XXIAdults

Approaches in Adult Education

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Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century

2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000245715

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Information

Project	Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century
Project Nº	Ref. No: 2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000245715
Work Package	WP2: XXI Adults Training Guide
Date	1.10.2025
Type of Document	Training Guide
Language	English
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Consortium

DIPUTACIÓN DE VALLADOLID

FORMATIVE FOOTPRINT

E-SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL GROUP

EMPODERAR
DESENVOLVIMENTO ORGANIZACIONAL, SOCIAL, PROFISSIONAL E PESSOAL

NOVA FUNDACJA

INSTITUTE for ROMA and MINORITIES INCLUSION

BRAVO Sarajevo

Approaches in Adult Education

Learning by Doing

Learning by doing is an educational theory that emphasises active engagement, hands-on experience, and task-oriented learning. Instead of passively receiving information through lectures or reading, the learner actively participates in practical, real-world tasks and activities.

Key aspects of learning by doing include:

- Hands-on experience
- Active engagement
- Learning from mistakes
- Reflection
- Contextual learning

Example of Good Practice

Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adults

Summary of the Practice

*Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adult*s is a peer-led, community-based initiative designed to improve essential digital skills among adults aged 50–75. It aims to address the digital divide by promoting practical, confidence-building learning in a supportive and non-formal setting. The practice supports the broader goals of the Adult Education by empowering vulnerable populations with 21st-century digital skills, helping to improve their quality of life and employment potential.

Objectives

- Equip older adults with practical digital skills (e.g., using email, accessing government portals, online safety, videoing).
- Reduce digital exclusion and promote independence.
- Foster social connection and community engagement through collaborative learning.
- Support adult education centres in modernising their outreach and inclusivity strategies.

Methodology

Step-by-Step:

- Recruitment: Local education centres invited older adults and community volunteers to participate.
- Training of facilitators: Volunteers (including younger adults and trained educators) received a short orientation on adult learning principles and digital tools.

Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational learning is a dynamic approach where people of all ages—from children and young adults to the elderly—learn together and from each other in ways that are mutually beneficial.

It is characterized by:

- Reciprocity
- Collaboration
- Lifelong Learning
- Key Benefits

Intergenerational learning offers significant advantages for all involved:

For Younger Generations (Children/Youth)	For Older Generations (Adults/Elders)	For the Community
Increased self-esteem and confidence.	Reduced social isolation and loneliness.	Strengthened community bonds and cohesion.
Improved social and emotional skills (empathy, respect for diverse perspectives).	Improved mental and cognitive health (e.g., enhanced memory, a sense of purpose).	Reduced ageism and breaking down stereotypes between age groups.
Access to life skills, historical context, and cultural knowledge from experienced adults.	Opportunities to learn new skills (especially technology) and feel valued.	Cultural preservation as traditions and life stories are passed on.
Enhanced academic and literacy skills.	Improved physical health when participating in shared physical activities.	Collaborative problem-solving on social or environmental issues using combined experience and innovation.

Example of Good Practice

Education and Culture Classrooms

Summary of the Practice

The example of good practice presented is part of the Valladolid Provincial Council's Continuing Education programme, called *Education and Culture Classrooms*, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023.

The programme began in the 1983–1984 academic year and aims to promote a sense of belonging to a shared humanity. It is open to people over the age of 18 and offers opportunities for social interaction, participation, and personal enjoyment.

From its inception, the programme has had a visible impact on the social and cultural life of local municipalities. It has created spaces for dialogue, debate, creativity, play, and active participation, which remain central to its approach today. Over the years, both the methodologies used and the thematic focus of daily educational practice have evolved. As a result, the training offer has diversified and now includes courses in English, film, art, geography, creative writing, emotional management, mythology, and symbolism in art.

Objectives

- Address diverse themes and events related to current, historical, literary, and life issues, supporting not only conceptual learning but also the development of skills and attitudes needed for everyday life.
- Promote a sense of belonging to a shared humanity and a shared planet by fostering empathy, care for resources, solidarity, and respect for diversity and differences.
- Empower learners to engage in critical reflection, express ideas and emotions orally and in writing, and practise active listening—key competences for functioning as autonomous global citizens.

Methodology

The methodology was designed to be active and participatory, starting from what learners already know. Learning outcomes were developed gradually, covering knowledge, practical skills, and attitudes. Teaching units followed a clear and logical sequence, with specific activities supporting each stage of the learning process.

