



OUTREACH EMPOWERMENT DIVERSITY

Guidelines for Trainers and
Management Staff in Adult Education
composed by DVV, FOLAC and lernraum.wien

www.oed-network.eu

Drafting and final editing by:

Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, DVV (Germany)
FOLAC - Learning for Active Citizenship (Sweden)
lernraum Wien (Austria)

Credits:

Most of the good practice examples provided on the following pages have been published in Kil, Monika, B. Dasch and M. Henkes. Outreach-Empowerment-Diversity: Collection, presentation and analysis of good practice examples from Adult Education leading towards an inclusive society. Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, 2013.

Furthermore, examples collected in feedback reports written by practitioners and other experts commenting on the first draft of this publication have been included.

Project coordination:

European Association for the Education of Adults, EAEA
Rue d'Arlon 40, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Design and edition:

Serena Gamba
www.serenagamba.com

© OED
Brussels, 2014



With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union - 517734-LLP-1-2011-1-BE-GRUNDTVIGGNW.

"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."



Table of Contents

OED - who are we?	P.5
Introduction	P.8
1.Initial Contact: Informing and Recruiting Learners	P.11
2.Pre-development Work: Balancing Identified Needs of Learners with Identified Strengths	P.13
3.The Learning Situation: Involving Learners in Class	P.15
4.The Learning Situation: Involving Learners on a Structural Level	P.21
5.Transitioning Before and After the End of the Programme	P.23
References	P.26

Executive summary

Adult education can be a key for transformation, challenging unjust power structures, enabling participation and overcoming marginalization. The OED network wishes to support the development of more diversity in adult education and promote active citizenship by supporting the inclusion of learners' voices within adult education institutions as well as during the learning process.

These guidelines aim to support managers, course designers and practitioners in adult education institutions in their work with socially and educationally disadvantaged groups. It is based on examples of good practice collected from 14 European countries and reflects the experiences of adult educators working in the field.

The guidelines' five chapters correspond to five different phases of encounter between the education provider and the (potential) learner. It starts off with the education provider's outreach activities, thereby dealing with potential barriers to participation and strategies to overcome these obstacles. Moving on to the classroom level, the guidelines illustrate ways in which practitioners can reach out to the learner in the course situation and thereby facilitate and encourage participation.

Assuming that learners' contributions can positively change adult education providers as a whole, the next chapter looks at involvement of learners on a structural level, such as their representation in organisational structures of adult education institutions. The final chapter illustrates some principles to support the transition at the end of a course.

The guidelines intend to raise awareness for outreach, empowerment and diversity programmes offered by adult education institutions and to guide the practitioner's daily work. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the guidelines aim to encourage a vital dialogue among all people who are dedicated to adult learning – trainers, management and participants.

OED - who are we?

OED stands for Outreach, Empowerment and Diversity in the field of adult learning. It is a European Grundtvig network that brings together 17 organisations from 14 countries. Our aim is to address the need for outreach to marginalized groups, especially migrants and ethnic minorities. We wish to support the development of more diversity in adult education, the inclusion of the learners' voices within the institutions and the learning processes as well as empowerment of learners to become active European citizens.

In the framework of the project, we want to

- provide a collection and analysis of good practice examples from across Europe that address the issues of social inclusion and active citizenship,
- analyse outreach strategies to marginalized groups employed by some institutions and to transfer this information to other adult education institutions to support them organizing outreach programmes,
- promote diversity in adult education organizations and their training programmes,
- develop empowerment strategies based on good practice and experiences of the network in order to activate learners from marginalised backgrounds,
- improve teaching methodologies for diverse target groups that empower them and publish methodology guidelines,
- improve the management of adult education institutions through diversity and the inclusion of learners' voices,
- look at how including diverse learners' voices can improve adult education,
- provide policy recommendations that will tackle the integration of marginalized groups, their empowerment and participation in lifelong learning,
- organise a European conference in Brussels in 2014 to present the results.

Members of the network



EAEA - European Association for the Education of Adults

The Network for Outreach Empowerment Diversity is coordinated by EAEA - the European Association for the Education of Adults. EAEA is a European NGO with around 116 member organisations in 43 countries working in the field of adult learning.



Dafni Kentro Epaggelmatikis Katartisis DAFNI KEK (Greece)

DAFNI KEK basically plans and implements actions and learning activities targeting to social disadvantaged population and groups at risk (unemployed, single mothers, rural habitants, migrants and Roma) responding to the Official Calls either in National and European Level or in local area by organizing workshops on active consciousness.



Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA)

DAEA is an organization which promotes non formal adult education through collaboration, information and development. DAEA represents 34 member organisations.



Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, DVV (Germany)

The German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, DVV) is the federal association of the 16 regional associations of community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen, VHS).



Educational Disadvantage Centre EDC, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, A College of Dublin City University (Ireland)

The Educational Disadvantage Centre (EDC), located within the Faculty of Education, St. Patrick's College aims to contribute to best practice in national and international policy regarding the implications of social and economic disadvantage on education.



Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (Estonia)

ENAEA is the umbrella organization for adult education organizations/providers (74). ENAEA is a social partner for Ministry of Education and Research



FOLAC - Learning for Active Citizenship (Sweden)

FOLAC is the international mission for the 150 folk high schools in Sweden. The aim of FOLAC is to promote learning for active citizenship at the local, national, European and global level.



German Institute for Adult Education Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning (DIE) (Germany)

The DIE (German Institute for Adult Education Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning) is the central institution for research and practice of adult and continuing education in Germany.



House of Science and Technology (Bulgaria)

Vratsa is a scientific cultural and educational, voluntary, creative professional non-profit association of engineers, scientists, inventors, technicians and other professionals and students in science, technology and economy, registered in 1992 under the Law legal non-profit organisations.



HYDRA International Projects & Consulting (Turkey)

HYDRA International Project & Consultancy Co., is a non-profit organization that has been established to provide knowledge oriented technical, economic and legal support, in accordance with the realities and needs of our country, to all institutions and organizations that aim to provide sustainable development both domestically and abroad.



International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Austria)

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.



La Ligue de l'Enseignement (France)

La Ligue de l'enseignement gathers more than 30,000 associations in 102 departmental and 22 regional federations in France with the common aim of training responsible citizens who will fulfil their duties, make full use of their rights and be active in society reinforcing its democratic, humanist and social character. These associations also work collectively against all inequalities in order to discuss and build a fairer and more independent society.



Iernraum Wien

Iernraum.wien - Institute for Multilingualism, Integration and Education is the research department of the Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS Wien).



Movimiento para la Paz el Desarme y la Libertad (Spain)

The Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad- MPDL, is an organisation that is managed by a board of directors that is presided by the president of the MPDL, Mrs Francisca Sauquillo. The president, the Secretary General and the rest of the members are elected in the member's General Assembly, which is the main governing body of the organisation.



The Finnish Lifelong learning Foundation, KVS (Finland)

Kansanvalistusseura, The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation - KVS - supports learning and builds a society of learners by offering expertise and services. The foundation, established in 1874, cooperates with a wide variety of adult education stakeholders in Finland and internationally.



National Institute of Adult Continuing Education NIACE (England and Wales)

NIACE's strategic plan commits us to supporting an increase in the numbers of adults engaged in formal and informal learning in England and Wales, in Europe and across the world.



Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen (Spain)

The Roma Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen is a non-profit organization created in 1999 by Roma and non-Roma women with different characteristics and backgrounds (age, academic level, job, etc.).

Please visit our project website www.oed-network.eu for more information.

Introduction

Background

Participation in adult education remains unequal. Despite many efforts, members of minority groups, adults with low educational backgrounds and other groups already underrepresented in society are underrepresented in adult education as well¹. Participation in education is evidently connected to participation in society, to the ability to make your voice heard. We therefore believe that working to engage marginalized groups in adult education must be a priority for adult educators as it means working towards a just and inclusive society. There are four concepts that seem to be of utmost relevance for this kind of work: diversity, outreach, empowerment and active citizenship.



OED focuses on people who need adult education most

A short look at some data on the economic, social and educational contexts of many Europeans can provide a picture of who we have in mind when we speak of people who need adult education most.

- Education is needed where the economic situation is precarious.

At least 20 million people have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources². According to the European Commission, 120 million people in the EU (24,2 %) are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and around a quarter of the total population have not completed upper secondary education³.

According to the European Commission, specific populations – for example the Roma – are especially challenged: two-thirds are unemployed, only one in two children attends kindergarten and only 15% complete secondary school⁴.

- Education is needed when people have little or no say in the frameworks of democracy. Education needs to support different modes of democracy.

On the one hand participation in the traditional instruments of representational democracy i.e. voting is on the decrease as people tend to experience a lack of influence through these channels of participation. On the other hand we experience new forms of protest and demands for possibilities for participation, such as the Occupy Movements throughout the European Union. Socially or educationally disadvantaged groups have the need and the right to be heard and to have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills enabling them to actively participate in the development of our society and to join in the discussions about how to deal with their own and our common challenge, at the local, national and at the European level.

