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Tafakur

Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) in Adult Learning and Education

Concepts and Approaches

From Recognizing Resources
to the Ability to Utilize Them

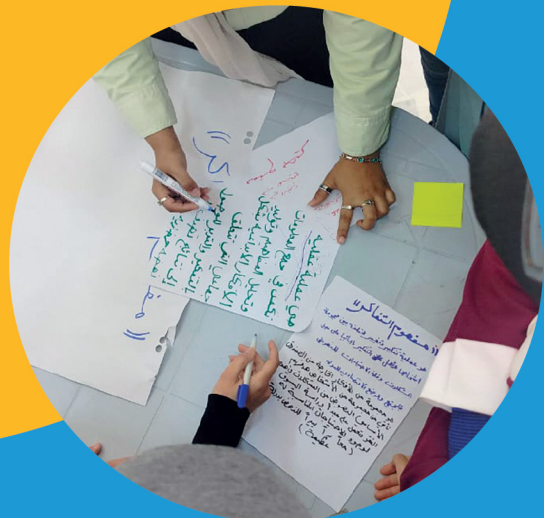


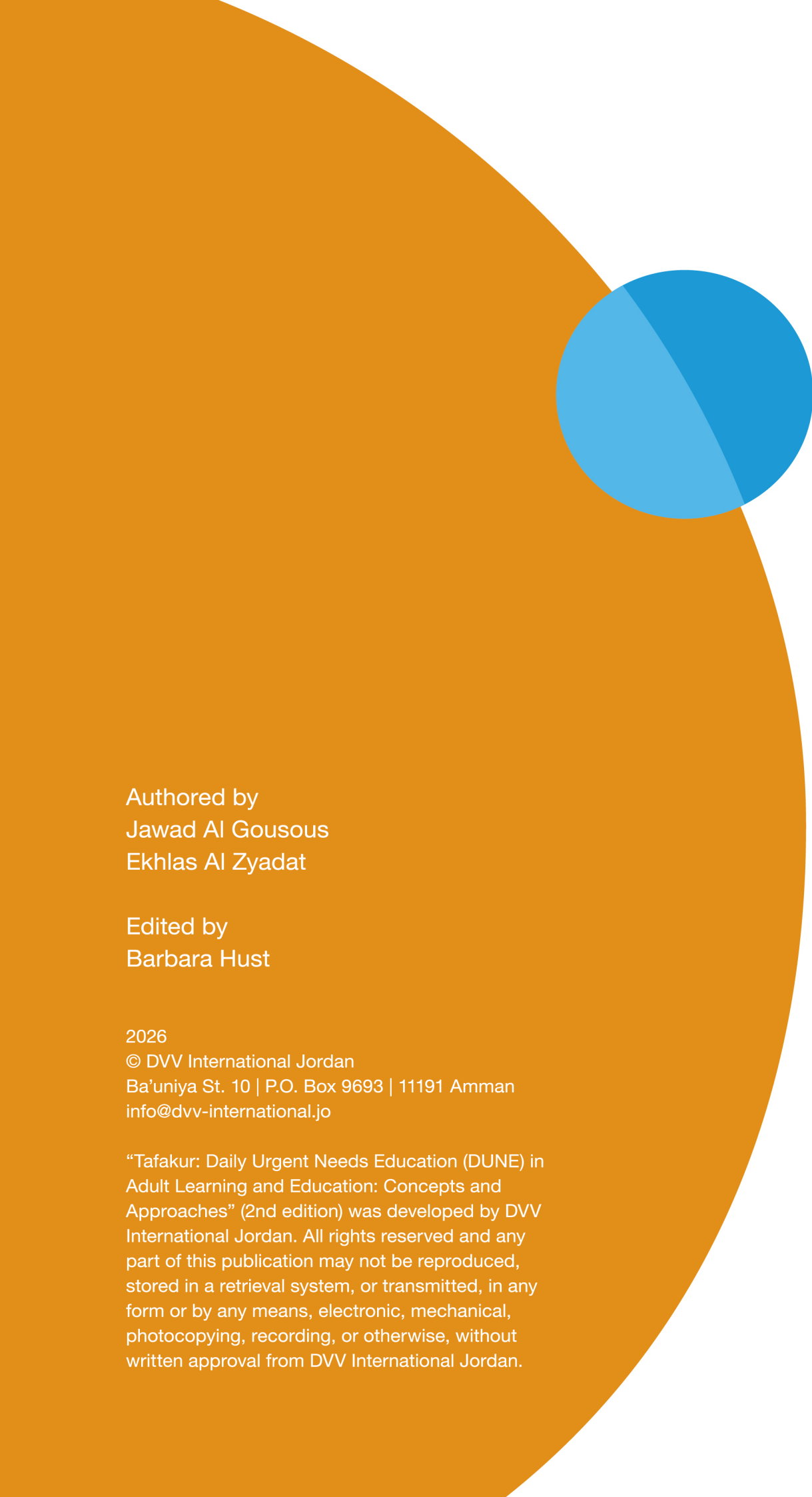
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Preface to the Second Edition

This second edition marks a significant step in the intellectual and practical development of the previous edition “A Guide to Popular Education Approaches for Learning Based on Daily Urgent Needs (DUNE)” (here referred to as DUNE). What began as a field-driven initiative to respond to the immediate challenges of adult learners in Jordan has matured into a comprehensive framework that bridges theory, practice, and social transformation.

Since the first edition, the context of adult learning and education (ALE) has undergone substantial shifts, locally, regionally, and globally. These changes have underscored the need to move beyond descriptive models of community learning toward an epistemological understanding of how adults construct knowledge, negotiate meaning, and transform their realities through reflection and dialogue.

This edition therefore expands the conceptual foundations of the original DUNE framework by introducing the Tafakur approach as both a philosophical and methodological core. It situates learning not merely as a means of acquiring skills, but as a process of epistemic empowerment, where knowledge emerges from lived experiences and collective inquiry.

The second edition combines theoretical insight with practical illustration, integrating new sections on epistemology and examples from DVV International’s work. In addition, the results of a field-based case study on the Tafakur approach conducted by the European Training Foundation (ETF) are included.

In the following comparative table, the development of DUNE as a framework to the current edition (here referred to as Tafakur–DUNE) can be traced: from a model responding to urgent needs to a dynamic learning philosophy.

Comparative Overview between the First and Second Editions

Aspect	First Edition (DUNE, 2020)	Second Edition (Tafakur–DUNE, 2025)
Main Focus	Practical documentation of the Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) framework, emphasizing community learning through vocational and daily-life skills.	Theoretical and epistemological expansion introducing Tafakur (dialogue and reflection) as the intellectual and methodological foundation of DUNE.
Purpose	To present DUNE as an innovative community-based learning model responding to socio-economic needs.	To establish Tafakur–DUNE as a transformative learning framework linking practice to epistemology, critical pedagogy, and adult learning theory.
Nature of Content	Descriptive and project-oriented, focused on field experiences, training activities, and success stories.	Analytical and reflective, integrates theory, epistemology, and field application, with stronger academic grounding.
Theoretical Foundation	Based on popular education, participatory development and experiential learning principles.	Grounded in Freirean critical pedagogy, Knowles’ andragogy, constructivist epistemology, and critical theory.
Core Concepts Introduced	Learning through urgent needs, community participation, empowerment through training.	New and deeper concepts: Epistemic empowerment, conceptual disruption, knowledge localization, dialogical facilitation.
Audience	Local practitioners, ALE trainers, and ALE institutions.	Practitioners, ALE trainers, ALE institutions, scholars, and policymakers.
Educational Methodology	Emphasis on learning-by-doing and vocational relevance.	Focus on dialogue-based learning, collective reflection, and transformative praxis.
Knowledge Approach	Practical knowledge transfer for livelihood improvement.	Co-construction of knowledge as an epistemic process rooted in context and experience.
Key Outcomes	Improved employability and basic life skills among adult learners.	Development of critical consciousness, reflective capacity, and social transformation.
Philosophical Lens	Humanistic and participatory.	Freirean–critical–constructivist synthesis emphasizing consciousness and agency.
Publication Goal	A conceptual and practical subject that explains the relationship between learning and Daily Urgent Needs based on the concepts of popular education.	Provide a frame for scaling and institutionalizing the Tafakur–DUNE conceptual framework.

Abstract

This publication examines the transformative role of the Tafakur (dialogue and reflection) approach in advancing ALE through the Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) conceptual framework. Rooted in Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy and Malcolm Knowles' andragogical principles, Tafakur emphasizes critical consciousness, dialogical engagement, and local adaptation as powerful tools for individual and community empowerment.

The DUNE conceptual framework, which has been developed and applied in Jordan, demonstrates how ALE can move beyond conventional rote-learning systems toward participatory, community-driven approaches. By positioning urgent daily needs, such as unemployment, marginalization, gender inequities, and economic exclusion, as starting points for learning, Tafakur transforms education into a meaningful and practical process of reflection, knowledge co-construction, and collective action. This orientation makes learning immediately relevant to people's lived realities, while fostering a sense of agency and social responsibility.

This second expanded edition deepens the theoretical foundation of the approach by incorporating epistemological insights, particularly the concepts of knowledge lodging and knowledge localization, which help explain how information moves from superficial reception to deep contextual integration. It also introduces additional concepts such as conceptual disruption, the deliberate unsettling of taken-for-granted assumptions, and epistemic empowerment, which emphasizes learners' active role as producers and agents of knowledge.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, the publication offers practical tools, facilitation strategies, and case studies that illustrate how Tafakur-DUNE programs can foster both measurable outcomes and deeper transformative impacts. Drawing on over a decade of field experience, this publication highlights real-world examples where communities have harnessed Tafakur to build critical awareness, develop livelihood opportunities, and strengthen civic engagement. As such, it provides practitioners and facilitators with a comprehensive framework for understanding and applying Tafakur as a dynamic model of ALE and social change. This second edition also offers an entry point for scholars to engage in and examine the co-relation between epistemology and socio-economic development.





Chapter 1: Introduction

Adult learning and education (ALE) is an essential response to the complex social and economic challenges facing many societies today. In contexts marked by rapid demographic change, economic pressures, and limited institutional support, traditional education systems often fail to meet the needs of adults. This is particularly true for marginalized communities.

In Jordan, this disconnect is especially visible. With a comparatively young and growing population, high unemployment, and significant rural-urban disparities, many adults, particularly women and youth in rural and semi-urban areas, find conventional education irrelevant or inaccessible. This calls for alternative, community-centered approaches that connect learning to daily life and empower individuals to become active agents of change.

For learning to be effective, it must be grounded in people's lived realities and address their immediate concerns. Since 2013, DVV International Jordan has worked with local communities to develop the Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) conceptual framework. At its core is Tafakur, a process of structured dialogue, critical reflection, and experiential learning. Rather than delivering predefined curricula, DUNE starts with learners' real-world concerns and supports them in analyzing and transforming their circumstances through collective inquiry and action.

