A training manual on interpersonal skills development among adult educators in the context of non-formal education
This learning manual was designed under Erasmus+ project Pathways to teaching identities which aims to contribute to the much-needed development in the field of interpersonal skills in adult education. This manual addresses the challenges to the lack and/or low level of interpersonal skills in adult education and among the adult educators by fostering their empowerment through training and teaching activities based on evidence-based practical and dynamic approaches from the planning, designing to delivering participatory learning activities as means for capacity strengthening and for interpersonal skills development. The manual goal is to strengthen the capacity of adult educators on training process for empowering the adult learners toward interpersonal skills development and suggests different techniques and activities to achieve that. It is made of three sections that were discussed and approved by the project’s partners.

Section-1 Integrates a gender-sensitive and participatory training approach by looking at adult education as a learning environment where both gender and human rights are respected, when there is active and informed participation by adult learners regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, or disability in the delivery of adult education. That is, applying a participatory approach means taking an active participation in training by learners which is the most important factor that facilitates learning and performance. To be more specific participatory approach means that female, male, and non-binary participants are involved and consulted throughout the training cycle, starting from the planning phase, design and organisation, to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This method requires to look for an agreement among the adult educators and adult learners on what is to be achieved, how to achieve it, and which monitoring, and evaluation strategies will best assist in pursuing success. It also ensures a realistic training development and sustainable results. Participatory approach engages beneficiaries and intermediaries in planning, design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of a training that suggests that expected results (outputs, outcomes, and impact) are more likely to be achieved in a more efficient manner. Moreover, section-1 also considers adult learners characteristics, life experience, encourages a critical reflection and analysis of their work or practices, so that they can further develop their interpersonal skills.

Section-2 takes into consideration the physical features of adult learners where the adult educators are encouraged to analyse and improve skills that help raise awareness of how cultural differences impact learning process. Being culturally aware increases the probability that the adult educators will engage in socially acceptable behaviours by the adult learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, overcoming of cultural differences and social barriers among adult learners generates inclusive pedagogical implications for promoting adult learners’ active participation in learning activities. Again, experiential leaning technique helps to address the issue of how to improve cultural awareness skills. It also considers the adult learners characteristics and their experiences and facilitates a critical reflection and analysis of their work or practices, so that they can further develop their own interpersonal skills. To illustrate learning restrictions between and/or among the adult learners caused by discrimination, racism, and gender issues through a community simulation, the learning activity called “The Power Walk” is introduced. There is another interesting activity called “The age of adult learners in the spotlight” which deals with stereotypes while working with different age adults. This activity is used to provide the learners with outside perspectives to inform about themselves and encourages them to apply new concepts to their own lives. It helps the learners to share, and discuss different understanding, attitude, perceptions, opinions about how individuals become aware of the role of one’s age play in the attempts to create an inclusive learning environment.

Section-3 looks at strengthening the characteristic features of adult educators which is seen as an important part of the manual on development of Emotional Intelligence skills. An adult educator with a high level of emotional Intelligence is able to use and apply different teaching and training techniques and structures through a continued teaching and learning process to appeal to adult learners’ learning needs, knowledge gaps, emotions, and social or cultural barriers with inclusion, diversity, flexibility, and critical thinking. Being emotionally intelligent adult educator may elevate the adult learners’ learning and performance, and positive interactions between the educator and the learners improves motivation. Having and showing empathy towards learners is all about practicing those kinds of assessments or observations and taking them into consideration while setting up a training course for adult learners. So, the lack of practice in such a learner-centred assessment, lack of Emotional Intelligence skills, time pressure or even over reliance on technology, often lead to insufficient education and practice and non-sufficient institutional promotion of educator-learner relations if institutions are not able to recognise the importance of healthy relationships with oneself and others in the learning-teaching-training process. This section also includes various experiential-based learning activities that take into considerations the characteristics, social barriers, and cultural differences of adult learners, creating safe learning environment for adult learners, allowing them to adapt to different learning conditions, thus perceiving learning contents with curiosity and passion.