OED – What we mean by Outreach, Empowerment, Diversity and Active Citizenship

Outreach

This concept entails that education is not just a commodity that people have to go and get, but a good that needs to be available for potential learners wherever they are and whatever they need. Paulo Freire⁵ criticizes what he calls the “banking concept of education” in which he sees teachers only transferring knowledge, issuing statements and orders and in which learners are regarded as simple containers for pre-conditioned knowledge⁶. Freire’s concept criticises the nature of knowledge transmission: knowledge being defined by elites who thus decide what is “useful knowledge” and what is useless.

Outreach, as an overarching concept, is the opposite: education makes itself available for people in different ways. In the process of learning, new knowledge is jointly produced. Hence both the roles of trainers and institutions change – they no longer represent a monolithic system of “dishing out” and conserving knowledge – as well as the learners’ role. Both cooperate in producing new knowledge. The term outreach, however, could also be used in a patronizing way: ‘we from the inside, who know, reach out to those who do not know’. This implies that institutions and trainers always need to reflect critically on their own roles, their agendas and their position.

Our challenge is to give access to adult education on their own terms to those that are often hindered from participating without patronizing them.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a concept dating back to the community action programs of the nineteen thirties, the civil rights movement and diverse grassroots projects. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) plays a pivotal role in both social

and psychological work as well as in education.

As contentious as the concept of diversity, the term empowerment can be understood by different players in very different ways. Certain groups of people in society lack power and representation due to a number of factors including cultural prejudices, discrimination, and inequality. The aim of empowerment, however, is not to hand power over to these groups in a paternalistic fashion but to enable them to take the power they need themselves. Jesse Jackson, one of the leading human rights activists in the USA says: "You are not responsible for being down, but you are responsible for getting up". Within the OED network we understand the term in exactly this way. Once again it seems difficult not to fall into the trap of a paternalistic habitus which can be summed up by the phrase 'we empower you', thus maintaining the status of powerlessness and dependence on a 'helping hand' for the groups we are working with: The content of learning must be decided upon by the learners themselves. Empowerment for us implies providing the tools for self-empowerment and constantly being aware of the necessity of critical self-reflection on the adult educator's side as well as on the side of the learner. This suggests that critical reflection and analysis of one's own situation are in itself tools for empowerment.

Critical reflection of power structures within society can also lead to defining strategies for change. Thus empowerment also entails an equal distribution of the role of trainer and the learner, with both groups being teachers and learners at the same time. The assumption that no knowledge is worth more than any other knowledge in the context of empowerment activities should be a guiding principle (in contrast to the powerful nature connected to both the source and the transmission of certain kinds of knowledge in so-called established educational contexts). Education in the context of empowerment should also be free of measurement of so-called learning outcomes.

Diversity

This concept means that we accept and acknowledge differences in people regarding their social standing, their religious beliefs, the languages they use, their gender, their origin, their age and their sexual orientation. The concept of diversity is important and positive as a method to make differences visible and usable and to cherish them – and sometimes to work on the sources of differences in order to improve life situations of certain groups, i.e. those who, for reasons of discrimination, racism, linguisticism or economic exploitation, are marginalized.

In adult education, knowledge about the diversity of life situations, contexts and life styles of (potential) learners as well as the teaching staff makes trainers, administrators and educational managers aware of the diversity of learners attending courses or – precisely the issue OED deals with – not attending courses. We strongly believe that diversity management and awareness are

a first step towards empowerment and active citizenship, as we also believe that being aware of diversity needs to be followed by concrete steps leading in the direction of affirmative action.



Active Citizenship

Active citizenship, in our understanding, means that citizens have the capability, opportunity and will to participate in different spheres of society such as work, civil society organizations, politics and culture. Active citizenship addresses the relationship between the individuals and their communities. It is founded on democratic values and human rights and stresses involvement and participation⁷.

Active citizenship is fundamental to democracy. There is no such thing as democracy without active citizens – citizens who are conscious of their rights and responsibilities and have the ability to make their voices heard and to take action. Our societies are facing deep and difficult challenges: financial crises, unemployment, widening gaps, migration, racism and xenophobic tendencies, gender inequality and climate change. We can learn from history that there are no positive solutions to these challenges without the involvement of active citizens and a vibrant civil society based on human rights. In a globalized world active citizenship should be conceived in a multidimensional way including the local as well as the regional, the national, the European and the global level. Citizens need to engage themselves locally, nationally and in transnational cooperation and they must be supported to do so.

Learning for Active Citizenship

Participation in learning for active citizenship must be understood as a political act. Learning for active citizenship is not to adapt learners to the current situation but to encourage change, in their own interest and for the benefit of society.

"I do not wish to downplay the significance of citizenship education, but I will argue that there is a need to shift the focus from teaching citizenship towards the different ways in which people learn democracy through their participation in the context and practices that make up their everyday lives and the society at large."

Berit Larsson at the OED trainer workshop, April 2013

We are not born as active citizens but we have the capacity to become active citizens. A person's right to basic knowledge and skills as well as their right to develop the key competences outlined by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission⁹ need to be respected and facilitated. Adult education can play a crucial role to accomplish this.

The point of departure for learning for active citizenship must be the participants' lives and the acknowledgment that they are subjects in their own development. This means for adult educators and learners to apply an individual and structural perspective at the same time. What are the individual obstacles for participation in society? What can I do to eliminate each obstacle?

What structural obstacles can be identified? How can I, together with others, change discriminating structures based on gender, class, ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation or disability?

"We learn democracy when we act in concert within an agonistic dialogue. This is why the essence of teaching subjectivity is about how to be equal in an unequal world."

Berit Larsson at the OED trainer workshop, April 2013

It is crucial that the learning process is an act of active citizenship in itself and not just about active citizenship. This implies that the learning process must involve daily life and its challenges in the surrounding community. Learning for active citizenship can be integrated as a dynamic part of the learning process when learning basic skills and languages, when learning to qualify for university as well as in vocational education and training.

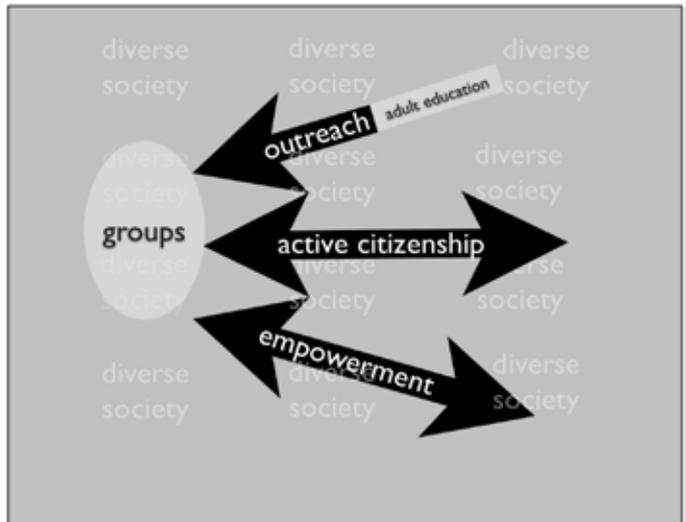
Learning for active citizenship involves the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills connected to individual and collective action. Important content in this learning process is:

- Self-reliance,
- democratic values based on human rights,
- knowledge about rights and responsibilities,
- knowledge of institutions and structures in society,
- the ability to find and to assess information,
- the ability to think critically,
- the ability to communicate,
- the ability to organize,
- the ability to identify where power is exercised and ways to have influence,

- the ability to form and communicate an opinion.

The best and most meaningful way to learn for active citizenship is to practice it - a kind of learning by doing. The trainer's role is to assist and guide the participants on their learning path.

The following chapters outline some basic principles deemed important by the OED network. They are illustrated by means of good practice examples⁹ and aim to give concrete ideas and suggestions on how to reach out to marginalised groups¹⁰ in adult education.



1. Initial Contact: Informing and Recruiting Learners

Minorities, adults who had limited access to education opportunities in the past, such as early school leavers, and other socially or educationally disadvantaged groups participate least in adult education. Education providers frequently adopt the view that 'those who are really motivated to learn will come to us' – however, non-participation is not necessarily a shortcoming of the non-participating person. Rather, it is the education providers who might be hard-to-reach in different ways.

Becoming aware of the barriers to participation in adult education is the first step towards the inclusion of marginalised groups. Reasons for non-participation might range from a lack of information about services on offer, language barriers, unsuitable locations at which services are held, to barriers of a personal nature such as the personal or cultural value attached to education. It is often low self-confidence or poor experiences with education institutions in the past that deter potential learners from participating in adult education¹¹. These factors need to be kept in mind when approaching potential participants.