- Motivational / awareness-raising activities
  – "What do you know about…?" / "What would you like to know about…?" activities
  – Watching videos, listening to songs, reading headlines
- Research / knowledge-building activities
  – Reading and discussing articles
  – Listening to podcasts
  – Individual research using the internet or books
  – Designing and conducting interviews or surveys
  – Presenting content and organising it through concept maps
  – Cultural outings (museums, cinemas, exhibitions)
- Reflection activities
  – Group discussions based on acquired knowledge and research

- Communication / assessment activities
  – Creating products related to the topic
  – Educational games
  – Mini-meetings with nearby communities or towns
- Sessions last two hours and are held weekly.

Outcomes

The concrete results of this good practice, based on participation data from the 2024 census, can be summarised as follows:

- Student engagement: 95% of participants reported high engagement in research activities and discussions, completing tasks with dedication.
- Attendance: Weekly attendance was consistent. Absences were mainly due to health issues or caregiving responsibilities.
- Participation in final activities: Learners actively took part in the final phase of the teaching units, including games and, most importantly, the creation of final products.

Success Factors

The practice was successful because it placed learners at the centre of the learning process. At many stages, participants shared their own knowledge and experiences with others, reinforcing peer learning. The continuous and active presence of the facilitator also played a key role. The educator supported and guided the group, encouraged participation, clarified content, and helped recognise and value the diverse roles within the group.

Recommendations

This practice is highly transferable and can be implemented in small towns. However, it requires strong teacher involvement, including flexible scheduling, regular follow-up through WhatsApp groups, ongoing group motivation, continuous content updates, and close attention to current events and participants' interests.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Ensure regular weekly meetings (e.g. 2-hour sessions) to build continuity and group cohesion.
- Keep group sizes manageable to allow dialogue and individual participation.
- Combine cultural stimuli (films, articles, music, artworks) with guided discussion.
- Integrate local cultural outings (museums, exhibitions, community events) whenever possible.
- Encourage learners to co-create final products (presentations, mini-projects, community meetings).

- Maintain communication between sessions (e.g. WhatsApp groups) to sustain engagement.
- Adapt topics to current events and participants' interests to keep learning meaningful.
- Provide strong facilitator support focused on moderation, inclusion, and active listening.

Community-based Learning

Community-Based Learning (CBL) is an educational strategy that integrates meaningful community engagement with academic instruction and critical reflection.

It is an experiential learning approach that connects what students are taught in the classroom to real-world issues, contexts, and problems in their local community. The core idea is that the community serves as a learning space where students can apply theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and contribute to addressing actual community needs.

Benefits of CBL

CBL provides significant advantages for all involved parties:

Beneficiary	Key Benefits
Students	✓ Deeper learning: Increased grasp of academic content through real-world application. ✓ Skill development: Hones critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. ✓ Civic responsibility: Fosters a stronger sense of empathy, civic engagement, and social responsibility. ✓ Career preparedness: Provides professional networking and resume-building experience.
Community Partners	✓ Increased capacity: Receive valuable assistance and fresh perspectives on community needs and problems. ✓ Access to resources: Gain access to the knowledge and expertise of faculty and students. ✓ Future stability: Helps build future stability by engaging young people in their mission.
Institution	✓ Stronger ties: Cultivates positive, reciprocal relationships with the local community. ✓ Enhanced reputation: Positions the institution as a leader in experiential education and community outreach.

Example of Good Practice

Back to the Future – Seniors as Digital Storyteller Gurus

Summary of the Practice

Back to the Future – Seniors as Digital Storyteller Gurus is an intergenerational learning project that empowers older adults to become digital content creators by sharing their life stories through digital storytelling tools and social media. The initiative enhances digital literacy, personal expression, and social inclusion.

In an increasingly digital society, many older adults face exclusion due to a lack of digital skills, confidence, or access to appropriate learning opportunities. While much of the focus in digital education is placed on younger generations, older adults are often left behind, leading to a digital divide that affects not only their access to services but also their social participation and self-expression.

This project emerged to respond to this gap by creating an inclusive and empowering learning environment where older adults could gain confidence in using digital tools, while also engaging in meaningful, creative work. The initiative focuses on digital storytelling—the use of photos, videos, voice, and text to craft and share personal narratives.

