



## IO1: Toolkit for developing Strategies for adult education providers



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## Toolkit Overview

This Toolkit is an easy-to-use package of resources, that is anticipated to support adult education providers (organisations, colleges, institutions) and adult educators to develop effective adult learning strategies, tailored to the needs of low-skilled and low-qualified adults. This toolkit is developed based on the results and recommendations of the prior research that has been conducted by the consortium (see *Transnational Report*). The objective of this Toolkit is to provide Adult education providers and adult educators with a comprehensive illustration of the strategy development process in adult learning. It consists of 11 autonomous but interconnected sections, covering all the subjects that arose from the preceded extensive research.

**Adult learning** and **strategy** have different conceptual meanings across countries and individuals. In the first section, you will be guided to clarify such essential concepts as well as the reasons why it is important to develop an adult learning strategy. A compact strategic understanding and planning will help you in decision making for an advantageous position in the market. Human capital and their skills are a leverage force of economic and social growth. The low-skilled phenomenon among adults has become a critical issue for many nations. Low-skilled adults are not easily identified neither comprehended from society. In the second section, you will get familiar with their specific educational abilities and needs.

Mobilizing the resources of your organisation adequately to meet the needs of adult learners, will enhance your efficiency. In the third section, you will learn to depict the complexity of their needs with well-structured research and take advantage of the resources of your organisation to meet them. Strong collaborations and partners can offer significant benefits to your organisation. This is the reason building partnerships is an integral part of strategic planning. Public infrastructures are often not enough; therefore, as an organisation, you need to develop your network of partners for cooperation and collective effort.

Adult learning has significant benefits for individuals, companies, and our society. When adults continue to learn, they are more satisfied with their lives, and they have more job opportunities, higher salaries, better health, and they participate more in civic life. In the fifth section, you will find useful information on how to adapt your offering to the profile of low-skilled adults advocating the benefits of adult learning.

The curriculum is probably the primary construct of an education and training programme; therefore, it must be carefully designed. In the sixth section, you will go deep into some fundamental elements for program design and curriculum planning. Usually, adult educators use the same teaching approaches we have learned at schools. This is a common trap because adults have different learning characteristics and needs. Some key findings from the literature in adult education provisions are presented in the seventh section.



Strategies must be exposed to constant evaluation and improvement. All your procedures need to maintain a high level of quality throughout the implementation; therefore, some useful guidelines are given in section eight. Learners and the labour market are increasingly demanding transferability and transparency of gained skills and competences. In section nine, you are given essential directions on how you can support your organisation with a recognition, validation, and certification system.

The use of digital technologies in the 21st century is continuously increasing; therefore, the need for digital competences and skills is becoming increasingly essential for all learners. The European Commission has concentrated several efforts on promoting those skills to educators and learners. In section 10, you will learn that any educational institution needs to embrace digital integration in all levels and ensure progress towards effective use of digital learning technologies that will enable learners to acquire digital skills. Last, in section 11, you are given two successful examples of adult learning strategies that might inspire you. Developing strategies define the future of your organisation and your prospective learners.

Toolkit Overview		
Sections		Objective
1	Introduction to adult education strategies	To set a strong conceptual basis about adult education and comprehend the importance of designing strategies.
2	Needs and characteristics of low-skilled adults	To recognise the segment of low-skilled adults, their educational levels, needs and background.
3	Conducting needs analysis	To perform an effective needs analysis for identifying the specific needs of target groups and match them with programme offering.
4	Mapping stakeholders and facilitating participation	To identify actors, explore collaborations and build partnerships that contribute to the upskilling process of low-skilled adults.
5	Adapting the training to the characteristics and needs of low-skilled adults	To develop programmes with real added value for adult learners and facilitate their participation.
6	Designing programmes with a focus on low-skilled adults	To get familiar with the programme design and curriculum planning for low-skilled adults.
7	Developing and implementing programmes	To explore and adopt the theory in adult education regarding the learning characteristics and teaching approaches.
8	Monitoring, evaluation and improving strategies	To keep track of strategy for maintaining quality and constant improvement

9	Recognition, validation, and certification	To comply with the national and European Qualification Frameworks
10	Digital competency framework for education organisations and educators	To align efforts and integrate technologies for a competent digital organisation.
11	Examples of strategies for adult education	To be inspired and encouraged to adopt innovative thinking while developing strategies



## Section 1: Introduction to adult education strategies

### Unit 1: Defining Adult Education Strategies

#### What is adult learning?

According to the definition given by [UNESCO](#): *Adult Education* refers to the “...education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes what may be referred to as continuing education, recurrent education or second chance education”.

#### Useful tip!

*You should always consult the responsible agency of your country regarding the adopted definition because it may vary across nations!*

The Council of the European Union’s definition of *Adult Learning* as stated in the [Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning](#) of 2011, mentions that:

“The term adult learning covers the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities — both general and vocational — undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.”

#### What is an adult learning strategy?

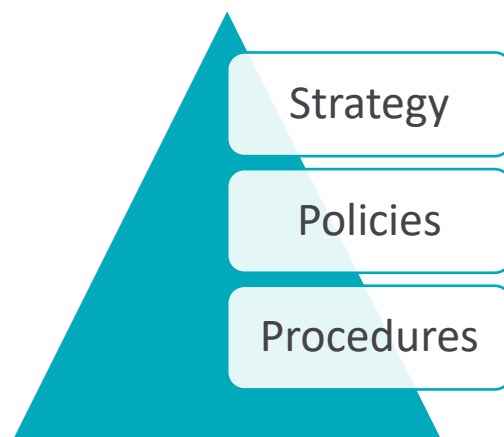


Figure 1. Strategic Plan Framework

A **Strategy** is a high-level plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim and to reach the organisational goals and objectives. The effects of the strategy can be only assessed in the long-term. It often includes the vision and mission of the organisation, while it answers

the question “Why are you doing this?”.

**Policies** refer to a set of guidelines, standards, rules and regulations designed and implemented by the organisation to support rational decision making for implementing the strategy, and with the ultimate goal to facilitate and support the achievement of the strategy objectives. Policies answer the question “How your vision and objectives will be achieved?”.

**Procedures** or processes are the daily actions and activities that materialise policies. In other words, it refers to the ways the organisation achieves the predefined goals - “What are you doing to realise policies”. It includes training and tools, instruments, and devices, as well as specific steps, needs to be taken.

Each strategy strives towards the endeavour of predefined goals (something to be achieved and defines success). The first task involves identifying the desired objectives and results. These could be specific quantitative targets (e.g. participation of low-skilled adults) and qualitative goals (e.g. the prospect of learners’ professional advancement after a course) that you would like to achieve within the next period. The timeframe for strategic planning is often 3-5 years (long-term), framed with the short-term operational plan. Keep in mind that a strategy must be regularly revised, evaluated, and improved if deemed necessary.

It is crucial to identify practical objectives. The SMART model could be very useful in this procedure.

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**elevant
- T**ime-bound

Go through the Toolkit sections and come back to complete your **strategic goals**:

Strategic Goal 1

.....

.....

Strategic Goal 2

.....

.....

Strategic Goal 3

.....

.....

Strategic Goal 4

.....

.....

### Why is designing strategies in adult education important?

The adult education sector in Europe is fragmented. There is a definite absence of comprehensive and bold strategies or policies in both the European and national level. Hence, it is essential to create the conditions that will better support your organisation, as well as adult learners. Designing a specific strategy for your organisation will mitigate the external fragmentation of the sector and undeniably, will guide your future actions towards the desired results.

## Unit 2: Strategies, Priorities and State of the Art

### The policy context: ET2020 goals in adult learning

As an adult education provider, you should be updated and informed about regional initiatives and priorities. European Commission has developed various strategies/policies on adult education and specifically, on low-skilled adults learning.

The [ET2020 framework](#) is based on the lifelong learning approach and provides opportunities to build best practices in educational policy at national and regional levels.

The four objectives pursued in ET2020 framework are:

- Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improve the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promote equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship
- Enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

### The most relevant benchmarks to be achieved by 2020 at a European level include:

- the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%,
- at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education,
- at least 15% of adults should participate in learning,
- at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad,
- the share of employed graduate (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at

*\* The above objectives and benchmarks refer to the strategy for 2020 however, the new updated European agenda for the next period is expected to be published soon. [Stay always updated!](#)*

### Alignment with national strategies and priorities

Examine the national strategies and priorities of your country, think about how you can contribute to it and ask for support! Governmental agencies can provide valuable information such as data in the sector, funding, or guidance about the national qualifications framework.

This will enhance the effectiveness of your adult education programmes, and your organisation will gain trust and recognition from the national authorities and the public.

Being aware of the state-of-the-art and the future aspirations of your country can help you make better decisions for the future.

### Questions

Do the goals and activities match the national strategy and priorities?

How are the results measured?

### Useful tip

Try to identify existing practices, tools, platforms, and analytics that are available from the national authority.



General information about adult education participation in your country can also be found in major international survey reports or other studies at a national level:

- Adult Education Survey ([AES](#))
- Global Report on Adult Learning and Education ([GRALE](#))
- Continuing Vocational Training Survey ([CVTS](#))
- Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies ([PIAAC](#))

## Adult education's role and utility

- Tackle poverty
- Reduce unemployment
- Increase literacy, numeracy, and digital skills
- Promote equality
- Promote inclusiveness
- Improve quality of living
- Eliminate other social or economic problems

*\* You can also get more useful and specific information for your country from [Eurydice Network](#) (the Education Information Network in Europe) and [EPALE](#) (the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe).*

## Identification of gaps

With the help of the research data available for your country, find out the reasons that existing challenges occur in your country. This might help you reflect on the current situation of the field in your country critically and come up with innovative ideas on how your organisation could reinforce participation.

## Key questions

- Why do those challenges exist?
- Which conditions are in charge for their existence?
- How could they be encountered?
- Why haven't they been resolved yet?

## Unit 3: Role and Position in the Market

### The role of adult education institutions

As an educational institution, you have the responsibility of shaping the future of society and economy, by developing its most valuable resource: human capital.

Education is a continuous procedure that never ends. As an adult education provider, you are the ambassador of this idea striving to maintain the flame of learning alive.



However, as you would be probably aware, many adults are not willing to participate in any form of education and training.

Among the responsibilities of each adult education provider are informing the audience about the importance of learning and the availability of programmes, delivering quality and relevant education, developing specific skills and competences on learners, evaluating learners and providing support.

## Competition-Differentiation

Despite the social contribution and impact your organisation is about to make, competition is always a challenge that you should consider. Acquiring information about other adult education providers in your region might help you decide about your position in the market. This procedure can give you better insights into:

- Adult learners' expectations
- successful or unsuccessful examples
- strengths and weaknesses of your organisation
- your unique selling point
- existing programmes and strategies

### How to collect information about competitors

- Web research
- Reports
- Social networks
- Customers
- Industry association & conferences
- Previous employees
- Media

Learn from your competitors but avoid over-analysis. You could also take into consideration some successful examples from other/similar industries. It might be useful to generate innovative ideas. Stay always focused on your organisation



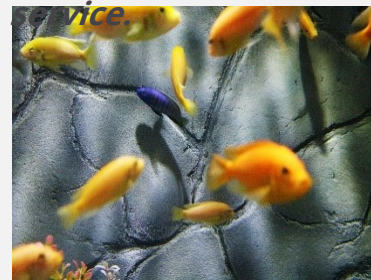
The key for each business is to be the *goldfish among a herd of catfish*. To be different means to distinguish yourself from the competition, to attract more attention from customers, to build and grow your market share.

What does it make you different? Is it your access to cutting-edge technologies, your highly skilled educators, your creative ideas, your specialised programmes, your facilities, your learners' turnover? Is it your support along with the provision of education, your network of stakeholders, your connections with employers?

Is it learners' lack of interest in learning or the unattractiveness of the offered programmes that lead to low participation rates?

## Useful tip!

*Differentiation often allows you the opportunity to charge a premium for your service. However, it might require higher 'costs' to offer a unique product or*



## Additional resources

European policy cooperation (ET 2020 framework):

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en)

EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe:

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>

Eurydice: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/>



## Section 2: Profile and characteristics of low-skilled adults

### Unit 1: Low-skilled & Low-qualified Adults

#### Who are low-skilled adults?

As regards to their formal education, adults with qualifications up to the lower secondary education level ([ISCED 0-2](#)) are defined as low qualified. This perspective is adopted by the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS).

According to OECD, adults who scored level 1 or below at the [literacy](#) and [numeracy](#) tests of PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) are considered low-skilled. This definition is based on their cognitive and information processing skills rather than their formal educational attainment.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) makes a different classification according to adults' job. According to the [International Standard Classification of Occupations of 2008](#) (ISCO-08), adults who work in elementary occupations (group 9) even if their educational attainment is at ISCED 3 or above, are considered as low-skilled.

#### Lack of skills

Low-skilled adults usually present low levels of literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Development of literacy forms the basis for further learning and linguistic interaction. Numeracy refers to the application of mathematical thinking and solution of problems in everyday situations. Digital competence involves the confident and responsible use of digital technologies for learning, work, and participation in society.

#### Eight Key competences for LLL

(according to the [Council of the European Union](#))

1. Literacy
2. Numeracy in science, technology, and engineering
3. Digital skills
4. Multilingual
5. Personal, social, and learning to learn
6. Citizenship
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression



Education and training institutions are called to design programmes that provide the skills required by the labour market. According to the European Commission, as stated in the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), "*low-skilled adults should be helped to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills and – where possible – develop a wider set of skills leading to an upper secondary education qualification or equivalent*".