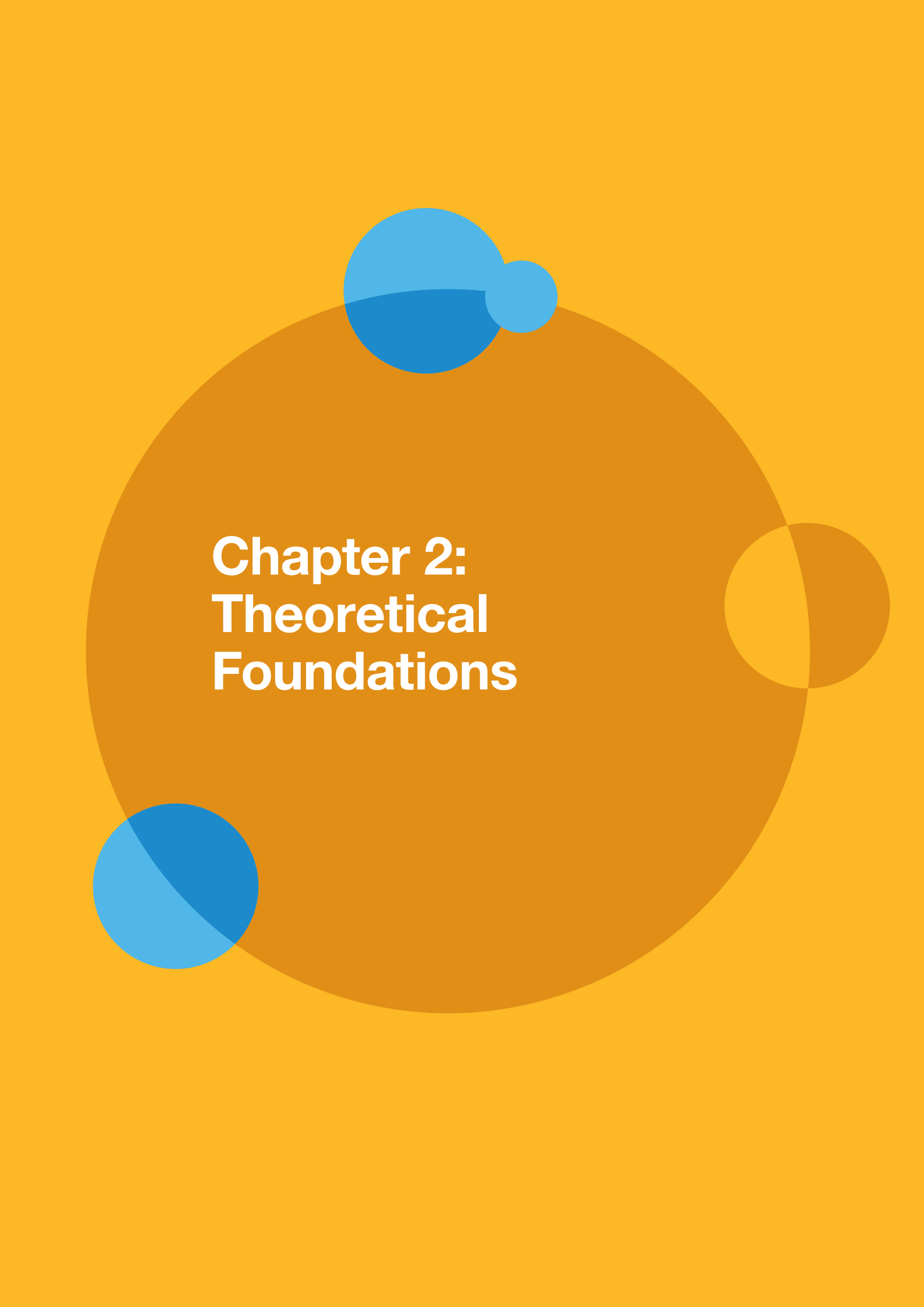
This approach addresses key limitations in traditional ALE in Jordan, including rote learning, top-down planning, and a lack of participatory spaces. Tafakur offers an alternative by treating learners as co-creators of knowledge, using their experiences as starting points for meaningful and socially relevant learning.

The goal of this publication is to:

1. Present a theoretical foundation for ALE rooted in epistemology, constructivism, and transformative pedagogy.
2. Offer practical strategies and tools for facilitators, trainers, and community practitioners working in similar contexts.

The target group of this publication includes ALE practitioners, facilitators, and program designers working with marginalized populations in Jordan and comparable settings in the Global South. The approach is also relevant for policymakers seeking to improve the education quality of their countries. Furthermore, the publication offers an entry point for scholars to engage in and examine the co-relation between epistemology and socio-economic development.

Drawing on over a decade of experience, this publication combines conceptual insight, practical guidance, and case studies to support a more relevant and empowering approach to ALE, one that begins with the needs of learners and leads to personal and collective transformation.



**Chapter 2:
Theoretical
Foundations**

2.1 ALE as a Distinct Field

ALE is not simply an extension of schooling; it is a distinct field with its own theoretical underpinnings, methods, and goals. Unlike pedagogy, which traditionally focuses on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, ALE recognizes that adults bring with them rich life experiences, established belief systems, and practical concerns that shape their learning trajectories.

The motivation for adults to learn is often problem-centered rather than content-centered. Adults tend to seek learning opportunities to address urgent life needs, such as finding employment, navigating social structures, or improving family livelihoods, rather than to accumulate abstract knowledge. This makes relevance, immediacy, and applicability crucial factors in adult learning design.

Furthermore, adults typically value autonomy and mutual respect in learning settings. They prefer to be treated as partners in the educational process rather than as passive recipients. These characteristics have led to the development of specialized theories that guide adult learning, most notably andragogy and critical pedagogy.

2.2 Malcolm Knowles and the Andragogical Model

Malcolm Knowles was one of the first theorists to articulate the distinctive principles of adult learning, which he termed andragogy, literally, “the art and science of helping adults learn.”¹ His model emphasizes several core assumptions:

- **Self-direction:** Adults expect to take responsibility for their own learning and prefer participatory approaches rather than authoritative instruction.
- **Experience as a resource:** Adults bring accumulated experiences that can be valuable sources of learning and critical reflection.
- **Readiness to learn:** Adult learning is often influenced by social roles and life transitions (e.g., becoming a parent, changing jobs).
- **Problem-centered orientation:** Adults are motivated to learn when knowledge is immediately applicable to real-life problems.
- **Internal motivation:** Adults are more motivated by intrinsic factors (e.g., self-fulfillment, empowerment) than by external rewards.

In the Jordanian context, these principles are particularly relevant. Many adult learners, especially marginalized youth and women, approach learning as a means to solve concrete economic and social challenges, rather than merely to gain credentials. For example, vocational workshops integrated with dialogue-based reflection sessions have proven more effective than conventional lectures, as they allow learners to connect their experiences to new concepts, share challenges, and collectively search for solutions.

¹ Knowles (Ed.), *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning* (pp. 1-21). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

2.3 Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of Liberation

Paulo Freire revolutionized ALE through his theory of critical pedagogy. Freire rejected the “banking model” of education, in which learners are treated as empty vessels into which teachers deposit knowledge. Instead, he advocated for dialogue, problem-posing education, and critical consciousness (conscientização) as pathways to human liberation. Key principles of Freire’s pedagogy include:

- **Dialogue as co-creation of knowledge:** Knowledge emerges through collaborative inquiry, not one-way transmission.
- **Problem-posing education:** Real-life situations form the basis for learning, encouraging learners to question and analyze their reality.
- **Critical consciousness:** Education should enable learners to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements of reality.

These ideas resonate strongly with the Tafakur approach. In many Tafakur-DUNE sessions, facilitators begin by inviting learners to identify pressing daily problems, such as receiving services in remote areas or dealing with the school requirements of their children, and use these as starting points for collective dialogue. Through reflection and discussion, participants move from personal anecdotes to structural analysis and, eventually, to strategies for change.

2.4 Epistemology and ALE

Epistemology, the philosophical study of knowledge, its nature, sources, and validity, offers a powerful lens for understanding ALE. Traditional education often treats knowledge as fixed, universal, and transferable, but epistemological perspectives remind us that knowledge is also contextual, constructed, and situated.

Adult learners do not passively absorb knowledge; they interpret, negotiate, and sometimes resist it based on their lived experiences. Learning thus becomes a process of co-constructing meaning through interaction, reflection, and dialogue.

Constructivist Perspectives

Constructivism views knowledge as something built through human activity, not simply discovered. Learners actively construct understanding by linking new information to prior experiences, social contexts, and shared cultural frameworks.

In ALE, this means:

- Learning should start with learners' existing knowledge and experiences.
- Educators should create spaces where learners articulate, question, and reconstruct their understanding.
- Knowledge is negotiated socially through dialogue rather than delivered unilaterally.

In Tafakur-DUNE sessions, for instance, facilitators often encourage participants to draw conceptual maps or share narratives about their daily struggles. These activities allow learners to externalize their implicit knowledge, compare perspectives, and collaboratively develop deeper insights.

Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

Michael Polanyi's² distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge is also crucial.

Explicit knowledge is formal, codified, and easily communicated (e.g., rules, facts, written information). **Tacit knowledge** is personal, experiential, and context-dependent; it includes skills, intuitions, and social know-how that are difficult to articulate.

ALE frequently focuses too heavily on explicit knowledge, such as providing information about legal rights, without engaging the tacit dimensions that shape how individuals understand and act upon that information.

Tafakur bridges this gap by creating structured spaces for reflective dialogue, where tacit insights can surface, be shared, and gradually become part of collective understanding. For example, during a session on labor rights, participants may share personal stories that reveal unspoken power dynamics, leading to a deeper communal awareness that cannot be conveyed through lectures alone.