1.1 Setting up a strategy

Outreach is not just about handing out flyers: outreach activities must be carefully planned, integrated and embedded into a comprehensive strategy. The best educational programmes cannot be successful if the outreach strategy is not suitable to reach the potential participants. It is difficult to rely on standard plans – the success of one provider's outreach activities with a certain group does not guarantee success in a different context. Management staff, trainers, outreach workers, learners and learner representatives should all be involved in the planning of an outreach strategy. In this context, all staff should (re)examine the provider's self-conception (as for example put into writing in the provider's mission statement) as well as their motivations concerning outreach to marginalised groups.

The following questions should be considered while keeping in view a realistic assessment of funding and qualified staff available:

- Who do we want to address - and who do we leave out by not addressing them?
- How do we set up contact to potential participants? This might be done through referrals, mediators, intermediaries, champions of learning, and volunteers.
- Do we want to work in educational settings of co-operating partners or should we address people outside of the educational setting, at their children's schools? Or do we visit them in their own homes?¹²
- How do we encounter and address reservations and distrust towards our services?
- How do we identify learning needs and interests?
- How does the institution need to change in order to fully include

the new participants?

All staff involved in the planning and realisation of outreach activities or in designing programmes for the participants respectively should have regular opportunities for exchange. Frequent exchange between staff responsible for recruiting learners and 'in-house staff' working with participants during or after enrolment will help to link the different phases of outreach and make sure no participants fall through the gap in between.

In order to make inclusive adult education come true, planning strategies are crucial. Programme planning is the conceptual link between the classroom, the addressees and the stakeholders. Programme planners should be offered training to prepare them for negotiations with these different partners.

Inclusive adult education may not be implied in every type of course, learning setting and topic of study. It has to be implemented carefully and gradually. However, every topic of study may be planned in the perspective of inclusive and diverse learning groups. Therefore, differentiated concepts not only for differentiated target groups but also for different topics such as art education, health education, language courses or literacy courses are needed.

GREAT project - Greenwich Community College, England

✓ Comprehensive outreach strategy

In the framework of the Gurkha Resettlement Education and Adult Training (GREAT) project, Greenwich Community College supports more than 100 Gurkha (Nepali) ex-soldiers and family members in the community by providing English lessons to them and their families.

As part of its outreach further education strategy, the Community Engagement Unit at the College works with community groups across the borough to establish community learning provision. As well as providing English classes with crèches in conjunction with Gurkha community groups, guidance to help families obtain further qualifications and employment is given. This has led to a connection being made with local schools in the borough, to deliver family learning as part of an on-going process to ensure that the learning needs of the community are met.

A full-time worker was also employed to raise awareness of the project by means of further outreach work, carrying out research to determine language needs of the Gurkha community through learner and non-learner inclusion, as well as offering guidance and networking with the Nepalese community and the voluntary and community sector in Greenwich.

You can find more information on

<http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/great>

1.2 Making personal connections, cooperating and synergizing

Once a specific group you want to address and the places to do so have been identified, time and patience will be needed to raise awareness for the services on offer and to build up trust. Members of staff doing outreach can establish initial contact, give information on the provider's services and lend a face to the education provider. Making personal connections is essential. Mediators can facilitate contact between the potential participants and the education provider. They might be professional outreach workers, staff employed by the provider, volunteers or freelancers¹³.

Identifying partners working with the same target group, on a similar subject or with otherwise overlapping goals and setting up a network might be helpful. It will be worth it to look beyond the rim of your teacup: it is important to also work with people in other sectors of education, such as pre-school, primary and secondary education, as well as partners outside of the educational sector (e.g. health services, community development, social or employment services, migrant associations, church communities, etc.). Network partners may refer potential participants to your provider or give you the opportunity to present your programmes in their institution - in an informal setting familiar to potential participants and therefore suitable to break down reservations and concerns regarding education programmes. Getting the support of a partner who the potential participants trust will help you build up trust for yourself.

Establishing contact with reference figures with a certain standing in the potential participants' community will give you access to local knowledge and help you to get in touch with potential learners.

If you have already been in touch with the group you want to address before, the peer-to-peer approach might be effective: former participants are asked to promote the services among their peers. Word-of-mouth recommendations are often the best way to attract participants.



"Red thread" – Kvarnby Folk High School, Sweden

✓ *outreach strategy*

✓ *peer-to-peer approach*

The "Red Thread" course at Kvarnby Folk High School in Sweden is aimed at Roma women with a low level of qualification. Distrust against schools and authorities is common within the Romani groups in Sweden. Two former participants, themselves with Roma origins, therefore worked as an ambassador and helped Kvarnby Folk High School get in touch with the women by seeking them out in their social environment to invite them to join the course. Due to their background it was easier for them to be accepted and listened to.

For further information go to

<http://www.folac.se/images/OED/redthreadkvarnby.pdf>

1.3 Thinking long term

Particularly when relying on results to secure future funding it should be kept in mind that outreach activities do not necessarily lead to results immediately. Furthermore, potential effects are hard to evaluate and difficult to attribute to a certain strategy. Patience and – in order to achieve long-term results – a long-term strategy might be needed. Outreach work should be seen as a continuous process: a short term engagement might even damage an education provider's credibility.



2. Pre-development Work: Balancing Identified Needs of Learners with Identified Strengths

Once potential participants are aware of the services on offer, have been in touch with a network partner or staff from the education provider directly, participants need to be engaged and motivated to follow their personal learning path. It is crucial at this point to be aware of and to allay any concerns or fears the participants might have – it might be an anxiety of finding oneself in a formal learning situation, of ‘getting the answers wrong’ or of unfamiliar group contexts.

Formal education might be frightening for some participants due to their learning biographies; teachers might be seen as representatives of a “restrictive system”, persons with authority and gate keepers for the learners’ future careers. This might be due to traditional views of teachers and to personal experience. Additionally, the whole group of participants could be perceived as a potential threat; the dynamics of a group might be perceived as uncomfortable.

2.1 Taking time to get to know the learners

When potential participants come for information or enrolment, they need to be received by a staff member who takes time to get to them individually and respond to their potential anxieties. It is important to be open about who the participants are, what their expectations might be and what attitudes they might have. Guessing what these might be, relying on hear-say and sketchy information from others and jumping to conclusions should be avoided. It is essential to be open, to identify learning styles, as they might vary from individual to individual and according to educational cultures, and to ask participants what they want, need and wish for: what they want to learn, how they learn and what their educational biographies are.

Potential participants might not be explicitly conscious of educational needs and might have other priorities and problems to deal with. The goal should be to try to raise awareness for the importance of education – but without ‘preaching’.

Putting emphasis on continuing education opportunities for staff is important. Especially the staff involved in designing and implementing education programmes should have access to anti-bias and social inclusion trainings in order to effectively work towards outreach, diversity and active citizenship.

Adult School La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain

✓ *pre-course guidance*

✓ *peer-to-peer approach*

At Adult School La Verneda-Sant Martí, welcoming people who come to the school for the first time is considered an important task that must be done individually. Time is taken for each person who comes to the school. Participants from previous years play a crucial role in the reception, registration and assignment of groups as they have the communication skills and an understanding of what it is like to come for the first time. The decision, which level a new participant is assigned to, is based on dialogue and consensus. Attention is paid to the fact that each person understands the process he or she is in and is placed in the group and level where they will learn the most. Staff and volunteers are careful to avoid the feeling of being tested. Each person gets to present their background, knowledge and skills.

For more information go to

<http://www.edaverneda.org/edaverneda/en>

2.2 Lowering the threshold to participation

Potential participants might be put off by having to sign up for a programme for a long period of time without knowing what to expect. Allowing them to get to know the learning environment before signing up by offering taster courses or induction sessions can lower the threshold. During open days, for example, potential participants can talk to trainers, get information on courses, get to know current participants and bring along relatives or friends.

“Red thread” – Kvarnby Folk High School, Sweden Coffee mornings as practised in An Cosán, Ireland

✓ *personal contacts*

✓ *lowering the threshold to participation*

✓ *counselling*

The “Red Thread” course at Kvarnby Folk High School in Sweden is attended by Roma women with a low level of qualification, most of whom only went to a school in their country of origin for a few years. To overcome their mistrust of educational providers, the course began with informal coffee meetings and open discussions about everyday life - about children, school and the employment office. Slowly, the women began talking about their own problems and the conversation could naturally turn to adult education offers from there.

A counsellor employed at the folk high school participated from the beginning - both in coffee meetings and other social activities as well as in class along with the trainer. She worked as a coach and a guide, as an expert on how the Swedish institutions work and was always available for individual counselling.

Similarly, coffee mornings are held at An Cosán, an adult community education centre in Ireland. They are informal ‘drop in’ sessions where potential learners ‘cross the threshold’ of the educational setting – where they might for example meet other

learners or potential learners, tutors and get information on the educational programmes on offer. Their purpose is to familiarise potential participants and to help to further break down any barriers to participation in adult education. This familiarisation can be just in terms of what the adult education setting looks like, who might be there and may involve a follow-up taster session if the participant is interested.