### Useful information

*Close to one fifth of adult Europeans struggle with basic reading and writing, calculation, and using digital tools in everyday life.*

### Educational background

Perhaps the most significant challenge is to engage and motivate low-skilled adults in education and training. You need to have in mind that most of them do not carry positive experiences of previous learning with them. They are not likely to see themselves excelling into a classroom. They previously felt inferior, disappointed, or unable to endeavour academically.

### Useful information

*Around 22% of adult Europeans obtained a lower secondary education level at most.*

### Strengths and weaknesses

Despite the lack of some critical skills, low-skilled adults might possess other valuable skills in different domains. Popular skills such as communication of sale representatives or specialised skills like carpentry could provide adults with some job security and credibility. In addition, their long work-experience might have equipped them with skills equal to formal qualifications, and they might not be vulnerable at all.

However, when education and training fail to meet their needs and expectations without considering their inadequacy in some domains, they might result in frustration or disappointment. Being aware about their strengths and weaknesses, your programmes will address their reality to a greater extent.

## Unit 2: Identifying Low-skilled Adults

### Target groups

The group of low-skilled and low-qualified adults cannot be easily identified and approached. Their characteristics, needs, and educational barriers remain unknown to a large extent and differ from country to country. A closer look is required for the segments to be revealed. Each group has its own needs and barriers to participation, so it must be treated accordingly.

Low-skilled and low-qualified adults are usually groups of a marginalised population. Identifying your target groups early on will assist you to focus your actions towards the right direction.

### Possible specific groups

Which groups may consist of your potential learners? Mark those that apply to your case:

- NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Unemployed people with low level of qualifications
- Older workers (45-64 years old)
- EU and non-EU migrants
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Prisoners
- People with disabilities
- Roma (“Gypsies”)
- Self-employed
- Low-paid employees
- Adult education staff
- School dropouts
- Specific profession .....
- Other.....
- Other.....
- Other.....

### Useful information

*In Europe, access to adult education remains **unequal!** That means that certain groups of people have constantly lower participation than others. In fact, less opportunities are provided to those that need them the most.*



### Profile of target groups

Prepare a short description of your target audiences. Descriptions do not have to be extensive, but they should be specific. For example: *“Our primary audience is political refugees, mostly from Middle East countries that live in refugee camps centres. They are well educated, but they have poor knowledge of the host country language. They want to build a new and safe living elsewhere because they cannot go back to their*

Description of target audience	
✓ What brings them together?	.....
✓ Where do they live?	.....
✓ What is their background?	.....
✓ What do they want to achieve?	.....
✓ What are their prospects and aspirations?	.....
✓ What about their culture and ethics?	.....
✓ What are their knowledge and skills level?	.....
✓ What are their strengths?	.....

country”. Try to answer the following questions:

In *Section 3*, you will be provided with some key advice on how to conduct a needs analysis, which will provide more in-depth information about their current condition and needs.

### Profile of target groups

Each adult group faces different barriers to participation in education. Often adult education providers do not consider their socio-financial reality. Therefore, facilitation in participation is not ensured. Knowing those barriers is easier to come up with sound solutions and ways to support them.

Below follows an extended list of prevalent barriers and gaps faced by adult learners. Try to identify the obstacles of your target groups (tick the boxes that may apply). Can you determine any other learning barriers?

**Situational barriers:** these barriers are related to unfavourable conditions in life, e.g. other responsibilities:

- busy work schedule
- family responsibilities
- poor financial conditions
- lack of available childcare services
- lack of transportation options

**Institutional barriers:** these barriers include administrative difficulties:

- inadequate design or implementation of the course
- the high cost of participating in learning
- inconvenient scheduling and timing of the programme
- lack of the variety offered
- inaccessibility of programmes that would respond to their needs
- lack of qualifications to enter the programme of their choice

**Dispositional barriers:** these barriers are related to the attitude of adults to learn:

- lack of motivation and determination
- discouraging previous experiences
- age or health issues
- limited availability of free time for learning
- peer pressure
- learning habits (or lack of them)
- procrastination and laziness
- lack of professional goals

**Academic barriers:** these barriers are strongly related to skill and knowledge gaps of adults:

- inadequate language or mathematical skills
- low digital skills that may restrain adults from accessing information about offered training, often accompanied by a lack of access to the internet or digital devices.

**Cultural and socio-economic barriers:** these barriers are usually related to cultural values, norms, stereotypes, and prejudices:

- women are not expected to work or get the education
- people are expected to start a family at a young age
- education is not valued



- lack of support and encouragement from employer

## Unit 3: The Three-Step Approach on Upskilling Pathways

[Upskilling Pathways](#) is a European initiative that gives people a second chance to learn basic skills. It is structured into three steps that help adults to access quality learning opportunities.

### 1. Skills assessment

This is to enable adults to **identify their existing skills** and any needs for upskilling. It may take the form of a "skills audit": a statement of the individual's skills that can be the basis for planning a tailored offer of learning.

### 2. Learning offer

The beneficiary will receive an offer of **education and training** meeting the needs identified by the skills assessment. The offer should aim to boost literacy, numeracy or digital skills or allow progress towards higher qualifications aligned to labour market needs.

### 3. Validation and recognition

The beneficiary will have the opportunity to have the **skills** she or he has acquired **validated and recognised**.



**Additional resources**

Upskilling Pathways:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1224>

European Skills Agenda: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

Key competences for lifelong learning:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604%2801%29>

Educating Adult Learners: Bridging Learners' Characteristics and the Learning Sciences:

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-15-1628-3\\_4#Sec4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-15-1628-3_4#Sec4)



## Section 3: Conducting needs analysis

### Unit 1: Gathering Information

#### Data collection means

In the previous section, we highlighted the importance of identifying the needs of your target groups. You have also gained a good understanding of the possible obstacles for participation. Now, you need to identify which are their real demands from education and training programmes. An efficient way to eliminate obstacles for adult participation in education and training programs is to adapt them to their needs. Therefore, a previous analysis of needs is mandatory.

How can you approach adult learners to get this information? Always have in mind that low-skilled adults might not be familiar with the modern means of data collection (e.g. online questionnaires) due to the lack of basic digital skills. You need to get in their reality and think creatively. For example, the PIAAC survey (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) run by OECD, uses a combination of paper-based and computer-based versions of the assessment. You can always use the results of other national relevant surveys (e.g. AES, PIAAC, GRALE, etc.). However, at this point, you would like to get more insights about your specified target groups.

#### Useful questions

- Do they have an electronic device? Can they use it to answer a questionnaire?
- How can you deliver a paper-based questionnaire?
- Can you approach an organisation or an association that affiliates with them?
- Can you assign this work to an external partner?
- Are phone surveys more effective in this case?

#### Examples of data collection diagnostic tools

##### Quantitative

- Face-to-face questionnaire
- Web survey
- Phone
- Mail



- Archival surveys and reports

#### Qualitative

- Face-to-face interviews
- Online forums and communities
- Focus groups

## Asking the right questions

What are their desired outcomes? Asking the right questions lead to clear-cut and explicit information. You aim to facilitate as much as possible the attendance and the completion of the programmes by adult learners, avoiding dropouts.

### Correct formulation of questions:

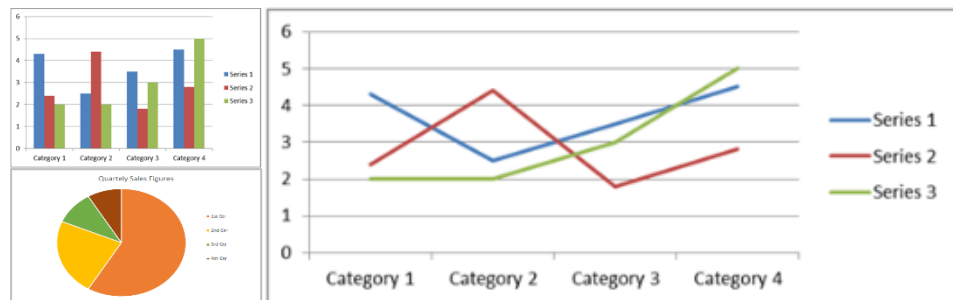
- ✓ The number of questions must be appropriate. Unneeded questions must be avoided, if there are repetitions, it is recommended to simplify it as much as possible.
- ✓ It is preferable that questions are closed in a limited number of categories or that they result in a immediate answer.
- ✓ The formulation of the question must be simple and expressed in a language close to the people who are being interviewed. It should also be precise, without ambiguity or double sense.
- ✓ The wording of the question must express what exactly is intended to be meant and must have the same meaning for all interviewees.
- ✓ It is suitable to make questions in positive, avoid negative enunciation and, above all, the double negation.
- ✓ The content of the questions must be pertinent for the interviewees, who must be able to answer to the questions.
- ✓ Questions should not make any assessment and, of course, it must not indicate the sense of the answer.
- ✓ Questions must not be intrusive, very personal or drive to a conditioned



## Analysing data

Once you collected the data, you will have to review the results. It is time to carry out some technical analysis for the data to make sense and draw some meaningful inferences. The purpose of data collection is not to prepare an extensive report nor a research article. You do not need to make a sophisticated analysis. You only care about the key findings that will enable you to adapt your offering to the needs of adult learners.

There are plenty of instruments online and offline that can help you present and visualise your results. You can



create charts and graphs using simple software like MS Excel. Other online programmes can help you to both gather and analyse your data (e.g. Google forms, SurveyMonkey). Visualising your results, you will be able to observe the trends and most popular demands of the respondents.

## Unit 2: Respond to the Needs

### Match needs and offerings

Why do you conduct a needs analysis? You might have heard of the term market research in the business world. Market research is imperative for companies to understand their target market if they want to offer realistic solutions to them. Business consultants advise to research the market regularly, keep up with the current trends and maintain their competitiveness. This also applies for non-profit organisations and public institutions that strive to have a substantial social contribution. As an adult education institution, your purpose is to offer robust educational solutions to adult learners.

As a starting point, a fundamental classification that distinguishes between two kinds of needs can be considered:

### ✓ Objective needs

They are those needs that are born from social, cultural and educational conditions of the students (country of origin, level of study, professional, age, languages, etc.), the level of knowledge or previous training and the aimed objectives at any level (personal, professional, academic, etc.). Objective needs will allow focusing the scope and the content

### ✓ Subjective needs

They are those needs of adult learners that are linked with cognitive and affective aspects, and they interfere, directly or indirectly, with the learning process (e.g. How learners process information, how they organise their environment and how they interact with it, their ability to tolerate unclear situations and to take risks within the learning process, their attitudes towards new

### Have you ever considered?

- Adults have many responsibilities that must be balanced against learning demands.
- Older adults may feel incommoded within a class of younger students so the learning environment should embrace their valuable contribution.
- Poor prior experiences with education may manifest in feelings as low-confidence, fear, or inadequacy. Enhancing the reasons for enrolling and disconnecting with the previous failure might be a great way to break this barrier.
- Low-skilled adults do not usually have a high ability to tolerate unclear situations and take risks within the learning process.
- Low-skilled adult might express high levels of anxiety or low levels of self-confidence or self-esteem towards learning.

### Availability of resources

As soon as you identify the needs and conditions of adult learners, you need to prepare a plan using the available resources of your organisation to respond to the demand. What resources do you have available today?



**Example of resources**

- Distance learning requires electronic devices, platforms accounts, appropriate software, training to educators etc.
- Physical attendance requires facilities, technological infrastructures etc.
- Andragogy requires certain teaching skills, practices, approaches etc.

Therefore, you need to make sure that your organisation is prepared to offer quality education and training, responding to the needs of adult learners. Try to think all required resources and fill the table below:

Human Capital	Facilities	Financial	Technological - Digital	Educational - Intellectual	Relational

### Mobility of resources

You should have realised that your organisation might not have all the required resources to respond to the needs of low-skilled adult learners adequately. You might also recognise that mobilizing all these resources might not be financially sustainable. Mobilizing resources involves costs which must also correspond to profits.

Resources will always be scarce. You do not have to worry. The key is to mobilise existing resources to produce value for adult learners and generate new ones. In this journey, you need to be creative and innovative.

### Additional Resources

Needs Analysis and Programme Planning Adult Education:

<https://library.oopen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/29456/9783847403562.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



## Section 4: Mapping stakeholders and facilitating participation

### Unit 1: Identification of Stakeholders

#### Key stakeholders and their role

Different stakeholders can contribute to various stages of your strategy in maximizing outcomes and impact. The European Union's policy on lifelong learning highlights the importance of cooperating with businesses, social partners, and stakeholders on a European, national, and regional level.

#### Key stakeholders in the field of adult education:

Ministries/governmental bodies/local authorities: In many EU member states, national responsibilities and initiatives in adult education are often divided among various public bodies. Try to identify these bodies in your country and how they can help your organisation.

Higher education institutions: Universities are considered as sources of knowledge. Despite the insights they can offer regarding the sector of adult education in general, they may accept a different kind of collaborations. Research hubs and student associations are also possible stakeholders within their micro-community.

Businesses: Businesses are usually the desired destination of adult learners; therefore, they can give you vital information about their actual demands and needs of the labour market. You cannot exclude them from your network.

Youth organisations/social groups/NGOs: These organisations often work with certain adult groups. They have their network of groups which often educate or train.

Consultancy organisations/Career advising services/Employment offices: Career guidance is essential for the successful upskilling of low-skilled adults. They need expert consultations about their prospecting career paths.