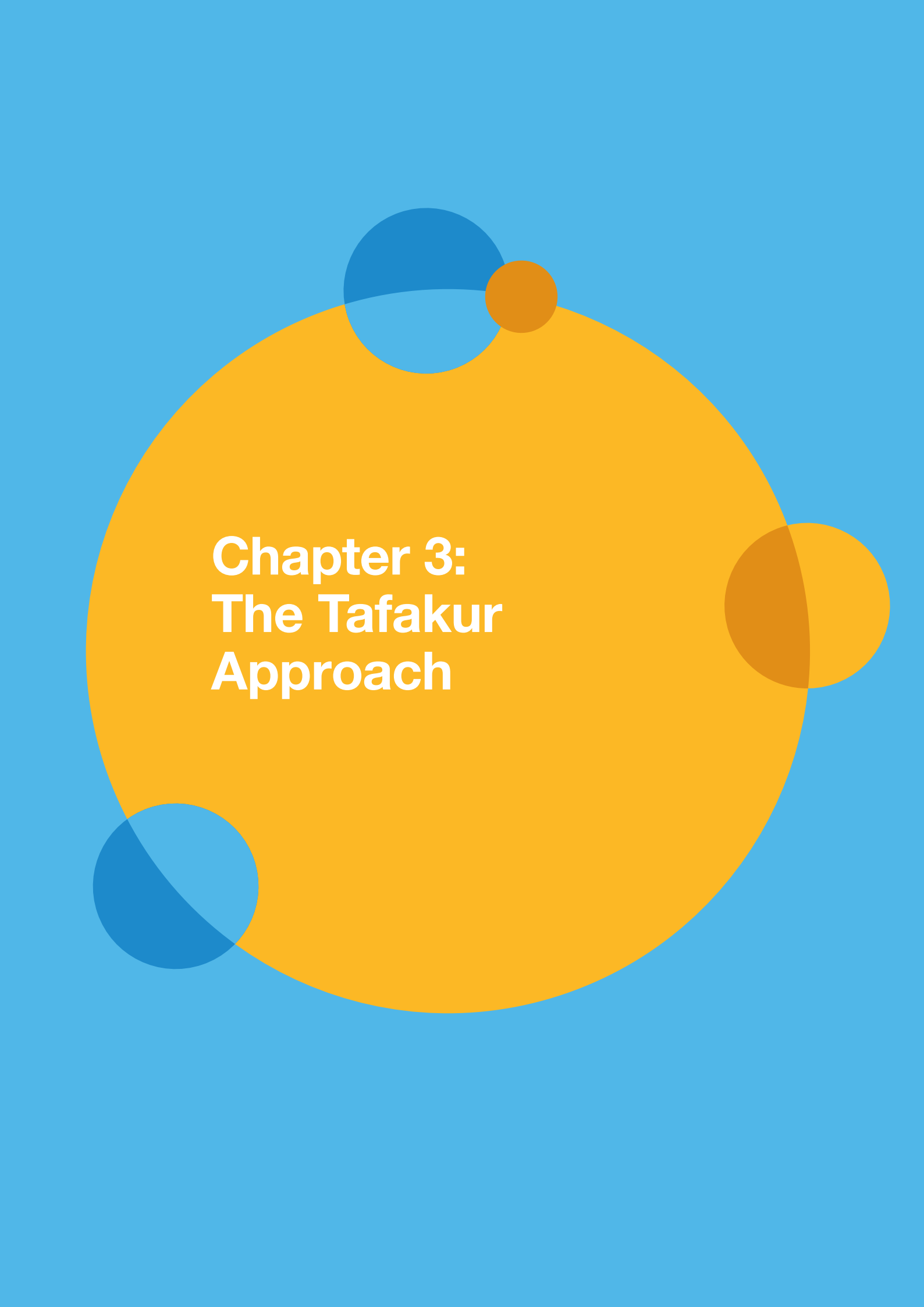
DUNE within the Theoretical Landscape

The DUNE conceptual framework can be seen as a synthesis of these theoretical strands:

- From Knowles, it adopts learner-centeredness and problem orientation.
- From Freire, it draws on dialogue, critical reflection, and empowerment.
- From epistemology and constructivism, it incorporates a contextual and participatory view of knowledge.

This theoretical foundation makes DUNE a transformative framework that connects theory, practice, and context. By rooting learning in daily urgent needs, it turns ALE into a site of epistemic co-creation and social transformation.

² Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) was a Hungarian-British philosopher and scientist, and is considered one of the most influential theorists in the philosophy of science and epistemology in the twentieth century.



Chapter 3: The Tafakur Approach

3.1 Defining Tafakur: Beyond Dialogue

Tafakur (Arabic: تفكير) is more than a simple conversation or group discussion; it is a structured epistemic and pedagogical process rooted in reflective dialogue and collective meaning-making. The term combines *fikr* (thought/reflection) and *tafāʿul* (interaction), implying a mutual exploratory engagement with ideas and lived experiences.

Unlike conventional ALE sessions, where information flows one way from instructor to learners, Tafakur treats knowledge as something to be co-created through interaction. Participants share personal experiences, challenge assumptions, reflect on underlying causes, and gradually construct new understandings that are both contextually grounded and socially relevant.

Tafakur-DUNE sessions typically revolve around a concrete issue of daily urgency, such as unemployment, transportation barriers, gender dynamics, or community health, identified by the participants themselves. This makes the learning process immediately relevant, while also opening pathways for deeper critical inquiry.

3.2 Tafakur as an Epistemological Process

At its core, Tafakur functions as an epistemological mechanism that bridges explicit knowledge (facts, information, codified rules) and tacit knowledge (experiences, social intuition, cultural understandings). Through reflective dialogue, information moves from being externally received to becoming internally processed, localized, and reinterpreted within the learner's sociocultural context.

This process involves several key epistemic transformations:

- **From reception to reflection:** Learners move beyond merely receiving information to questioning, relating, and contextualizing it.
- **From individual to collective sense-making:** Knowledge is negotiated through shared experiences and multiple perspectives.
- **From abstract to situated knowledge:** Concepts are grounded in lived realities, making them meaningful and actionable.
- **From passive learning to epistemic agency:** Learners gain the ability to reinterpret and apply knowledge critically within their own contexts.

For example, in a Tafakur session on job market barriers, participants may begin by listing explicit challenges (lack of opportunities, transportation costs). Through dialogue, these surface-level problems are reframed: transportation is no longer just a logistical issue but a structural barrier linked to gender roles, local governance, and economic policy. Such epistemic reframing is central to Tafakur's transformative power.

3.3 The Tafakur Learning Cycle

Tafakur operates through a dynamic learning cycle, which provides structure without imposing rigidity. This cycle typically includes five interconnected phases:



This cyclical process mirrors Freire's problem-posing education model while grounding it in local epistemologies. Importantly, the phases are not linear; groups may move back and forth between exploration and reflection as new insights emerge.

3.4 Roles within Tafakur: Facilitators and Learners

Tafakur redefines the roles of both facilitator and learner.

The facilitator is not a lecturer or authority figure, but a dialogic guide who creates a safe and stimulating space for exploration. Their responsibilities include:

- Initiating the reflective process through open-ended questions.
- Encouraging equal participation and validating local knowledge.
- Helping the group deepen its analysis without imposing conclusions.

Learners are treated as epistemic agents, active participants who bring valuable experiences and perspectives. They:

- Contribute stories, ideas, and reflections.
- Engage critically with their own assumptions and those of others.
- Collaboratively construct knowledge and identify pathways for action.

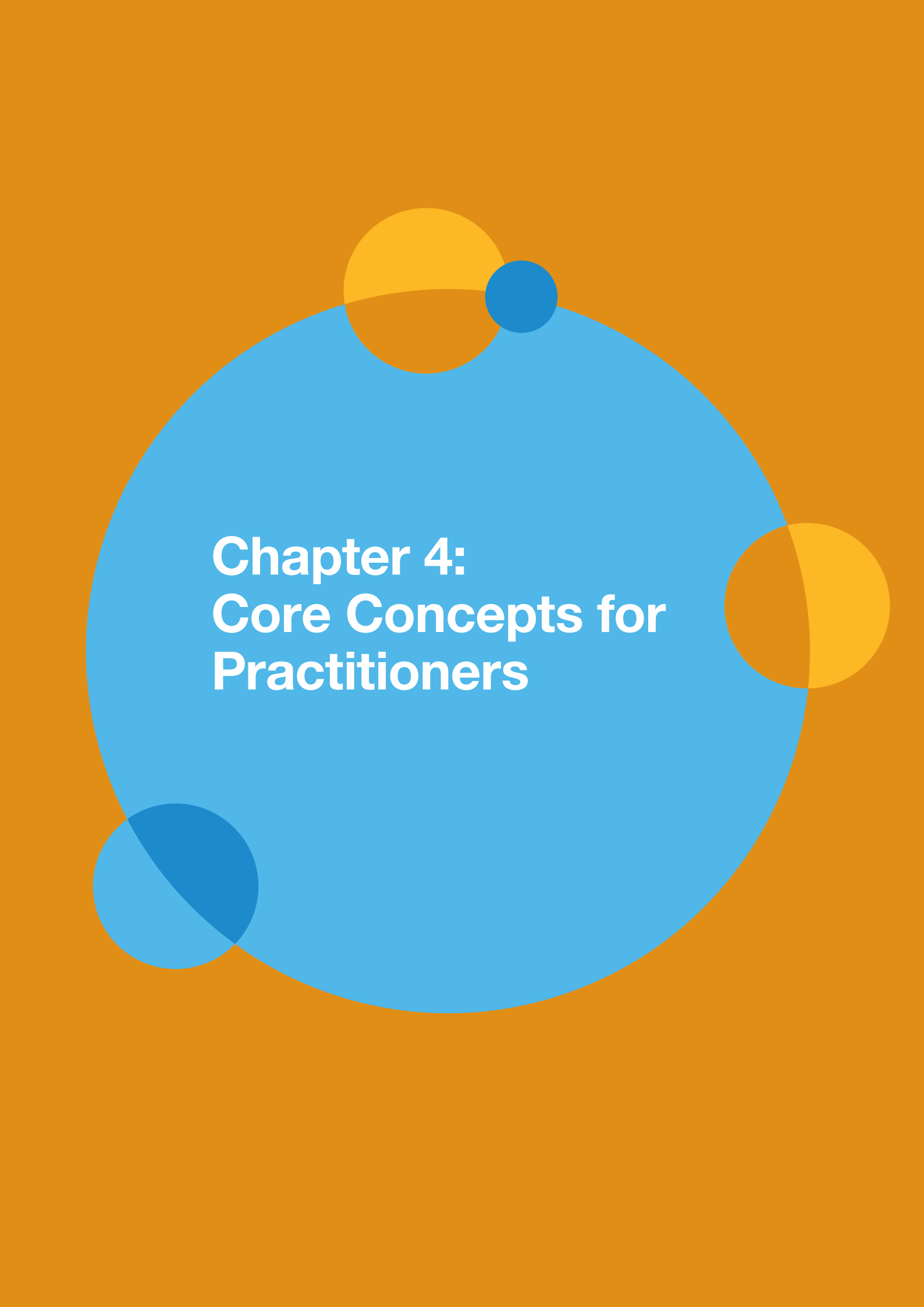
In Jordan, facilitators often receive specialized training on exploratory questioning techniques and group dynamics, ensuring that Tafakur-DUNE sessions maintain their reflective and participatory character. This shift in roles often requires time and practice, as many adult learners are accustomed to traditional hierarchical models of education.

Why Tafakur Matters

Tafakur offers a bridge between lived reality and critical knowledge production. By starting from daily urgent needs, encouraging reflection, and fostering co-construction of meaning, Tafakur:

- Makes learning personally relevant.
- Encourages collective critical thinking.
- Transforms learners into knowledge producers.
- Catalyzes community empowerment and action.

In this sense, Tafakur is not merely a pedagogical technique but a transformative epistemological practice, one that aligns with the goals of DUNE and addresses the specific socio-cultural conditions of Jordan and similar contexts.



**Chapter 4:
Core Concepts for
Practitioners**

While Chapters 2 and 3 established the theoretical foundations of Tafakur and ALE, this chapter translates those foundations into a conceptual toolkit for practitioners. Understanding and applying these core concepts is essential for facilitators who aim to move beyond rote education toward transformative, participatory learning.