**For further information on the “Red Thread” go to <http://www.folac.se/images/OED/redthreadkvarnby.pdf>.
For further information on An Cosán go to www.ancosan.ie.**

2.3 Overcoming obstacles

As far as possible, the participants’ living situations and schedules should be taken into consideration: Do they need childcare to be able to participate in a programme? Does the course programme need to be compatible with different job schedules?

Obstacles of a different nature should be kept in mind as well: Making sure, for example, that every participant can find her room by using signs with graphics or pictures on them can ensure that participants feel safe and not out of place.

The more often dialogue takes place between participants and staff, the easier it will be to overcome potential obstacles.

La Ligue de l’Enseignement (Ligue 24), France

✓ lower threshold

✓ planning services according to learners’ needs

La Ligue 24 manages three sites in the department of Dordogne with a total of 15 employees. The main activities concern adult education, social care for individuals receiving a form of social state benefits as well as courses in French as a foreign language. An essential feature for the success of La Ligue de l’enseignement in Dordogne is the flexible course schedule. One of the difficulties in accessing training by many disadvantaged groups is the timetable. At La Ligue 24, participants can choose their own learning rhythm: they can attend once a week, twice a week or more – up to once a day. Sessions in different subjects take place every day: French, mathematics, science, and information technology, for example, are offered every day and the participants can choose the day and time slot they want to attend.

For more information on La Ligue Dordogne go to <http://www.laligue24.org/>.

For information on the La Ligue network please visit <http://www.laligue.org/>.

Learning does not always have to take place in your institution. As the following example shows, setting up the learning premises where the participants live or spent time, will increase the chance for participation.

Kansan Sivistysliitto, Finland

✓ lower threshold

✓ learners’ needs

The course “Everyday Skills for Immigrants” is aimed at female job-seekers from migrant families. The course is non-formal with some informal elements and is taught in Finnish. The needs of individual participants and the group are the absolute focal point: for example, the course takes place in a common room in the building where most of the participants live. Childcare is provided, thus enabling women to participate.

For more information please visit

<http://www.ksl.fi/ksl-pa-svenska-in-english/>.

In the following example, a provider took – arguably controversial – measures to enable women to participate.

Sundsvall Folk High School, Sweden

✓ lower threshold

Sundsvall Folk High School invited women, mostly from Muslim countries (Chechnya, Iran, Somalia, Afghanistan, Republic of Macedonia, Sudan), to join a study group to learn about Swedish life and society. The target was to create a safe meeting place for women from different cultures. The invitation was made in writing and was translated by authorized interpreters. It was addressed to the women but also to their husbands to avoid that the husbands would feel excluded in the process as this might have had negative effects on the women’s opportunity to participate. The meetings were then held in a room with big windows. The husbands would – in the beginning – be sitting in their cars outside. They could see inside the classroom and could see that there were only women in the room, doing handicrafts, talking and laughing. Nothing could be heard outside the room, so the women could talk openly with each other.



3. The Learning Situation: Involving Learners in Class

Barriers to participation in adult education are not necessarily overcome when a participant enrolls for a programme. Outreach is not merely an activity aiming to attract potential participants to join a course but an attitude that should permeate the whole education provider. Learning, in this sense, should take place both ways: on the part of the participants as well as on the part of the institution.

The following principles illustrate in which ways you can reach out to the learner in the course situation and thereby facilitate and encourage participation.

3.1 Creating a welcoming environment

The environment as well as the group atmosphere is crucial for the achievement of learning goals. Participants should have the chance to get to know each other in an informal setting; if possible, the trainer should provide (and participate in) social occasions for the group to meet and talk.

In the course context, it is necessary to allow space and time for the participants to learn about and from each other. Learning communities that are founded on mutual respect and understand collective and individual learning goals as two sides of the same coin, are more successful in every way. A creative learning climate needs a protected space for unfinished thoughts, spontaneous expressions and emotional reactions. Only if the atmosphere is permissive, everyone will speak, not only the loud and confident ones.

A buddy programme, for example, in which new participants are being supported by 'buddies' (other learners) helps new participants get a good start and can foster inclusion and strengthen group dynamics.

Positive experiences have also been gathered with (group) learning agreements that include a commitment of the stronger participants to support the weaker once.

Language club - Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA), Estonia

- ✓ learning environment
- ✓ inclusion

The MISA language club supports each participant according to his or her individual language abilities, thereby creating a friendly environment in which learners with different needs and abilities can feel equally safe. During the language course, participants' future plans as well as their reasons for learning the language are taken into consideration - to find employment or to study further. The language club encourages the voluntary involvement of native Estonian speakers in the language teaching process, thereby giving learners the opportunity to communicate with people speaking their native language in a safe environment. Experience shows that volunteers cope with this task quite well, making immigrants more daring when communicating in Estonian.

More information about the provider can be found on <http://www.meis.ee/eng>

3.2 Discovering new learning spaces

Learning does not always have to take place in a classroom setting. While new learning spaces can be challenging for the trainer, they might be very rewarding for the participants. Establishing spaces where participants can learn without fear or barriers is worth the effort.



"German in the Park" - Wiener Volkshochschulen, Austria

- ✓ outreach
- ✓ learning environment
- ✓ flexible teaching methods and contents

The project "German in the Park", involving four VHS schools in Vienna, was initiated based on the realisation that conventional VHS courses fail to engage many migrants: education has to come to the people. The public park was identified as the ideal place to hold the German language course, as many people spend their spare time in public parks and this relaxed setting leads to natural, unforced communication.

The idea was that education would be able to reach out to people if it was taken into that setting. The project was advertised a week in advance using posters hung in the parks where lessons were held, and the teaching teams also tried to seek out participants actively at the start of the project by approaching people in the park directly. Many students later brought along family members, friends and acquaintances.

The trainers and participants settled down on the public benches in the park to learn German together. The very informal setting and openness of the course rubbed off on the teaching methods and course content: teachers communicated directly with the students to discover what topics might interest them. The teachers then spontaneously worked out exactly how to go about teaching this content and put theory into practice immediately with students' approval.

The main aim of the project was not only to recruit participants but

to show learners firstly that they were able to learn a language and could do so successfully, and secondly that learning can take place in a relaxed atmosphere without fear. The courses thus strengthened students' self-esteem, giving them the self-confidence to take part in education and learning situations of their own accord.

A word of caution seems to be appropriate at this point. "German in the park" has been highlighted by the institution, used for PR purposes, communicated on the internet and generally made visible to groups that weren't originally supposed to take part. Thus in 2013 the composition of the groups has changed: learners looking for a free course to some extent replaced those who the project originally intended to reach out to.

The following example highlights that the consideration of contexts and settings is crucial when designing new offers. Specific ideas that work in one setting cannot necessarily be transferred to a different one.

A course called "German at the hospital", based on the course design of "German in the park", was organised on the initiative of the hospital management. This project did not work for various reasons. For once, a park is a place where people sit and relax; a hospital, however, is a setting where people move quickly from A to B and are often stressed. It is also a place where communication does not work easily. There was no adequate place to advertise the courses and hospital staff, although they were informed about the courses and considered them important, did not cooperate, as they had other, more urgent, matters to consider.

More information on

<http://www.vhs.at/lernraumwien/weitere-aktivitaeten/deutsch-im-park.html>

Making use of community centres, town halls, libraries, open spaces etc. allows the participants to discover the spaces for themselves. Take the learning out of the classroom and into everyday life!

Kalundborg Language Centre, Denmark

✓ **learning environment**

✓ **learning spaces**

Kalundborg Language Centre supports the integration of various groups and offers language lessons and courses on Danish history and culture and on the Danish employment market. The trainers constantly adapt and extend their teaching methods to meet participants' individual needs. Objects, pictures, trips to various places and meet-ups with local people are all used to teach the language in a lively, authentic manner with long-lasting effect.

As a good addition to the classroom-based education, trainers make use of museums, work places, community centres and public buildings, e.g. the library and the town hall to visit, thereby using the everyday life of the community as a class room. This makes it easier to integrate culture, sports, political aspects and the life in

work places in the course, while also giving the participants ideas and contacts in the local community.

More information can be found on
www.lof-sprogcenter.dk (in Danish).

3.3 Listening to the learners voice and being flexible

While the trainer's task is to set aims and objectives, at the same time the focus should be on the issues that are alive in the group. The wishes and needs of the participants should be placed at the centre of the learning process even if they defy the trainer's expectations.

The trainer should be flexible and open to learners' feedback concerning course contents as well as teaching methods – adjusting the teaching strategy in accordance with the learners' feedback does not make the trainer aimless or unsystematic. The trainer's task is not to convert others to a particular way of learning but to be able to adapt the teaching methods to the participants' needs.