Adult education organisations: A horizontal collaboration may be an excellent way for exchanging practices or strengthening your voice and raise essential issues, such as under-funding from the government. Representation is critical for a stronger social presence of adult education organisations.



## Establishment of collaborations and their contribution

Try to identify your network of stakeholders and how each one can contribute to the process.

- **Ministries/governmental bodies/local authorities:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Promote education and training in specific target groups through their network
- Get informed about national priorities and strategies
- Receive statistical data and insights about the sector
- Access the national or regional labour market forecasts
- Learn about available public programmes and funding
- Collaborate with public employment services
- Access libraries, facilities, and other community services
- Be informed about legislations and right of learners
- Learn about the national initiatives for quality assurance (NQF, certifications and recognition mechanisms etc.)

- **Higher education institutions:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Get evidenced-based ad theory-driven information and ideas
- Approach potential learner groups
- Collaborate with university hubs of they could provide external services
- Hire educational services
- Create education-to-employment tubes
- Identify learning opportunities for your stuff

- **Businesses:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3.

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- Be informed about labour market needs and demands
- Establish bridges of employment for your learners
- Approach potential clients (e.g. in-company training or clients training)
- Get employers more actively involved in education and training
- Identify segments based on certain competences and training themes

- **Youth organisations/social groups/NGOs:**

1.

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2.

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3.

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- Approach potential adult groups (e.g. prisoners, refugees, elders etc.)
- Identify new education and training themes and topics

- **Career advising services / Employment offices:**

1.

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2.

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3.

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- Hire services to provide a complete package to adult learners
- Learn about potential employers and current vacancies
- Be informed about potential career paths and adapt your training

- **Adult education organisations:**

1.

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2.

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3.

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- Exchange knowledge, practices, material, equipment, or facilities
- Strengthen your voice and social image through representation
- Hire and offer services

In many European countries, adult education providers have formed association and national representative networks which are funded, frequently, by national, regional,



and/or local authorities. Many of these associations and networks are members of other associations at international level (Europeans) as for example the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), European Basic Skills Network (EBSN), European Prison Education Association (EPEA) and the European Society for the Research in Education of Adults (ESREA).

**European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)**

Is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe.

EAEA is a European NGO with 133 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide

**European Prison Education Association (EPEA)**

Is an organisation made up of prison educators, administrators, governors, researchers and other professionals, whose interests lie in promoting and developing education and related activities in prisons throughout Europe in accordance with

**European Society for the Research in Education of Adults (ESREA)**

Promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications.

## Unit 2: Guidance and counselling services

### Setting up career guiding shops

Guidance and counselling are crucial elements that support learners in making informed decisions about their career and education choices. Different models have been established in Europe to assist citizens in this respect. Some countries have opted for integrated and publicly funded services, while some others rely on private initiatives.

While different guidance models might encourage different approaches, they are all generally based on dialogue between the counsellor and the client. The purpose of the session (or a series of sessions) is to establish the objective of guidance, discuss the client's skills, experiences, and interests, and provide information about the current opportunities. In some cases, this includes creating a personalised action plan.



### Useful questions

- What is available in your country for career guidance?
- What can your organisation offer to complement the existing offer?
- How can your partner network assist you in this procedure?

### Examples of other countries

Portugal has established the *Qualifica centres* that offer guidance and counselling, validation of prior learning, and education courses to adults.

In countries where the guidance system is fragmented, different services have been established. For example, in Flanders (Belgium) the so-called *learning shops* (*Leerwinkels*) provide free information, guidance and counselling on learning opportunities; they have recently set up a regional network.

In other countries, for example in the Netherlands, the system is largely market-

### Informing about the rights of education and training

The right to education is, as they are all Human Rights, universal, and it is applied to everyone, matter their age.

Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies.”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Unesco (2015). Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245179>



Adults engage (or re-engage) the educational system because of several reasons:

### Some examples are:

1. Replacing Elementary or Secondary Education that they did not have, or they dropped out.
2. Acquiring basic educational skills, such as reading, writing or arithmetic.
3. Acquiring training and professional knowledge with the aim of adapting themselves to the new labour market conditions or to change their careers or to have a lifelong professional development.
4. Continue learning as part of the personal development or just for leisure.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, Adult Education also benefits and support the following:

- ✓ Enjoying other human rights such as, right to work, to health and to participate in cultural life and public affairs.
- ✓ Qualifying adults who are financially and socially marginalised to understand, question and transform; through critical awareness, which are the reasons of their exclusion; including getting out themselves of poverty.
- ✓ Developing needed skills and knowledge to participate in society.
- ✓ Supporting active citizenship.

Currently, Adult Education, and particularly non-formal education, including literacy programmes, usually is the educational level with lowest rates regarding its implementation and funding in most of the countries. There are very few countries that spend the recommended 3% of their national Budget on Literacy Education Programmes and Adult Education<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, learning and adult education are not usually free, so it is a barrier for access to adult education, or it is a financial burden for adults who are already marginalised.

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<sup>2</sup> Unesco (2016). Reading the past, writing the future: fifty years of promoting literacy. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247563>





you need to decide if you will use social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, a blog, etc.) or traditional offline channels to inform your audience. There is a reasonable possibility that low-skilled adult groups usually get informed by printed newspapers, magazines, or other offline communication channels.

The language of your campaign must reflect your target group, so they can easily understand the messages. Think about how your message can be delivered effectively. You might prefer to use written language; however, the use of pictures and videos might be more attractive.

### To find the best communication means make sure that you consider...

- a. Which communication channel you are using and what kind of campaign.
- b. Your target group (check the responses to the questions above).
- c. If you have the resources to produce what you would like to.

### Increase the motivation of adult learners

Understanding why adults might be likely – or unlikely – to seek learning opportunities is a complex issue and a particularly sensitive one for adults with lower educational attainment and negative experiences in formal education. Various studies have been undertaken to analyse adults' motivations for learning, which ultimately change throughout their lives. Significant life transitions on employment, having children and retirement, all might have a potential positive or negative impact on the motivation to participate in learning. This means that adults who are currently unlikely to participate in learning might be likely to do so in the future.

#### Possible motivating factors for basic skills

##### Economic

- Higher earnings
- Better employment
- New professional identity

##### Non-economic

- Improved self-confidence
- Being a better parent or grandparent
- Empowerment

Sadly, and importantly for adults in need of improving their basic skills, background-related inequalities in participation accumulate over time. Adults from



disadvantaged backgrounds will consequently need patience and persistence in overcoming various obstacles that come in their way. Without a *constant renewal of motivation*,<sup>3</sup> they will be more likely to drop out. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are closely interlinked. While the prospect of a better job might be a crucial motivating factor, studies show that various elements of intrinsic motivation, such as curiosity or preference for challenges, can predict the *amount and breadth of reading*<sup>4</sup>.

However, while motivation might be a deciding factor for participation among many adults, it is not the only one. Studies show that the *perceived cost of learning* plays a vital role in the decision to participate in education, particularly for those adults who are at risk of exclusion<sup>5</sup>. Participation depends on several other elements of a broader learning ecosystem that come into play. As demonstrated by Boeren<sup>6</sup>, the ecosystem includes not only the learner and the adult education provider but several other elements, such as the support of employers, accessibility of various social services or broader policy frameworks that facilitate access to adult learning. This means that as an adult education provider, you might want to analyse not only what will motivate learners to “get through the door” and whether they will find your learning offer relevant for what they want to achieve, but also whether the environment that learners find themselves in will enable them to make such a decision, and to follow it through.

### Three main components to motivation are:

- a. Future time perspective
- b. Self and identity-based concepts, including self-efficacy and self-concept
- c. The interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

## Employability and future benefits

Improving one’s basic skills and providing them with adult learning opportunities can have a transformative impact with many benefits on both their personal and professional life. While more research into the benefits of basic skills provision is still

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/adult/adult-basic-skills\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/adult/adult-basic-skills_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <https://h2020enliven.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/enliven-d4.1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [Understanding adult lifelong learning participation as a layered problem](#)



Several studies have also shown that adult learning is an investment that brings long-term benefits. A longitudinal study conducted in Portland (Oregon, U.S.) followed both participants and non-participants in adult basic skills programmes. Assessing their skills over a ten-year period (1998-2007), the study found that those who participated in basic skills programmes had a 53% increase in income, progressed to other learning opportunities and displayed more civic engagement<sup>7</sup>.

Yet while the benefits of participating in basic skills programmes are indisputable to anyone working in the field, this is not necessarily the case for the general public. Potential learners (and policymakers alike) might perceive adult learning as more of a cost than an investment. Learning opportunities might seem expensive, challenging to organise logistically, time-consuming. At the same time, low basic skills specifically can be a source of shame and stigma for many; coming back to the classroom is, understandably, a difficult decision to take regardless of its obvious benefits.

Outreach and communication strategies play a key role in making sure that those who need learning most are aware of the current opportunities. Adult learning needs a positive image; it should be perceived as accessible, enjoyable, relevant, and most importantly, devoid of any prejudice or stigma.

### Useful information

Basic skills do not exist in a vacuum – they are needed to perform a set of everyday tasks, such as managing a household budget or taking care of one’s health. The Citizens’ Curriculum, developed in the UK by the National Learning and Work Institute and tested with community partners, has successfully embedded basic skills provision in a wider context of life skills. Participatory approaches were adopted to make sure that the content of course stays relevant for each learner. As a result, learners have seen changes to their employability, significantly improved their attitudes to learning and their self-efficacy.

### Additional resources

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<sup>7</sup> <https://proliteracy.org/Blogs/Article/196/The-Case-for-Investment-in-Adult-Basic-Education>



Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices:  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices>



Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners (GOAL), Erasmus+ project:  
<https://adultguidance.eu/>

### Additional resources

(on motivation and benefits):

Improving basic skills in adulthood: Participation and Motivation -  
[https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/adult/adult-basic-skills\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/adult/adult-basic-skills_en.pdf)

(on communication):

On storytelling / campaigning – showcasing successful examples of adult learners

I'm an adult learner 2016: Inspiring learner stories from across Ireland -  
<https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Learner-Work/Im-an-Adult-Learner-2016.pdf>

AONTAS Star Awards - <https://www.aontas.com/community/adult-learners-festival/aontas-star-awards>

Festival of learning 2019 Award Winners, Learning and Work Institute -  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmZbrFRJFfyMdlNGWzPOyt0sHVhhH5Dj1>

Live and learn: Stories of adult learning - <https://vimeo.com/showcase/4012888>

BeLL Study - <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/benefits-of-lifelong-learning/>

(on outreach): Outreach, Empowerment, Diversity - [https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/guidelines-for-trainers\\_en.pdf](https://www.oed-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/guidelines-for-trainers_en.pdf) - especially on adapting communication tools to different target groups.

(on advocacy) – ARALE project - <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/arale-general-page-policy-makers-database-a-bus-tour-for-awareness-raising/>

more examples here [https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/arale\\_dfs\\_conferencearticles\\_24pages\\_low\\_opslag.pdf](https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/arale_dfs_conferencearticles_24pages_low_opslag.pdf)



## Section 5: Adapting programmes to the characteristics of low-skilled adults

### Unit 1: The value of Adult Learning

#### Relevance and usefulness for employability

Adult learning can affect employability at different levels. At the individual level, learners are directly benefited at the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. This may have an impact on getting and keeping a favourable job, increasing earnings, raising aspirations, and enhancing job satisfaction. At an organisation level, there are gains in productivity, employee commitment and lower labour turnover. At a national level, employment levels, tax revenues and acceptance of innovation tend to increase.

#### Useful tip

When it comes to offering training for professional purposes, you must make sure that learners will endeavour positive employment outcomes. Try to link your offering with the context and workplace of the learner. For low-skilled adults, embedding basic skill training is essential. For such purposes, opportunities should be practical and problem-oriented linked to daily practice.

Try to determine which skills adult learners will develop in each programme (learning goals) and how:

	Skills	Where they will use it	How they will be developed
	<i>Example: Basic information and data literacy.</i>	<i>Identification of clients and suppliers. Get in contact and increase acquisition.</i>	<i>By browsing, searching, and filtering data in exercises during the class. Learners will be asked to articulate information needs, to search for data, information, content in digital environments.</i>
	Skill 1:		

	Skill 2:		
	Skill 3:		

## Identification of national and regional trends

The fast, technological change related to what is known as the fourth industrial revolution, is making knowledge, competences, and skills of workers every time more obsolete. Rapid socio-economic changes are daily forming our reality. According to estimations<sup>8</sup>, many adults are at risk of losing their jobs or be significantly affected because of automation in the coming years. Therefore, it is your responsibility to prepare adult learners for the current and upcoming trends.

In fact, adults with low skills are more affected by these changes, as much of their operation is being replaced by technological advancements. Supporting low-skilled adults to upskill or reskill is imperative for employability, social productivity, and inclusion. Programs must be focused on promoting learning about what is going to be needed in the future, while denial of progression means a waste of time and resources.

OECD<sup>9</sup> has identified four megatrends<sup>9</sup> and their aftermath that are already affecting the world of work.

<sup>8</sup> Nedelkoska, L. and G. Quintini (2018), "Automation, skills use and training", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 202, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/2e2f4eea-en>.