The four core concepts (knowledge lodging, knowledge localization, conceptual disruption, and epistemic empowerment) are explained in detail in the following chapters. These concepts are not isolated; rather, they form a dynamic and interconnected epistemic process.

4.1 Knowledge Lodging

Definition

Knowledge Lodging refers to the initial phase of learning in which new information is received and temporarily stored by the learner without being deeply analyzed or integrated into their cognitive structure. This stage typically occurs when learners are first introduced to new ideas, concepts, or frameworks, and their engagement is still limited to understanding basic meanings or definitions rather than exploring implications or applications.

In ALE, this phase should not be viewed as a weakness or a failure; rather, it represents a necessary and natural step in the broader learning process. Knowledge lodging provides learners with a shared foundation or reference point that will later serve as a basis for reflection, analysis, and eventual localization of knowledge within their personal and social contexts. During this stage, learning tends to be characterized by passive reception and surface-level comprehension. It occurs early in the learning process and plays a crucial role in preparing the ground for deeper inquiry and transformation.

In essence, knowledge lodging functions as the starting point of the reflective journey, where understanding begins, but meaning has yet to be constructed. Through subsequent dialogical engagement, learners move beyond this temporary stage toward critical reflection, active analysis, and ultimately, knowledge localization, where information becomes personally relevant and socially grounded.

4.2 Knowledge Localization

Definition

Knowledge localization represents the advanced phase of the learning process, in which information becomes meaningfully integrated into the learner's cognitive, social, and cultural framework. At this stage, learners move beyond passive understanding to actively reconstruct knowledge in light of their lived experiences, values, and collective realities. Localization transforms abstract or external information into a personal and socially relevant resource, something that shapes attitudes, behaviors, and community engagement.

Through reflective dialogue and participatory inquiry, learners critically examine how new knowledge relates to their context: they test ideas against their own experiences, reinterpret them through discussion, and adapt them to fit local challenges and opportunities. This deep engagement gives rise to contextualized understanding, a form of knowing that is both functional and transformative.

Unlike lodging, which provides temporary awareness, localization marks the stage where learning becomes embodied and situated. It is characterized by active participation, critical reflection, and a growing sense of agency. In this process, the learner evolves from a receiver of knowledge into an active knowledge producer, capable of linking insight to action.

Aspect	Knowledge Lodging	Knowledge Localization
Depth	Surface-level	Deep, contextual
Role of experience	Minimal	Central
Transformation of info	None	High
Outcome	Temporary memory	Permanent, applicable knowledge

4.3 Conceptual Disruption

Definition

Conceptual Disruption involves critically questioning inherited assumptions and dominant narratives that shape how people perceive their reality. It is the epistemic equivalent of “shaking the foundations” to make room for new understandings. In adult learning, conceptual disruption helps participants move beyond unquestioned cultural scripts that may limit their ability to act or change.

This process often begins with an encounter with dissonant information, something that challenges existing beliefs and/or assumptions. This encounter triggers a process of reflection and dialogue on those assumptions, encouraging learners to critically examine the foundations of their understanding. As a result, there is a reframing of concepts in which previous interpretations are revised or replaced with more nuanced or empowering perspectives.

4.4 Epistemic Empowerment

Definition

Epistemic empowerment refers to the development of learners’ capacity to produce, evaluate, and apply knowledge within their contexts. It is the ultimate aim of Tafakur: enabling learners to become active epistemic agents, rather than passive knowledge recipients. Epistemically empowered learners have the ability to critically analyze their environment, the confidence to question dominant narratives, and the skills to generate locally relevant knowledge. They engage in individual and collective action.

Before Empowerment	After Empowerment
Passive reception of info	Active production and evaluation of knowledge
Acceptance of dominant views	Critical questioning and reinterpretation
Limited agency	Increased participation and initiative



Chapter 5: Methods and Tools

This chapter presents practical methods and facilitation tools for implementing Tafakur-based learning. These tools enable facilitators to structure sessions that move from knowledge lodging to localization and empowerment, while maintaining flexibility for organic dialogue. Key methods include exploratory questioning, Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA), interactive facilitation techniques, case studies and real-life examples, as well as collective reflection.

5.1 Exploratory Questioning

Exploratory questioning lies at the heart of Tafakur. It helps uncover tacit knowledge, surface hidden assumptions, and guide participants toward deeper reflection.

Types of Questions

Type	Purpose	Example
Descriptive	Gather baseline info	“What happens in your daily routine?”
Analytical	Uncover causes	“Why do you think this problem persists?”
Reflective	Promote critical thinking	“How does this affect your community?”
Hypothetical	Stimulate imagination	“What if things were different?”

Practical Tips for Facilitators

- Avoid leading questions.
- Allow silence, reflection takes time.
- Encourage multiple perspectives.
- Sequence questions from simple to complex.

5.2 Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA)

PRA is a set of participatory methods that enable communities to analyze their realities quickly and collectively. It is well-suited to Tafakur because it privileges local knowledge and shared inquiry.

Common PRA Tools

Type	Purpose	Tafakur Application
Social mapping	Identify community assets, barriers	Ground discussions in spatial reality
Timeline analysis	Examine historical changes	Connect past events to present challenges
Problem ranking	Prioritize issues	Identifying, understanding most urgent needs
Seasonal calendars	Understand temporal patterns	Link daily needs to broader cycles

5.3 Interactive Facilitation Techniques

Facilitators must create spaces of trust, engagement, and co-construction. Interactive techniques break down hierarchical barriers and make dialogue more dynamic.

Techniques

- **Brainstorming:** Generate ideas quickly without judgment.
- **Role play:** Explore perspectives through dramatization.
- **Story circles:** Encourage personal storytelling as epistemic input.
- **Small group dialogue:** Foster deeper analysis in intimate settings.

5.4 Case Studies and Real-Life Examples

Case studies bridge theory and practice by showing how abstract concepts play out in real contexts. In Tafakur, they provide concrete reference points for reflection, allow learners to analyze real dynamics collectively, and inspire new initiatives by showcasing local solutions.

Example Structure

1. **Present the case** (e.g., a local employment challenge).
2. **Facilitate dialogue** on causes, consequences, and possibilities.
3. **Encourage localization** by linking to participants' experiences.
4. **Identify lessons** and potential actions.

5.5 Collective Reflection

Reflection consolidates learning. It allows participants to internalize insights, articulate new understandings, and plan actions.

Reflection Activities

Activity	Description
Silent journaling	Individual reflection on session insights
Group synthesis	Collective summary of key points
“What–So what–Now what”	Structured reflection model
Visual mapping	Drawing collective insights on boards/maps



Examples from Practice

Women's Economic and Social Participation

Context

Rural women in Jordan face multiple layers of marginalization: economic exclusion, restrictive gender norms, mobility limitations, and limited access to formal education or training.

Tafakur Application

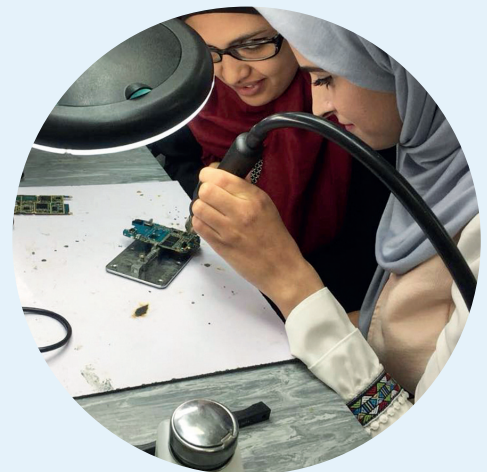
Tafakur sessions with women's groups typically began with stories about daily struggles: balancing domestic responsibilities, transportation challenges, and lack of market access.

Using PRA tools such as seasonal calendars and timeline analysis, participants mapped their economic activities across time and space. Exploratory questioning helped surface tacit knowledge about community needs, skills, and opportunities.

Outcomes

Women's groups, through Tafakur, were able to:

- **Localize business concepts** such as market analysis and value chains by linking them to their own production cycles.
- **Disrupt limiting assumptions** (e.g., "women cannot run businesses") through collective reflection.
- **Develop microbusiness initiatives**, often rooted in traditional skills but adapted to modern market demands.
- **Strengthen social solidarity**, creating support networks for shared childcare and transportation.



Example: A group of women launched a cooperative for producing and marketing traditional food products. Through Tafakur, they collectively analyzed demand patterns and transportation options, leading to successful market integration.

Community Mobilization and Collective Initiatives

Context

Many communities face shared structural challenges such as inadequate services, environmental degradation, and weak civic engagement.

Tafakur Application

Community-level Tafakur sessions often started by mapping collective problems: lack of healthcare access, deteriorating water sources, or absence of youth spaces. Facilitators employed PRA tools (e.g., social mapping, problem ranking) to ground the discussions in tangible realities.


Through conceptual disruption, participants reframed issues previously seen as “inevitable” into collective challenges that can be acted upon.

Outcomes

- **Improved community dialogue** and cooperation across age, gender, and professional groups.
- **Formation of local advocacy groups** to engage municipalities or NGOs.
- **Launch of grassroots initiatives**, including cleanup campaigns, educational programs, and youth spaces.
- Enhanced sense of **collective epistemic agency**: the belief that communities can generate and apply their own knowledge to solve problems.

Example: One illustrative story describes a housewife who initially joined Tafakur sessions with hesitation due to restrictive social customs. Over time, she developed strong leadership and entrepreneurship skills, eventually launching a small dessert-making business that supplies products to local schools. Similar transformations were reported among other participants who developed communication, digital marketing, and project management skills, translating reflective learning into tangible economic and social outcomes.





Chapter 6: Results and Impact

DVV International Jordan and its partners are carefully monitoring the outcomes of the Tafakur approach among the participants. Pre- and post-assessments as well as tracer studies that are conducted among the learners six months after their participation in Tafakur indicate outcomes and impacts. In addition, the European Training Foundation (ETF) conducted a case study on the implementation of the Tafakur approach in Jordan between 2022 and 2024. The study examined the application of Tafakur in two ALE centers, focusing on how dialogical and reflective learning can address urgent daily needs, particularly for marginalized groups such as unemployed youth and women. The results were published in 2025².

6.1 Findings from the ETF Case Study

For the case study, ETF collected data through surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, workshops, and interviews with learners, facilitators, and centre management to gather insights on learning practices and employability progress. In addition, DVV International's monitoring database as well as the tracer study results were taken into consideration.

The main outcomes of the study include enhanced professional and personal skills, improved employability, better social integration, and increased motivation to pursue further education among learners. The findings pointed out that:

- 32% of learners from the vocational track engaged in income-generating activities post-training (source: DVV International tracer study).
- 71% of learners reported enhanced employability (source: questionnaires in the frame of the ETF case study).
- 91.94% improved their understanding of labor market challenges and opportunities (source: questionnaires in the frame of the ETF case study).
- 92% feel proficient in professional communication and problem-solving skills (source: questionnaires in the frame of the ETF case study).
- 79% of learners expressed increased motivation for continuous learning (source: questionnaires in the frame of the ETF case study).