Objectives

The Back to the Future project was designed to combine digital inclusion with personal and cultural empowerment. Its objectives are both technological and humanistic, focusing on digital competence, creativity, and intergenerational learning:

- To enhance digital literacy among older adults through engaging and purposeful use of technology;
- To enable seniors to share their life stories using digital tools, fostering self-expression and legacy-building;
- To promote intergenerational learning by connecting seniors with young volunteers or facilitators in a cooperative learning process;
- To reduce digital and social isolation, helping older people feel more connected and valued in today's digital world;
- To encourage active ageing, through participation in meaningful and creative activities;
- To develop accessible digital storytelling methodologies that can be replicated in various adult education and community contexts.

Rather than focusing on abstract skills, the project aims to use digital storytelling as a bridge to connection, self-worth, and creativity. Participants learn not just to use digital devices, but to use them for something that truly matters to them: telling their story.

Methodology

The *Back to the Future* project follows a practical, creative, and intergenerational approach. It is structured around hands-on learning experiences that support older adults in becoming digital storytellers, with the guidance of younger facilitators or educators.

Step-by-Step Implementation

- Recruitment of participants
- Training of facilitators
- Workshops and story circles
- Digital literacy development
- Story creation
- Sharing and exhibition
- Feedback and reflection

Duration and Format

- The project is typically implemented in cycles of 8–12 weeks, with 1–2 sessions per week (1.5 to 2 hours each).
- Sessions are held in informal, friendly environments such as senior universities, libraries, or local cultural spaces.

Outcomes

The Back to the Future project has produced significant and multi-layered outcomes, both at the individual and community levels. Its impact goes beyond digital skill acquisition, encompassing emotional, social, and intergenerational transformation.

- Improved digital competence
- Empowerment through self-expression
- Reduced social and digital isolation
- Strengthened intergenerational bonds
- New learning communities
- Dissemination and visibility

Success Factors

The success of *The Back to the Future* lies in its capacity to combine digital empowerment, creativity, and intergenerational solidarity within a simple, replicable structure. Several key factors contributed to the effectiveness of the practice:

- Storytelling as a motivating tool.
- Learning by doing
- Intergenerational collaboration
- Flexible, non-formal environment
- Cultural expression and visibility

- European collaboration and resources

Recommendations

- The practice can be implemented in senior clubs, libraries, community centres, or non-formal education settings.
- Small and consistent groups support trust-building and peer learning.
- Facilitators should be prepared to combine digital guidance with emotional support.
- A safe, respectful environment is essential for sharing personal stories.
- Cooperation with youth organisations or volunteers strengthens the intergenerational dimension.
- Public presentation of outcomes increases visibility and participant motivation.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Start with introductory sessions focused on communication and trust-building.
- Keep group sizes manageable to ensure individual support.
- Provide clear and accessible learning materials adapted to participants' digital level.
- Encourage participants to bring personal photos, memories, or objects to inspire storytelling.
- Allow time for reflection and group discussion after each session.
- Focus on the learning process rather than technical perfection.
- Document the stories and share them within the local community to reinforce visibility and pride.

Digital & Blended Learning

Digital learning and blended learning are two related educational approaches that leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning, but they are distinct in their structure and delivery.

Digital learning is an umbrella term for any learning process that is mediated, or supported, by digital technologies. It focuses on using a variety of digital tools and resources to:

- Provide flexibility over time, place, path, and/or pace of learning.
- Offer personalized experiences tailored to individual student needs and styles.
- Enhance accessibility to educational materials.
- Include various formats, such as online courses, mobile learning, educational software, video lectures, and interactive content.

Feature	Digital Learning	Blended Learning

Scope	Broad – an umbrella term for any learning supported by technology.	Specific – a specific instructional model that combines two delivery types.
Delivery	Can be fully online (e.g., a MOOC), mobile, or simply technology-enhanced.	Always a mix of in-person (face-to-face) and digital/online components.
Location	Can be anywhere (online only) or a physical classroom.	Requires both a physical classroom and online access.