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2019), Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning, <http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf>

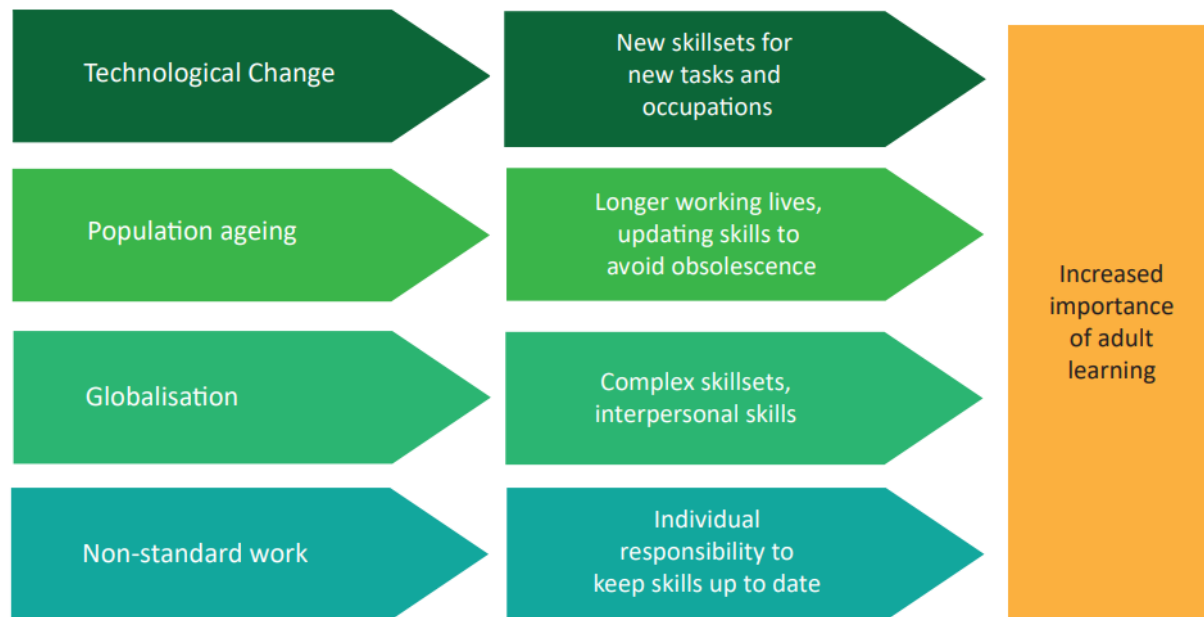


Figure 2. Megatrends affect the world of work (OECD, 2019)

### Useful tip

You can consult the national forecasts of employment needs from the responsible authority of your country, for more accurate and relevant information on your context. Based on these results or projections from other sources, try to identify the missing links in terms of knowledge, skills, or competences.

### Active citizenship

Adult learning is also associated with high levels of community engagement, social cohesion and integration, community involvement, democratic participation, and workplace citizenship<sup>10</sup>.

Adults may carry with them misperceptions or extreme social and political opinions. Learning programmes should not oppose any views. However, it is your obligation to provide opportunities for different opinions to be presented within a spirit of unity. In addition, try to emphasise common local problems (e.g. low level of recycling) and enhance collaboration for solving them.

<sup>10</sup> Schuller, T. (2017). What are the wider benefits of learning across the life course?. Future of Skills & Lifelong Learning. Foresight, Government Office for Science, UK. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/635837/Skills\\_and\\_lifelong\\_learning\\_-\\_the\\_benefits\\_of\\_adult\\_learning\\_-\\_schuller\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635837/Skills_and_lifelong_learning_-_the_benefits_of_adult_learning_-_schuller_-_final.pdf)

Make sure to transmit within your offering values such as tolerance of diversity (among religions and nationalities), social trust, political understanding and participation, local community problem-solving, rights awareness and social collaboration.

## Unit 2: Flexibility & Availability

### Flexibility of curriculum

Providing flexibility on the curriculum for adults to adapt and format their courses (on-job training modules) might be more attractive. Modular learning opportunities offer the ability for learners to shape their learning path, adding credits or part-qualifications to their learning portfolio. The modernisation of education and training provision and the exploitation of innovative learning strategies and means could add to the quality and effectiveness of the sector.

#### Useful tip

Few low-skilled adults have the time and motivation to take part in lengthy courses to upskill or reskill.

You can provide learners with the ability to combine modules from different types of learning provision to obtain a qualification. Try to break up your standardised courses in shorter modules (of 1-2 weeks or 1-2 months). Ideally, this 'learning portfolio' should include skill recognition and validation procedures. In this way, low-skilled adults can focus on acquiring those skills they are missing towards a full qualification.

### Flexibility of programme schedule

In addition, the flexibility of a programme schedule is another primary need that should be respected when designing programmes for low-skilled adults. This means, for example, shifting the venues or schedules according to learners' needs or considering the options of face to face and online learning, if deemed feasible. You would also like to consider evening and weekend provision and part-time programmes.

#### Useful tip



Most low-skilled adults lead busy lives with family and work obligations, which allow limited time for learning. A shortage of time is among the most critical barriers to participation.

### Accessibility & Inclusiveness

Just like architects proactively design buildings to be accessed by individuals with disabilities, adult educators can plan their success in learning. Accessibility practices include the appropriateness of academic content and the promotion of inclusion in all aspects of the learning environment.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) recognises the right of people with disabilities (physical and intellectual) to inclusion and expands in 20 categories. The first one refers to the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning for employability and socialisation.

#### To create an inclusive learning environment, you can:

- Respect all individuals regardless of their gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, or physical and intellectual abilities.
- Acknowledge that they carry multiple perspectives to learning situations.
- Follow the [rules](#) on how you make easy-to-read information.

#### Useful tip

Many adults with intellectual disabilities in Europe cannot participate as active citizens in their societies, since most have only limited access to formal or informal adult education and training.

#### Be careful!

Distance learning is a great way to provide access to learners in rural areas, but it works conversely for learners without an internet connection or electronic devices.

#### Additional resources:



What are the broader benefits of learning across the life course?:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/635837/Skills\\_and\\_lifelong\\_learning\\_-\\_the\\_benefits\\_of\\_adult\\_learning\\_-\\_schuller\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635837/Skills_and_lifelong_learning_-_the_benefits_of_adult_learning_-_schuller_-_final.pdf)

Automation, skills use and training:

[https://pmb.cereq.fr/doc\\_num.php?explnum\\_id=4268](https://pmb.cereq.fr/doc_num.php?explnum_id=4268)

Getting Skills Right - Engaging low-skilled adults in learning:

<http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf>

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>



## Section 6: Designing programmes with a focus on low-skilled adults

### Unit 1: Curriculum Planning

#### Intended purpose and objectives

Training processes must be understood as unitary and continuous systems. For this, it is necessary providing them with a connection that serves to harmonise all required actions. This process is called *Planning*, which means the sequential order of all elements that interfere or are required in a learning process.

Therefore, planning means projecting, trying, pursuing, preparing, inventing, suggesting to reach the purpose and objectives. Planning is making an idea become an activity. It prevents action, taking previous decisions to reach something.

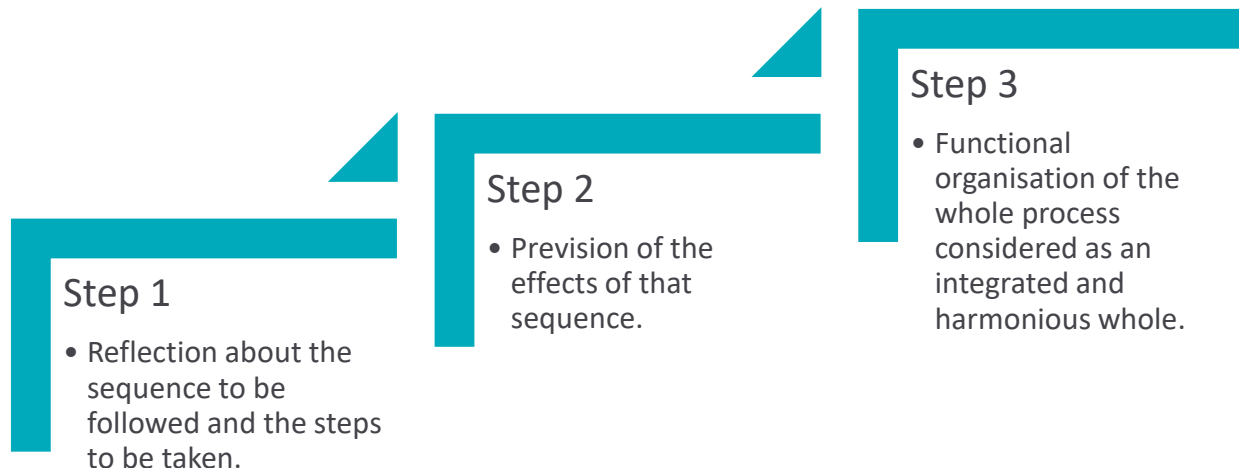
For the trainer to be able to plan, it is necessary:

- To consider the *intended purpose*, which means that the trainer must analyse the objective to be reached, understand it in its full extension and study its possibilities and opportunities.
- To prevent the *process* from being followed. This is achieved by answering the questions why, how, what, to whom, in which circumstances...
- To have the *appropriate training* (ideas, experiences, knowledge) to attend the intended purpose properly.

#### Planning process

In the learning area, planning requires:





The complexity of the situations within the non-formal education context requests that planning processes are the most comprehensive as possible and that they consider, not only the variation imposed by time but also the influence of circumstantial pressures that come into play in each action. Based on this, different planning levels can be considered:



## Unit 2: Elements of the Curriculum Design

Once the planning is defined and understood, the different elements that compose training planning and programs for adult learners are going to be analysed. These are elements that all trainers or training providers must keep in mind during the planning process, and the development and evaluation of the training.

### First element: Needs analysis

As has already been explained in section three, the starting point in the elaboration of a training plan or program for adult learners depends on its needs. The previous needs analysis allows guiding the planning process, leading transformation processes, justifying policymaking.

### Second element: Training policy

This is an essential element to keep in mind while elaborating training plans and programs for adult learners. The training policy is a summary of the previously detected needs in a certain context and institutional policy. Verifying, this is important in order to design and develop programs that are not only coherent with the adult learners needs but also supported by the institution. Therefore, training programs must satisfy not only educational-psychological and contextual (needs) but also consider the institutional reality.

### Third element: Target group

Another variable to be considered within the process of lesson planning and designing of training programs is the target group. The training curriculum must be developed in a specific context for certain recipients with also specific features, conditions, interests, expectations, experiences, educational levels, and needs, etc.

### Fourth element: Content

Content is the central part of the curriculum. This section is focused on clarifying two essential questions regarding the contents: selection and organisation (sequencing) of contents.

Regarding the first one, the selection of the contents, the main problem is the criteria to be used and its *raison d'être*. It should be noted that not all criteria carry the same specific weight, and this depends on the type of teaching-learning process (formal, non-formal), among other criteria. Some of these criteria are exposed below:

- *Objectivity*. It is understood as the adaptation and the consistency with real facts, approach to reality.
- *Conventionality and agreement*. it refers to the inclusion of the most agreed contents within the community.
- *Present*. All content must be pertinent and updated. Sections must avoid the alienation and the obsolescence of the contents.



- *Validity*. In the sense that content must be appropriate to achieve results that are aimed to be reached. That means, content must be closely linked with the objectives.
- *Exemplariness*. This implies the selection of the relevant contents regarding its instrumental sense as logical.
- *Transferability*. Giving priority to those aspects with a higher level of transference that supports the generalisation of learning experiences.
- *Utility-Applicability*. Choosing contents with a higher realistic projection for the social and professional activities of the subjects.

### Four principles for tailored learning programmes:

#### Principle 1: Adults must be involved in the development and evaluation of their learning process.

Adults must have an active role in their learning experience. Trainers must involve participants in this process. This plan of personal learning development would include the participation of the adult learner in all steps.

#### Principle 2: Adults learn when they can experience and link what has been learned with experiences.

The main activity to make more accessible the learning process is the experience. It is crucial to create an environment where participants can feel free to experience and live these learning processes without being personally or professionally questioned or judged if they fail.

#### Principle 3: Adults learn when the learning process is focused on their problem's resolution.

Adults learning process must be focused on practical (daily life) problems resolution, more than on the acquisition of non-applicable interesting knowledge. Adults are usually quite busy (family, work, etc.), and they look for spending their time and energy on those training that can directly benefit them. The trainer must correctly find out and identify those problems that learners must face while implementing their daily work, and allow the own participants to give solutions, sharing best practices or tools.



Principle 4: Adults learn when they know the relevance and positive impact (on their lives, work, etc.)

Adults are more involved in the learning process when they know about the benefits and impact that this process can have to improve their professional or personal lives. For this reason, it is vital to design courses that include learning experiences based on participants interests.



## Section 7: Developing and implementing programmes

### Unit 1: Adult Education Theory

#### General characteristics of adult learners

The unique characteristics of adults as learners impacts on what motivates them to learn and what learning styles they prefer. According to Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in adult learning, **some universal characteristics of adult learners** are:

Adults are autonomous and self-directed: They need to be actively involved in the learning process and serve as facilitators rather than fact generators. Educators must adapt their content according to their perspectives and let them work on projects that reflect their interests.

Adults carry with them a bunch of experiences and knowledge: They must be shown respect for what they bring to the classroom. Experiences and interactions are paramount sources of learning. Adults must be encouraged to share them with their peers.

Adults are goal-oriented: They engage better in a programme with clearly defined purposes and objectives, which are related to their concerns. Adults become motivated when it comes to acquiring relevant and adequate knowledge.

Adults are relevancy-oriented: Learning becomes more valuable when it applies to their goals, work, and daily life.