The ETF study emphasizes the transformative dimension of Tafakur:

“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.”³

2 European Training Foundation (ETF). (2024). Tafakur: A dialogue-based adult learning approach in Jordan. Retrieved from <https://www.dvv-international.jo>

3 European Training Foundation (ETF). (2024). Tafakur: A dialogue-based adult learning approach in Jordan. Retrieved from <https://www.dvv-international.jo>

6.2 Indications towards Impacts of the Tafakur Approach

The data collected through the ETF case study as well as DVV International's assessments and tracer studies indicate that the Tafakur approach can have a deep impact on the epistemic and social changes that occur within individuals and communities.

At the individual level, project managers and facilitators have reported notable enhancements in participants' critical thinking, practical competencies, self-confidence, and decision-making capacities. At the community level, the application of the Tafakur approach has contributed to strengthened social cohesion and a more positive perception of marginalized groups. At the institutional level, the implementing local partner organisations have integrated the Tafakur approach into their ongoing programming, indicating a degree of institutionalization and sustainability.

Example from the Field

A woman who had been socially isolated became an active local facilitator after participating in a Tafakur-DUNE program, illustrating how epistemic empowerment can translate into social leadership.

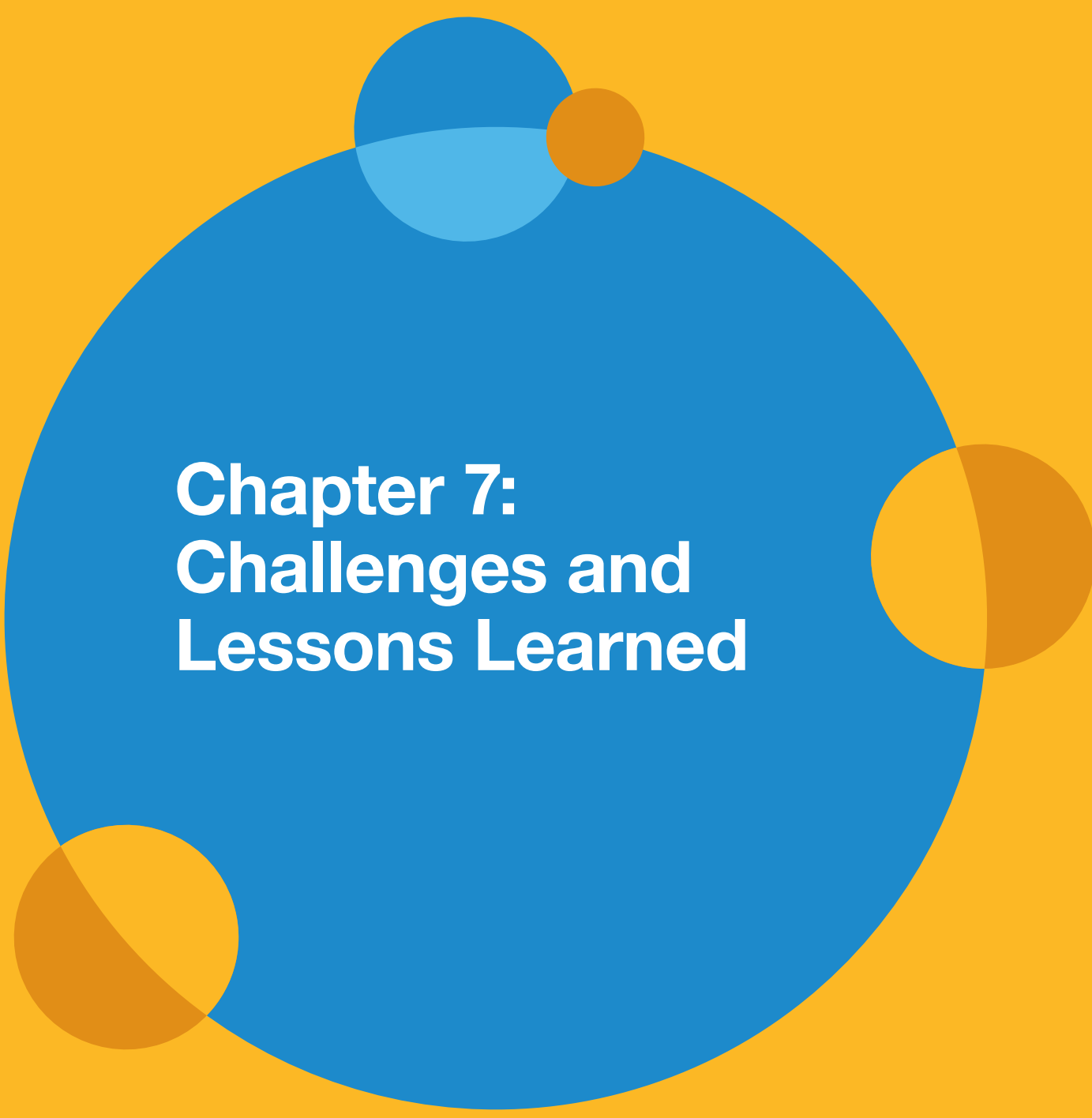


I graduated with a degree in Sociology but struggled to find employment in my field. When I first joined the training program, my goal was simply to leave the daily routine and build new social and professional connections, hoping it would help me access job opportunities.

After joining Tafakur, I chose the community initiatives track because it aligned with my academic background. At first, I thought an accredited certificate was the most important outcome, but I later realized that the real value lies in the knowledge and experience I gained.

Tafakur taught me the language of dialogue, persuasion techniques, and self-marketing. Now, my colleague and I, who were both trainees in the community initiatives course, are working as facilitators for an organization at the same centre where we first joined as learners.





Chapter 7: Challenges and Lessons Learned

The implementation of Tafakur within the DUNE conceptual framework has had positive effects on the understanding and development of ALE and community empowerment. However, like any transformative educational approach, it faces a range of contextual, cultural, and institutional challenges. Nevertheless, these challenges have provided rich opportunities for learning and model refinement. Over more than a decade, facilitators and communities have developed adaptive strategies that make Tafakur both resilient and contextually relevant. By acknowledging and systematically addressing these challenges, practitioners can strengthen Tafakur's role as a transformative epistemic and educational approach that bridges theory and practice while empowering communities to address their daily urgent needs.

7.1 Cultural and Educational Challenges

Dominance of Rote Learning

A significant challenge in Jordan's educational landscape is the entrenched culture of rote learning, which emphasizes memorization over critical thinking. Many adult learners are products of this system and initially expect learning to involve passive reception of information.

Lesson learned: Facilitators must begin with familiar entry points (daily needs) to ease transition from rote learning to reflective dialogue. Early sessions often focus on building trust and modeling critical dialogue. Facilitators should progressively introduce exploratory questioning and reflection, allowing participants to adapt gradually to this unfamiliar mode of engagement.

Gender Norms and Social Expectations

Gender norms can restrict women's mobility and participation, especially in rural areas. In some cases, social expectations discourage women from speaking openly in mixed-gender settings, which can limit the depth of Tafakur discussions.

Lesson learned: Safe women-only spaces are essential at the initial stages. Female facilitators can play a crucial role in building confidence. Gradual integration into mixed settings can occur once participants develop comfort and confidence.

7.2 Institutional and Programmatic Challenges

Short Project Cycles

Tafakur-DUNE cycles are typically implemented within limited funding periods (5 - 8 months). Transformative learning, however, is a long-term process that requires sustained engagement. Short project timelines can limit the depth of knowledge localization and empowerment.

Lesson learned: Embedding Tafakur within longer-term community development strategies, either through partnerships with local organizations or by creating self-sustaining community groups, can mitigate the effects of short funding cycles.

Resource Limitations

Some communities lack the physical spaces, materials, or logistical support required for regular Tafakur sessions. This can constrain participation and reduce the continuity needed for transformative learning.

Lesson learned: Tafakur does not rely on expensive infrastructure. Using low-cost, locally available tools (e.g., community centers, schools after hours, public spaces) and integrating sessions into existing social structures increases feasibility and ownership.

Institutional Resistance

At times, institutions (including NGOs and government bodies) exhibit skepticism toward Tafakur because it challenges traditional hierarchical approaches to education and development. There may be concerns about losing control over content and outcomes.

Lesson learned: Demonstrating tangible community-level results helps build institutional trust. Also, involving institutional actors in Tafakur sessions as participants, rather than external evaluators, can foster understanding and support.

7.3 Facilitation Challenges

Balancing Structure and Flexibility

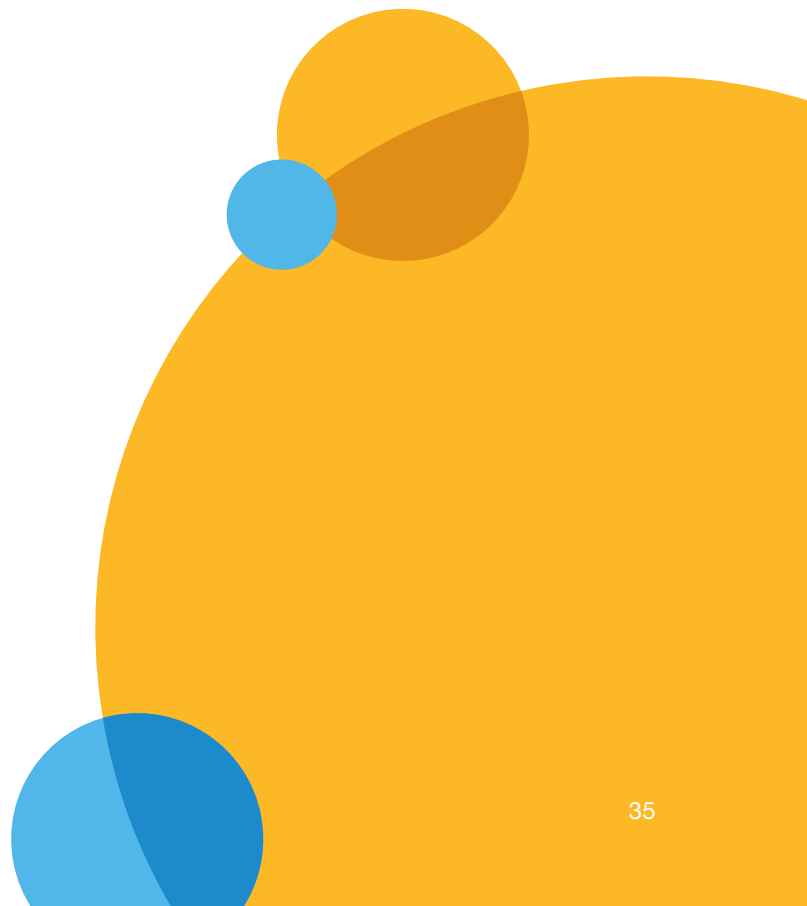
Tafakur relies on structured facilitation to guide reflection while also allowing for organic dialogue. Striking this balance can be difficult, especially for new facilitators. Over-structuring can stifle reflection, while excessive flexibility can lead to unfocused discussions.

Lesson learned: Training facilitators in adaptive facilitation techniques is essential. Regular debriefing and peer learning among facilitators strengthen their ability to maintain this balance.

