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# Faculteit Revalidatiewetenschappen

## Master in de ergotherapeutische wetenschap

***Masterthesis***

***Process and Effect Evaluation of a Training Module on Meaningful Activities for Direct Support Professionals Working with Persons with Intellectual Disabilities***

**Emilie Coppin**

Scriptie ingediend tot het behalen van de graad van Master in de ergotherapeutische wetenschap

**PROMOTOR :**
Prof. dr. Patricia DE VRIENDT

**BEGELEIDER :**
De heer Christophe WILLE

**COPROMOTOR :**
Prof. dr. Dominique VAN DE VELDE

**2023**
**2024**

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# Abstract (Nederlands)

**Introductie**

Het deelnemen aan betekenisvolle activiteiten (BA) is essentieel voor de participatie en onafhankelijkheid van personen met een verstandelijke beperking. BA verbetert de kwaliteit van leven door een gevoel van betekenis en vervulling te bieden. Het faciliteren van BA brengt echter uitdagingen met zich mee, waardoor begeleiders ondersteuning nodig hebben. Deze studie evalueert de MA4A-trainingsmodule 'Back to Basics'.

**Methode**

Er werden focusgroepgesprekken en semigestructureerde participatieve observaties gehouden met begeleiders om inzicht te krijgen in het proces en effect van de trainingsmodule. Een inductieve thematische analyse werd gebruikt om de gegevens te analyseren.

**Resultaten**

Na de inductieve thematische analyse werden vier hoofdthema's geïdentificeerd: 1) Het ontwikkelen van een gedeeld begrip van BA. 2) Veranderende denkwijzen over hoe BA structureel in de organisatie kunnen worden ingebed. 3) Het operationeel maken van geleerde tools en strategieën om BA structureel in de organisatie te integreren. 4) Potentiële verbeteringen om de trainingservaring te optimaliseren.

**Conclusie**

De MA4A-trainingsmodule 'Back to Basics' toonde potentieel in het verbeteren van het professionele functioneren van begeleiders bij het faciliteren van BA voor personen met een verstandelijke beperking. De training hielp een gedeeld begrip en taal te ontwikkelen om BA te bespreken en prioriteit te geven. Er ontstond een verschuiving van een aanbodgestuurde naar een vraaggestuurde aanpak. Deelnemers begonnen creatief kansen voor BA te zoeken, ondanks aanhoudende organisatorische belemmeringen. De studie onthulde echter ook uitdagingen bij de implementatie van de geleerde strategieën binnen de organisatie.



**Trefwoorden:** Begeleiders, Verstandelijke Beperking, Betekenisvolle Activiteiten, Trainingsmodule, Kwalitatief Onderzoek

**Aantal woorden:** 7.636

# Abstract (English)

**Introduction**

Engaging in meaningful activities (MA) is crucial for the societal participation and independence of persons with intellectual disabilities. These activities enhance quality of life by providing a sense of meaning and fulfilment. However, enabling MA poses challenges, and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) require support to enable MA. This study evaluates the 'Back to Basics' training module, designed to enhance the facilitation of MA by DSPs.

**Method**

Focus group discussions and semi-structured participatory observations with DSPs in Flanders (Belgium) were conducted to understand the perceived impact and process of the training module. An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

**Results**

The inductive thematic analysis identified four main themes: 1) Growing towards a shared understanding of meaningful activities. 2) Shifting mindsets on how to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization. 3) Operationalizing learned tools and strategies to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization. 4) Potential enhancements for optimizing the training experience.

**Conclusion**

The MA4A training module 'Back to Basics' showed potential in enhancing the professional functioning of DSPs in facilitating MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. The training helped participants develop a shared understanding and language to discuss and prioritize MA, fostering a shift from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach. Participants began to creatively seek opportunities for MA despite organizational barriers. However, the study revealed challenges in implementing the learned strategies within the organization.



**Keywords:** Direct Support professionals, Intellectual Disabilities, Meaningful Activities, Training Module, Qualitative Research


**Word count:** 7.636

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# Prologue

This master's thesis represents the culmination of my Interuniversity "Master of Science in Occupational Therapy" program at the Universities of Leuven, Hasselt, and Ghent. It has been an enriching experience that would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many individuals.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my promoter Prof. dr. De Vriendt Patricia, co-promotor Prof. dr. Van de Velde Dominique, and supervisor PhD-candidate Wille Christophe, for their guidance, support, and insightful feedback throughout this research project. I am thankful that I could be part of the third and final phase of the "Meaningful Activities 4 All (MA4A)" project. This project interested me from the start and motivated me to complete this master's thesis.

Secondly, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the direct support professionals who participated in this study. Their willingness to share their experiences, opinions, and perceptions during the training was vital in exploring the experienced impact of the MA4A training module "Back to Basics".

Thirdly, I would like to thank the Universities of Leuven, Hasselt, and Ghent for providing resources such as books, articles, NVivo, etc., that facilitated this research. I am also grateful to the University of Leuven for providing the necessary materials, such as cameras and audio recorders.

Lastly, special thanks to my family, friends, and fellow students. Their support and encouragement gave me the strength to continue and fulfill this research, even during challenging times.

This master's thesis is not just a reflection of my hard work but also the collective effort of all those who have supported me along the way. I am thankful for their contributions and look forward to applying the knowledge and skills gained to make a meaningful impact in the field of occupational therapy.

Emilie Coppin, June 2022

# Background

This master's thesis is situated within the research domain of occupational science. The research is embedded within a larger ongoing research project "Meaningful Activities 4 All" (MA4A) (PA2021-091) and contributes to the doctoral study led by PhD candidate Wille Christophe. The main goal of this research project is to enhance qualitative support for persons with intellectual disabilities, enabling them to participate in meaningful activities (MA) and the society (Wille et al., 2022). The research project is based on the Human-centered design, consisting of three phases, namely inspiration, ideation, and implementation (Wille et al., 2022).

Phase 1: Inspiration

In this phase a qualitative and quantitative approach was used to get insights on how Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) experience enabling MA, what their needs are, and which key factors facilitate or obstruct this enablement (Wille et al., 2022).

Phase 2: Ideation

Insights from the inspiration phase were discussed in the world café and brainstorming sessions, leading to the development of prototypes during co-creation sessions with DSPS, supervisors, and persons with intellectual disabilities (Wille et al., 2022).

Phase 3: Implementation

The previous phases led to the development of five training modules to support DSPs in facilitating MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. This study will reflect on the qualitative part of a mixed-method study focusing on the processes and effects of the second training module: 'Meaningful activities - Back to basics'.

# Introduction

Globally, the prevalence of individuals with intellectual disabilities ranges between 1 and 3 percent (Harris, 2006). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), intellectual disability (ID) is defined as follows:

> *"ID is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates during the developmental period, which is defined operationally as before the individual attains age 22"* (Schalock et al., 2021, p. 13).

These limitations result in challenges with thinking, learning, reasoning, planning, adapting to different circumstances, and learning from experience (Schalock et al., 2021; Van Gennep, 2007).

Support is essential for individuals with intellectual disabilities to participate fully in society and mitigate the impact of their limitations (Schalock et al., 2021; Van Gennep, 2007). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, everyone has the right to participate in society (United Nations, 2006). In Flanders the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities (VAPH) has developed policies to uphold this right (Beke, 2019)

The current support paradigm emphasizes inclusion in society through inclusive education, supported living, and employment, alongside the right to self-determination. This approach has led to more person-centered, participative, and quality of life (QOL) focused support for persons with intellectual disabilities (Schalock & Verdugo, 2013). The shared citizenship paradigm further insists on the active and complete participation of persons with intellectual disabilities as equal, respected, valued, and contributing members of society (Schalock et al., 2022).