Adults are practical: They appreciate the knowledge that is directly applicable instead of theoretical concepts. A significant challenge for educators is the conversion of learning to practical activities.

Adults thrive in collaborative relationships: They become more productive when considered as colleagues by their educators and peers, and when their contributions are acknowledged.

Kapur<sup>11</sup> similarly, has identified the following qualities that constitute common traits of adult learners:

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<sup>11</sup> Kapur, S. (2015, November). Understanding the Characteristics of an Adult Learner. *Jamia Journal of Education*, pp. 111-121. Retrieved June 2020, from



- Autonomy and the need for responsibility for and control of their learning process
- Practical approach – adults usually prefer acquiring practical knowledge and skills
- Learning by experience
- Previous knowledge and experience
- Purposefulness and goal orientation
- Emotional barriers
- Potential physical limitations
- Outside responsibilities
- The need for seeing a bigger perspective of the learning activity – adult learners usually like to know-how elements of the learning complement each other
- The need for community – adults often enjoy learning community environments where they can discuss, interact, and exchange experiences

### Useful tip

You should make sure that the specific cognitive and social traits of adult learners will be taken into consideration by the designers and adult educators. This guarantees that adult learners will receive an education that responds to their learning needs and styles<sup>12</sup>.

### Key theories in adult education

Adults learn differently than children. This fundamental concept of education theory underlines the importance of recognising the distinctive characteristics and needs of adults as learners when developing and implementing learning strategies that are dedicated to adults<sup>13</sup>.

#### a) Andragogy and self-directed learning

Andragogy is the core theory of adult education popularised by M. Knowles. Andragogy distinguishes how the learning styles and preferences of adults differ from how children learn. It also explored the characteristics, needs and preferred learning styles of adults. This theory identifies five core principles of adult learning

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287488944\\_Understanding\\_the\\_Characteristics\\_of\\_an\\_Adult\\_Learner](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287488944_Understanding_the_Characteristics_of_an_Adult_Learner)

<sup>12</sup> Malamed, C. (2009, September 29). Characteristics of Adult Learners. Retrieved June 2020, from thelearningcoach.com: <http://thelearningcoach.com/learning/characteristics-of-adult-learners/>

<sup>13</sup> Pappas, C. (2013, May 8). 8 Important Characteristics Of Adult Learners. Retrieved June 2020, from [elearningindustry.com](http://elearningindustry.com)



that you should follow to ensure that your educational strategies respond to the needs of mature learners.

### Five Principles of Andragogy:

**Self-concept:** adult learners have a more vital self-awareness; they want to control their learning and have a sense of autonomy.

**Experience:** prior experience plays an essential part for adults; they prefer building on the knowledge and skills that they already have.

**Purpose-driven learning:** adult learners are characterised by motivation to learn things that they see the relevance of; they like to see measurable learning objectives and be able to monitor their learning progress.

**Readiness to learn:** adults often learn because they want to and not because they must; hence they are strongly motivated and expect higher quality learning.

**Internal motivation:** adults are more often driven by internal motivation; they prefer problem-solving, and real-life simulation approaches learning.

Based on the conclusions derived from Andragogy, Knowles created a concept of self-directed learning. According to this educational theory adults can take the initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, goals, and preferred learning styles, as well as identify suitable resources and learning strategies, and evaluate the outcomes of their learning<sup>14</sup>.

### How to introduce self-directed learning to the learning strategy?

- ✓ Promote critical thinking among learners
- ✓ Introduce Design Thinking
- ✓ Use reflective techniques and mind mapping to promote different perspectives
- ✓ Allow learners for experimentation with their learning
- ✓ Encourage the development of a learning community where adult learners support and empower each other

## b) Experiential learning

<sup>14</sup> Smith, M. K. (2013, April 4). Malcolm Knowles, informal adult education, self-direction and andragogy. Retrieved June 2020, from infed.org: <https://infed.org/mobi/malcolm-knowles-informal-adult-education-self-direction-and-andragogy/>



Experiential learning is a theory developed by D. Kolb. According to this concept, knowledge is created through experience, and effective learning involves four phases that can be presented in the form of the learning cycle. By comparing two variables analysed on the cycle – how adults approach the learning activity and what is their emotional response to it, four basic learning styles characteristic to adults can be identified.

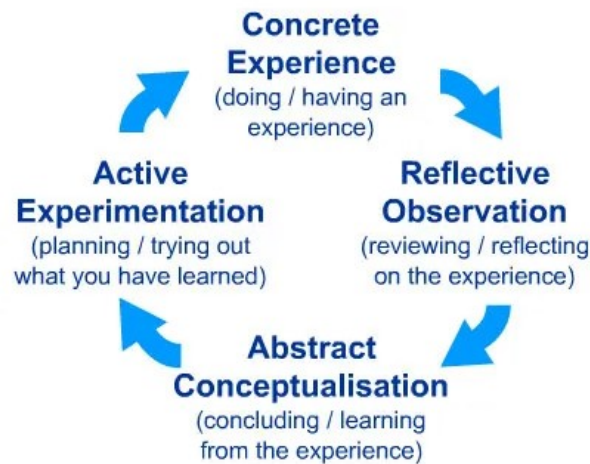


Figure 3: Kolb's Learning Cycle (source: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>)

### Four learning styles identified by Kolb

**Diverging style:** characteristic for learners who prefer watching rather than doing. They tend to be very imaginative, enjoy ideas generation, brainstorming and researching information.

**Assimilating style:** typical for learners who have a concise, logical approach to learning. They prefer clear explanation than practical activity; they are focused on abstract concepts and ideas.

**Converging style:** characteristic to people who are practical and oriented on problem solving. They tend to be interested in solving practical solutions for problems and questions.

**Accommodating style:** associated with learners who rely on intuition more than logic. They learn most effectively by using other people's and their own experience in practice.

### Other learning theories

Other fundamental learning theories that have an application in adult education include, e.g. **Transformational Learning** by J. Mezirow, and **Project-Based Learning** by J. Dewey.

## Methodological principles

Some of these methodological principles and intrinsic features you might find useful are:

- 1. Construction of meaningful learning.** It is assumed that learning is a process of development of meanings and, therefore, it is built, and not acquired. This construction process must be carried out, starting from previous knowledge, which is a question that, in the case of adults, has essential importance.
- 2. Learning functionality.** It seems a universal principle, but it is specific to adult learners that have dropped out of initial training and, therefore, they are not learning professionals as they used to be. When a worker, a housewife, a professional or a retired person decide to spend their spare time to improve their education or training in formal learning systems, they are motivated by a definite functional necessity that if it is not reached, makes them drop out the system.
- 3. Activity.** It is also assumed that an intensive activity by the learner contributes much more significantly to the construction of the learning process than just a receptive attitude towards external knowledge
- 4. Participation.** The participative methodology is an essential activity; without it, it would be impossible to carry out any kind of learning activities with this kind of people.
- 5. Self-learning.** It could be said that self-learning is an intrinsic condition of adult life. However, it is crucial to consider that while considering formal training, the fact of having previous knowledge is needed to carry it out in the most appropriate way.
- 6. Cooperative learning.** This principle is one of the most deeply rooted in adult education tradition. That means giving priority learning with others and others learning, as well as giving importance to establishing effective links among the components of the learning group. This type of learning supports adult learners, especially to those with low skills who initially live their learning situation with a certain anxiety.
- 7. Use of previous knowledge.** This is an essential methodological tool since it allows the teaching organisation to value and take advantage of real knowledge and skills, no matter where these come from. Also, it supports the significance of the learning process.



8. **Flatness.** This is a principle that means not only episodic aspects as they might be equal treatment among adults, either if they are students or trainers; but also more profound questions such as the consideration of learners and facilitators as authors of their knowledge construction process and not as a possessor of a knowledge that is transferred to a group of students essentially receptive.

## Unit 2: Modern approaches in Adult Education

Adult education practices and methods based on the available technologies can benefit the offer addressed to marginalised and low-skilled adult learners. Modern approaches, such as blended learning or flipped learning, create new possibilities for bridging some of the learning gaps and addressing the barriers that adult learners face. Although not free of their limitations and flows, the latest approaches to adult education allow meeting low-skilled and marginalised learners' needs more effectively than many traditional methods<sup>15</sup>.

### Blended learning

Blended learning is a term used to describe learning strategies that combine both face-to-face and online activities. Their big advantage is that they are flexible and give the possibility to individualise the pace of learning and feedback<sup>16</sup>.

### Useful information

Blended learning approaches are considered the most effective in implementing adult education among low-skilled adults<sup>17</sup>.

The spectrum of blended learning models is very diversified. It includes on the one end approaches where the educator is doing most of the teaching, and learners

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<sup>15</sup> Brame, C. (2013). Flipping the classroom. Retrieved June 2020, from Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching: <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/flipping-the-classroom/>

<sup>16</sup> Constantakis, P. (2016). Integrating Digital Tools for Adult Learners: Four Critical Factors. Digital Promise. Retrieved June 2020, from [https://digitalpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/dp-integrating\\_digital\\_tools.pdf](https://digitalpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/dp-integrating_digital_tools.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Margolis, A. R., Porter, A. L., & Pitterle, M. E. (2017). Best Practices for Use of Blended Learning. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education. Retrieved June 2020, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5423065/#:~:text=Blended%20learning%20courses%2C%20or%20courses,face%2Dto%2Dface%20courses.&text=Blended%20learning%20is%20effective%2C5,using%20a%20blended%20learning%20approach.>



spend little time on self-learning. At the other end, most of the learning is delivered online, and the educator supports learners individually as needed.

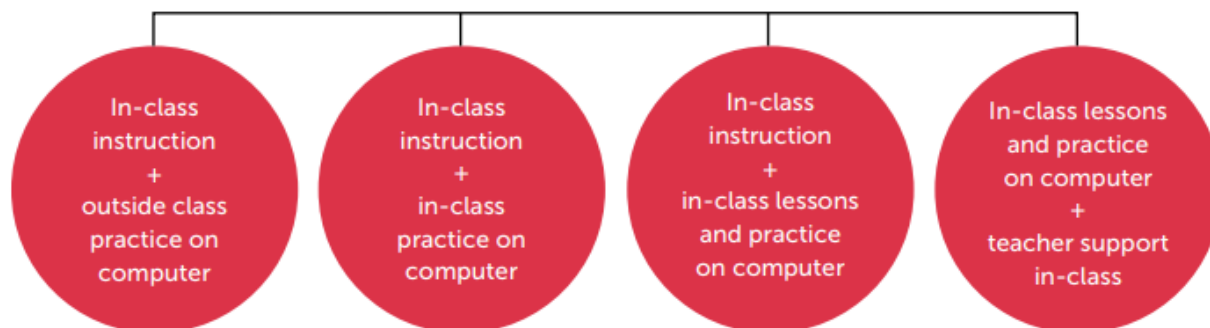


Figure 4: Various approaches to the blended learning model. (Source: Constantakis, 2016)

### Useful tips when implementing blended learning

You can adjust the blended learning model to the individual needs of the learners (Constantakis, 2016):

- a blended model involving more in-class instruction is more suitable for the lowest skilled adults who are less confident with technology or their skills, or who may lack the self-determination needed for long-term independent learning
- online courses are more appropriate for more advanced students who are feeling confident in digital environments
- when working with low-skilled adults, it might be necessary to implement various blended-learning models in the scope of one learning strategy or even allow for the evolution of the approach as learners' needs are changing.

### Flipped learning

Flipped learning is an educational strategy based on the reversed model of classroom learning. Learners acquire background knowledge at home with the use of pre-prepared learning materials. Then the practical part of education is completed face-to-face with the support of the educator<sup>18</sup>.

The benefits of flipped learning from the perspective of adult education, specially dedicated to low-skilled and marginalised adult learners include, most importantly, the transition from the educator-centred to learner-centred learning. Adult learners

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/the-definition-of-the-flipped-classroom/>

can develop their skills and competences more efficiently through experience exchange and hands-on activities. Additionally, learners gain more control on the pace, timing, and scheduling of learning<sup>19</sup>.

**Useful information**

Usually, the flipped phase of learning involves technology-based approaches, e.g. online videos, online lectures, assignments, self-evaluation, tests, online collaborative discussions, digital research, text readings etc. However, flipping the learning process is not limited to the technology-based approaches (Brame, 2013).