Dealing with Conceptual Disruption

Conceptual disruption can trigger emotional or defensive reactions when deeply held beliefs are challenged. Skilled facilitation is required to navigate these moments constructively, ensuring that they lead to growth rather than conflict.

Lesson learned: Facilitators should create trusting, respectful environments where disagreement is handled as part of learning. Introducing disruptive concepts gradually and grounding them in lived experiences reduces resistance.





Chapter 8: Recommendations

Building on the theories, findings, examples, and reflections of the previous chapters, the following recommendations outline practical, scholarly, and institutional pathways for strengthening Tafakur-based approaches in ALE. Beyond immediate actions, strategic opportunities may arise for integrating Tafakur into broader educational, vocational, and community development frameworks, ensuring its continued relevance and transformative potential.

Recommendations

For Practitioners and Facilitators

- Invest in continuous facilitator training that emphasizes adaptive methods and critical dialogue.
- Start from familiar daily issues and deepen reflection progressively.
- Link learning to collective social or economic action.
- Use participatory evaluation tools to refine methods.

Facilitation in Tafakur is an epistemic and relational process, not a technical exercise.

For Scholars

- Explore Tafakur's connections with global critical epistemologies (Freirean, feminist, Marxist).
- Conduct longitudinal and comparative studies to assess long-term impact.
- Document and share case studies to support scaling and adaptation.

Tafakur offers fertile ground for advancing critical ALE theory, especially in non-Western contexts.

For Policymakers and Institutions

- Integrate Tafakur principles into national ALE frameworks.
- Provide longer funding cycles to allow for full learning processes.
- Promote participatory planning and support facilitator networks.

Sustaining Tafakur requires institutional commitment to community knowledge and long-term engagement.

Strategic Outlook

Looking ahead, several strategic opportunities could enhance the impact and sustainability of Tafakur-based approaches:

1. Integration with Vocational Training

Embedding Tafakur within vocational programs could bridge technical skills and critical reflection, producing more adaptive and empowered learners.

2. Digital and Hybrid Facilitation Models

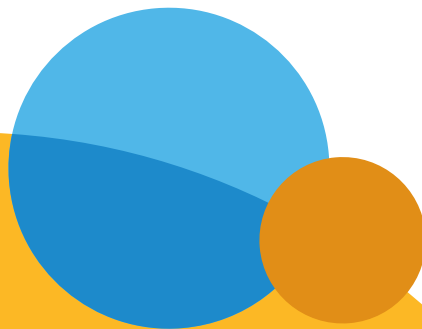
Exploring ways to conduct Tafakur through online or blended modalities can increase reach, particularly among youth.

3. Regional and International Knowledge Exchange

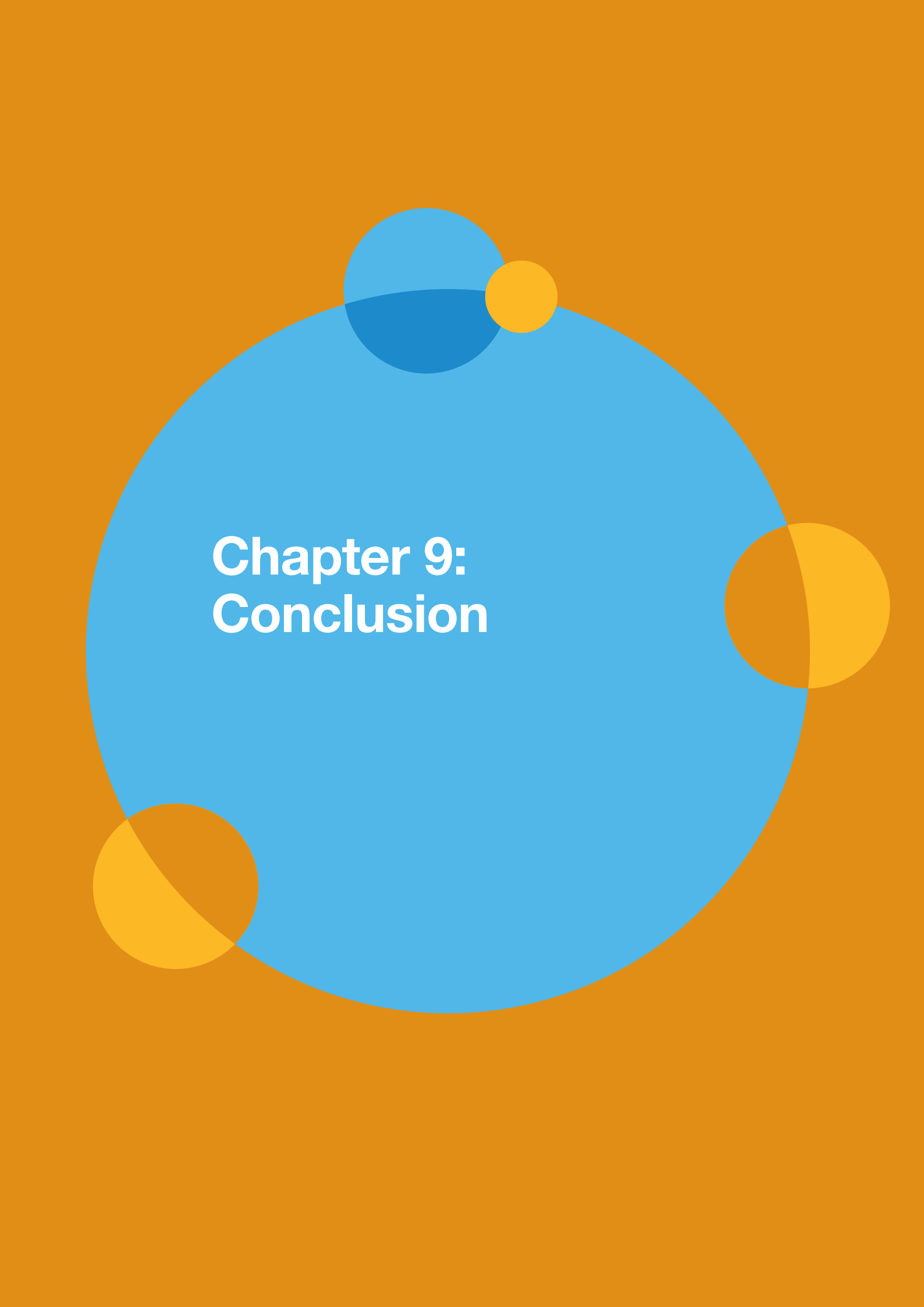
Sharing experiences with similar participatory approaches in the Global South can foster mutual learning and theoretical enrichment.

4. Embedding in Community Development Frameworks

Tafakur can become a core component of community development, supporting locally driven solutions and participatory governance.







Chapter 9: Conclusion

Over the past decade, the Tafakur-DUNE approach has stood out as a transformative educational and epistemological approach, and has proven effective in bridging theory and practice, enabling learners and communities to reconnect learning with lived experience, critical dialogue, reflection, and collective action. In contexts marked by marginalization and structural inequalities, it offers a pathway toward empowerment, social inclusion, and sustainable change.

At its core, Tafakur challenges the “banking model” of education, positioning learning as a co-constructed process rooted in dialogue and contextual understanding. Knowledge emerges through the interplay of knowledge lodging, knowledge localization, conceptual disruption, and epistemic empowerment, moving learners from passive recipients to active producers of meaning. Daily concerns such as unemployment, mobility, or gender roles serve as epistemic entry points, enabling reflection in real-life contexts and supporting transformative learning processes.

Tafakur operates on both individual and collective levels. It builds critical consciousness and self-efficacy while promoting dialogue, solidarity, and social action. Its methodological flexibility, combining participatory tools, questioning, and case-based reflection, allows adaptation across diverse groups.

The Jordanian experience demonstrates that Tafakur is not merely a set of tools, but a mindset and a process, one that enables communities to become active producers of knowledge and agents of change.

Future efforts should focus on consolidating these gains, expanding the approach through institutional collaboration, and deepening its theoretical and practical foundations to serve as a model for ALE and community empowerment in diverse contexts.

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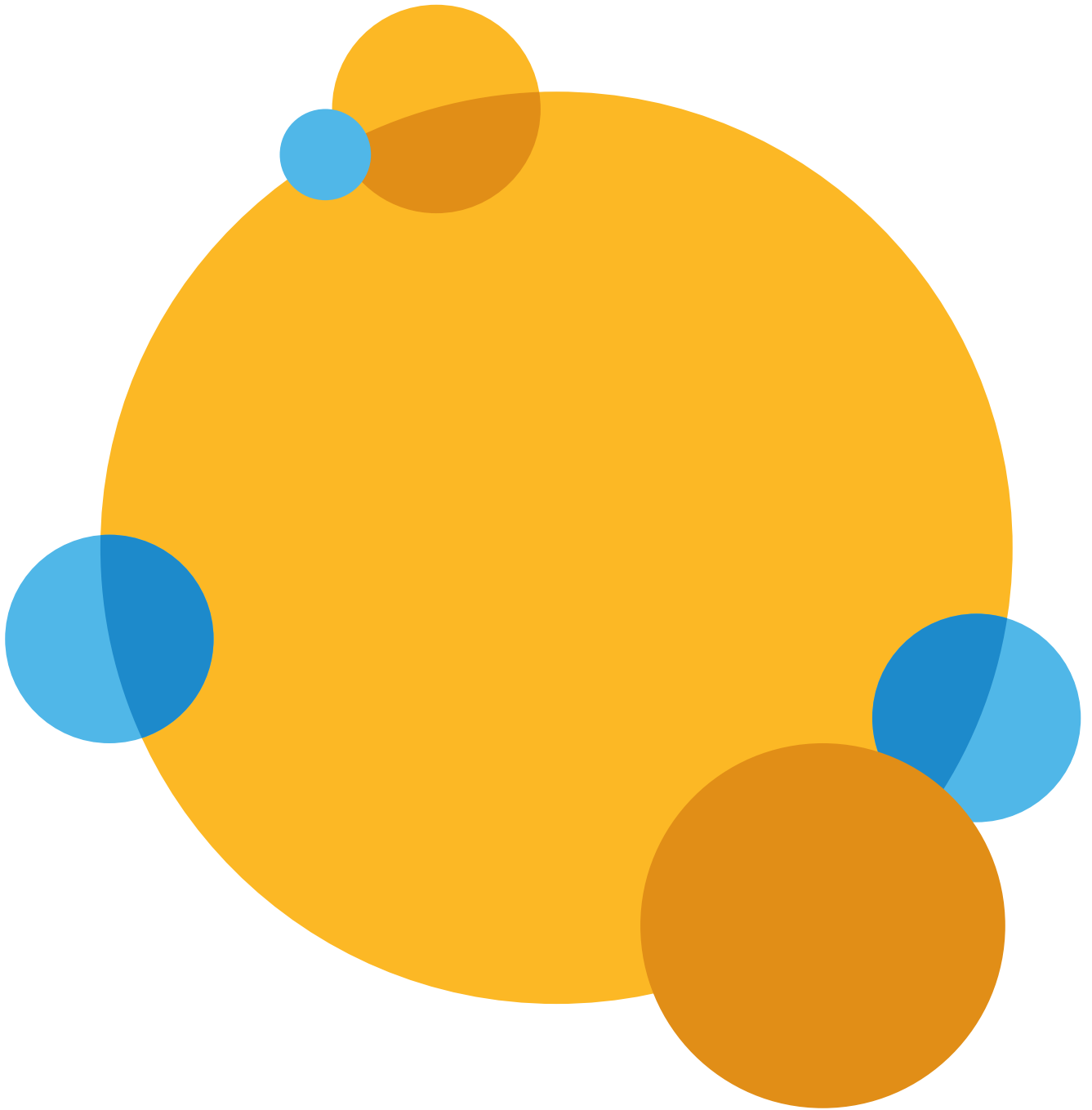
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Annex

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Contributions of a dialogue-based ALE approach to community empowerment in Jordan

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Key words:

Dialogic skills, adult learning and education, community development, critical consciousness

Abstract:

This paper presents the Tafakur approach – an innovative, dialogue-based adult learning model developed by DVV International in Jordan in response to the country’s socio-economic challenges and limitations within its formal and non-formal education systems. Grounded in Paulo Freire’s emancipatory pedagogy, Malcolm Knowles’ andragogy, and Robert Chambers’ participatory methods, Tafakur integrates theory with practice to empower marginalized communities through transformative, needs-based learning. Central to the approach is the Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) framework, which anchors learning in the learners’ lived realities and fosters critical reflection, self-awareness, and active participation.