Direct support professionals (DSPs) play a critical role in facilitating the inclusion and participation of persons with intellectual disabilities. Their evolving roles and functions now focus on person-centered strategies that are holistic, coordinated, and outcome-oriented, aimed at improving the QOL for persons with intellectual disabilities (Friedman, 2018; Schalock et al., 2021). Person-centered care involves respecting, the values, preferences, and needs of persons with intellectual disabilities, providing clear information and access to care,

offering emotional support, involving family and friends, ensuring continuity and coordination of care, and focusing on the individuals' strengths (Castagnino & Blaskowitz, 2022; van der Meer et al., 2018).

Engaging in meaningful activities (MA) is crucial for the societal participation and independence of persons with intellectual disabilities. MA are actions or tasks that are purposeful, fulfilling, and contributes to an individual's sense of identity and well-being" (Eakman, 2013). These activities enhance QOL by providing a sense of meaning and fulfillment (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2012). Effective communication between DSPs and persons with intellectual disabilities is essential for successful engagement in MA, as it fosters better understanding of their wishes and needs (Iacono et al., 2019).

However, enabling MA possess challenges, and DSPs require support to facilitate MA for persons with intellectual disabilities (Truong et al., 2021). A scoping review identified the support needs of DSPs, categorizing these needs into policy-, organizational-, and personal level support needs. At the policy level support needs, there is a request for support in implementing guidelines and policies as well as increasing wages to enhance recruitment and retention of qualified DSPs. At the organizational level support needs, additional training is needed to improve DSPs' knowledge, skills, and behaviors in working with persons with intellectual disabilities. At the personal level support needs, focus on personal growth, including self-confidence, resilience, and role clarity would be beneficial (Wille et al., 2023).

These insights led to the development of five training modules to support DSPs in facilitating MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. This study focuses on the second MA4A training module: 'Back to Basics'. This module covers the fundamental knowledge required to enable MA for persons with intellectual disabilities.

This research will explore the processes and effects of this training module on DSPs working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Consequently, the following research question and sub-questions were formulated: How do participants perceive the evolution of their ability to enable meaningful activities for persons with intellectual disabilities through the MA4A training module: 'Back to basics'?

- Sub-question 1: How do participants perceive the evolution of their professional functioning in enabling meaningful activities for persons with intellectual disabilities through the MA4A training module ‘Back to Basics’?
- Sub-question 2: How do participants perceive the evolution of the organization’s ability to enable meaningful activities for persons with intellectual disabilities through the MA4A training module ‘Back to Basics’?
- Sub-question 3: What are the participants’ opinions on potential adaptations to the MA4A training module ‘Back to Basics’ to better support DSPs in enabling meaningful activities for individuals with intellectual disabilities?

# Methods

## Study design

This study is part of a mixed-method design focusing on collecting, analyzing and integrating qualitative and quantitative data. This with the aim to gain a better understanding of the effects and processes of the intervention (Palinkas et al., 2011). Triangulation is applied, giving equal weight to both qualitative and quantitative methods (Polit & Beck, 2010). This study focused on the qualitative part, were a thematical analysis of focus group discussions and semi-structured participatory observations with DSPs working in Flanders (Belgium) were conducted to gain insights into understanding the perceived impact and process (Farr & Nizza, 2019; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). In the quantitative method, standardized assessments with DSPs working in Flanders (Belgium) were conducted to gain insights into understanding the effects (Palinkas et al., 2011).

## Research team

The research team consists of students of the Master of Science in occupational therapy, a PhD candidate/ occupational therapist/ educator, a senior researcher/ gerontologist/ occupational therapist/ educator and a senior researcher/ occupational therapist/ educator. This research consists of a qualitative and quantitative part. The Master of Science students will each elaborate on one part. Emilie Coppin will focus on qualitative data collection and analysis, while Aster De Busschere will focus on quantitative data collection and analysis. Therefore, this paper will only report the qualitative part. Furthermore, the PhD candidate will be involved in developing and delivering the training modules, as well as providing support in data collection and analysis if needed. The senior researchers will support and share expertise while guiding the research process.

## Intervention

As described in the background and the introduction, the previous phases of this research led to the development of a training module. The 'Back to Basics' training module was conducted over three half-day sessions spread across three months. This approach aligns with the principles of the HILL model, promoting a deeper, more sustainable, and effective learning experience for participants (Dochy & Segers, 2018). This training module covers the basic knowledge and tools necessary for enabling MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. On

the first day, the participants learned about the core components of meaningful activities, namely person, environment, and activity. On the second day, they learned about combining the core components and addressing their potential issues. On the third day, they explored on how to structurally embed the learned strategies and skills in the organization. Appendix 1 provides a brief overview of the topics covered in each session. The intervention was designed based on the seven principles of HILL Model with the aim to promote effective and lasting learning experiences: 1) Collaboration & Coaching by letting the participants interact, share information, ideas and opinions. By creating the MA4A-community, a safe space for all participants is provided to share their experiences openly and support one another. 2) Hybrid Learning by mixing face to face sessions with video's, information, … sent in the MA4A WhatsApp community. 3) Action and knowledge sharing by sharing experiences face to face and through the MA4A WhatsApp community, as well as actively searching solutions for their specific situation. 4) Flexibility by combining formal and informal learning to deepen understanding. 5) Assessment as learning by evaluating progress. 6) Creation of Urgency by showing the usefulness of (new) knowledge, tools, and skills, by using specific examples and their own cases, by encouraging the participants to identify problems and analyze the needs, and by stimulating participants to give and receive feedback. 7) Learner agency by allowing participants to manage their own learning trajectories, pursuing individual goals (Dochy & Segers, 2018).

**Participants and Sampling**

A realist sample was used, ensuring maximum variation to explore a wide range of perspectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). Maximum variation was strived for by including DSPs meeting the following inclusion criteria: 1) Working in a day care center, supported employment, or integrated care. 2) Working as an occupational therapist or pedagogue or nurse or middle management staff or Supervisor or team leader. 3) Work with adults with intellectual disabilities. 4) Understanding and speaking Dutch. 4) Be willing to follow the MA4A training module: 'Back to basics'. They were excluded if they met the following exclusion criterion: 1) Vocational training without basic knowledge of intellectual disabilities (applies to career changers with a different vocational training). The participants were recruited through contact with the organization's representative via flyers containing information about the study distributed within the organization. After reviewing the literature, it's noted that a small

sample size is recommended due to the intensive process of the in-depth analyses (Farr & Nizza, 2019). Additionally, the recommended sample size for a training program is 18 (Tomei & Nelson, 2019), while for a focus group discussion, it typically falls between 6 to 12 participants (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, with potential dropouts in mind, the researchers aimed to involve 16 participants.