Teaching should always support learner involvement and feedback. Participants should have a say in what they want to learn and how they want to learn – if they have the chance to contribute to decision making processes and engage in dialogue in the classroom, participation outside the classroom will be facilitated.



"Red Thread" Kvarnby Folk High School, Sweden

✓ **listening to the learner**

✓ **flexibility**

✓ **teaching methods**

A trainer at a language class at Kvarnby Folk High School was used to working with modern interactive methods common in Swedish folk high schools such as conversation practices, group work, and learning based on practical situations. But the participants did not appreciate the methods, they preferred teacher-led classes with textbooks, paper and pencil and they wanted to learn grammar in a 'traditional' way. The trainer therefore adapted his methods to the needs of the participants. After a while, when the participants felt safe, he slowly introduced

other ways of learning. The participants eventually changed their ideas of how they could learn and developed new learning strategies. They learned to appreciate more interactive learning sessions and learning based on activities such as walking in the park or baking bread together.

For further information please go to

<http://www.folac.se/images/OED/redthreadkvarnby.pdf>

3.4 Giving up control

Encouraging participation (in class as well as beyond) entails the willingness on the part of the trainer to give up control: learners who might feel powerless in many areas of their everyday life can feel empowered in the classroom. This might happen by giving participants the chance to take ownership of their learning in a general sense or by – more concretely – occasionally inverting the roles of student and teacher.

Each participant comes to class with specific knowledge or skills that he or she might not even be aware of. Uncovering these skills and integrating them in teaching practice will benefit the learner as well as the trainer. Experiencing that they can contribute something unique, being asked to share their knowledge or skills will boost the participants' self-confidence.

KAMA - Courses by asylum seekers, refugees and migrants for everybody – Vienna, Austria

✓inclusion

A group of (Austrian) students organises services together with asylum seekers who offer courses for anyone interested. The aim of the project is to enable asylum seekers who are generally marginalised by society to actively take part in a sector of society by acting not as receivers but as providers of education. Courses are organised together and offered on a webpage. KAMA is currently offering courses in different areas ranging from cooking to dancing, language classes and crafts workshops. There are no course fees and asylum seekers, who are not allowed to work, receive donations from course participants.

<http://www.kama.or.at>

3.5 Teaching as a relation

Instead of using 'off the shelf' methods for teaching, solutions should be tailored to each group, time, venue and the learning contents. Participants should know that you are prepared and that you care, but also that you are in this together and it is a work in progress.

In the context of participation and active citizenship, it is important to outline how the learning context relates to society (the work place, authorities, etc.) – this can happen independently of the course being taught. Participants do not just learn when they are 'being taught'. Your classroom culture should reflect the desired democratic outcome: learner involvement, dialogue and critical reflection should be encouraged.

The following classroom methods illustrate how to engage the participants and encourage involvement and dialogue.



Dialogic Literary Circles (La Tertulia), practiced at Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain

✓method

✓group discussion

✓participation

Literary Circles can take place on their own or are embedded in specific courses. At La Verneda-Sant Martí they are also used as a practice within initial level courses.

Literary Circles are a method enabling people who have little education and often little literacy to read and discuss classical literature. Traditionally the domain of the educated elite, literary discussions have generally required a high level of literacy and an appreciation of language as art. The goal of Literary Circles is to make literary classics accessible "through a process of egalitarian dialogue where all opinions are valued and there is no right or wrong response. The work of Freire has demonstrated the power of dialogue in the development of literacy, particularly for those who have been excluded from active participation in the political process due to limited literacy and schooling."¹⁴

In a literary circle, everyone is equal. This gives the participants the confidence to express their opinions. The circles are completely democratic. No one will laugh at an opinion and everyone feels safe to speak. By feeling free to express their own opinions and being recognized, participants with little literacy skills can build up the confidence to read.

In Literary Circles, there are different ways to read a book, different interpretations are valid. The discussions are not based on knowledge but on experiences, which enable also people with lower levels of education to participate confidently.

Dialogic reading of classic literature is a recognized and successful practice that at the same time increases the reading ability and the participation and involvement of people who participate in it.

You can find more information on the Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí and the approaches used there on

<http://www.edaverneda.org/>

“Study Circle - the Workshop of Democracy” – Folkevirke, Denmark

✓method

✓group discussion

✓active citizenship

The Workshop of Democracy is a method to enable participants to experience democracy in practice. It can be offered by itself or be arranged with groups involved in other courses. It provides opportunities for dialogue and discussion as well as exchange of knowledge and experience. It supports the development of a democratic mind and allows learners to convey to each other an understanding of other cultures, norms and traditions. The goal is to encourage active citizenship. The Study Circle gives the participants a better foundation for engaging themselves in the democratic process and leaves them with the knowledge that everybody has something to offer to society.

What is a study circle?

A study circle may be defined as a group of people who - through the independent work of the participants - elucidates various topics on the basis of selected study material. In the study group, the participants get the possibility to get to know themselves and recognize their own talents and limitations during the interaction with other participants, regardless of cultural and social barriers and difference in age.

The objective for the work of the group is to examine a common topic which interests everyone. The purpose is to acquire knowledge of and insight in political, cultural and social coherences. The participants will acquire knowledge which enables them to take part in the democratic process and hence obtain influence upon their own life conditions. The tools of the study circle are dialogue, discussion and argumentation – all of these being part of the democratic way of life.

Why a study group?

The purpose of a study group is to motivate the participants to perform an independent piece of work as well as to analyse and to evaluate. The more different the participants are, the more dynamic the study group becomes. But the participants cannot differ so much that they fail to understand each other. This may happen if the participants have a different cultural background, i.e. come from different countries or belong to different religions and thus have different social and ethical standards. In a well-functioning study group, everybody's contributions are equal and the conversation takes place according to a pre-determined set of rules which allows room for everyone. Besides new skills, the participants acquire self-esteem and practice in expressing their own opinions. You may call the study group “the workshop of democracy”.

Choosing a subject

The topic of a study group should be decided on democratically and should be based on shared knowledge. Topics for study

groups might be about religious diversity, job culture, gender equality, active participation in society, such as:

- What did you have to give up from your cultural background in order to live in Denmark?
- Where have you met democracy in your everyday life?
- Which problems do you have when meeting with the Danish democracy?
- Where do ethnic Danes see the biggest problems in the confrontation with other cultures?

Please go to <http://www.folkevirke.dk/global/folkevirke-in-english/> for more information on Folkevirke.

“View’n’Act - Film workshops for the promotion of active citizenship” - DAFNI KEK, Greece (Grundtvig learning partnership)

✓method

✓group discussion

Critical film viewing can support the development of basic social competencies such as debating skills, respecting and accepting others' views, formulating and articulating diverse opinions, sensitivity to social problems. Objectives of a film workshop might be to get to know facts and aspect of a certain issue, e.g. immigration in the UK, to reflect on the subject together and exchange experiences and opinions and to think about solutions to the issues presented in the film. On a more general level, films can be used to raise social interest and encourage activity in citizenship issues.

Film workshops

Film watching with ensuing critical discussions can be organized in different ways and focusing on different topics. Depending on the interests and living situations of the participants, different topics might be of interest (e.g. immigration, labour market, entrepreneurship, social justice, gender, poverty). Films used by the partners of the View'n'Act project included “It's just a kiss” (immigration, religion, integration) and “La Haine” (integration, poverty, social issues).

A film workshop will typically include the following elements:

Phase 1 (15 minutes): Introduction of the film and the issues raised; pre-discussion.

Phase 2 (45 minutes): Film watching.

Phase 3 (45 minutes): Discussions and productive results.

Each film workshop is led by a facilitator who should ensure that each participant has the chance to participate equally and share his or her personal experiences and opinions with the group. The facilitator should promote a conversation which is open to possibilities and new lines of reflection and practice. To initiate and moderate the debate after the film different approaches can be chosen. One approach tested in the framework of the Grundtvig project was a creative thinking tool based on the Six Thinking Hats¹⁵ a technique used to look at a decision or a topic from a number of different perspectives.

White Hat (Information): What is the film about? Which are the main characters of the film?

Red Hat (Emotion): How do you feel after watching it?

Yellow Hat (Optimistic response): Which are the main positive things shown in the film?

Black Hat (Discernment): Which are the main conflicts/challenges shown in the film? Which are the difficulties faced by the main characters?

Green Hat (Creativity): How could you improve the situation? How do you think that the film would continue? What would you do if you were one of the main characters?

More information on the project, the partners involved and different methods used at:

<http://www.exact4.eu/content/view-n-act>

3.6 Making learning outcomes visible

Trainers have had good experiences with putting emphasis on creative methods such as theatre, cooking, crafts activities, creating short films, etc. Visualizing learning outcomes can be motivating and encouraging not only for the participants themselves, but also for future learners, who can see what they are going to achieve in the course of the learning process. Furthermore, future groups can continue working with the materials produced by another group.

To encourage dialogue among the participants themselves, learners can be encouraged to present objects, products or projects that had a profound effect on them.

