi-structured questionnaire, the facilitators score each of their learners. The measurement is based on weighted categories and subcategories. The assessment results show that learners have improved capacities (e.g.: for problem solving, identifying own needs and strengths), acquired various skills (e.g.: communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, negotiation, marketing and digital marketing skills, CV writing skills, job interviewing skills), and had better economic conditions.

Enhanced employability and social integration

The enhanced professional and personal skills have allowed learners to set up their own project or business or find full time/part-time employment – e.g.: working from home on sewing projects or finding work in an established business due to the hands-on skills acquired. Tafakur helped learners conduct realistic planning and organization of their own projects and business ideas/start-ups, some of them even created job opportunities for other learners. Several of the learners have shared their personal success stories during interviews.

By spending extensive time to discover the learners' skills and needs and relate them to the actual needs of the local community, there is a higher chance of success, as learners can implement projects based on their competences that are relevant to the local context and local labour market. One learner from Jdetta centre said: *“My participation in Tafakur gave me the opportunity to get out of home, as my family didn't allow the girls to go out, but after my training, I started working in a beauty salon, which also made my social life more active. I mean, a lot of things have changed in my life.”*¹⁵

This quote not only shows how the programme resulted in finding a job, but also the impact it has had on the learner's participation in social life. Also, other learners referred to the opportunities they got or see after the completion of the training programme. Another learner stated that: *“I really enjoyed being a part of this wonderful experience, and on the last day, the day where we graduated, I found a job opportunity three hours later.”*¹⁶. This indicates the impact of the Tafakur on learners' employability.

Another interviewee said that: *“I think it's one of the most important courses I have ever participated in, I had no skills, as my colleague said, I was just a normal housewife. After participating in the soap production course, I started thinking about having my own project.”*¹⁷

Six months after Tafakur, a **tracer study** is conducted among each learner cohort by the learning centre which measures immediate to midterm impact. For those who are looking to improve their income and enhance their families' economic conditions, the focus of the tracer study is on their engagement with the local labour market. The tracer study results of 2022 indicate that out of the 159 who joined the

¹⁵ Interview with Learners Jdetta

¹⁶ Interview with Learners Mafraq

¹⁷ Interview with Learners Jdetta

Tafakur vocational track, 56 (32%) had been involved in an income-generating activity; either through obtaining employment or through self-employment. Considering the highly disadvantaged target group, and that the main objective of Tafakur is employability, not employment, this is an impressive rate, while community participation also went up as wider social impact.

(Self-)Perceptions of learning progress shows added value of Tafakur

The questionnaires rolled out in 2023/2024 to capture the (self-)perceptions of learning progress, were conducted with both learners and facilitators. While notably the sum of respondents was very low given that only a hand full of learners and facilitators were questioned for this pilot initiative, results still show a positive trend in relation to the effectiveness of Tafakur. For instance, results confirm the notable impact on the learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, indicating an enhancement in the employability of 71% of respondents based on self-perceptions, a sentiment unanimously echoed by facilitators who attested to an increase of all learners' employability. Additionally, 79% of the learners expressed an increased motivation to pursue continuous learning, providing a robust foundation for achieving their goals.

Regarding the knowledge acquired, 91.94% of the learners reported an improvement in their understanding of challenges and opportunities within the labour market, both at a personal level and within their communities, following their participation in Tafakur. Furthermore, 88.8% of participants noted a perceived increase in their knowledge concerning financial support options for their education. Among them, 90.4% state to possess the knowledge necessary to identify individuals who can assist them in acquiring work experience.

Furthermore, 93.5% state to have the knowledge essential for recognizing their strengths, understanding their learning needs, and addressing challenges related to their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and social networks - a crucial aspect for successful engagement in further learning and transitioning to work. 91.9% state being able to recognize their rights, particularly those pertaining to work and education. Additionally, 90.4% of the learners, state to exhibit the ability to formulate roadmaps and action plans for both their professional advancement and entrepreneurial endeavours.

Looking at the skills aspect, 92% of the learners indicate that they feel proficient in identifying the skills required for effective professional communication, encompassing verbal and non-verbal language. Another 92% express that they feel able to apply diverse skills in the workplace, including negotiation and problem-solving skills, and indicate adaptability to different living conditions. Additionally, 90.4% indicate that they have skills in maintaining a positive self-image for the realization of their career plans and community engagement. They state being capable of effective self-organization, including managing time and workload, and state to be able to apply an entrepreneurial mindset and leadership skills when initiating, deciding, thinking innovatively, demonstrating belief in their self-efficacy, and showcasing persistence (achievement orientation).