**Data collection**

The data were collected between January 2024 and March 2024 during three half days from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. in an organization in Flanders. This organization is a VAPH-recognized care provider for persons with intellectual disabilities located in Flanders (Belgium). Qualitative data was collected through pre- and post-training group conversations and semi-structured observations during the training. The focus group discussions were conducted using an interview guide, retrievable in appendix 2. This guide consists of 5 parts, based on the reflection questions of the Occupation-Centered Intervention Assessment (OCIA) (Jewell et al., 2022): 1) Brief explanation about the study. 2) breaking the ice with the activity of making a word cloud reflecting on the term MA. 3) An opening question about the impact of MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. 4) Main questions about Occupation centered practice (Jewell et al., 2022), experienced barriers, used strategies, and tools. 5) A closing question reflecting on the dreams of the DSPs regarding the enablement of MA for persons with intellectual disabilities with the aim to talk and reflect about enabling meaningful activities for persons with intellectual disabilities. Creative methods, such as drawing, and interactive methods were used during the focus group discussions (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Drawing gives the participant freedom of expression, supports the participant to talk about sensitive subjects and reduces stress (Virole & Ricadat, 2022). The focus group discussions were conducted in Dutch and led by the MSc students and the PhD candidate trained in qualitative research techniques. The participants were divided by the researchers into two groups, to achieve an equal distribution based on the participant's background. Before the first session of the 'back to basics' training module, the MSc students each led one group. After the last session of the 'back to basics' training module, the PhD candidate and one MSc student each led one group. The semi-structured observations were conducted using an observation guide, retrievable in appendix 3. This guide was based on the group environment scale (Moos et al., 1974) and consists of Tuckman's five phases of group development: 1) Forming, where the group

members meet and establish the group's purpose. Behaviors include uncertainty, politeness, dependence on the leader, and a search for direction. 2) Storming, where the group members express individual opinions, leading to conflicts. 3) Norming, where the group develops cohesion, cooperation, and shared values, resolving conflicts. Collaborative and supportive behaviors emerge. 4) Performing, where the group achieves high levels of cohesion and effectiveness. Members communicate and collaborate efficiently to meet goals. 5) Adjourning, where the group prepares for separation, reflects on achievements, makes future plans, expresses emotions, and transfers knowledge to their own operations (De Vos, 2016). This with the aim of observing the group's evolution in enabling MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. The MSc students both took on the role of observer and each observed two tables of four participants per table. In appendix the focus group interview- and the observation guide can be found. The data was collected by using video-, and audio recordings and transcribed afterwards. The data was stored on a protected server by the lead researcher.

**Data-analysis**

An inductive thematic analysis was conducted. An inductive approach is a bottom-up approach where the data is not fitted in pre-existing frameworks, instead the themes derived from the data itself. A thematic analysis was chosen to give insight into patterns of themes across the data. This by identifying collective meanings and experiences. The data was analyzed using a six-phase approach to thematic analysis: 1) Familiarizing yourself with the data by reading textual data and watching visual data. 2) Generating initial codes. 3) Searching for themes. 4) Reviewing themes. 5) Defining and naming themes. 6) Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2012). NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, was used to analyze and visualize the data (Edhlund & McDougall, 2019).

**Ethical approval**

Ethical approval was given by the Ethical Committee of University Ghent (UGent) and Ghent University Hospital (UZ Gent) (B6702023000724). Principles were followed in accordance with the Helsinki Declarations (World Medical Association, 2013). The participants received written and verbal information about the purpose and methods of this study, and their rights. Participants included in this study all agreed to and signed the informed consent. Participating in this study was completely voluntarily, withdrawal was possible at any time, and

confidentiality was ensured by pseudonymizing data that could potentially be used to identify the participants.

# Results

In this study, the sample (n = 17) consisted of 5 males and 12 females with diverse professional backgrounds. The table below highlights the key characteristics of the participants.

*Table 1: Participant demographics*

| Code | Sex | Age | Level of education | Education | Experience | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | M | 41 | Bachelor degree | Special education teacher | 14 years | Day care supervisor |
| #2 | F | 32 | Bachelor degree | Occupational therapist | 8 years | Occupational therapist |
| #3 | F | 36 | Secondary school degree | Healthcare assistant | 15 years | Residential support worker |
| #4 | F | 36 | Associate degree | Social worker | 6 years | Integrated occupational therapist |
| #5 | M | 50 | Bachelor degree | Social worker | 27 years | Residential support worker |
| #6 | F | 30 | Bachelor degree | Event manager | 2 years | Support worker |
| #7 | F | 26 | Bachelor degree | Special education teacher | 3 years | Residential support worker |
| #8 | F | 31 | Bachelor degree | Occupational therapist | 10 years | Integrated occupational therapist |
| #9 | M | 47 | Bachelor degree | Social worker | 19 years | Support worker |
| #10 | M | 31 | Bachelor degree | Physical educator | 10 years | Movement therapist |
| #11 | F | 25 | Bachelor degree | Occupational therapist | 5 years | Integrated occupational therapist |
| #12 | M | 40 | Bachelor degree | Occupational therapist | 2 years | Occupational therapist |
| #13 | F | 24 | Bachelor degree | Occupational therapist | 1 year | Occupational therapist |
| #14 | F | 33 | Secondary school degree | Educator | 5 years | Day care supervisor |
| #15 | F | 45 | Bachelor degree | Family scientist | 25 years | Residential support worker |
| #16 | F | 62 | Associate degree | Special education teacher | 41 years | Day care supervisor |
| #17 | F | 22 | Bachelor student | Occupational therapy | 0 Years | Student |

Data were collected through four focus group discussions and four participant observations. The focus group discussions resulted in more than 3 hours of data. Each focus group included eight to nine participants. Additionally, participant observations were conducted, resulting in more than 15 hours of observational data.

After conducting an inductive thematic analysis four main themes were identified: 1) Growing towards a shared understanding of meaningful activities. 2) Shifting mindsets on how to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization. 3) Operationalizing learned tools and strategies to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization. 4) Potential

enhancements for optimizing the training experience. In appendix 4, a table of the themes and subteams can be found.

## 1. Growing towards a shared understanding of meaningful activities

### 1.1. Developing a common language to talk about meaningful activities


*Figure 1: Developing a common language to talk about MA*

During the first training session, DSPs identified a crucial need for acquiring a richer vocabulary to discuss MA and establishing a unified understanding of this concept. Initially, there were divergent perspectives on what constitutes a MA, when it holds significance, who it benefits, and the factors influencing its meaningfulness. Through collaborative discussions and receiving information during the training sessions, the MA4A community developed a shared lexicon and comprehension of MA. This shared understanding facilitated smoother MA discussions, fostering dialogues not only about the training content but also about MA for clients. DSPs began using common terms such as form, function, and meaning, and they even started incorporating MA-related humor into their interactions.

> *T1:"It is a very vague subject. It's not really very clear. We're noticing that now, aren't we? What a MA is, is different for everyone. The perspective on it is different." #8*
>
> *T4: "What I have noticed is that speaker 12 and I work together in a team, and discussions about MA go much more smoothly with him. We share the same*

*perspectives, making it easier to discuss. With other colleagues, we first have to get them on board and explain our point of view." #11*

However, on the organizational level challenges persisted. During the first training session DSPs expressed difficulties in translating their understanding of MA during team meetings due to incomplete grasp of the concept and insufficient language. By the third training session, DSPs had grasped the concept but were still exploring effective ways to integrate MA discussions during team meetings. By the fourth session, participants gained the confidence to discuss MA and the MA4A community's vision during meetings, reflecting their evolving engagement and deeper understanding of MA principles.