Example of Good Practice

Digital Mentorship Programme: Seniors Learning from Peers

Summary of the Practice

The Digital Mentorship Programme is a structured peer-to-peer initiative where digitally competent older adults mentor their peers who lack digital skills. This model leverages peer credibility, empathy, and shared experiences to accelerate digital learning, improve confidence, and reduce the sense of isolation common among older adults unfamiliar with modern technologies. It aligns with the general Adult Education goals by modernising adult education practices in a culturally sensitive, low-pressure way that emphasises both empowerment and community.

Objectives

- Improve digital competencies among older adults using a peer-led format.
- Build learner confidence and reduce resistance to digital tools.
- Promote volunteerism and active ageing.
- Strengthen the sense of purpose and societal contribution among senior mentors.
- Facilitate community-based education and digital inclusion in underserved areas.

Methodology

Phase 1: Mentor Recruitment & Training

- The centre identified digitally literate older adults (aged 55+) with interest in volunteering.
- Short training (3 sessions) equipped them with teaching and communication strategies tailored to peer learning.
- Mentors received toolkits with step-by-step guides, common troubleshooting FAQs, and a mentorship manual.

Phase 2: Mentee Enrolment

- Participants with little or no digital experience registered via local centres.
- Learners were matched with mentors based on language, interests, and availability.

Phase 3: Mentoring Sessions

- Pairs met weekly for 1–2 hours over 6 weeks in familiar, informal environments.
- Curriculum was demand-driven: mentees chose focus areas (e.g., using government services online, video calls, photo sharing, video creation).
- Mentors reported progress to a programme coordinator for feedback and support.

Phase 4: Group Reflection & Celebration

- Mentors and mentees gathered at the end of the cycle to share experiences and success stories.
- Certificates and recognition for both mentors and learners enhanced motivation.

Outcomes

- Over 30 mentorship pairs successfully completed cycles in the pilot phase.
- 87% of mentees reported feeling “more confident” using digital tools.
- Mentors reported increased self-worth and purpose.
- Many mentees went on to teach others informally—creating a ripple effect.

Success Factors

- High empathy and relatability between mentor and learner.
- Focused, 1-on-1 attention—learners moved at their own pace.
- Low-cost, easily scalable using local volunteers and spaces.
- Social bonding and interdependence among seniors.

Recommendations

Easily transferable to adult education centres, NGOs, libraries, and senior associations across Europe. To succeed, implementers need:

- A pool of digitally capable older adults
- Basic coordination (one part-time coordinator per region)
- Accessible learning spaces
- Printed support materials and mentor training.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Begin with tech-savvy retirees (e.g. former office workers, teachers).
- Use simple feedback forms to track progress and adapt sessions.
- Acknowledge and celebrate mentors—retention improves when they feel appreciated.

Peer Learning

Peer learning is an educational practice where students or colleagues learn with and from each other through a collaborative and reciprocal process. Instead of all knowledge flowing directly from a single teacher or expert, peers share, teach, and support one another to achieve mutual learning goals.

Benefits of Peer Learning

Peer learning provides a range of cognitive and social benefits:

Benefit Type	Description
Cognitive	**Deeper Understanding:** Explaining material to others solidifies one's own grasp of the subject. **Diverse Perspectives:** Exposure to multiple viewpoints and problem-solving strategies enhances critical thinking.
Social & Emotional	**Improved Skills:** Fosters teamwork, communication, cooperation, and patience. **Increased Comfort:** Peers often use simpler, more relatable language and create a less-judgemental environment, increasing the willingness to ask questions.
Academic	**Better Outcomes:** Studies show it can lead to improved conceptual understanding and academic performance. **Increased Engagement:** The social element makes the learning process more enjoyable and motivating.

Example of Good Practice

Learning Garden – Hands-on Environmental Education for Social Inclusion

Summary of the Practice

The *Learning Garden* is a nature-based education practice designed to support the social inclusion of marginalized adults, including refugees, low-income families, and people with disabilities. By engaging participants in hands-on gardening, environmental education, and group activities in a community garden, the programme fosters social

connection, ecological awareness, and personal empowerment. The goal is to provide a safe, inclusive, and calming space where participants can learn by doing, reconnect with nature, and build self-confidence while developing sustainable habits and social bonds.

In urban areas like Berlin, many socially disadvantaged adults, including migrants, unemployed individuals, and people with mental health conditions, face social isolation, lack of purpose, and low engagement with formal education. Traditional classroom-based learning often fails to attract or retain these learners. There was a growing need for alternative, low-threshold learning spaces where participants could connect, build confidence, and develop competences in a hands-on and supportive environment.