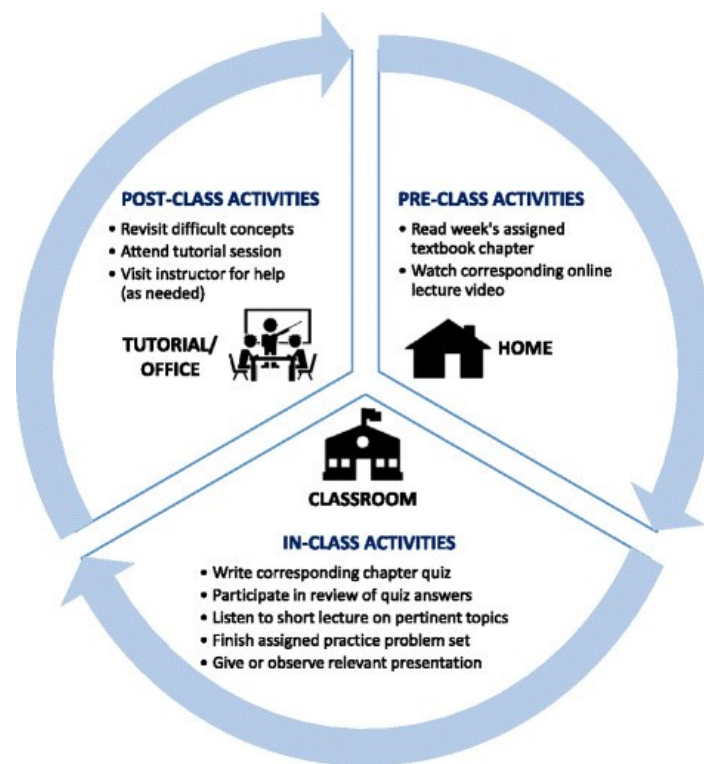


Figure 5. Flowchart of the Flipped Classroom structure and settings<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Flipping the classroom in adult education. (2016). Learning Guide on Flipping the Classroom in Adult Education. Velenje: Flipping the classroom in adult education (iFLIP). Retrieved June 2020, from [http://projectiflip.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/iFlip\\_IO7\\_Learning-Guide-in-FTC-in-Adult-Education\\_EN.pdf](http://projectiflip.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/iFlip_IO7_Learning-Guide-in-FTC-in-Adult-Education_EN.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Moraros, J., Islam, A., Yu, S., Banow, R., & Schindelka, B. (2015). Flipping for success: evaluating the effectiveness of a novel teaching approach in a graduate level setting. BMC Medical Education, 15, 27. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-015-0317-2>

### Additional resources

Principles of Adult Learning

<https://alabamapathways.org/principles-of-adult-learning/>



## Section 8: Monitoring, evaluation and improving strategies

### Unit 1: Monitoring and Evaluation of Adult Education Strategies

#### Levels, areas and subjects of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation processes can be implemented on three levels<sup>21</sup>:

- Micro: individual level that includes monitoring and evaluating learning progress of individual learners.
- Meso: institutional level that includes monitoring and evaluating the course or adult education strategy on a level of the adult education institution/organisation.
- Macro: system level that allows the monitoring of the progress in the competence level of the given population or group.

An efficient implementation of the monitoring and evaluating processes in adult education requires both short-term and long-term approach. The processes should be understood and explained in detail initially and used in a wider context than just a one-time event, but rather as an on-going exercise carried out at several points in time throughout the learning process. Monitoring and evaluation aim to measure and assess learner's performance to improve the outcomes of learning<sup>22</sup>.

#### Useful information

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<sup>21</sup> Lattke, S. (2018). Professional Competence in Designing, Monitoring and Evaluation of Adult Learning Processes Research Report. Bonn: DEMAL Design, monitoring and evaluating adult learning classes - Supporting quality in adult learning. Retrieved July 2020, from [http://www.demalproject.eu/documents/O1\\_EN\\_Research\\_Report\\_181130.pdf](http://www.demalproject.eu/documents/O1_EN_Research_Report_181130.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> ESSEX Safeguarding Adults Board. (2018). Monitoring and Evaluating Learning and Development Opportunities. ESSEX, United Kingdom. Retrieved July 2020, from <https://www.essexsab.org.uk/media/2581/monitoring-and-evaluating-learning-and-developing-toolkit.pdf>



Evaluation and monitoring processes should be dedicated not only to learners but also to the educator. In addition, they should be allowed to analyse the wider impact of adult learning, e.g. on the community, in the workplace etc<sup>23</sup>.

### Tools used for monitoring and evaluation of adult education strategies

Depending on the purpose of the evaluation, there are various tools and approaches that you can take. Summative approaches to evaluation and monitoring are implemented after the end of the education activity. You can apply them to measure the final quality and impact of your strategy. Formative evaluation and monitoring, on the other hand, takes place at various points during the training and aims to identify the elements for improvement (Lattke, 2018).

### Most popular tools used for evaluation and monitoring<sup>24</sup>

Can you identify any tools that you can apply as part of the following evaluation methods?

<p><b>Qualitative methods</b></p> <p>Qualitative methods aim to understand the reaction and response of the learner to the training.</p>	<p><b>Quantitative methods</b></p> <p>Quantitative methods are used for collecting and comparing information and data that help to identify to what extent the objectives and goals of the training have been reached.</p>
<p><b>Self-evaluation methods</b></p> <p>These methods aim to support learners and educators in self-evaluation of their performance and competences.</p>	<p><b>Learner-centred methods</b></p> <p>Learner-centred methods aim is to identify the types and styles of learning that are the most beneficial for the learner. They should become integral phases of learning and give the learner</p>

<sup>23</sup> Ingram, M. (2017, August 08). Leaders to Make Impact. Retrieved from 3blmedia.com: <https://www.3blmedia.com/News/Ashridge-Executive-Education-Action-Research-Method-Trains-Business-Leaders-Make-Impact>

<sup>24</sup> Olesen, L. A., & Vincze, Z. (2018). Training Course Evaluation of Adult Education and Training Activities Course Structure and Contents. Bonn: Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership “Designing, monitoring and evaluating adult learning classes – Supporting quality in adult learning” (DEMAL).



	a chance to measure and document their progress.
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### Useful information

Other popular methodologies used to evaluate the effectiveness of adult education strategies include the Kirkpatrick Taxonomy, the Phillips ROI Model, and the CIPP Evaluation Model.

## Unit 2: Reflective Practice in Adult Education

### What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is a methodology related to learning through experience. It bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. Learners should use reflective practice to analyse their experience actively. However, this process should be based on the conscious effort to understand the processes constituting the learning.

### Useful information

According to Dale's Cone of Experience, learners retain more information when learning through direct, purposeful experience as opposed to only listening, reading, or observing during the educational activity<sup>25</sup>. Now, the research suggests that not only performing the task but also reflecting on it can improve the retention of information<sup>26</sup>.

The reflective practise methodology aims to identify the elements of the process that could be changed or improved to achieve better results next time. A great advantage of this methodology is that it can be adapted by both adult learners to improve

<sup>25</sup> Janoska, L. (2017, August 28). What Really Is The Cone Of Experience? Retrieved June 2020, from elearningindustry.com:

[https://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/documents/Dales\\_Cone\\_of\\_Experience\\_summary.pdf](https://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/documents/Dales_Cone_of_Experience_summary.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Schlichting, M. L., & Preston, A. R. (2014). Memory reactivation during rest supports upcoming learning of related content. PNAS. Retrieved June 2020, from <https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2014/10/15/1404396111>



learning performance<sup>27</sup>, and adult educators to better understand their teaching practices<sup>28</sup>.

### Gibbs' reflective cycle of learning

One of the most popular reflective practice models – the Gibbs' reflective cycle of learning presents six phases of reflection on the learning experience<sup>29</sup>.

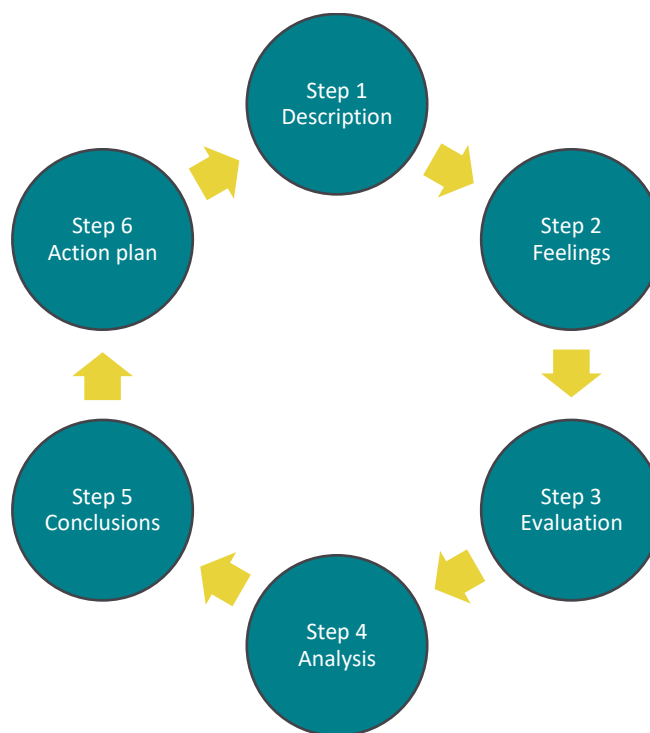


Figure 6: Gibbs' reflective cycle of learning.

Think of the reflection questions that could support you when reflecting at each of the stages of the cycle of learning.

**Description:** at this stage, the learning experience should be described in detail.

- What happened.

<sup>27</sup> Conti, P., Nilsson, J., Ramstrand, A., & others, a. (2017). IN-LEARNING Reflection tools for supporting individual learning paths of adults. Reflection tools for supporting individual learning paths of adults" (IN-LEARNING).

<sup>28</sup> Imel, S. (1992). Reflective Practice in Adult Education. ERIC Digest No. 122. ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education Columbus OH. Retrieved June 2020, from [ericdigests.org](http://ericdigests.org)

<sup>29</sup> The University of Edinburgh. (2019, March 20). Gibbs' reflective cycle. Retrieved from ed.ac.uk: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflection-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>

- What was the outcome of the situation?
- .....

**Feelings:** feelings and thoughts that appeared during the experience should be explored, as well as their impact on the situation.

- What were my feelings during the situation?
- .....

**Evaluation:** objective evaluation; positive and negative aspects of the situation should be identified.

- .....
- .....

**Analysis:** in this step, the learner should analyse why the different aspects of the situation worked well or went wrong.

- .....
- .....

**Conclusions:** this step should answer the question: what did you learn from the experience?

- .....
- .....

**Action plan:** what changes should be introduced to improve the outcome next time, and how to guarantee a positive outcome.

- .....
- .....

## The benefits of the reflective learning cycle in adult education

For adult learners, some of the benefits include continuous learning, improved critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. Reflecting on the process of learning can support them in understanding to what extent their efforts are turned into expected results, and this realisation can help identify their preferred

learning style. Additionally, reflective practice can be used as a self-monitoring and self-evaluation tool to judge results based on objective evidence<sup>30</sup>.

For educators, the reflective practice can be a useful tool of professional development that allows them to understand their current teaching style. Through analysing different approaches to teaching, educators can improve their competences and practices, which consequently can lead them to the point where they are able to modify their skills to respond to specific situations and needs effectively. Reflective practice can also serve as a tool supporting educators in better understanding of learners and their specific needs<sup>31</sup>.

### Implementing reflective practice in adult education and monitoring its effectiveness

To fully benefit from the reflective practice, you should implement it on a level for developing the adult education strategy. You can try to base your reflections on your previous experiences, experiences of learners, peer discussions and available alternatives. The reflective practice should be an opportunity for you for continuous evaluation of your teaching practices. Hence it should be continued through-out the whole duration of the learning activity. Try organising study teams, peer coaching, or analysing learners' feedback to get better results.

To support learners in implementing reflective practice, you should instruct them on how to implement self-evaluation and self-reflection activities and encourage them to practice these methods in relation to their learning process<sup>32</sup>.

#### Useful information

There are various exercises that you can use to encourage adults to implement the reflective practice, e.g. hypothesizing, analysing problems from various perspectives, questioning (including *what if...* approach), comparing and contrasting etc. (cyc-net.org, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Fook, J. (2007). REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND CRITICAL REFLECTION. In J. Lishman, Handbook for Practice Learning in Social Work and Social Care (pp. 440-454). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

<sup>31</sup> Sellars, M. (2012). Teachers and change: The role of reflective practice. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEW HORIZONS IN EDUCATION (pp. 461 – 469 ). Callaghan: University of Newcastle.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0404-reflective.html>



## Unit 3: Adult Educators Professional Development

### Content expertise

The [Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals Report](#) conducted on the commission of the European Commission in 2010 allowed to map the 13 basic fields of adult education professional activity. These fields can serve as a tool to identify the main competences that you might need in your job.

#### The core fields of jobs of adult educator include:

- Learning needs assessment
- Preparation of courses
- Facilitation of learning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Counselling and guidance
- Programme development
- Financial management
- Human resource management
- Overall management
- Marketing and PR
- Administrative support
- ICT-support
- Overarching activities

Depending on the various factors such as the context and type of the education strategy, the group of learners etc., the set of the competences that different adult educators need can vary significantly. Additionally, depending on the role that you play in your team or organisation, e.g. teaching, management, counselling or administrative the set of the required competences might differ also.

As the needs of adult educators vary, they often rely on the tools such as individual professional reflection and self-assessment to refine and improve their practice. Moreover, as the needs of learners change and differ, so do the needs of educators.

#### Useful information

The Key Competences for Adult Learning Professionals Report includes broad descriptions of the general and specific competences recommended for adult educators. They can be useful tools for adult education professionals and providers in setting development goals and designing the CPD programmes.

## Teaching methods

As the adult education sector is opening to new digital environments, learning methods, tools and the competences and approaches of the adult educators' need to change with it. This is especially important for educators working with marginalised and disadvantaged groups of adults where access to education is sometimes only possible through digital devices and methodologies<sup>33</sup>.

### Factors that adult educators should consider when choosing teaching methods

In addition to the growth of importance for digital competences, there are various other noticeable shifts and factors in adult education that can impact what teaching methods you will decide to apply in your practices. These factors include<sup>34</sup>:

- The diversity of the learner population and the multiplicity in that diversity.
- Educators' understanding of the art and science of teaching adults.
- The integration of learning strategies and learning accommodations.
- The re-conceptualisation of the role of adult learning principles.
- The need for substantial change in the way educators evaluate performance.

## Professional Development

Given that the effectiveness of adult education strategies depends on the well-trained and motivated educators, your continuous professional development is of key importance. Educators are the elements of the adult education strategy that safeguards the quality of the education, guarantees its prestige and reputation but also is the agent that ensures that the needs of each learner are recognised and met.