The paper outlines the theoretical foundations of Tafakur, its methodological tools, and the facilitator’s role in cultivating participatory, learner-driven environments. Drawing on over a decade of implementation, it analyzes the outcomes of the “Adult Education Project for Community Development and Empowerment,” which engages community-based organizations and development centers to deliver participatory learning tailored to local needs. The approach has demonstrated measurable impact at individual, institutional, and community levels – enhancing critical thinking, employability, and social inclusion.

Findings from a 2023–2024 case study by the European Training Foundation underscore Tafakur’s effectiveness in fostering personal transformation and addressing structural barriers such as unemployment and social marginalization. The paper concludes by identifying the need for continued research, institutional partnerships, and policy integration to ensure the model’s sustainability and scalability as a replicable strategy for adult learning and community empowerment in the Global South.

Acknowledgements:

We gratefully acknowledge the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for their funding and the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International) for their sustained technical support, which made the development and implementation of the Tafakur approach possible.

Our deepest thanks go to the Community of Practice facilitators in Jordan, who played an essential role in bringing the Tafakur approach to life. Their commitment to adult education and their openness to participatory, reflective learning processes greatly contributed to the success and ongoing refinement of this work.

Further appreciation is extended to the European Training Foundation (ETF) for conducting a comprehensive case study on the Tafakur approach and highlighting its impact. Their analysis has provided valuable validation and strategic direction for future expansion.

Finally, we thank the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development for their institutional collaboration and ongoing support, which have been vital in reaching communities across the country.



Introduction

In response to growing demands for community development, dialogue-based learning emerges as a vital approach for individual empowerment and effective learning processes. Rooted in participatory, horizontally structured exchanges, it fosters equitable dialogue among educators and learners as well as among learners themselves, encouraging a shift from passive knowledge intake to critical self-reflection and reinterpretation of reality. Such dialogic processes promote awareness of personal and social conditions, enabling individuals to identify genuine needs and recognize their marginalization – key drivers of transformative change. As Freire asserts, “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.”¹

In the Jordanian context, the adult learning and education (ALE) system is confronted with multifaceted challenges, stemming from the country’s economic conditions, the rigid structure of the formal education system, and the design and implementation of non-formal learning environments, all of which significantly impact individual development and societal outcomes.

These challenges underscore the need for an alternative educational model. This is why the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International) in Jordan developed an educational approach later termed “Tafakur” based on Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE). Philosophically rooted in Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools, the approach stimulates learning in a dialogic environment, transforming daily needs viewed by learners as core issues causing tension and pain into educational materials while reconnecting individuals to their communities.

This paper aims to present the theoretical foundations underpinning the Tafakur approach, outline the DUNE conceptual framework and the Tafakur methodology, and present the project model developed and implemented by DVV International in Jordan. It further offers an analysis of the transformative impact of dialogic learning, drawing on experiences from the Jordanian context, with a view toward its potential as a replicable model.

1 Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*.
<https://www.amazon.com/Pedagogy-of-the-Oppressed-Anniversary-Paulo-Freire-ebook/dp/B00M0FQHQO>

The Emergence of the Tafakur Approach: Connecting Theory with the Jordanian Reality on the Ground

Theoretical Foundations of the Tafakur Approach

At the heart of the Tafakur approach lies dialogue-based learning, rooted in a transformative pedagogical philosophy that seeks to challenge and move beyond traditional rote-learning models. In this context, Paulo Freire's theories of popular and emancipatory education have served as a key intellectual foundation. In his work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire analyzes how the education system supports mechanisms of marginalization and oppression. Freire coined the term "banking model of education", describing the prevalent education system in which teachers deposit ready-made knowledge into learners who become mere passive participants in the educational and social process. Freire emphasizes the necessity of transitioning to dialogue as a liberating tool, where learning becomes an interactive process enabling participants to discover themselves and their reality. Dialogue serves as the catalyst in the evolution of consciousness, guiding individuals from a naive awareness toward a critical, reflective understanding, thereby empowering them to take ownership of their learning and to engage meaningfully with social and economic transformation.

The Tafakur approach has also drawn significantly on Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy as a foundational framework for adult learning. Knowles identifies assumptions and principles of adult learning that have guided the development of the Tafakur approach, in particular the need to involve adults in the planning of their learning as well as to use learning content that has direct relevance to their personal life. Knowles also highlights an inherent readiness to learn, a heightened awareness of the needs and a certain autonomy and self-direction that guides the learning process of adult learners. In the context of Jordan, these assumptions didn't meet the reality on the ground, necessitating a refinement of the DVV International approach.

The Tafakur Approach as a Response to the Jordanian Context

ALE is a relatively new and unknown concept in Jordan. Since 2010, DVV International has been promoting ALE in Jordan through engaging diverse stakeholders in education and development. These continuous discussions and collaborations have informed the development of the Tafakur approach that takes into consideration the specific features and challenges of adult learners in Jordan.

Jordan is a relatively young state, established in 1921 under the British Mandate for Palestine. It achieved independence in 1946 and has since been known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. As with all state-building processes, the formation of a cohesive national identity has been a central objective for Jordanian leadership – a task complicated by entrenched tribal structures and the integration of successive waves of refugees, initially from Palestine and later from Iraq and Syria.

The Jordanian education system is comparable to Freire’s banking system; traditional rote-learning is at the center of the education process, leaving no room for the development of analytical and critical thinking skills. In addition, Jordan is characterized by a weak economy and high unemployment rates, especially among young adults. Data from the Jordanian Department of Statistics indicate an unemployment rate of 21.4% in 2024². Especially among marginalized groups – such as women, people living in rural areas, and refugees – access to education and employment opportunities is extremely limited.

Within this context, DVV International recognized the need to develop a learning approach tailored to the specific needs of Jordanian adult learners. Although originally designed for implementation in marginalized areas, the approach is adaptable to a range of settings, including among students and recent graduates. When developing and implementing the Tafakur approach, it became obvious that Knowles’ assumptions of adults being self-directed, autonomous, and motivated to learn did not apply in the specific Jordanian context. Adult learners – particularly those from marginalized communities – often lack awareness of their own needs and interests, struggle to articulate their experiences, and face difficulties linking these needs and experiences to their lived realities. This disconnect frequently results in passivity and a diminished capacity for action.

DVV International also identified a further challenge in the structure and orientation of prevailing non-formal learning and training programs offered to participants. These programs often emphasize self-development within a framework that promotes an individualistic conception of leadership, rather than one rooted in collective action. This often resulted in barriers between participants and their surrounding reality, limiting community participation and subsequently fostering social alienation – where individuals no longer perceive themselves as integral members of their society or as active agents within a meaningful, development-oriented educational environment.

The unawareness of inherent needs of marginalized communities as well as the societal alienation revealed the importance of including Robert Chambers’ participatory rural appraisal into the Tafakur approach which he described as “a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act”³. Motivation to learn often stems from daily challenges like economic hardship or limited social mobility. ALE must address these realities, helping learners reflect critically and develop practical solutions. Participatory, dialogue-based learning fosters self-awareness and a deeper understanding of real needs, leading to an awareness of marginalization of learners – an essential driver of change.

² Department of Statistics. (2025, August 25). 21.4 unemployment rate for 2024. https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/unemployment_2024/

³ Chambers, R. (1992). Rural appraisal: rapid, relaxed and participatory. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/download.php?file=files/Dp311.pdf>

Tafakur Approach for Learning Based on Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE)

Against this backdrop, DVV International adopted the Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE) model as both an entry point and a conceptual framework for facilitating learning among marginalized communities in Jordan. Building upon DUNE, the Tafakur approach was developed, employing a range of participatory, dialogue-driven methods and tools to actively engage learners in the educational process.

The Conceptual Framework: Learning Based on Daily Urgent Needs Education (DUNE)

Learning based on daily urgent needs focuses on analyzing the reality from learners' own perspectives by identifying their daily most pressing challenges, deconstructing their structural causes, and transforming these challenges into learning opportunities. Anchoring learning in learners' daily needs enhances its impact, as it is grounded in their socio-economic realities – an approach particularly effective within communities experiencing marginalization and poverty. By enabling learners to test and re-evaluate their perceptions and analytically address their problems enhances their intellectual autonomy and critical consciousness. To identify the most pressing daily challenges and needs, the Tafakur approach was developed offering adult educators concrete methods and tools to organize a participatory and dialogue-based learning process.

Tafakur Approach: Concept and Tools

Tafakur refers to deep, culturally rooted reflective thinking. It is an interactive process analyzing current realities and its contradictions. Tafakur relies on exploratory questions (often Socratic in style) that begin with lived experience and move toward conceptual understanding, stimulating cognitive transformation without imposing ready-made frameworks.

Dialogue opens spaces for questioning and discovery. The intention of dialogue as such is, however, not sufficient. As Paule Freire once said: “What is really essential in this process is that both the teacher and the students know that open, curious questioning, whether in speaking or listening, is what grounds them mutually – not a simple passive pretense at dialogue”⁴. This is why the pedagogy of question as well as the text-based pedagogy build essential elements of the Tafakur approach.

This enables learners to deconstruct their reality, crystallize priorities, and design learning paths connected to their daily lives and developmental aspirations.