Target Group

- Adults with low qualifications or long-term unemployment
- Refugees and migrants with limited formal education experience
- People with mental health issues or recovering from psychosocial crises
- Seniors and adults with social anxiety or isolation

Objectives

- Use nature-based education to foster self-efficacy, social skills, and sustainable awareness among marginalized adults
- Create inclusive and therapeutic outdoor learning spaces that promote well-being and reduce stress
- Develop practical skills in organic gardening, environmental stewardship, and teamwork
- Improve employability through transferable soft skills (timekeeping, responsibility, collaboration)

Methodology

Step-by-Step Implementation:

1. Space Setup: Vacant land near the centre was converted into an accessible learning garden with raised beds, rainwater tanks, seating areas, and a small outdoor classroom.
2. Participant Outreach: Referrals came through local social workers, job centres, and neighbourhood projects. No previous knowledge or literacy was required.
3. Weekly Sessions: Participants joined small group sessions (2–3 hours/week) over 12–16 weeks, led by trained garden educators and social pedagogues.
4. Thematic Learning Modules: Topics included composting, soil care, seasonal planting, biodiversity, nutrition, and community-building.
5. Reflection & Social Integration: Sessions always ended with a group reflection circle. Participants shared meals with herbs and vegetables they grew, promoting belonging and cultural exchange.
6. Community Events: The garden hosted harvest festivals, open days, and workshops for families, increasing visibility and local engagement.

Methods Used

- Experiential, nature-based learning
- Groupwork and storytelling
- Tactile and sensory activities (e.g., planting, cooking, harvesting)
- Non-verbal learning formats (ideal for low-literacy participants)

Outcomes

Concrete Results:

- Over 150 adults completed the *Learning Garden* cycle since 2020.
- 75% continued to engage in further education or volunteering activities.
- Several participants went on to join urban agriculture or sustainability training programmes.
- Strengthened community ties and reduced feelings of isolation and anxiety among participants.

Impact on Participants:

- Participants gained confidence, routine, and a sense of agency
- Improved physical and mental health, especially for those with long-term unemployment or trauma

The learning process promoted intercultural exchange and peer learning

Success Factors

What made the practice effective and innovative:

- Low-threshold, non-digital format accessible to all adults regardless of literacy or language
- Use of nature and gardening as therapeutic and educational tools
- Learner-centred, informal, and trauma-sensitive approach
- Cross-sector collaboration between educators, social workers, and gardeners

Unique or Creative Elements

- Learning through nature-plants, soil, and seasons became “teachers”
- “Harvest & share” meals made learning tangible and nourishing
- Use of reflection circles and storytelling rather than formal assessments

Recommendations

Conditions for Successful Implementation:

- Outdoor space with basic infrastructure (raised beds, shelter, water access)
- Trainers familiar with inclusive pedagogy and environmental education
- Partnerships with local health, employment, or social services for outreach
- Flexible schedule and ongoing feedback loop from participants

Tips / Implementation

- Avoid overly structured curricula – let the garden and seasons guide the learning
- Design with accessibility in mind (wide paths, raised beds, quiet corners)
- Include informal social time (tea, meals, conversations) to build trust
- Use observation and journals (visual or verbal) to track progress

Mentoring / Coaching

Mentoring and coaching are both valuable development approaches, focused on helping individuals grow and reach their potential, but they have distinct characteristics:

Mentoring

1. Focus: Long-term, holistic professional and personal growth, career development, and navigating challenges.
2. Relationship: Involves a more experienced, trusted advisor (mentor) sharing their wisdom, knowledge, and personal experience with a less experienced individual (mentee).
3. Timeframe: Tends to be long-term, often lasting a year or more.
4. Expertise: The mentor typically has direct experience in the mentee's field or career path.
5. Agenda: Generally mentee-driven; the mentee sets the agenda and seeks advice or guidance.
6. Approach: More likely to be informal and involves the mentor giving advice, sharing stories, and providing direct counsel.

Coaching

1. Focus: Short-term, performance-driven improvement in specific skills, tasks, or achieving measurable goals.
2. Relationship: Involves a coach partnering with the individual (coachee) in a thought-provoking process. The coach does not necessarily need to have direct experience in the coachee's specific job.
3. Timeframe: Often short-term or time-bound, focusing on specific outcomes.
4. Expertise: Coaches are trained in coaching methodology and skill development.
5. Agenda: Co-created by the coach and coachee, focusing on the specific needs and goals.