Film Talks at VHS Offenburg, Germany

✓ **method**

✓ **group discussion**

✓ **collaboration**

The adult education centre in Offenburg in Germany works with films in different ways and contexts. Similarly to the film workshops described above, the VHS film talks are offered regularly for a wide audience. Each semester has a different focus topic (such as 'work', 'city' or 'democracy'). The evening starts with a 15 minute introduction by a facilitator, outlining the central question, followed by the film viewing. Afterwards the film is discussed by means of deliberative discussion, focusing on the central question outlined before. Deliberative discussion serves as a way to encourage dialogue between people with different perspectives. The films are often watched in the original language, aiming to attract participants from language courses and specific communities as well the interested public. VHS Offenburg intends to include the whole town in their film talks. They are therefore often held in cooperation with partners, who are then part of the film selection process (for instance education providers from the church or trade union environment; but also groups such as Amnesty International or engaged individuals host film talks in cooperation with VHS Offenburg each semester).

One of these partners has been the Alevi community of the town. The idea was to start up a dialogue on ethical issues between members of the Alevi community and other citizens. Many films chosen for the film talks, however, did not have German subtitles. In order to enable everyone to understand the films, a Turkish youth group of the Alevi Community translated films and subtitled them. Working on the subtitles allowed the group to engage deeply in the topics of the film and facilitated a discussion of the discourses represented in it.

VHS Offenburg also organises media-pedagogical workshops for the different partners, in which cinematographic essentials (visual literacy), critical discourse analyses in terms of a democratic film reception, and technical competences such as subtitling, are discussed.

The film talks manage to open up a conversation among the participants as well as deepen cooperation between the education provider and other local civil society actors. Furthermore, by engaging different groups and communities in the planning of the film talks, they provide networking opportunities, with personal connections being established that might lead to cooperation outside of the film talks (for instance between the Catholic community, which established contacts with the Alevi community, having started up a conversation at the film talks).

For further information see

<http://vhs-offenburg.de/menu-links/aussergewoehnlich-lernen/filmgespraeche> (in German).

3.7 Recognizing the value of diversity

We should challenge the assumption that learning together with participants of the same age group, background or abilities is most effective. Forming groups of participants from different backgrounds can be beneficial to all. Besides, even if a group might look homogenous, indeed each group of learners is diverse and we should take advantage of that fact.

It might be beneficial to accept learners' tendency to stick to their own ethnic/ age/ language group at first, and to only gradually challenge and encourage the participants to work in diverse groups. Learning in heterogeneous groups maximizes opportunities for tutoring and support and has been shown to improve social competences.¹⁶



Interactive Groups (IG), practiced at Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain

✓ **teaching method**

✓ **diversity**

What are Interactive Groups?

Interactive groups are a method based on interactionist and dialogic learning approaches. They can be advantageous in different kinds of courses independent of the learning contents and work with heterogeneous groups.

Learners are divided into small groups ("Sub-Communities of Mutual Learners") of about 3-5 learners. In this group they have to solve tasks together. Each sub-group is overseen by a person other than the teacher, e.g. a volunteer or a former student.

Why Interactive Groups?

Interactive Groups in the classroom allow learners to interact with each other as well as with adults other than their teachers. They focus on intersubjective and communicative contexts of learning. Interactive Groups stimulate interactive, critical and deep dialogue between learners. Learners are put in different roles at once: they are learners as well as teachers to their peers. Knowledge is de-monopolized (away from the central figure of the teacher) and thereby increases self-esteem as learners realize that their perspectives and their individual knowledge is valuable for others. Furthermore, solidarity (inside and outside the classroom) is enhanced.¹⁷

Teachers using IG in their classrooms are convinced that the heterogeneity of the group is beneficial to the learning process. An increase in different backgrounds, different experiences increases the perspective of everyone involved and maximizes learning.

3.8 Working towards inclusion

Educational programmes targeting specific groups threatened by exclusion might run the risk of actually reinforcing exclusion by forming 'problem groups'. The following example shows how different groups of learners are brought together, fostering an atmosphere of inclusion.

Fáilte Isteach – Third Age, Ireland

✓ **inclusion**

Third Age is a national voluntary organisation running the Fáilte Isteach (Welcome-In) community project, which welcomes new migrants by offering English language courses in the community. The idea of the project is to give older, isolated yet active, skilled and experienced people, including the very elderly, a meaningful occupation – (re-)integrating them into society, as well as providing language lessons in a relaxed atmosphere for immigrants who want to develop and/or improve their English language skills. The volunteers act as mentors and tutors for the migrants. This means that the concept of inclusion is being put into practice in two ways: firstly, through offering English language lessons to migrants who are new to the community, and secondly through

older people acting as tutors and mentors.

Courses are held in informal settings with a relaxed atmosphere, in schools, churches, community centres, libraries, offices and parish halls, with small groups of adult learners, usually no more than five learners per tutor. Regular tea/coffee breaks are an important part of the courses, to encourage social interchange. The subjects covered are aimed at helping migrants to manage in everyday life, e.g. phrases used when visiting the doctor, talking to children's teachers or going shopping. The learning is intended to be bi-directional, so not only on the part of the migrants, but also on the part of the tutors. Students do not just improve their communication skills but also gain a better understanding of Irish culture, history and community life, while volunteers also learn something about the cultures, traditions and customs of other countries.

Please visit www.thirdageireland.ie for further information.



4. The Learning Situation: Involving Learners on a Structural Level

It is important for learners to have a voice in different arenas in society, as individuals and as members of a group. This process can be initiated in the learning situation (see above) and then go on to other areas, such as family life, community, etc. Involvement might start with a student forum that helps to develop student leadership and encourages students who are willing to step in – there are different levels of engagement and adult education providers should be aware of their chance to encourage participants to active citizenship.

While the previous chapter has examined the participants' role inside the classroom, the following chapter focuses on how learners can positively contribute to and change adult education providers as a whole. Going one step further than participation within the classroom, the idea is that if participants are taken seriously in the context of the provider and are being listened to, participation outside of the institution, in their community is more likely.

4.1 Planning services together

Learners' input is not only to be seen as valuable in the course setting vis-à-vis the trainer, rather, participants can also be involved in planning new services. Whether this is done through focus groups, evaluation forms or other ways, it is crucial to keep in mind that the participants' involvement should also lead to change. In the cases where changes cannot be implemented, the reasons for that should be analysed together.

Learner focus groups - Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS), England

✓ learner involvement

At LASALS, learner focus groups are used for a wide range of purposes, sometimes systematically to explore a topic or issue such as quality of teaching or resources. However, focus groups are also used in a more ad-hoc way if there is a concern about an issue in a particular curriculum area or venue, e.g. they might be used to explore a new idea for a course. They tend to be groups of about 6-10 learners invited by the course tutor. Sessions last between 30 minutes and an hour, usually take place right before or after a course session and are facilitated by the course tutor or a manager, depending on the theme.

More information on LASALS can be found on
<http://www.lasals.co.uk/>

Mamak Adult Education Centre, Turkey

✓ evaluation

✓ learners' needs

The participants at Mamak Adult Education Centre are as varied as the population as a whole, including elderly people, adults with a disadvantaged socio-economic background, people with disabilities and migrants. The centre engages with residents in two steps: first there is a careful evaluation of their interests and needs, and then courses are developed based on this evaluation. It is particularly important to the centre that the programme remains varied and flexible so that it can react to different needs. The staff are supported in meeting these requirements in the form of internal training courses and are encouraged to take part in exchange programmes.

4.2 Institutionalising involvement

To ensure participation, fixed structures (e.g. forums or steering groups) allowing for involvement should be embedded throughout. All staff should be involved in this – not just trainers in touch with the participants directly but also administrators and management.

Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain

✓ institutionalised learner involvement

The Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí is democratic, pluralistic and participatory. Learners are involved in the process of decision making and the control of activities. Diverse organisational structures ensure participation on different levels: the General Meeting, the Central Council, the Associations of learners, the Monthly Coordination and the Weekly Coordination. Deliberative democracy is the school's participatory model so that all learners can participate on equal terms through dialogue and be equal in all decision making processes through information, deliberation, consensus and decision-making open to everyone.

You can find an overview of the different committees and groups in which participants are organised at Adult School of La Verneda-Sant Martí at:
<http://www.edaverneda.org/edaverneda/en>



4.3 Making skills acquired by learners sustainable at your own institution

Make sure that results achieved as well as the participants' 'products' or project results are made visible in your educational environment.

By using learners as tutors you can make sure that institutional learning, as well as individual learning, is made sustainable. Furthermore, it is a first step to increase diversity in the institution at the trainer level.