They also perceive themselves as being proficient in deploying their acquired knowledge in the workplace, in communicating, and participating in digital environments, in forming social networks, and in identifying digital information¹⁸. The findings also show that 86.6% of the learners indicate that they comprehend the risks associated with technology usage and employ strategies to effectively mitigate them.

Furthermore, 87.1% of learners state to possess the ability to critically assess labour market trends within their community and evaluate the resulting impact on the environment, the community, and themselves. 78.7% of participants state to be able to critically assess the opportunities presented to them, evaluating their relevance to their professional plans, particularly those associated with community participation.

¹⁸ "Identifying digital information" refers to the process of recognizing and distinguishing specific data or content within a digital environment. It involves pinpointing relevant information, such as files, documents, or data points, often in the context of digital platforms, databases, or electronic systems. This process may include searching, sorting, or categorizing digital information to extract meaningful insights or fulfil a particular purpose, such as research, analysis, or decision-making.

Related to attitudes, 92% of learners state to exhibit confidence in their abilities to compete in the labour market and engage in community initiatives. 90.32% of the learners believe in their own capabilities as well as in the abilities of others. They indicate to be open to various opinions, thoughts, and ideas, displaying optimism and confidence regarding the future in both work and life. Additionally, 88.71% of learners state that they are receptive to changing their perspectives on various issues such as gender, disability, and the environment. These outcomes were substantiated through interviews conducted in July 2023 with learners from both centres. It is noteworthy that facilitators also affirmed the validity of these results.

To conclude, the small scale data collection on the effectiveness of Tafakur gives great indications that Tafakur empowers individuals to self-directedly (re-)engage with learning and work through enhancing participants' critical understanding of themselves in the context of their community, through personal and professional development that enhances agency and employability, through fostering motivation to participate in learning, through increasing awareness of labour market dynamics, and facilitating the acquisition of a diverse skill set. Participants profit not only through acquiring labour market relevant competences but also through acquiring the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and collaborate in dynamic team environments.

In essence, Tafakur stands out as a comprehensive personal development program that goes beyond traditional training initiatives. It serves as a catalyst for holistic development, addressing not only immediate employment needs but also nurturing a mindset of continuous improvement and adaptability. The program's success lies in its ability to create a positive ripple effect, enhancing motivation, awareness, and skill sets, and contributing to the overall resilience and competitiveness of its participants in today's fast-paced and competitive job market.

Increased motivation to pursue further education

Many of the learners expressed their willingness to participate in further learning, to acquire more advanced skills, and thereby to further enhance their employability.¹⁹ One learner said: *"I have been involved in 4 different training programs in one centre, I am willing to register for another one. However, the facilitators said that they want to give opportunities to others as well. I still wish I can have another opportunity to participate in trainings in the near future."*²⁰.

Tafakur seems to have provided a positive basis and support structure to increase motivation for adult learning participation. Interviews and self-perception surveys confirm this. Seventeen of the 53 learners in Zarqa have taken up additional classes at local, governmental VET centres and institutions to expand and upgrade their vocational skills and to receive a formal certification that will help them advance on the labour market – 12 continued pastry courses and 5 continued beauticians' courses.

¹⁹ Interview with Learners, Reflection Interview with Staff and Trainers Zarqa

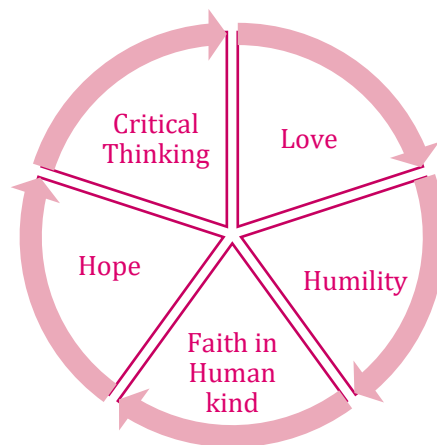
²⁰ Interview with Learners, Reflection with learners from Jedattah Center/ Irbid

Innovation revisited

Dialogue-based methodology rooted in Popular Education

Rather than simply transferring knowledge through a theoretical and teacher-centred learning approach where the trainer takes on the role of an instructor, Tafakur is based on a participatory and dialogue-based methodology. Coined by Paulo Freire²¹, Popular Education is a very interactive learning approach which “promotes student involvement in the construction of knowledge through practice”²². Popular Education aims at empowering learners to take control of their own learning. Denouncing the banking model of education, Popular Education is based on the idea that teachers and learners are in constant dialogue; everyone teaches, and everyone learns. Learners should be able to make decisions about what they learn and start that process from their own experiences. The guide of DVV International to implement Tafakur specifically refers to the five foundations for dialogue that Freire identifies in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (see figure 4)²³:

Figure 4: The five Foundations for Dialogue that Freire identifies



These foundations are critical elements in the design and implementation of Tafakur. Popular Education and dialogue-based education have also been widely used across Latin America, but in the Jordanian context it is a new and innovative approach. The innovation of the Tafakur approach lies in the variety of interpretations and fields of use of Popular Education. For instance, Tafakur starts with the daily urgent needs of the participants (see Phase 1) and helps them connect (a) engagement in learning with (b) addressing the identified urgent daily needs, which leads to increased intrinsic motivation to engage with learning and enhanced agency in taking one’s life into one’s hand and act.

The pedagogical approach used within the Tafakur process presents a new learning experience for all learners – but in particular for (1) recent graduates, as it locates the learner in the centre of the learning process, considering the individual differences among them, and for (2) women who, as interviews showed, have so far been focusing on raising their children and caring for families with approximately 19:1 hours of unpaid care work conducted by women compared to the unpaid care work conducted by men in Jordan²⁴. While (3) young university graduates have a high level of theoretical knowledge, they

²¹ See <https://www.freire.org/paulo-freire> for more information

²² <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-762011/popular-education-and-reflect/popular-education-and-pedagogy>

²³ Freire, Paulo (1970): *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Chapter 3*

²⁴ See, <https://ardd-jo.org/publication/care-matters-the-value-of-womens-unpaid-care-work-in-jordan/> for more information

have not usually experienced practical and interactive learning that engages them and teaches them in hands-on ways.

Interviews with learners in both targeted centres (2023) highlighted the issue that the Jordanian education system relies heavily on theory learning and rarely experiential learning, as indicated by 12 learners. This is considered by respondents as one of the main challenges faced by graduates in Jordan. In addition to that, the education of educators follows the same logic (teacher-centred approach focused on theoretical learning), making it hard for them to learn other pedagogical approaches. The inability of the education system to adjust to the changes in the labour market and society is one of the main challenges, as indicated by respondents.

Discovering own needs in relation to community needs

The Tafakur approach has a very strong emphasis on learners becoming aware of their own needs and to develop a critical understanding of themselves in the context of their community as basis for creating intrinsic motivation to engage in learning as a means to change one's life situation and improve community life. This is very unique, as community and individuals are seen as interacting and connected, and needs of daily life of individuals build the starting point to create relevance of learning for them in a personalised manner.

As mentioned previously, the first Tafakur phase focuses on covering different topics and contents, such as life skills, for example building self-awareness, critical thinking, self-confidence, goal setting, planning and organizing, problem solving skills, communication skills, leadership skills and creating the basic ground for decision-making skills. This supports the learners in setting their own goals and directions for the continuation of their career path in a self-directed way - a **key element increasing motivation to learn**. During the second Tafakur, learners follow up on their action plans through engaging in learning activities and reflecting on their achievements and objectives. As such, they shape their own learning journey based on their personal experience and motivation.

It is the **combination of life skills and employability skills learning and that personal and professional learning meets community needs that makes this programme unique**. While there are other vocational institutions and other community centres that offer professional classes, Tafakur integrates the learners into the design of their own learning journey, ensuring that the content is as relevant to their personal as well as community needs.

Strong support structure throughout the learning journey

One of the elements mentioned repeatedly by learners, facilitators, and organisers of the Tafakur approach is the friendly 'trusted'²⁵ atmosphere that is purposefully developed during the first phase of Tafakur and lasts throughout the entire learning journey. Through the participatory, interactive and inclusive approaches, including icebreakers, learners gain the confidence to actively participate. WhatsApp groups connect learners and facilitators and offer an informal space for questions and support (personal, social and professional level).

A learner stated: *"The facilitator of this course was amazing, she taught us as best as she could, but we would have liked the course to last longer but nevertheless the facilitator was great. She has a really good way to get the information through to us and our group worked together like a bunch of sisters."*²⁶

The fact that facilitators remain in touch with learners even after the end of Tafakur gives additional confidence to the learners to start their own project or apply for a job in the labour market, knowing there is guidance and support.