Training adults is a profession and requires constant development! Becoming an expert in your field and working to become an excellent adult educator is a life-long process. Certifications and titles are the tools that will help you to prove your efforts and guarantee that they will not remain unnoticed! The benefits of acquiring

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<sup>33</sup> Milin, A. (2019, January 29). Digital and online learning in Adult Education. Retrieved from EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/digital-and-online-learning-adult-education>

<sup>34</sup> Bryson, J. D. (2013). ENGAGING ADULT LEARNERS Philosophy, Principles and Practices. Barrie: James David Bryson.



certifications in adult education range from your satisfaction and possible financial gain to the significant positive impact on your practices and in the consequence of learners' performance.

You can seek support through the training and certification schemes offered to adult educators nationally or regionally in your country. There are also available various online training and development opportunities that can guarantee the acquisition of the most recent knowledge and skills. Additionally, various non-governmental organisations provide trainings, data, and guidance for educators<sup>35</sup>.

### **What guarantees success in professional development?**

- Recognise that your individual development has an impact on learners and most probably on your whole organisation
- Think big but do not be discouraged from starting small
- Work in a team to receive support
- Seek feedback on your results and achievements
- Integrate your new skills and knowledge to your everyday practices

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<sup>35</sup> Bailey, N. (2009). Integrating Development Education into Adult Education using Active Citizenship as a Focus. Dublin: AONTAS.



## Section 9: Recognition, validation, and certification

### Unit 1: National Qualification Framework

#### Principles and Standards

A national qualification framework (NQF) is a tool that is used to classify a country's qualifications at different levels, which address a set of learning outcomes. At the EU level, the European Qualifications Framework, established in 2008, provides a reference across borders, aiming to “improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people’s qualifications”.<sup>36</sup> So far, 32 countries (EU and beyond) have linked their NQF to the EQF.

Linking the NQF to the EQF is only one of the principles set out at the European level – see the box below for the complete list. Most of the national validation systems already follow them – you can check how your country is doing in the European inventory on validation<sup>37</sup>.

#### European principles for national validation systems

- Validation arrangements in place
- Guidance and counselling available
- Information on procedures and opportunities available
- Validation arrangements linked to the NQF and to the EQF
- Transparent quality assurance measures
- Standards are the same for qualifications obtained through validation and through formal education
- Synergies between validation systems and credits
- Disadvantaged groups most likely to benefit
- EU/national transparency documents promoted for documentation
- Professional development of staff working in validation
- Skills audits available for the unemployed or at a risk of unemployment.

<sup>36</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0615%2801%29>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory#Thematic>



A clear definition of standards is crucial for validation processes to be legitimate and reliable; standards are usually described as competences or learning outcomes. How they are agreed on might differ from country to country; the development of standards is frequently the responsibility of a national association. A variety of stakeholders might be involved in the process. In the case of occupational standards, some countries, e.g. Belgium, have a decision-making process that involves social partners and education and training providers, whereas in others, e.g. in Switzerland, they are developed by labour market organisations.

As a provider, you should be aware of what standards are applicable to you, as well as whether – and how – you should get your programme accredited.

### Evaluation and certification of programmes

Most countries have quality assurance systems to ensure that the validation process is transparent and reliable and that programmes offered by learning providers correspond to the NQF. This is usually done by an accrediting institution, public or private. Evaluation and certification of programmes might be conducted in different ways: you might need to submit an online form (including, for example, a detailed description of the curriculum in your course); you might also expect an on-site visit. In some cases, certification will have to be renewed regularly.

In some countries, existing quality assurance frameworks for the adult learning sector are applied to validation; in others, an independent awarding body or institution is responsible for quality assurance of validation mechanisms. There are also countries without a compulsory validation framework, but as an adult learning provider offering validation, you will be invited to follow specific guidelines.

If you are planning to apply for accreditation of your learning programmes, or if you would like to offer validation of prior learning, make sure that you check the official requirements that apply in your case.

## Unit 2: Skills assessment

### Tools, methods, and procedures

Skills identification is the initial stage of a validation process; skills assessment is also the first step of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, which aims at supporting low-



skilled learners with a tailor-made offer. Assessment is also an inherent part of most learning programmes, be it during or at the end of the course.

While classic assessment methods, including written or oral exams, might work well in some contexts, they are far from common in non-formal adult education. By using methods that offer a non-threatening environment and a personalised approach, non-formal adult education can help to move away from standardised testing and instead concentrate on the needs, preferences and learning style of an individual learner. Such methods can include dialogue, observation, and demonstration.

With considerable life experience, adults also have an idea of what they want to achieve; this means that they should have an active role in monitoring how they progress towards their goals. For example, Lire et Écrire Belgium, who work towards improving literacy in French in Belgium, has developed a set of accessible tools that support self-assessment and self-reflection. Through portfolios or other tools, such as a “spider’s web”, learners can visualise how far they have advanced in their reading and writing, and link basic skills to other learning outcomes, such as improved communication.

*In terms of cognitive skills, several EU countries developed on-line tools that may be completed by low skilled adults either at home or at other places (mostly in Municipalities or one-stop-shops). These tools assess the level of skills that an individual has in certain domains (e.g. language skills, digital skills) and based on the results, an individual programme is built. During the assessment, adults may receive guidance by trained staff.*

## Assessment of pre-existing skills

Several methods can be used for assessment of pre-existing tools. Additionally, some tools have been developed specifically to support specific target groups. For example, the EU Skills Profile

### Common assessment methods of pre-existing skills

- Skills profiling
- Interviews with a counsellor
- Portfolios
- Competence surveys



Tool for Third Country Nationals<sup>38</sup> has been developed to help adult learning providers and other organisations welcoming migrants and refugees.

Before deciding on a specific tool or method, it is crucial to consider the vulnerable position of some of the learners who wish to improve their basic skills. Online forms might seem like the most efficient solution, but their use implies that our learners are already at ease with digital tools. If our learners might have had negative experiences with formal schooling, it will also be essential to ensure a non-threatening environment, and perhaps to offer a meeting with a counsellor instead of a form to complete. This could also help learners to clarify questions and to avoid misunderstandings that can easily happen when completing a standardised form.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1412&langId=en>





difference between the knowledge and skill levels that the learner already has and what he or she should have at the certain learning level.

### Guidance tools

Different tools can support you in providing guidance services:

- Skills assessment tools (e.g. Literacy Screener)
- Tools to support validation of prior learning
- Tools for evaluation and self-evaluation (e.g. interest inventories, tools for making action plans)
- Self-reflection tools for counsellors
- Information tools, e.g. job search websites
- Data monitoring tools and registration systems
- Tools that help structure meetings with clients, e.g. interview scripts
- Tools that help clients with job search, e.g. with writing a CV
- Other.....
- Other.....
- Other.....

See more on the website of the Erasmus+ GOAL project: <https://adultguidance.eu/>

### Additional resources

European guidelines on validating non-formal and informal learning (CEDEFOP):  
[https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073_en.pdf)

European Inventory on Validation: 2018 Update (CEDEFOP):  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory#Thematic>



## Section 10: Digital competency framework for organisations and educators

### Unit 1: Digitally Competent Educational Organisations (DigCompOrg)

#### Leadership & governance practices

An essential element for the effective integration of desired practices within an organisation is the adoption of them from the leading departments and the dissemination from the top to the lower levels of the organisation (top-down approach).

You need to make sure that you integrated digital age learning as part of the overall mission, vision, and strategy of the organisation. Furthermore, support this with an implementation plan and a relevant management model.

#### Useful questions

Are the benefits of digital learning well communicated?

Is the potentiality of digital learning flagged?

Is digital age learning aligned with the priorities of the organisation?

Are digital resources aligned with the budget and staffing?

#### Teaching and learning practices

For a real impact and development of digital skills among the members of the learning process (educators and learners), you would like to integrate digital practices in teaching and learning. Make sure that digital competencies are promoted, benchmarked, and assessed in classrooms. This will only happen if educators rethink their existing roles and pedagogical approaches.

#### Useful questions

Are digital competences being benchmarked and assessed for staff and students?

What new roles have been envisaged for staff and students?

Which pedagogical approaches are added to the teaching-learning procedures?

How can digital approaches be used for enhancing personalised learning, creativity, socialisation, and collaboration?

## Professional Development

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is essential for individuals to professionally maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, skills, and qualities. This systematic education and training will eventually increase the efficiency of your organisation towards the desired results.

### Useful questions

Is CPD provided for staff at all levels?

Are CPD opportunities aligned with the individual and organisational needs?

Are CPD programmes accredited and certified?

## Assessment practices

Digital tools and practices can add value in assessment procedures. Assessment formats may become more engaging and motivating; assessments methods become structured and automated; assessment results and analytics are easily enabled.

### Useful questions

Which digital tools can be used to promote formative assessment, diversified and personalised feedback or self- and peer-assessment methods?

How can you take advantage of available digital tools to recognise and accredit prior and experiential learning?

How can learning analytics be used for quality management, curriculum design or strategic planning?

### What is formative and summative assessment?

Formative assessment

*Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. The general goal of formative*

*assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning while it is happening<sup>39</sup>.*

### Summative assessment

*Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement after a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative-assessment results are often recorded as scores or grades that are then factored into a student's permanent academic record<sup>40</sup>.*

## Content and Curricula

Content and curricula are also needed to be updated in terms of material and format to reflect the pedagogical possibilities of digital technologies. Open Educational Resources (OERs) are nowadays widely promoted and used by learners and educators as means of access to teaching, learning and research materials.

### Useful questions

How can content repositories be effectively used?

How can subject-based learning be reimagined to create more integrated approaches?

How can time and place of learning be rescheduled with the use of OERs?

How can learners' digital competence be developed across the curriculum?

### What are Open Educational Resources (OERs)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

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<sup>39</sup> The Glossary of Education Reform (2014, September 04). Formative assessment, Great Schools Partnership, Retrieved from: <https://www.edglossary.org/formative-assessment/>

<sup>40</sup> The Glossary of Education Reform (2014, September 04). Summative assessment, Great Schools Partnership, Retrieved from: <https://www.edglossary.org/summative-assessment/>



OER form part of 'Open Solutions', alongside Free and Open Source software (FOSS), Open Access (OA), Open Data (OD) and crowdsourcing platforms<sup>41</sup>.

## Collaboration and networking

Networking, sharing information and collaboration with other partners can offer great opportunities for strategic planning and positioning. Digital means of communication cannot only facilitate such procedures but are essential for a digitally competent organisation.

### Useful questions

How can networked collaboration and knowledge exchange be used to pool expertise and share contents in this norm?

How can your organisation establish a dynamic online presence?

How can internal collaboration be enhanced through digital communication means?

How are educators and learners incentivised to actively develop partnerships?

## Infrastructure

Sophistically designed physical and virtual learning spaces should optimise the affordances of digital age learning you want to promote. Therefore, there are several advantages that digital infrastructure can offer if planned and managed effectively.

### Useful questions

Which digital learning technologies can support pedagogical practices?

How is technical and user support ensured?

Are assisting technologies to address special needs maintaining privacy, confidentiality, and safety?

Which Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) services consist of the backbone of your organisation?

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<sup>41</sup> UNESCO (2019). Open Educational Resources (OER), Building knowledge societies. Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer>



## Sector-specific elements

According to your context, several other needs and opportunities may occur. This is related to your sector (e.g. culinary arts, languages, ICT etc.), the geographical area or even the cultural ethics and restrictions.

### Useful questions

Which are your sector-specific requirements?

What are other sub-elements crucial to adapt to local needs and specificities?