*T4: " I have much more courage to talk about MA during team meetings and to say, for example, that something is not meaningful." #6*

1.2. Awareness of the importance of prioritizing meaningful activities

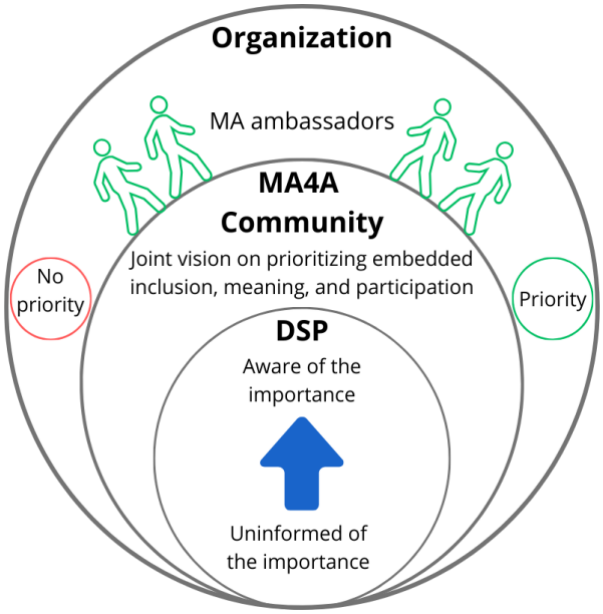


*Figure 2: Awareness of the importance of prioritizing MA*

At the beginning of the first training session, DSPs were inadequantely informed about the importance of MA, and it was unclear if the concept of meaning was central in their activities. However, by the final session, the DSPs had gained a clear understanding of the importance of prioritizing MA. This newfound awareness fostered a shared vision within the MA4A

community, emphazising the prioritization of embedded inclusion, meaning, participation, empowerment, well-being, rights, and autonomy.

*T1: "I haven't been consciously engaged with it, I hope it's meaningful" #12*

Participants emerged as ambassadors for furthering the development of MA within the organization. Achieving an organization-wide shift towards prioritizing MA requires a unified mindset, where meetings and activities are concistently approached from an MA perspective. Initially, participants noted that MA were not always prioritized within the organization, with residential support staff often focusing on daily routines instead. By the third session, it was evident that practical tasks still took precedence over MA. In the fourth session, although participants felt more consciously engaged in MA, these were not consistently central within their teams. Furthermore, participants observed that the prioritization of MA varied from one colleague to another. At last, they appreciated that the management was addressing this issue but were waiting to see if the efforts would be effective.

*T4: "It just disappoints me that now that I am aware of the importance of MA, I notice that my colleagues often focus more on themselves and daily tasks than on the residents."#6*

*T3: Participants note that the collective vision of the group, emphasizing inclusion, participation, empowerment, well-being, self-determination, rights, and meaningful activities, is not adequately reflected in the current processes.*

## 2. Shifting mindsets on how to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization

### 2.1. Transitioning from a supply-driven approach to a demand driven approach

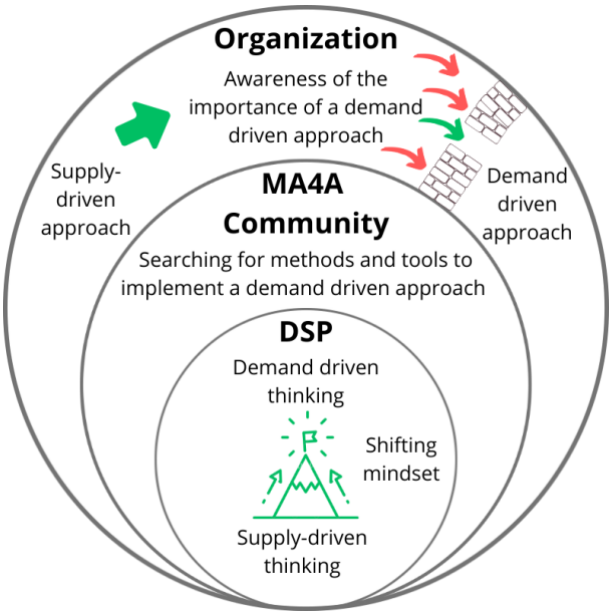


*Figure 3: Transitioning from a supply-driven to a demand driven approach*

During the first training session, participants focused on supply-driven thinking, searching for creative ways to improve the supply. In the first and second training sessions, a shift in mindset occurred. Participants realized they were doing many things simply because they had always done them that way. They began to question whether regular activities were truly meaningful, including activities like the sensory bath. This awareness persisted until the last training session, where it was emphasized again that it's crucial to continuously question the activities and to avoid repeatedly offering the same activities to a client just because they enjoyed it once. This led to demand-driven thinking, where participants recognized the importance of considering what someone enjoys, continuously assessing the meaningfulness of activities, and ensuring all client have opportunities to participate.

> *T1: "It's about creatively searching for another way to provide supply." #1*
>
> *T1: "I have noticed that there are fixed activities that need to be completed, where I feel there is no longer consideration given to their meaningfulness." #14*

This change in mindset drove the community to seek methods and tools to implement a demand-driven approach. Techniques such as active support, grading activities, and having

the opportunity to deviate from current practices were explored. The community looked for ways to start from the client's needs and interests and to find balance between what clients can do and what they can handle. Tools were sought to deeply understand the meaning of the activity for the client. The goal was to bring out the best in each client, give their lives meaning, and optimally engage them through a demand driven approach.

> *T1: "I would actually prefer to start from scratch, so basically, change all the workshops and truly begin based on the interests and preferences of the clients."#12*

> *T4: "It's crucial to align closely with the interests of the clients."#15*

The shift of the participant's mindset and the discovery of the tools and methods, led to the application of a demand driven approach within the organization. However, this was challenging as participants encountered the difficulty of transitioning from a supply-driven approach to a demand driven approach within a structured system of fixed activities. Despite these challenges, some participants managed to create awareness within their team of the importance of a demand driven approach. For instance, a participant used the OCIA to evaluate client's activities, which made the team realize that many activities were imposed by the organization rather than coming from the clients. As a result, they began reviewing activities in team meetings. Engaging in discussions during meetings to address and make colleagues aware of a demand driven approach recurred among participants. One participant mentioned the need to create friction to achieve change. Despite many obstacles, by the final training session, some demand-driven activities had been successfully accomplished, ranging from an individual day trip to the sea to creating a cozy green oasis with the clients.

> *T4: "I applied the OCIA, and I found it quite confronting. Out of all the activities, I scored five or six, none of the clients chose them themselves; everything was imposed by us, leading the team to reflect. We will review the activities in our upcomming meetings."#3*

2.2. Shifting from thinking in terms of limitations to creatively seeking opportunities

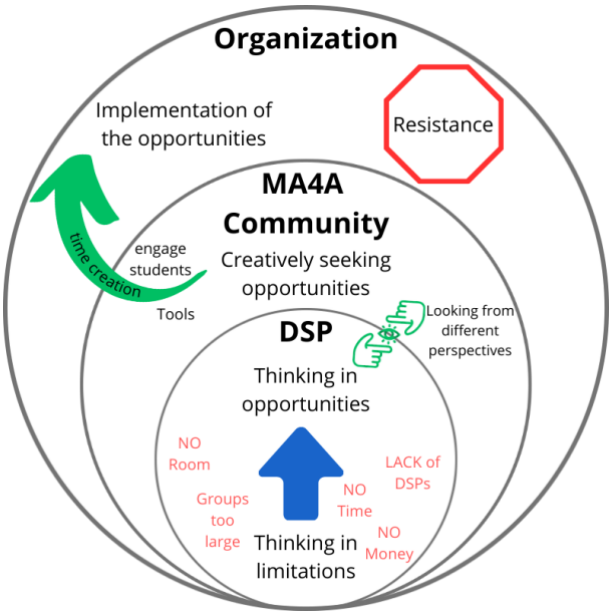


*Figure 4: Shifting from thinking in terms of limitations to creatively seeking opportunities*

During the first training session, participants thought more in terms of limitations. Limitations in rooms, time, clients, personnel, materials, and resources. There was a need for large rooms for group activities, and homelike living groups. Time constraints were frequently mentioned as daily tasks and rigid schedules leaving no room for MA. Client group were too large and diverse, and communication was a challenge. Personnel shortage, high turnover, and burnout were prevalent, and a top-down structure limited DSPs' ability to make changes. Materials and resource shortages led to unequal access to activities.