Migrants teach migrants – Mannheim Adult Education Centre, Germany

✓ *participants as experts*

✓ *peer-to-peer approach*

In the project "Migrants teach migrants" well-integrated migrant women were trained to become mentors and to support trainers in German language courses for new immigrants. The mentors got trained in presentation and moderation techniques and got training from experts on certain fields (health, food, education), learned to prepare lesson plans and exercises. Subsequently, they passed on the acquired knowledge to participants in integration courses. The teaching methods evolved in the framework of the project. Step by step, the mentors learned to take over responsibilities. Towards the end, project coordinators and mentors started working on the same level.

After the three year project finished, the mentors were involved in developing the concept for an evening course for the target group of migrants with little language skills in German/Turkish, German/Arabic and German/Russian. Furthermore, the mentors worked on a concept for a course for elderly migrants and for a course on the recognition of foreign qualifications. They had come to be seen as experts by the staff of the education provider who realized that the skills the mentors had acquired would be beneficial to new learners, the provider and the mentors themselves.



5. Transitioning Before and After the End of the Programme

Lifelong learning is a continuous transitioning process and does not stop when a programme has come to its end. Adult education needs to regard itself not just as a provider of courses, workshops and seminars but also as a companion for learners when they step “outside” into the real world with their new knowledge and their acquired competences. Adult education should not only have open doors for learners when they commence or continue their educational paths but also when they want to come back to talk about their success, the obstacles they are facing and their new challenges. Adult education institutions should offer guidance and reflection in dialogue together with learners; offers of group reflection, coaching or counselling seem to be appropriate formats to reach this goal.

It is fundamental that educational support is not perceived as a “one-off” action but as a sustainable measure that stimulates lifelong learning processes. In order to bridge the gap between participation in a programme and life afterwards we find the following principles important.



5.1 Evaluating and reflecting together with the participants during the whole process

Evaluation should not be left until the end of the learning process. Evaluation is indeed a powerful tool for the learning process itself and should be an on-going process. The evaluation should have a dialogical approach and thus allow time and space for individual and collective reflection. It is about awareness and self-reflection. This helps the participants to learn from each other and to reformulate their learning goals and relate them to their daily life, and to their possibilities to participate in different spheres of society.

Evaluation should be done both at individual and group level and can be combined with guidance and coaching from the trainers. The trainers need to be open to the participants and reflect their own role. This makes it possible to adapt the learning process to the needs of the participants.

If possible it is a good idea to gather the group of learners some four to six months after the course ended and to continue an on-going dialogue with them about their experiences. Furthermore, providing space and time for former participants to talk about their experiences with current learning groups, will benefit both former and current learners.

Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS), England

✓ *pre-exit guidance*

At Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service, the learning process takes the form of a learning partnership between the tutor and the learner, with tutors asking each learner about their individual needs so that the course can meet those needs as closely as possible. The learners decide for themselves which fields they would like to be taught, meaning that their learning interests are incorporated into curriculum planning.

Furthermore, LASALS learners and tutors set up a record of progress and achievement and an individual learning plan. This is a document that allows the learner and the tutor to agree on individual learning outcomes and how and when they will be assessed.

At the end of their courses, learners at LASALS are advised about the progression options and requirements, both within the service and for other organisations. Tutors are provided with a ‘progression advice leaflet’ as well as an ‘end of course checklist’ for tutors to remind them and help them with this pre-exit guidance work.

More information on LASALS can be found on <http://www.lasals.co.uk/>

5.2 Focusing on learning outcomes and skills and their use

Visualizing together with the learners what they have actually learned as a result of the course can be useful. Making lists of what has been achieved can lead to discussing with the participants how they can use these new competences in different contexts.

House of Science and Technology – Vratsa, Bulgaria

✓ *guidance after the programme*

House of Science is a provider of vocational training and aims to help unemployed people in entering the labour market by improving their skills. One of the courses trains participants in starting their own business. Students receive support in developing their own business plans and business programs in the training. Dialogue with the participants continues after completion of the course. Some of them currently receive guidance from trainers at ‘House of Science’ while developing their own business plan and applying for a grant to start their own small business.

5.3 Letting former students be role models

The institution should create and facilitate encounters with former students. This can be an important part of the learning process. It can motivate the participants and at the same time give recognition to the former students as important persons. Former participants can be guest teachers sharing their experiences of how the learning process has helped them in their future life. They can help the learners to identify possibilities and obstacles and find ways forward. As they have been in the same position as the learners, their experiences have very high credibility.

Another option is to take a learning group out to visit former participants and experience the ways they are participating – for instance through employment or work in social organizations.

Wik's Folk High School, Sweden

✓ *learning champions*

✓ *peer-to-peer networks*

Five art one-year courses are offered at Wik's Folk High School: Theatre, Music, Creative writing, Fine Arts. The way the programmes work could be named "Open doors".

During the programme, the trainers and participants connect (through visits, social media and email etc.) with people working in the same area so that the participant, when finishing, has got a large network and a number of possible meeting places for the future. We put special effort in giving graduates the possibility to connect to former participants who after the studies found work in the same area.

Meeting other people who are active in the insecure art/culture area gives new participants the courage to go on. Therefore former participants are frequently invited back to Wik. Former participants come back to see "the new ones" at performance days and the Wik Day (Open house). Former participants are also important role models when working as guest teachers. Participants and former participants from different years also connect with one another on social media and in the student's organisation (Wik's elevförbund).

As Wik works on crossing the borders between art forms, this network ties lifelong relations between culture activists and practitioners. This results for instance in former students planning cultural activities and festivals together in different places and cities in Sweden.

You can find more information on Wik's Folk High School here: <http://www.lul.se/sv/Kampanjwebbar/Wiks-folkhogskola/Wik-Folk-High-School/>

5.4 Opening doors to institutions and organizations

A very important part of lifelong learning is to conquer new spaces and contexts and to make them part of your life. The educational process should include visits to community meetings, workplaces, unemployment offices, cultural houses, libraries, hospitals, social organizations, political parties etc. The visits should be prepared and reflected upon afterwards and aspects of diversity in the learning groups should be considered.

Educational institutions that are part of social movements or civil society organizations have a wide range of future opportunities to offer for participants.

Women's Learning House Frankfurt – beramí berufliche Integration, Germany

✓ *cooperation*

✓ *civil involvement*

Beramí is an association focusing on the vocational integration of women with a history of migration. The provider maintains a large cooperative network designed to connect experts. As well as providing advice, beramí also works towards the recognition of vocational and general education qualifications acquired in migrants' native countries.

Furthermore, beramí runs the Learning House, which provides the infrastructure for self-organised civic involvement. The Learning house offers a one-year programme training interested participants to become cultural mediators in two different focus areas: nursing and work with senior citizens. One of the key objectives is to train



volunteers who want to get involved and increase the percentage of migrants in civil involvement. The training is free of charge for the participants and includes communication training, handling conflicts, and biography work among others.

More information on www.berami.de (in German).

5.5 Fostering companionship and trust

It is important that learners feel welcome throughout the process. This means that the trainers have to create an environment where all feel that they are listened to. It is equally important that the learners are prepared to tackle contexts and situations after the course where they may not be so welcomed.

Counselling about education – Jubiz, Volkshochschulen Vienna, Austria

✓ **counselling**

✓ **building lasting relationships**

The centre for educational counselling in the Youth Education Centre of the Wiener Volkshochschulen (Jubiz) offers individual socio-educational support beyond concrete courses and seeks to establish strong and lasting relationships with the learners. A key factor in the success of this work is the personal contact and trust between the counsellors, trainers, social workers and the learners and the experience of being heard and accepted.

<http://www.vhs.at/16-vhs-ottakring/jubiz.html>
(in German).

5.6 Seeing the individual in her context

When analysing how the learning process can help the learner to participate in different spheres of society, an individual and a structural approach should be used at the same time. This is to be done together with the participants. What are the obstacles to participation that I can overcome by myself and how can I together with others try to change structural obstacles to participation?

The “Red thread” – Kvarnby Folk High School, Sweden

✓ **civil involvement**

✓ **opening doors**

The “Red Thread” course at Kvarnby Folk High School in Sweden is aimed at Roma women with a low level of qualification. The school has connections to a number of different organizations. The participants are encouraged to engage in the development of the society throughout the programme. The Romani groups (there are at least five different Romani groups in Sweden) are considered to be the most excluded and discriminated groups in Sweden. The participants of the “Red thread” learned to start and manage an association (both skills and knowledge). This is essential in the Swedish society in order to defend and develop your rights and interact with other groups, authorities and politicians. It can also

be an opportunity to get a paid job. With the active assistance of the director of the school, the participants started an association for Romani women.

Flandre Youth Centre - La Ligue de l'enseignement, France

✓ **cooperation**

✓ **counseling**

The aim of the centre is to help young people (mainly young immigrants) gain access to education and employment, promote their social integration and individual rights. To achieve these goals the centre offers different services in partnership with other local associations: advice on housing, schooling and the job market, French language courses, cultural and leisure activities and sessions on health and legal advice. The tissue of local partnerships is crucial to these services as many of the visitors are in highly precarious situations. Deprived of the most basic rights such as housing or education, accompanying them is time intensive and goes beyond the means of the youth centre. By involving other associations, know-how and expertise can be combined and tasks shared.