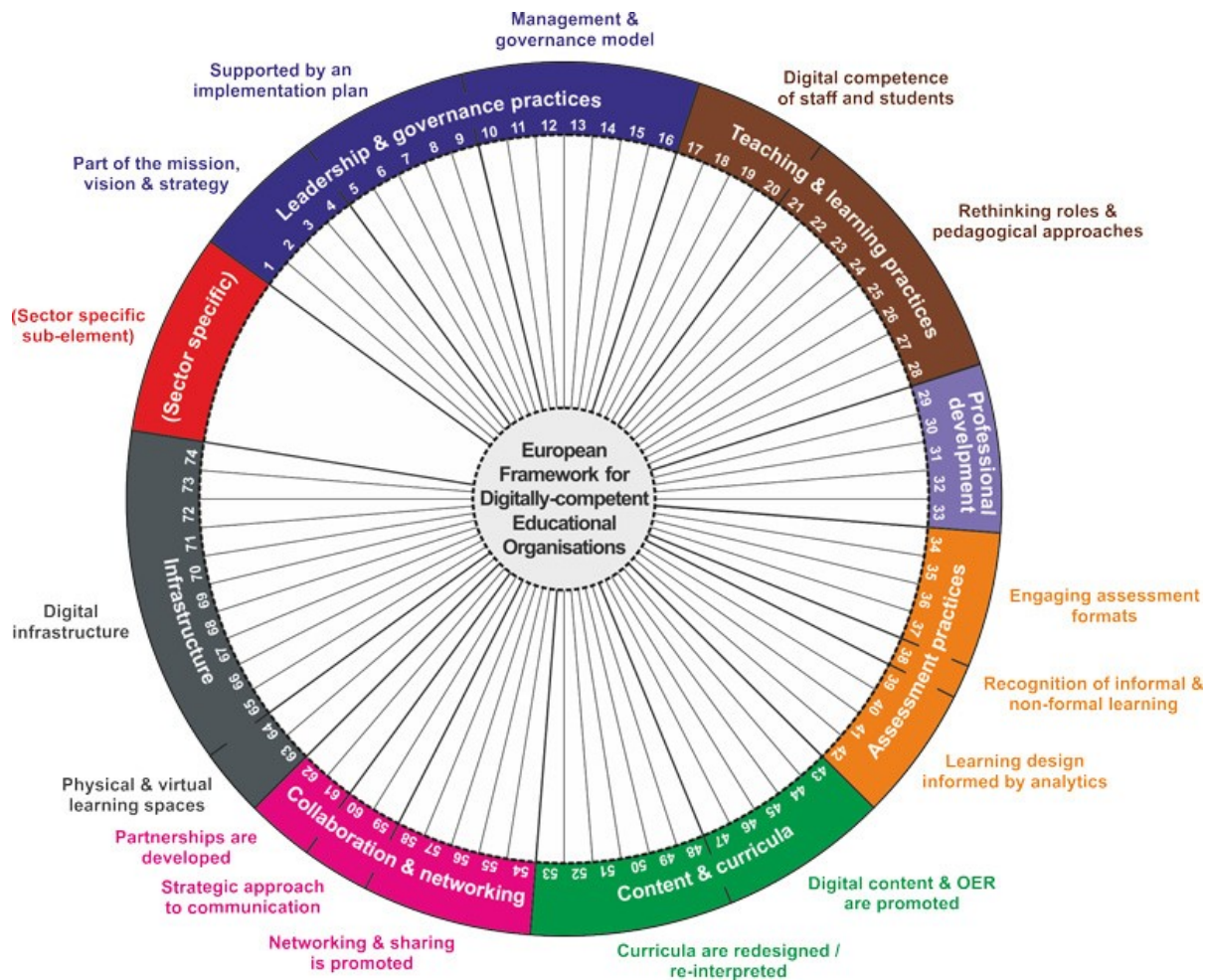


Figure 7. Key elements and sub-elements of DigCompOrg<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Kampylis, P., Punie, Y. & Devine, J. (2015); Promoting Effective Digital-Age Learning - A European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations; EUR 27599 EN; doi:10.2791/54070

## Unit 2: Digitally Competent Educators (DigCompEdu)

The Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) Framework focuses on six areas of educators' professional activities. These areas are classified into three categories as presented below. Some areas appear to have similarities with the *DigCompOrg* that you studied above.

### Educators' professional competences

#### Area 1: Professional Engagement

Professional engagement refers to the use of digital technologies by educators to enhance their professional interactions and collaboration with colleagues, learners, and other partners. Digital competences at this level are also employed by the individual to enhance the continuous professional development, which contributes to the continuous innovation of the organisation and the teaching profession.

#### Useful questions

Organisational communication: Which digital technologies are used by educators for communications with colleagues, learners, and other parties?

Professional collaboration: Which digital technologies are used by educators for the exchange of knowledge, experience, and pedagogic practices with other educators?

Reflective practice: How digital technologies are used from educators to reflect or be assessed on their digital pedagogical practice?

Digital Continuous Professional Development (CPD): How digital source and resources can be used for CPD?

### Educators' pedagogic competences

#### Area 2: Digital Resources

Educators, nowadays, are confronted with a variety of digital educational resources that are easily accessible. However, it is a matter of a wise selection about which of them are better suited to their learning objectives, learner groups and teaching style. At the same time, they need to be aware of the copyright rules and the responsible use of digital content and tools.

#### Useful questions

Selecting digital resources: Are digital resources selected considering the learning objectives, context, and learner groups?

Creating and modifying digital resources: Are new digital resources created considering the learning objectives, context, and learner groups? Are resources planned to be modified openly licensed?

Managing, protecting, and sharing digital resources: How is shared digital content to learners being protected according to privacy and copyright rules.

### Area 3: Teaching and Learning

Digital technologies can be designed, planned, and implemented in different phases and settings of the learning process. Educators must emphasise the real potential of digital technologies and provide support to learners through self-regulated and collaborative learning activities.

#### Useful questions

Teaching: How can digital devices and resources be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of teaching interventions?

Guidance: How can educators guide and assist learners during the experimentation with new digital technologies?

Collaborative learning: How can digital technologies be used to foster learner collaboration?

Self-regulated learning: How can digital technologies be used to support learners' self-regulated learning (plan, monitor, reflect on their learning and access solutions)?

### Area 4: Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process, and digital technologies can facilitate in many ways this procedure. Collection of results, provision of feedback, analysis, and interpretation of data, monitoring of learning progress and assessment of teaching strategies are some possible elements of the process of assessment that could be simplified by digital means.

#### Useful questions



Assessment strategies: Which digital technologies can be employed for formative and summative assessment?

Analysing evidence: Which digital technologies can be used for generating, selecting, analysing, and interpreting data?

Feedback and planning: Which digital technologies can be used to provide targeted and timely feedback?

## Area 5: Empowering Learners

Digital technologies offer excellent opportunities to boost the active involvement and engagement of learners in the learning process. Furthermore, they can contribute to differentiation and personalisation of learning adapted to learners' level of competence, interests and learning needs.

### Useful questions

Accessibility and inclusion: How can digital resources and activities be used to respond to learners' expectations, abilities (e.g. individuals with special needs)?

Differentiation and personalisation: How can digital technologies be used to allow learners to advance at different levels and speeds, and to follow individual learning pathways and objectives?

Actively engaging learners: How can digital technologies be used to foster active involvement, deep thinking, and creative expression of learners?

## Learners' competences

### Area 6: Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence

This area focuses on how educators will instil digital competences in learners. It refers to five key digital competences that are essential for learners, as the European Digital Competence Framework describes it for Citizens (DigComp).

#### Key competences for learners:

To incorporate learning activities, assignment and assessments which require learners to:

- **Information and media literacy:** articulate, process, analyse and critically evaluate information in digital environments.



- **Digital communication and collaboration:** effectively use digital technologies for communication, collaboration, and civic participation.
- **Digital content creation:** modify and create digital content in different formats.
- **Responsible use:** to manage risks and use digital technologies safely and responsibly.
- **Digital problem solving:** to identify and solve technical problems, or to transfer technological knowledge creatively to new situations.

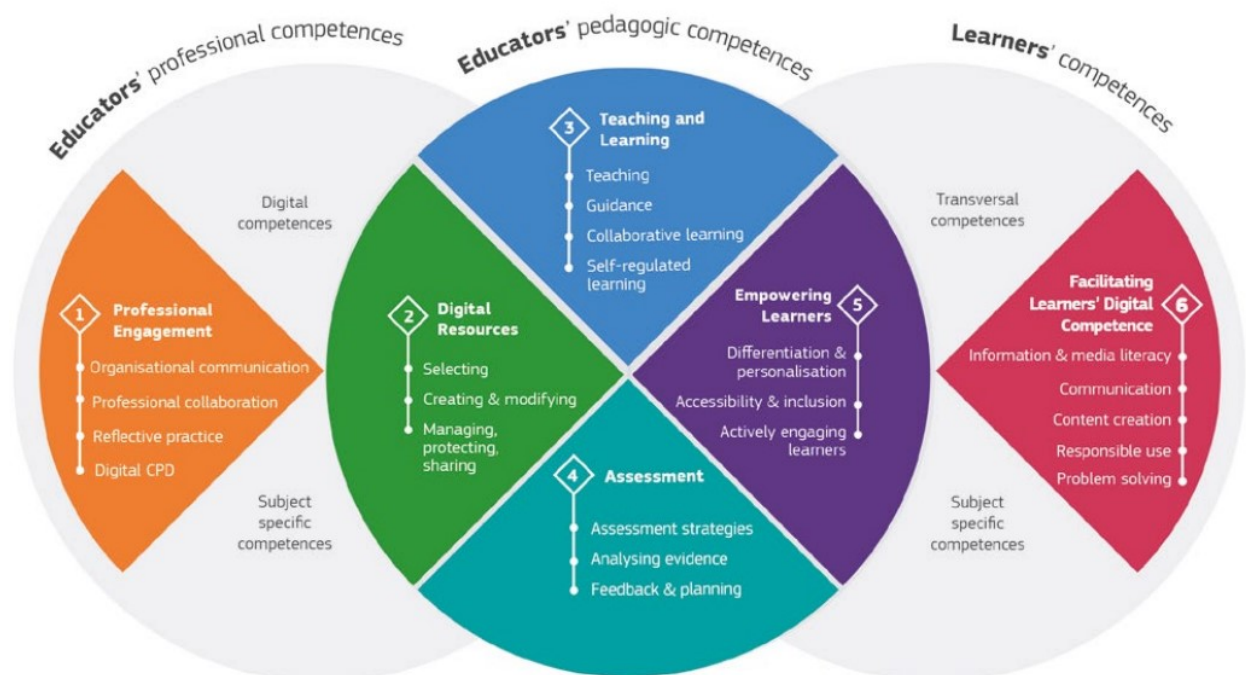


Figure 8. Synthesis of the DigCompEdu framework<sup>43</sup>

### Additional resources

Promoting Effective Digital-Age Learning: A European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations:  
[https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC98209/jrc98209\\_r\\_digcomporg\\_final.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC98209/jrc98209_r_digcomporg_final.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/european-framework-digital-competence-educators-digcompedu>

European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/european-framework-digital-competence-educators-digcompedu>

DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/digcomp-21-digital-competence-framework-citizens-eight-proficiency-levels-and-examples-use>



## Section 11: Examples of strategies for adult education

### Case study 1: Building a strategy bottom-up

The Adult School of La Verneda - Sant Martí was founded in 1978 from the union of various educational and civic movements in Barcelona. Run by two non-profit associations, the school aims to defend the right to education of all adults and to encourage participatory decision-making. The school offers a broad set of courses, such as numeracy and literacy, ICT, and language courses for migrants, various workshops, as well as culture and leisure activities.

#### Key questions

- How to introduce participatory decision-making?
- How to improve outreach to vulnerable learners?
- How to introduce a peer-to-peer approach?
- How to review and adapt a strategy?

The principle of egalitarian dialogue is key in the recruitment of learners as well as in the organisation of learning activities and general management of the school. Diverse organisational structures have been established to ensure participation on different levels, such as the General Meeting, the Central Council, the Association of Learners, the Monthly Coordination, and the Weekly Coordination.

A peer-to-peer approach is another key element. Participants from previous years are involved in the reception of new learners, their registration and assignment of groups. Time is taken for each new participant to explain the process and the decision on the level and group they will be assigned to is based on dialogue and consensus. Former and current learners of the school – neighbourhood residents, university staff as well as international placement students – are also involved in teaching and are trained to carry out their work. Their role is also important in outreach to new learners.

Interestingly, while initially the school was run entirely by volunteers, this decision was partially reversed by introducing several paid positions. It eventually turned out that there was more engagement in school activities and democratic spirit when everyone who worked at the school did so voluntarily. Consequently, the school returned to cooperating only with volunteers.



## Case study 2: Organisational strategy guiding adult learning provision and advocacy in Longford Women's Link, Ireland

Longford Women's Link is a community centre whose strategic priorities underpin all activities, such as education and training, counselling, and domestic violence prevention. The vision of LWL is that "women in Longford can achieve their full potential in a safe and equal society<sup>44</sup>"; three priority areas have been identified to achieve this

### Key questions

- How can strategic priorities support your vision or your mission statement?
- How can you cater to the needs of your community?
- What can a good partnership offer?
- How can you make your voice visible at the national level?

vision: providing direct support to individuals, building community capacity by providing access to affordable community education and training, and collective lobbying and advocacy. Established specifically to cater to the needs of local women, the centre is firmly established in the local context, while staying active on the national level to ensure that the grassroots perspective informs adult education policy.

Statistics show that in Longford County, 40% of mothers are single parents, comparing to 22% nationally<sup>45</sup>. This has to be taken into account when planning activities for women. LWL has on-site childcare facilities to ensure equal participation.

To further increase the accessibility of further education opportunities in an area that is predominantly rural, LWL has partnered with other organisations. For those women who would like to progress to third-level education, LWL offers blended learning opportunities through a partnership with the An Cosan Virtual Community College (An Cosan VCC).

Policy and advocacy also constitute an essential strand of daily work. To foster positive engagement between women and local decision-makers, LWL has established a Longford Women's Manifesto Group. This allows, on the one hand, to

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.lwl.ie/about-us/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://eaea.org/2018/08/30/partnerships-cooperations-foster-learner-centred-policy-ireland/>



develop women's political understanding, while at the same time bringing their perspectives and voices to the decision-making level. LWL also assures an

### Over to you!

- ✓ Who will be involved in developing a (new) strategy for your organisation? Your executive board? Staff? Learners? How will you involve them? Through meetings? Consultations? Working groups?
- ✓ Is there a mission statement or a vision that guides your work long-term?
- ✓ Have you carried out a needs analysis in your community?
- ✓ What will be the priorities that will guide your work mid-term? Or in other words, what would you like to achieve – and by when?
- ✓ What resources will you need to achieve your goals? Are they based on course fees? Governmental grants? Corporate partnerships? Voluntary contributions?
- ✓ Who will help you achieve your goals? Have you already mapped your potential partners who share similar priorities? Where are they based – in your community, or perhaps also at the national or European level?
- ✓ How and when will you evaluate your strategy?

information flow between different levels, primarily through its active engagement in AONTAS: The National Adult Learning Organisation, whose aim is to represent community education providers and other adult education organisations at the national level.