Over time, participants began to think in terms of opportunities. They acknowledged persistent barriers but adopted a new perspective, allowing them to find creative solutions within the MA4A community. They reorganized schedules, restructured meetings to be more efficient, and involved students in developing MA. Retaining personnel was emphasized, with hiring practices aligned with team preferences. They advocated for organization-wide tools to

support MA and cross-group activities to offer more tailored activities. Daily creative thinking was seen as a growth process.

> *T4: "I now have more time. I've changed my approach by managing my own time more effectively and by assessing and utilizing my team's talents."#3*

Efforts to implement these opportunities met resistance from the team, management, and external factors. The team and management were not fully aligned with the new mindset, resources were lacking, and systems like Orbis were not adapted for these changes. Additionally, external factors, such as clients' parents not permitting MA for various reasons, posed challenges. Despite these challenges, participants worked on strategies to gain support, such as presenting ideas with concrete tools, gradually introducing changes, and demonstrating effectiveness. Maintaining motivation was crucial for the implementation of the opportunities.

> *T4: "The ideas are there, but the execution can be rough or sometimes gets lost along the way."#15*

## 3. Operationalizing learned tools and strategies to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization

3.1. Moving from unconsciously using strategies to consciously applying strategies to one's own operations

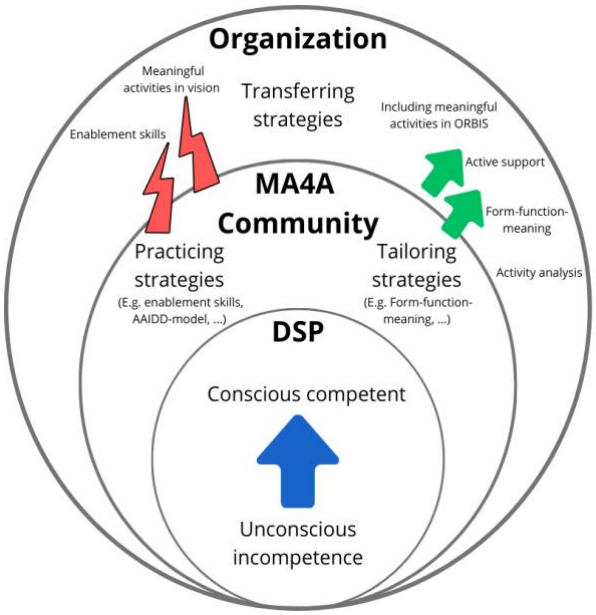


*Figure 5: Moving from unconsciously using strategies to consciously applying strategies to one's own operations*

At the beginning of the training, participants acknowledged a lack of conscious strategy use, relying instead on intuition and past experiences. They expressed a need for theoretical background and scientific substantiation. By the end of the training, however, participants reported a shift towards more deliberate and conscious use of strategies to embed MA. They felt more confident in questioning existing strategies and experimenting with newly learned ones.

> *T4: "We once had an unconscious gut feeling, but now it has become more concrete and our focus on it is deliberate. This is definitely a positive development."#12*

Within the MA4A community, participants were engaged in extensive practice. They applied the AAIDD model to their cases, explored various types of time use, examined the form-function-meaning of activities for their cases, actively used the enablement skills, and conducted an activity analysis. This practice led to tailoring strategies to their own operations, resulting in ideas such as documenting, and further developing the form-function-meaning of

activities in Orbis and discussing these in team meetings. In the final training session, discussions focused on concretely applying all the learned strategies.

> *T4: The group members are actively considering and discussing how to integrate the learned strategies into their own operations and organization.*

The practiced and tailored strategies were then transferred to the organization. The participants applied active support, activity analysis, form-function-meaning, enablement skills, and incorporated MA in the treatment plans of persons with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, a participant devised a plan to develop a sensory garden using active support, students were involved in assessing the form-function-meaning of a MA, activities were broken down into activities, tasks, and actions, and a talent poster was developed to highlight the MA of the person with an intellectual disability.

Despite the progress, not all strategies were fully transferred. Participants reported limited application of enablement skills and noted that the vision has not yet been adjusted to more centrally incorporate MA. They recognized that while they now have a clear framework of strategies, additional time is needed to fully integrate all strategies.

> *T4: "I would love to say that we have already fully integrated everything into the team, but due to time pressure, the training sessions being close together, and various practical matters arising, it has not been fully implemented yet. However, we are keeping it in mind."#1*

3.2. Progressing from limited and context-dependent evaluations to the first steps of a comprehensive evaluation for the entire organization

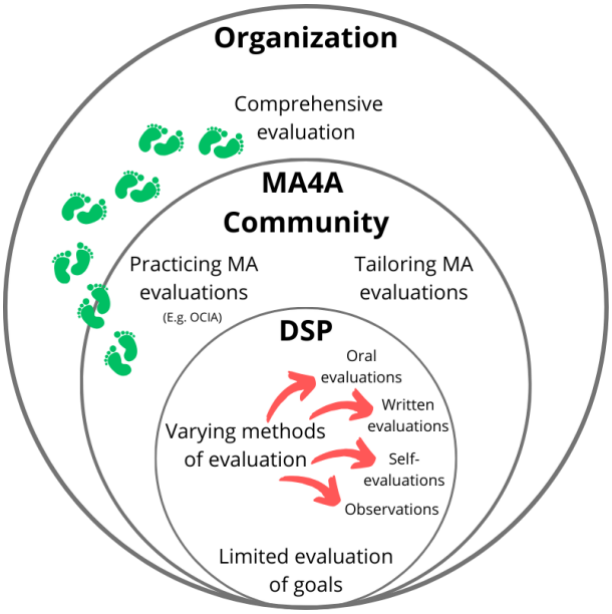


*Figure 6: Progressing from limited and context-dependent evaluations to the first steps of a comprehensive evaluation for the entire organization*

At the beginning of the training, participants acknowledged the limited evaluations of goals and the varied methods for assessing MA depending on the setting and the DSP. These methods ranged from oral and written evaluations to self-evaluations and observations.

Within the MA4A community, participants sought solutions to improve MA evaluations. They focused on learning and practicing the OCIA and discussed how to communicate key points, MA, and major life events. This led to the realization of the need for a comprehensive evaluation tool to assess MA in the organization.