4 Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom: ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. <http://catalogue.cdeacf.ca/Record.htm?record=19278408124910966809>

The Role of the Adult Educator – Facilitation rather than Teaching

The Tafakur approach is based on interaction on eye-level between the adult educator and the learner. This approach demands a high degree of openness and flexibility on the part of the adult educator responsible for guiding the learning process. Within the Tafakur framework, DVV International accordingly refers to the adult educator as facilitator, emphasizing their role in supporting rather than directing learning. Facilitators must be adept at cultivating an environment that encourages learners to engage in critical reflection, identify the knowledge and skills necessary for their goals, acquire relevant information and training, and formulate actionable plans. Consequently, a predetermined curriculum is not imposed. Instead, learners assume an active role in shaping their own curriculum, with the facilitator serving as a guide and support throughout the process.

The Tafakur approach helps facilitators build collaborative learning environments that enable both learners and facilitators to rethink themselves and their reality and engage in socially and economically meaningful learning projects. Within this framework, learning is conceptualized as a transformative force – an engine of structural change with the potential to reshape societal configurations across economic, social, and political domains. A competent facilitator – one who possesses a clear understanding of their role within the learning process, along with the appropriate methodologies and tools to unlock the latent capacities of individuals and communities – is therefore essential to achieving meaningful and lasting learning outcomes.

The Methods and Tools of Tafakur

Based on this understanding, the Tafakur approach relies on several key tools and methods:

- Exploratory questions: Used to stimulate deep thinking and encourage learners to analyze reality rather than receiving ready-made information.
- Participatory analysis: Discussing and analyzing daily issues in groups to enhance interactive and collaborative learning.
- Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools: Methods like ranking, social mapping, timeline analysis, and group self-evaluation to help learners critically understand their environment.
- Interactive facilitation techniques: Including brainstorming, role-playing, and group activities that stimulate interaction and active engagement in learning, guiding groups toward collective thinking and discovery rather than delivering knowledge vertically.
- Case studies: Analyzing real experiences to help learners see how acquired knowledge applies to their daily reality.

The Tafakur Approach in Practice: Adult Education Project for Community Development and Empowerment in Jordan

Taking into consideration the theoretical framework, the Jordanian context and the developed Tafakur approach, DVV International has been implementing since 2013 the “Adult Education Project for Community Development and Empowerment“ in Jordan. The project primarily targets marginalized groups, including unemployed youth and women in rural areas.

Within the framework of the project, local non-governmental community-based organizations (CBOs) and Community Development Centers (CDCs) affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development receive comprehensive training in adult education concepts, the Tafakur approach, and institutional capacity development. DVV International, through its team of expert trainers, provides continuous support to both staff and facilitators throughout the implementation of the project.

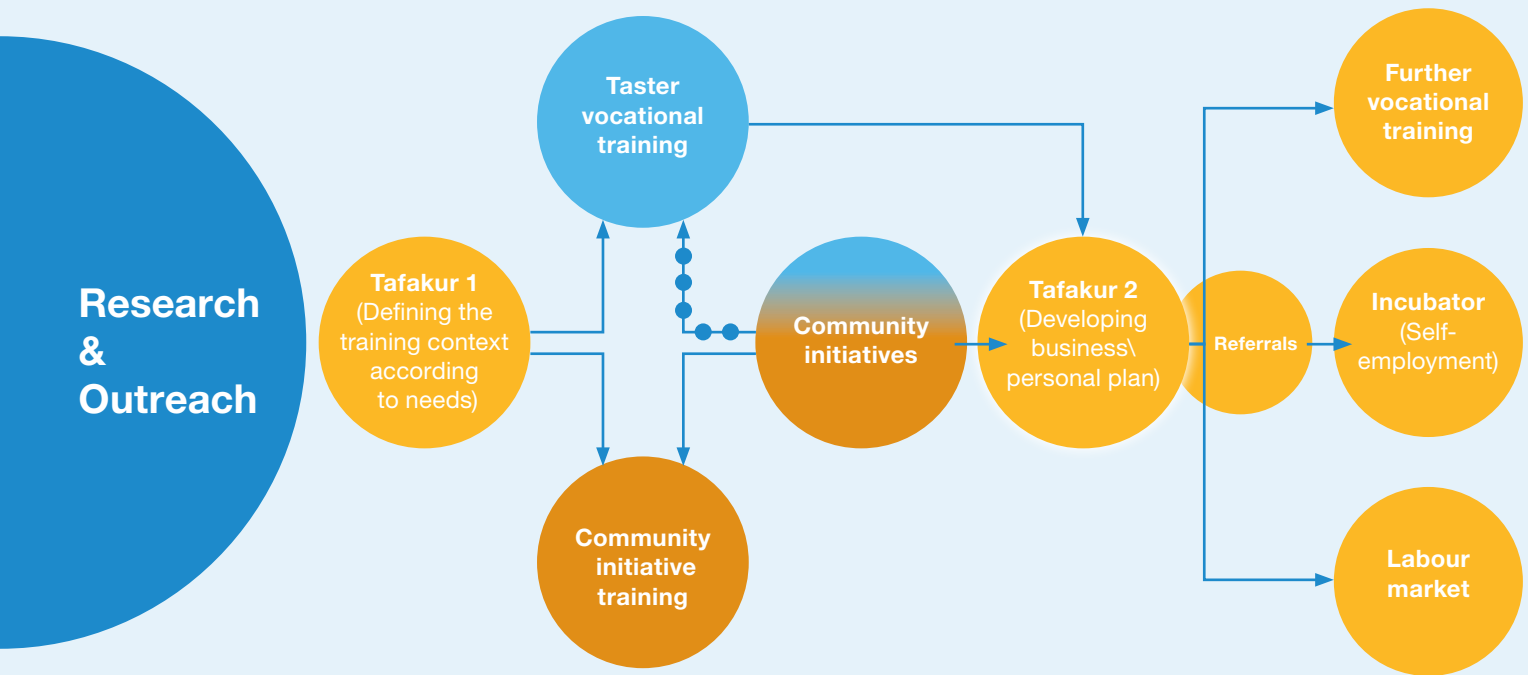
The learning journey at CBOs and CDCs begins with a participatory diagnosis of the community context employing Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools. This process facilitates the joint identification of local needs in collaboration with CBO and CDC staff, community leaders, and representatives from diverse social groups, thereby ensuring a grounded and inclusive understanding of the community’s lived realities.

Following this initial assessment, the first stage of the Tafakur approach is implemented, engaging the project’s target group in a series of interactive dialogue sessions (Tafakur 1) that draw directly on the findings of the PRA. This stage plays a critical role in cultivating participants’ critical consciousness, enabling them to engage in reflective analysis of their social and economic realities.

The insights gained from these sessions are transformed into preliminary vocational training programs or community initiative training, tailored to participants’ needs and the local labor market. This training serves as a bridge, allowing participants to transition from critical analysis to practical application. They are given opportunities to implement community initiatives, which often evolve into sustainable economic projects.

The learning cycle concludes with the second stage of Tafakur (Tafakur 2), focusing on personal and professional planning. Here, participants develop practical livelihood plans with support from facilitators through innovation hubs and entrepreneurship incubators. This phase includes training on résumé writing, job search techniques, and referrals to further training opportunities, employment services, microfinance institutions, digital marketplaces, etc.

Project Model: Adult Education Project for Community Development and Empowerment in Jordan



Results and Impact

Changes on the Individual, Institutional and Community Level

The mentioned interventions have generated measurable outcomes across multiple levels. At the individual level, project managers and facilitators have reported notable enhancements in participants' critical thinking, practical competencies, self-confidence, and decision-making capacities. At the community level, the project has contributed to strengthened social cohesion and a more positive perception of marginalized groups. At the institutional level, CBOs and CDCs have integrated key components of the project – particularly the Tafakur approach – into their ongoing programming, indicating a degree of institutionalization and sustainability.

In addition, a national informal network of facilitators – the “Community of Practice” – was established and connects practitioners using collaborative adult learning methodologies. The network enables knowledge exchange through workshops, seminars and peer discussions while building valuable connections among field experts. Members develop both their facilitation skills and practical tools, particularly for needs-based and reflective learning approaches, while continuously adapting methods to local cultural contexts.

Case Study Assessment through the European Training Foundation

From 2023 to 2024, the European Training Foundation (ETF) conducted a case study on the Tafakur Approach developed by DVV International in Jordan. As part of its Partnership for Innovation in Adult Learning and Education (PIALE), ETF examined learning practices and prepared peer-learning case studies that were published in 2025⁵. The results demonstrate that dialogue-based approaches focused on participants’ needs enhance learners’ self-awareness and understanding of their realities, stimulate motivation for learning and career development, enhance social inclusion and provide strong support for both learners and DVV International’s partner network, serving as key enablers for transitioning to diverse employment opportunities and community development.

Concretely, 93.5% of learners gained ability to identify own strengths/educational needs, 92% reported improved communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills and 90.4% boosted their employability skills (CV writing, interviews). Furthermore, 91.9% of the participants better understood their work/education rights and 79% showed increased motivation for continuous learning. Community initiatives implemented by participants in their communities contributed to improving social issues such as reduced school dropout rates, improved citizens’ health and nutrition or higher awareness and action for cultural preservation.

The findings of ETF confirm that the dialogic Tafakur approach can effectively address unemployment and poverty in marginalized communities. The methodology demonstrates strength in creating measurable personal transformations while generating ripple effects across social and economic dimensions. Future implementation would benefit from longitudinal studies to further validate the sustainability of outcomes.

5 Tafakur - A dialogue based adult learning approach in Jordan.
https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/system/files/2025-01/TAKAFUR%20Case%20study%20PIALE%20Jordan_final.pdf

Conclusion

The significance of the Tafakur approach lies in its rare integration of theoretical depth and practical adaptability. On one hand, it is grounded in a robust educational philosophy, while on the other, it possesses the flexibility to adapt to local specificities. Most importantly, it offers a practical model for transforming socio-economic challenges into genuine opportunities for learning and empowerment.

Furthermore, community partnerships played an important role in developing and testing the approach and project model, continuously redefining them in collaboration with DVV International's CBO and CDC partners. They emerged as essential partners in ensuring project continuity and reaching out to target groups. These partnerships also enhanced the community ownership of the program.

Despite the strength of this approach, its implementation in Jordan faces challenges linked to three main factors: the dominance of rote-learning culture in educational institutions, limited resources allocated to ALE programs, and difficulties in measuring long-term impact. Subsequent research must develop evaluation tools that capture qualitative shifts in community awareness, also supporting advocacy for educational reform and improved funding.

Sustaining and expanding the Tafakur model requires continuous critical reflection, strategic planning, and broad-based collaboration. Partnering with universities can enhance the theoretical depth of content and boost academic credibility, while coordination with government ministries ensures alignment with national policies and access to institutional support. Piloting the model across diverse regional contexts will refine its adaptability, supported by continuous exchange among facilitators, researchers, and practitioners.

Empirical research remains essential, particularly studies on the transformative impact of dialogic learning and its integration into formal education systems. Embedding Tafakur within national adult education strategies and teacher training programs will be key to its long-term relevance and institutional sustainability.

Ultimately, Tafakur's continued success depends on a multidimensional strategy that integrates programmatic innovation, academic and governmental partnerships, research, and policy engagement – ensuring it remains a dynamic tool for emancipatory education and community empowerment.

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