All in all, this training module views training as a learning process which involves a wide range of learning activities aimed at strengthening the adult learners’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a means to address a specific cultural, economic, gender, social, or environmental problem they are facing in their own local reality. The training module achieves its goal perfectly well because it is straight to the point, it gives clear and specific activities to illustrate different methods and presents adequate reasons why interpersonal skills are integral for adult educators. It is recommended to study the module to those adult educators who are looking for information and training on how to develop interpersonal skills. They will gain necessary knowledge about this discipline and a clear technique of how to start to improve their qualification. And the most important thing is that readers shall build a concrete framework for further learning and apply what they have learned to new situations and to other disciplines.
Learning to Teach Identities
Media and information literacy has become an important part of education and training for people all over the world. Media literacy, simply put, is the ability to identify different types of media and the messages they are sending. To develop healthy practice for engaging with information, both online and offline is needed for people of all ages. This manual on interpersonal skills development in adult education through information and media literacy responds to the current needs of media consumers and provides an insight to adult educators in using media to promote interpersonal skills. The manual provides educators with basic knowledge about media and a variety of training ideas. It also intends to develop their training skills and to promote interpersonal skills. The manual consists of four chapters.

Chapter-1 introduces media and information literacy. It clarifies what media literacy is about, its effects on adult education and essential digital skills needed for the use of media. Moreover, it explains how being media literate might help individuals to achieve their learning goals, and how to distinguish between real information, misinformation, and disinformation, and how this information is being disseminated on different social media. It is both engaging for learners as well as for educators because bringing the media into the classroom connects learning with the real life and confirms that media culture is a rich environment for learning. The chapter is concerned with deciphering between false and true narratives and providing learners with techniques, such as fact checking, to not fall into misleading theory. The chapter also looks into how adult learners deal with information and be able to identify and verify the original source of online information since it can be harmful or damaging to one’s reputation.

Chapter-2 looks at how social media is perceived among generations and how big the gap between the elderly and young people is. The role of social media in media and information literacy is to see how far behind a particular generation is when it comes to using a specific service. There is a different approach towards web services, media and information literacy that differs among generations. However, this chapter also analyses the similarities and advantages of using the social media, its impact on communication and sharing of information. And whether we like it or not in order to keep up with the information today in this network society, people in many sectors including education are required to gain certain digital competences. Development of digital skills has become significant in understanding how young people would interact and identify themselves. This chapter further presents an insight into how social media impacts overall human interaction and its effect on the way people communicate with each other, that the information can be source checked and that a person has to be equipped with basic fact-checking or verification skills.

Chapter-3 reflects on the effects of digital education on interpersonal skill. Digital education requires educators to adopt a variety of new teaching methods since it is fundamentally distinct from face-to-face interactions and thus requires educators or trainers to develop new lesson planning skills. All these tendencies require training, time, and resources for the educators, trainers to prepare quality classes. ICT should create opportunities for development of collaborative skills through real communication of information and knowledge between learners and educators and among learners. Specifically in adult education an empathic and patient educator can help the learners to learn and grow effectively in their education. Thus, educators need to be trained not only in new pedagogies, such as blended learning discussed in the manual, but also in new technologies that support knowledge or skills construction. It is important to note that many adult education institutions do not rely on just one model. That is, an adult education institution, adult educator may implement more than one model or pull components from the various models they find most effective to create a more digitalised and interactive learning environment based on how they aim to meet the needs of their learners.

Bearing in mind that the internet and most digital learning technologies are still relatively new, instructional alternatives such as blended learning could be seen as way out for adult education. Obviously, fluency in online learning is becoming progressively more important for professional growth and career advancement for everybody. To equip learners with necessary competitive skills to meet the demands of the modern world schooling system and adult centres must widen up the arsenal of methods used in teaching and training. The chapter also includes information on how to improve one interpersonal skills with developing ones digital literacy, and what are the advantages of having digital education in the development of interpersonal skills. The manual encourages educators to use ICT in classroom to diversify learning and bring sparkle to learning for adult learners.

Finally, Chapter-4 contains a step-by-step guide on writing a web blog and it presents a model to be used by the readers. This chapter is useful for perhaps beginners, and it focuses more on the content of a blog rather than technical issues. A reader will find how to create a personal blog, what is the domain and hosting service, and what are the requirements for the content that stimulates curiosity and encourages clicks. In addition, there is an important part on how to publish and promote a blog, what are the strategies that help spread the information about the newly created blog. Media education is the process of teaching learners to interpret, evaluate, and think critically about media systems and the content they produce. It involves careful analysis of but is not limited to, social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), Internet memes, viral video content, blogs and weblogs, political communication, public relations, and all forms of popular communication. Media education challenges learners to think critically about the impact of media system on the culture. And it encourages them to think about how this system might reflect and reinforce certain ideas, values, social norms, and power arrangements in the larger culture.

The manual does provide learning material, which responds to the global problem of misinformation, disinformation confronting society today in general. Serving as a learning module, the manual is designed to give adult educators and trainers a framework to help adult learners to navigate the issues associated with information disorder by practicing how to deal with disinformation.
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