> *T3: The participants suggested the following solutions for evaluating MA: finding objective criteria, allowing the client to assess the activity themselves (for example, by using emoticons), and by utilizing the OCIA.*

These discussions and practices regarding MA evaluations marked the initial steps toward developing a comprehensive evaluation tool for the entire organization. This involved

assessing MA using the OCIA and incorporating the form-function-meaning of activities, MA goals, major life events, and an annual MA survey into Orbis.

> *T4: "A tool that is practical for both occupational therapists and residential support workers, usable at Borgwal and the external houses. It should ensure consistency when transitioning between locations or groups, so that the same tools are used consistently."#15*

## 4. Potential enhancements for optimizing the training experience

### 4.1. Practical adaptations improving the experience of DSPs during the training

The participants suggested several practical adaptations to enhance their learning experience. This subtheme explores adjustments in the training environment, participant organization, scheduling, and technology usage.

During training session 1 and 3, the training environment was very small and crowded, leading to overstimulation and decreased focus among the participants. Distractions from clients in the hallway and personal phones also disrupted the sessions. In contrast, the improved room setup during the second-, third-, and fourth session facilitated a  better learning experience.

> *T3: Participants noted that the room was very small and crowded, and they felt the need to go outside during breaks, which was not possible at this location.*

The participants recommended the inclusion of managers, directors, and team members to ensure that representatives from every level of the organization are present to achieve a unified vision on meaningful activities. A diverse mix of participants was seen as beneficial, enriching the training through varied perspectives and interactions. Additionally, varying the scheduling of training sessions across different weekdays would be beneficial, as currently, the same group of clients miss out on therapy because participants are attending the training.

> *T3: Participants expressed that it would be beneficial to include supervisors in the training. They also value the diverse mix of participants from different departments, as it promotes mutual learning.*

Technical challenges also impacted the training experience. The use of Wooclap faced issues with slow performance due to poor WIFI connections, although it was considered a useful tool for engaging participants and encouraging thinking about various questions. Furthermore,

WhatsApp was seen as the most accessible communication tool, and participants expressed interest in using it for ongoing collaboration, such as arranging annual meetings with the community formed during the training.

### 4.2. Content satisfaction and -adaptations improving the experience of DSPs during the training

Participants expressed that they gained a lot from the training content, which left them with many new questions. They found some of the information interesting, depending on how relevant it was to their own context. Notes were taken on diverse topics, including the AAIDD model, enablement skills, the definition of meaningful activities, active support, OCIA, Kotter's model, and others. They acknowledged the positive impact of the exercises given during the training on their ability to remember the content.

> *T4: "I feel that it has made me doubt more. The more you know, the more questions arise. So, although we've learned a lot, it has left me with even more questions."#8*

In terms of the training content, participants felt the need for more creative activities. They also mentioned experiencing information overload, feeling rushed for time and losing focus as the sessions progressed. For example, the explanation of active support was postponed to the third session, and there was so much information presented later on that it became difficult to absorb. The participants suggested that shorter, more focused sessions or a longer training duration beyond four days could be beneficial.

Additionally, participants highlighted the positive impact of video content on the training atmosphere. Video clips often elicited laughter, creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.

# Discussion

The study aimed to explore the processes and effects of the MA4A training module: 'Back to Basics' on the ability of DSPs to enable MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. The results revealed growth in the professional functioning among the participants, although the implementation of the learned strategies within the organization proved to be challenging. As described by Beer & Nohria (2000) 70% of all change initiatives fail to implement. Barriers can be found at different levels: the patient level, the provider team or group level, the organizational level, or the market/policy level (Ferlie & Shortell, 2001). For successfull change there is a need to use a variety of approaches rather than favouring one in all situations. For this it is important to understand the context in which the organization is operating and the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches to change (Burnes, 2004).

The participants developed a shared understanding and language to discuss MA, which facilitated smoother discussions and fostered a shared vision in the MA4A community. According to Bittner & Leimeister (2013) shared understanding can have positive effects on perfomance, group member satisfaction, co-ordination, team morale, and innovation. This shared understanding was crucial in shifting the mindset from a supply driven approach to a demand-driven approach. Despite the challenges, some participants managed to create awareness within their teams about the importance of a demand-driven approach. This shift aligns with the shared citizenship paradigm, a key development in the the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. This paradigm recognizes individuals with intellectual disabilities as equal, respected, valued, participatory, and contributing members of society (Schalock et al., 2022).

The study also highlighted the transition from thinking in terms of limitations to creatively seeking opportunities. This shift was driven by the participants' ability to find creative solutions within the MA4A community, despite persistent barriers. However, efforts to implement these opportunities met resistance from the team, management, and external factors. Research indicates that constraints can either enhance or inhibit creativity. This paradox can be explained by an inverted U-shaped relationship between creativity and

constraints, where both excessive and insufficient constraints negatively impact creativity (Tromp, 2022)

The participants moved from unconsciously using strategies to consciously applying strategies to their operations. They applied active support, activity analysis, form-function-meaning, enablement skills, and incorporated MA in the treatment plans of persons with intellectual disabilities. However, not all strategies were fully transferred. This aligns with the stages of competence model, which suggest that learners typically progress through four sequential stages: 1) unconscious incompetence, 2) conscious incompetence, 3) conscious competence, and 4) unconscious competence (Peel & Nolan, 2015).

The study also marked the initial steps toward developing a comprehensive evaluation tool for the entire organization. This involved assessing MA using the OCIA, and incorporating the form-function-meaning of activities, MA goals, major life events, and an annual MA survey into Orbis.

Finally, participants suggested several practical and content adaptations. These included adjustments in the training environment, participant organization, scheduling, and technology usage. They also expressed the need for more creative activities and shorter, more focused sessions or a longer training duration. This aligns with the finding of Tanner (2008) that poorly lit, windowless classrooms, and high-density conditions negatively impact training outcomes, leading to excessive stimulation, stress, and arousal. Additionally, Molloy et al. (2012) emphasized that shorter training sessions and well-timed intervals between sessions are crucial for promoting latent learning, enabling between-session reflection, and enhancing post-training application.

**Limitations**

Several methodological limitations may impact the generalizability and applicability of the study findings. Firstly, the sample size may be limited, affecting the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population. The selection criteria for participants may also limit the representativeness of the sample, as the study was conducted within a single organization (Maxwell, 2021). Additionally, the reliance on self reported data from participants can introduce response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable responses or may not

accurately recall their experiences, leading to potential inaccuracies in the data collected (Rosenman et al., 2011).

The implementation of the MA4A training module may vary across different settings and participants. Differences in the training environment, facilitator effectiveness, and participant engagement can lead to inconsistent application of the training content, affecting the study outcomes (Salas et al., 2012). The evaluation of the training module's impact may be limited to a short-term period, with short training durations. Long-term effects and the sustainability of the training benefits are not assessed, leaving uncertainty about the lasting impact of the training (White & Arzi, 2005).

External factors such as organizational support, policy changes, and resource availability can influence the effectiveness of the training and the implementation of learned strategies. These contextual factors may not be adequately controlled or accounted for in the study. Moreover, participants noted a need for more creative activities and expressed feelings of information overload and time constraints, suggesting that the training content may not have fully addressed the diverse needs and learning preferences of all participants, potentially limiting its overall effectiveness (Pettigrew et al., 2001).