For more information please visit

www.ligueparis.org/antennes-jeunes-flandre

References

Bau-Madsen, Jeanne. Study Circle – the Workshop of Democracy. Folkevirke.

Elboj, Carmen and Reko Niemelä. "Sub-Communities of Mutual Learners in the Classroom: The Case of Interactive Groups." In: *Revista de Psicodidáctica*. 15 (2) 2010. 177-189.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Kil, Monika, B. Dasch and M. Henkes, under collaboration of Laura Lücker. *Outreach-Empowerment-Diversity: Collection, Presentation and Analysis of Good Practice Examples from Adult Education Leading Towards an Inclusive Society*. Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung. 2013.

Larson, Berit. *The Focal Point of Popular Adult Education – From Teaching Citizenship to Learning Democracy*. Lecture given at OED Trainer Workshop 17th April 2013.

McGivney, Veronica. Outreach. NIACE Briefing Sheet 17, 2001.

Moser, Helga (Editor). *Opening Doors to Adult Education for Migrants Guidelines for working with Education Ambassadors - Grundtvig "Learning Community" Project*. Graz, 2012. 17.

"Social Value of Adult Learning for Community Empowerment". NIACE, 2011.

Suda, Liz. "Dialogic Literary Circles: a Practice Matching the Theory." In: *Fine Print: a Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education*. Melbourne: Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, 2002. 7-10.

Credits

Pages 8,9,17,23:
Shutterstock

Page 12:
Dafni Kek, Greece

Pages 14,15,20,22:
lernraum.wien, Austria

Pages 16, 24 :
Amelie Louys - Adult School La Verneda Sant Martí, Spain

Page 19:
©Kamen tabakov, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kamen-tabakov/3865090701/>, no changes made.

Page 20:
FAEA, Finland

Page 21:
Mannheimer Abendakademie

Notes

¹ Cf. EAEA. *Adult Education Trends and Issues in Europe 2006*, http://www.ginconet.eu/sites/default/files/library/AE_trends_issues_Europe.pdf (accessed 2nd January 2014)

² "People at risk of poverty or social exclusion", http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/dataset?p_product_code=T2020_50, accessed 30th June 2013.

³ "Poverty and Social Exclusion", <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=751> (accessed 30th June 2013)

⁴ Cf. European Commission. *Roma and Education: Challenges and Opportunities in the European Union*. Publications Office of the European Union: 2012. 17

⁵ Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who laid the foundations of critical pedagogy in the 1970s.

⁶ Cf. Freire 74.

⁷ Cf. European Commission. *Study on Active Citizenship Education, Final Report*. Publications Office of the European Union: 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/activecit_en.pdf, accessed 21st April 2013.

⁸ Cf. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>, accessed 31st January 2014

⁹ Most of the good practice examples provided on the following pages have been published in Kil, Monika, B. Dasch and M. Henkes. *Outreach - Empowerment - Diversity: Collection, presentation and analysis of good practice examples from Adult Education leading towards an inclusive society*. Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, 2013. Furthermore, examples collected in feedback reports written by practitioners and other experts commenting on the first draft of this publication have been included.

¹⁰ Most of the examples were collected with a specific target group in mind. However, we believe that many of the ideas can be transferred to the work with different groups as well.

¹¹ Cf. Moser, Helga (Editor). *Opening Doors to Adult Education for Migrants Guidelines for working with Education Ambassadors - Grundtvig "Learning Community" Project*. Graz, 2012. 17. http://www.zebra.or.at/projekte/LearningCommunity_Opening-doors.pdf, accessed 20th March 2014.

¹² For an overview of the different outreach models cf. McGivney.

¹³ Skills needed for staff doing outreach as outlined by McGivney and used in the analysis of good practice examples by OED members: "Outreach work requires a very wide range of practical and interpersonal skills. Staff need to be able to conduct local research; to identify local networks; to contact and negotiate with a range of different agencies, groups and individuals; to interact with and listen to people and identify their learning interests and needs; to set up and co-ordinate meetings; to locate and negotiate use of premises; to broker provision between groups and providers. In performing these and other tasks, they need to have: sensitivity, respect for others and the host communities; the ability to adapt to different groups and different situations and to react to widely differing wants and needs."

¹⁴ Suda, Liz. "Dialogic Literary Circles: a Practice Matching the Theory." In: *Fine Print: a Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education*. Melbourne: Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, 2002. 7.

¹⁵ For more information on the Six Thinking Hats by de Bono see <http://www.debonothinkingsystems.com/tools/6hats.htm>.

¹⁶ Cf. Elboj, Carmen and Reko Niemelä. "Sub-Communities of Mutual Learners in the Classroom: The Case of Interactive Groups." In: *Revista de Psicodidáctica*. 15(2) 2010. 177-189.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 183.

CHAPTER	INSTITUTION	EXAMPLE	NETWORK PARTNER PROVIDING THE EXAMPLE
1.1	Greenwich Community College, England	GREAT project	Alistair Lockhart Smith, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
1.1	Kvarnby Adult Education Centre, Sweden	The "Red Thread"	Mats Ehn and Ingegerd Akselsson Le Douaron, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
2.1	Escuela de Personas Adultas La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain	Peer-to-peer approach	Natalia Fernandez, Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen
2.2	Kvarnby Adult Education Centre, Sweden	The "Red Thread"	Mats Ehn and Ingegerd Akselsson Le Douaron, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
2.3	La Ligue de l'enseignement de Dordogne (La Ligue 24), France	Flexible course schedules	Mélanie Schoger, La Ligue de l'enseignement
2.3	Kansan Sivistysliitto (KSL), Finland	„Everyday Skills for Immigrants“	Johanni Larjenko, Finish Adult Education Association (FAEA)
2.3	Sundsvall Folk High School, Sweden	Overcoming obstacles to participation	Mats Ehn, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
3.1	Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (MISA), Estonia	Language Club	Tiina Jääger, Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA)
3.2	Vienna Adult Education Centre, Austria	German in the park	Dr. Thomas Fritz, lernraum.wien
3.2	Sprogcentret i Kalundborg, Denmark	Varied learning spaces	Dr. Trine Bendix Knudsen, Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA)
3.3	Kvarnby Adult Education Centre, Sweden	The "Red Thread"	Mats Ehn and Ingegerd Akselsson Le Douaron, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
3.4	KAMA Vienna, Austria	Courses by asylum seekers, refugees and migrants	Dr. Thomas Fritz, lernraum.wien
3.5	Escuela de Personas Adultas La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain	Dialogic Literary Circles	Natalia Fernandez, Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen
3.5	Folkevirke Denmark	Study Circle	Dr. Trine Bendix Knudsen, Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA)
3.5	DAFNI KEK, Greece	View'n'Act	Vassiliki Tsekoura, Dafni Kentro Epaggelmatikis Katartisis DAFNI KEK
3.6	VHS Offenburg, Germany	Film Talks	Lisa Freigang, German Adult Education Association (DVV)
3.7	Escuela de Personas Adultas La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain	Interactive Groups	Natalia Fernandez, Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen
3.8	Third Age, Ireland	Fáilte Isteach	Dr. Catherine Maunsell, Ireland, Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra; A College of Dublin City University
4.1	Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS), England	Learner Focus Groups	Alistair Lockhart Smith, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
4.1	Mamak Adult Education Centre, Turkey	Evaluating learners' needs	Arzu Ozyol, HYDRA International Projects & Consulting
4.2	Escuela de Personas Adultas La Verneda-Sant Martí, Spain	Institutionalised learner involvement	Natalia Fernandez, Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen
4.3	Mannheimer Abendakademie und Volkshochschul GmbH Germany	Migrants become multipliers for adult education	Lisa Freigang, German Adult Education Association (DVV)
5.1	Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS), England	Learning plans	Alistair Lockhart Smith, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
5.2	House of Science and Technology, Bulgaria	Guidance after the course	Evelina Vaskova, House of Science and Technology
5.3	Wik's Folk High School, Sweden	Peer networks	Mats Ehn and Ingegerd Akselsson Le Douaron, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
5.4	beramí berufliche Integration e.V., Germany	Learning House	Prof. Dr. Monika Kil, Donau- Universität Krems (formerly DIE Bonn)
5.5	Vienna Adult Education Centre, Austria	Youth Education Centre of the Wiener Volkshochschulen (Jubiz)	Dr. Thomas Fritz, lernraum.wien
5.6	Kvarnby Adult Education Centre, Sweden	The "Red Thread"	Mats Ehn and Ingegerd Akselsson Le Douaron, Learning for Active Citizenship - FOLAC
5.6	La Ligue de l'enseignement – Flandre Youth Centre France	Forming partnerships to react to participants' needs	Mélanie Schoger, La Ligue de l'enseignement