Embedded in the community

Another unique aspect of the programme is that the centres are very well connected to stakeholders in the community and labour market, such as community-based organisations, civil society organisations

²⁵ Reflection Interview with Staff and Facilitators

²⁶ Interview with Learners Zarqa

and individuals, but also universities and colleges, the private sector and governmental organisations, the main players in vocational education and training (VET) and the community influencers and leaders. For instance, the two centres organised a bazaar where learners presented their products. Other community organisations in the realm of the adult education centres were invited to provide learners visibility and professional networking opportunities, in addition to supporting learners in identifying other opportunities and familiarize themselves with the labour market trends by exploring various initiatives carried out by entities at the national level.²⁷

A well-networked centre increases the trust of learners and is an added value for the learning process that serves their personal and professional development as well as their future employment and training opportunities. In this regard, the centre in Al Jdetta described itself as the '**connecting ring**²⁸', connecting learners to experts, to vocational training centres, to the job market or other community organisations. The family affairs association in Al-Zarqa assured that they create job opportunities for learners, amongst others by hiring them as facilitators. The approach helps the previous learners to gain income, strengthen their skills in training provision and help the centre to overcome shortage of experts as well as to minimize the cost paid to external experts.²⁹

²⁷ Reflection Interview with Staff and Facilitators

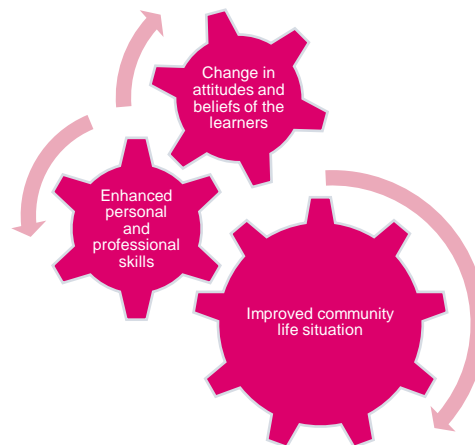
²⁸ Interview with Staff and Facilitators Jdetta

²⁹ Interview with Al-Zarqa center director

Innovation in brief

The Tafakur approach developed by DVV International Jordan is implemented by seven Adult Training Centres in Jordan, out of which two are the focus of this case study. Tafakur reaches out to disadvantaged groups empowering them to self-directedly (re-)engage with learning or work through supporting them in the development of a critical understanding of themselves in the context of their community, in the development of personal and professional competences, and in the development of changed attitudes and beliefs (mindset). Overall aim is to increase employability and participation in the community and the local labour market (see figure 2). At its core, Tafakur helps increase motivation in adult learning participation.

Figure (2): Pillars of the change which Tafakur aims to create



The Tafakur approach offers a different and new learning experience to adult learners in the most disadvantaged communities. It is based on a participatory and dialogue-based methodology. The approach creates an atmosphere where learners feel at ease to express themselves. In the words of a learner: *“I did not know before I participated in Tafakur that there are learning places where you feel that you are within your family.”*³⁰. This helps learners speak about their needs and pave their future directions themselves - a key ingredient to increase intrinsic motivation to engage in learning and develop agency for self-directed life design.

The success of Tafakur is supported by the way the adult education centres are integrated in the community, creating a strong sense of belonging and the ability to address individual and community needs. The strong connection with the community offers opportunities to the learners after they complete their participation in Tafakur. Finally, the contact with the centres doesn't stop after the completion of learners' participation. The centres keep tracking learners to be informed about learners' progress and provide guidance and support.

The approach is especially valuable for disadvantaged groups further away from education and employment. For instance, many countries have set up Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) to reintegrate unemployed or inactive adults into the labour market. Still, it remains difficult to integrate certain groups and provide job opportunities ensuring no one is left behind. Tafakur is an approach that can reach out to the most disadvantaged groups, including women and persons with disabilities, and to empower them and **facilitate readiness for (re-)engaging into learning within formal offers funded through ALMPs**. Putting Tafakur timely before formal learning opportunities funded under ALMPs can help increase adult learning participation and activation.

³⁰ Interview with learners in the family affairs association- Al-Zarqa, 2023

Credits

The current case study is based on data collection during the cohort of 2022 and based on the outcomes/outputs of the data collection and analysis process conducted in 2023. In 2022, the data has been collected through a survey submitted to each of the centres, two focus groups with the management of each centre and facilitators involved in Tafakur (one at the start and one at the end) and an interview with the learners of each of the centres.

In 2023, the data has been collected through two types of questionnaires: a learners' questionnaire, and a facilitators' questionnaire, capturing the learners' self-perception and facilitators' perception of the learners' learning progress related to employability. In addition, workshops were held with the learners, facilitators and centres' directors, and interviews were conducted with some of the centres' learners (see figure below) to collect additional information on the learning methods used in Tafakur. The aim was to capture the learning practice and share it with others for inspiration and peer learning.

Figure (3): Methods used in the data collections of the 2023 research