Challenges in implementing learned strategies within organizations, including resistance from the team, management, and external factors, can hinder the practical application of the training content and affect the overall succes of the training (Salas et al., 2012). Some participants had already attended an inspiration session, indicating prior knowledge that could influence the study's outcomes (Shapiro, 2004). Additionally, selection bias could arise from participants who had pre-existing interest or motivation in the training content, as they were allowed to apply voluntarily (Hegedus & Moody, 2010). The focus group discussions were conducted by different interviewers and determined by the researcher, which might introduce variability and interviewer bias (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The structered observations through the five phases of Tuckman may also introduce reporting bias, as observations were aligned with these phases (van der Steen et al., 2019). The thematic analysis employed in the study lacks a pilosophical background, which might limit the depth of understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furtermore triangulation was not yet applied, which

could have provided a more comprehensive perspective and enhanced the study's validity (Polit & Beck, 2010).

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and in the design of future research.

**Strenghts**

Several strenghts can contribute to the robustness and relevance of the study. Firstly, the use of a mixed-method design is a strenght that allows a comprehensive understanding of the impact an processes associated with the MA4A training module. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the study captures a more holistic view of the participants' experiences and the effectiveness of the training (Palinkas et al., 2011). As described in the limitations the application of triangulation is not yet applied, but by giving equal weight to both methods, the validity and reliability of the findings can be enhanced further (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Another strength is the detailed and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. The use of a thematic analysis for the qualitative data, guided by established frameworks and supported by software like Nvivo, ensures a thorough and structered examination of the data (Edhlund & McDougall, 2019). The six-phase approach to thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2012), adds rigor to the process of identifying themes, contributing to the depth and clarity of the insights derived from the data.

Furthermore, the training module itself is grounded in the principle of the HILL model, which promotes effective and lasting learning experiences. This theoretical foundation provides a strong basis for the training design and delivery. The structered yet flexible format of the training caters to different learning preferences and enhances participant engagement (Dochy & Segers, 2018).

Finally, the study's focus on a realist sample and the effort to ensure maximum variation among participants is another notable strength. By including DSPs from different professional backgrounds and departments in the organization, a wide range of perspectives are captured, making the findings more comprehensive and reflective of the diversity within the field. This approach also helps in identifying common challenges and successes across different

departments in the organization, contrituting to the generalizability of the results (Palinkas et al., 2015).

**Future research**

Future research should build on the findings of this study and address its limitations to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the MA4A training module 'Back to Basics'. Key areas for future research include conducting longitudinal studies to track the sustainability of training impacts over extended periods. This would assess whether improvements in professional functioning are maintained and evolve over time (White & Arzi, 2005).

Additionally, future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. This includes participants from various geographical locations, settings, and demographic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive understanding of the training effectiveness across different contexts (Maxwell, 2021).

Further research should explore barriers DSPs face in implementing learned strategies, investigating organizational, managerial, and external facters hindering implementation (Salas et al., 2012).

**Relevance for practice and recommendations**

The findings of this study hold implications for the practice of direct support professionals working with persons with intellectual disabilities. By following the MA4A training module 'Back to basics', organizations can enhance the professional functioning of DSPs, enabling them to facilitate MA more effectively. Firstly, this training fosters a shift from a supply-driven to a demand driven approach, encouraging DSPs to prioritize the preferences and needs of persons with intellectual disabilities. Secondly, DSPs develop a shared understanding and language to discuss and implement MA, which can lead to improved quality of life for the persons with intellectual disabilities.

Therefore, the following recommendations are brought forward:

- It is recommended for DSPs to follow the MA4A training module 'Back to basics' to enhance their professional functioning, enabling them to facilitate MA more effectivly.

- It is recommended to actively participate in all aspects of the MA4A training module. Engage with both the face-to-face and digital components, and make the most of interactive opportunities such as group discussions and collaborative excercises.
- It is recommended to apply the knowledge and skills acquired from the training in daily practice.
- It is recommended that the organization actively supports the implementation of the learned strategies and skills in daily practice by aligning their policies and practices to facilitate the integration of MA into daily routines.
- It is recommended to adapt the suggested practical and content adaptations to improve the training experience for DSPS. These include adjustments in the training environment, participant organization, scheduling and technology usage. Additionally, incorporating more creative activities and shorter, more focused sessions or extending the training duration beyond four days to prevent information overload.

# Conclusion

The MA4A training module ‘Back to Basics’ demonstrated a promising potential in enhancing the professional functioning of DSPs in facilitating MA for persons with intellectual disabilities. The training helped participants develop a shared understanding and language to discuss and prioritize MA, fostering a shift from a supply-driven approach to a demand-driven approach. Participants also began to creatively seek opportunities for MA despite persistent organizational barriers. However, the study revealed challenges in the practical implementation of the learned strategies within the organization. Additionally, not all strategies were fully integrated, indicating the need for more time and further support to ensure comprehensive application.

Participants provided valuable feedback for improving the training experience, suggesting practical and content adaptations such as adjustments in the training environment, scheduling, technology usage, and incorporating more creative activities. They also recommended shorter, more focused sessions or extending the training duration beyond four days to prevent information overload and maintain focus.

Despite these challenges and the need for adaptations, the MA4A training module has shown potential in enhancing DSPs’ abilities to facilitate MA. Further research is required to address the implementation challenges and optimize the training module based on the feedback provided. This would help ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the training in different organizational contexts and over extended periods.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Overview of topics per training session

*Table 2: Overview of topics per training session*

| Trainings day 1 | Trainings day 2 | Trainings day 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Essence of meaningful activities | Presenting one's own case using the AAIDD model | Volition, habituation, and performance |
| Mindset and discourse | Reflecting on the habits and patterns of one's own case | Client-centered practice |
| Paradigm | Evaluating the use of form, function, and meaning | Doing, being, becoming, and belonging |
| AAIDD and levels of presentation | The different forms of meaning | OCCIA |
| Habits and patterns | Occupational disruption, deprivation, imbalance, and alienation | |
| Use of time | Environmental problems | |
| Major life events | Loss of environment | |
| Life stories | Loss of caregivers | |
| Time, location, and context | Enablement skills | |
| Environmental systems | Taxonomic code of occupation | |
| Activities vs. meaningful activities | Active support | |
| WWWHW technique | | |
| Form, function, and meaning | | |

**Appendix 2: Focus Group Interview Guide**

***Aim:***

the aim is to talk and reflect about facilitating meaningful activities for persons with intellectual disabilities.

***Supplies:***

- Min. 6 large sheets (A1 or A2)
- Min. 4 alcohol markers
- Min. 16 sheets (A4)
- Min. 16 markers
- Min. 16 colored pencils
- Print mnemonics at least twice
- Video- and audio recorder with SD-card

***Room arrangement:***

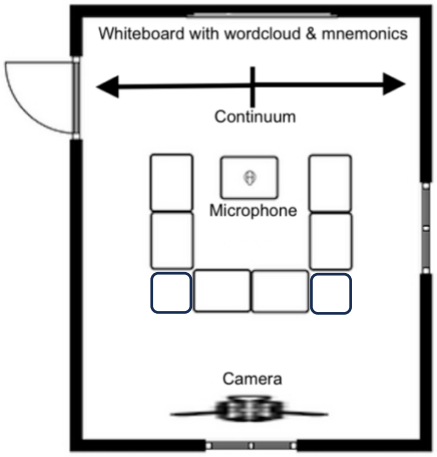


*Figure 7: Room arrangement*

**Interview guide:**

*Table 3: Interview guide*

| Interview Guide | |
|---|---|
| ID (Indicate what is appropriate) | Group 1<br>Group 2 |
| Date | |
| Interviewer's name | |
| Start time | |
| End time | |
| Location | |

***1. Welcome***

Hello everyone, I am Emilie/Aster, a master student in occupational therapy. Alongside Christophe and all of you, our goal is to support each other through a training program focused on enabling meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities. This training program will start with a group conversation where everyone will have the opportunity to share their experiences on this topic. It is essential to pay attention to the following mnemonics (Print and hang them up in the room):

- Apply NIVEA (Don't Fill in for Others). We also want to emphasize that everyone is allowed/encouraged to share their experiences without judgment from others.
- Be an OEN (Open, Honest, and Curious). Here, we want to highlight that every experience is equally valuable and should be expressed. It is also important to listen attentively and with curiosity to everyone's experiences.
- Finally, it is important to emphasize that everything said will be kept confidential, and no information will be shared with the management or higher authorities.

Is this clear to everyone?

| Time | Aim | Exercise | Question | Sub-question | Material(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min. | 2. Opening: Set the stage. | Participants create a word cloud based on the two questions. After creating the two-word clouds, a discussion will take place, starting with the sub-questions. | • "What do you expect from this training package?" (first focus group session) or "Have your expectations been fulfilled?" (Last focus group session). | • 'Do any words catch your attention?'<br>• 'Which word catches your attention?'<br>• 'Why does this word catch your attention? | Two large sheets of A2 or A1 paper with alcohol markers. In the center, of the first sheet the word 'Expectations' is written. In the center of the second sheet the word 'Meaningful Activities' is written. The sheet is placed in the middle so that it is visible and accessible to everyone. |
| | | | • "What words come to mind when you think of meaningful activities?" | | |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • How frequently do you currently use occupation-based or occupation-focused interventions? Red = never, Green = always | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • How satisfied are you with your current ability to design occupation based or occupation-focused interventions? Red = dissatisfied, Green = satisfied. | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! | • How confident are you with your current ability to design | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green? | 16 answer boards |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | occupation based or occupation-focused interventions? Red = Insecure, Green = confident. | • "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • How important is creative thinking or creativity to you when it comes to enabling meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities? Red = unimportant, Green = very important. | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • Do you experience barriers when it comes to enabling meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities? Follow-up question: Consider personal, contextual, or other barriers. Red = never, Green = always. | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| | | answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | | | |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • Do you use strategies when it comes to enabling meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities? Red = never, Green = Always | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| 6 min. | 3. Main Questions: reflecting on occupation centered thinking. | Important: When answering the questions, think about an average day! The questions will be addressed using statements. A double-sided answer board will be used to express an answer; for example, the red side represents 'never,' and the green side represents the opposite, 'always.' Participants turn their answer board to reflect their personal opinion. Once a choice is made, participants have the opportunity to explain their standpoint. | • Do you evaluate whether meaningful activities are truly central to your interventions for people with intellectual disabilities? Red = never, Green = Always | • "Why did you turn your answer board to green?<br>• "Why did you turn your answer board to red?<br>• "Why did you hesitate when making a choice?". | 16 answer boards |
| 8 min. | 4. Closing Question | The task is to individually answer the question on the A4 sheet. This can be done in a creative way, such as through a drawing, written text, or other expressive forms. Afterwards, this will be explained in the group, with the guidance of the researcher. | If you could dream. what would you still like when it comes to enabling meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities? | Not applicable | 16 A4 sheets, colored pencils and markers |

## Appendix 3: Observation guide

### *Aim:*

The aim is to observe the group's evolution in enabling MA for persons with intellectual disabilities.

### *Supplies:*

- Video- and audio recorder with SD-card

### *Room arrangement:*

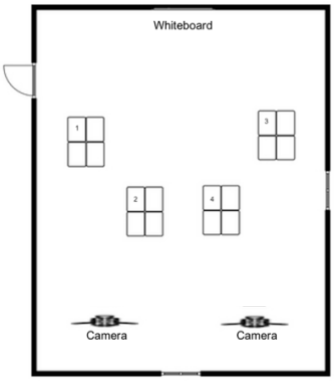


*Figure 8: Room arrangement*

### *Observation schedule:*

*Table 4: Observation schedule*

| Semi- structured observation schedule | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Observation ID (Indicate what is appropriate) | Table 1<br>Table 2<br>Table 3<br>Table 4 | | | | |
| Date | | | | | |
| Observer's name | | | | | |
| Start time | | | | | |
| End time | | | | | |
| Location | | | | | |
| **Term** | **Observation** | | | | |
| **Participation** (mark observed Phase(s), and describe) | **phase 1: Forming** | **phase 2: Storming** | **phase 3: Norming** | **phase 4: Performing** | **phase 5: Adjourning** |
| | Do the group members seek guidance and approval from the leader on how to participate? | Do the group members take on roles and responsibilities? | Do the group members make clear agreements? | Is the group able to self-manage and make decisions? | Does the group reflect and openly discuss the overall experience and accomplishments? |
| | | | | | |
| **Communication** (mark observed Phase(s), and describe) | **phase 1: Forming** | **phase 2: Storming** | **phase 3: Norming** | **phase 4: Performing** | **phase 5: Adjourning** |
| | Do the group members communicate assertive or tentative? | Do the group members communicate their own ideas and openly discuss disagreement? | Do the group members offer and receive constructive feedback? | Do the group members communicate effectively? | Do the group members communicate their gratitude and appreciation to each other? |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Positive connectedness** (mark observed Phase(s), and describe) | **phase 1: Forming** | **phase 2: Storming** | **phase 3: Norming** | **phase 4: Performing** | **phase 5: Adjourning** |
| | Are the group members open to diversity by appreciating each other's different background, opinions, views and values during discussions or activities? | How does the group handle tension and conflicts? | Does the group develop their own values and norms? For example: do they agree on what is acceptable behaviour within the group? | Do the group members trust each other? | Do the group members make further plans for collaboration? |
| | | | | | |
| **System change** (mark observed Phase(s), and describe) | **phase 1: Forming** | **phase 2: Storming** | **phase 3: Norming** | **phase 4: Performing** | **phase 5: Adjourning** |
| | Do the group members discuss the group's purpose and goals? | Do the group members challenge existing structures, approaches and methodologies? | Does the group work together to solve challenges in the existing structures, approaches and methodologies? | Does the group try new approaches and methodologies? | Do the group members transfer their learned knowledge and solutions from the MA4A community to their own department? |
| | | | | | |

## Appendix 4: Themes and subthemes

*Table 5: Themes and subthemes*

| **Themes** | **Subthemes** |
|---|---|
| Growing towards a shared understanding of meaningful activities | 1. Developing a common Language to talk about meaningful activities<br>2. Awareness of the importance of prioritizing meaningful activities |
| Shifting mindsets on how to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization | 1. Transitioning from a supply-driven approach to a demand driven approach<br>2. Shifting from thinking in terms of limitations to creatively seeking opportunities |
| Operationalizing learned tools and strategies to structurally embed meaningful activities in the organization | 1. Moving from unconsciously using strategies to consciously applying strategies to one's own operations<br>2. Progressing from limited and context-dependent evaluations to the first steps of a comprehensive evaluation for the entire organization |
| Potential enhancements for optimizing the training experience | 1. Practical adaptations improving the experience of DSPs during the training<br>2. Content satisfaction and -adaptations improving the experience of DSPs during the training |