6. Approach: More structured and is typically non-directive. The coach uses powerful questions to help the coachee find their own answers, build self-awareness, and develop an action plan.

Example of Good Practice

Forma-te: A Collaborative Learning and Resource Sharing Platform for Adult Educators

Summary of the Practice

Forma-te is an online platform designed to support the continuous professional development of adult educators, trainers, and other education professionals in Portugal. It functions both as a digital repository and an active learning community, where users can share, access, and evaluate educational resources.

Its primary purpose is to promote collaborative learning and peer support through a credit-based system that rewards the sharing of original content. Trainers earn credits when uploading resources (such as lesson plans, worksheets, or tools), which can then be used to download materials shared by others. This reciprocal model fosters a sense of community, trust, and professional recognition among adult educators.

The platform also provides updated information on adult education policies, training opportunities, professional certification (such as the CCP), and pedagogical trends, making it a valuable hub for anyone involved in the non-formal education sector.

Targeted mainly at trainers and education professionals, *Forma-te* enhances the quality of adult education by facilitating access to practical resources, encouraging reflective practice, and supporting professional growth through active participation in a peer-led network.

Objectives

The main objectives of *Forma-te* are to promote quality in adult education and to empower trainers through access to resources, peer learning, and professional recognition. More specifically, the practice aims to:

- Foster a collaborative learning culture among adult educators by encouraging the sharing of pedagogical materials and experiences;
- Facilitate access to practical, ready-to-use educational resources tailored to adult learning contexts (non-formal, vocational, community-based);
- Promote the professional development of trainers through reflective practice, exposure to new methodologies, and contact with peer contributions;
- Encourage digital participation and literacy by offering a user-friendly online environment and promoting the use of digital tools for training purposes;
- Support the visibility and value of the trainer's role, recognising contributions through a credit system that rewards active participation;

- Bridge the gap between policy and practice, by sharing updates on regulatory frameworks (such as CCP requirements) and fostering a space for informed debate.

The overarching goal is to create a sustainable, inclusive, and participatory ecosystem for adult education professionals, where continuous learning is not only encouraged but rewarded and facilitated through peer support.

Methodology

The implementation of *Forma-te* followed a clear, scalable, and user-focused methodology centred on three main pillars: content sharing, peer interaction, and platform usability. The process unfolded in several stages:

1. Platform Development and Design

A small team of educators and developers designed the platform with the specific needs of adult education professionals in mind. The design prioritised:

- Ease of navigation;
- User autonomy;
- A clean and functional interface;
- Integration of a credit system as a motivational mechanism.

The credit system was inspired by peer-to-peer exchange principles: users earn credits by uploading original content and can use those credits to download materials uploaded by others. This model fosters fairness, contribution, and reciprocity.

2. Resource Structure and Curation

The platform allows users to share a wide range of resources, including:

- Training session plans;
- Worksheets and exercises;
- Practical tools and templates;
- Theoretical reflections or technical articles;
- Official documents and guidelines relevant to the training field.

Each resource is tagged, categorised, and described by the contributor. Other users can rate and comment on the materials, supporting a culture of quality control and peer feedback.

3. Community Engagement and Communication

The platform grew organically through:

- Word of mouth and professional networks;

- Collaborations with training centres and adult education organisations;
- Regular publication of informative articles, newsletters, and legal updates;
- Active presence on social media.

Over time, the community began to self-regulate, with experienced users contributing regularly and offering informal mentoring through forum interactions and commentaries.

4. Ongoing Maintenance and Evolution

Continuous feedback is collected from users to improve functionalities. New categories and features are added regularly, such as:

- Thematic calls for resource sharing (e.g., digital inclusion, green skills);
- Highlighted resources and contributors;
- Integration with other initiatives like *Transforma-te*, promoting pedagogical innovation.

Timeframe

The platform was conceptualised and developed over a period of approximately 6–9 months, with continuous updates and refinements since its launch. It is an ongoing initiative with long-term sustainability ensured through community engagement and minimal operational costs.

Outcomes

Since its launch, *Forma-te* has demonstrated clear and measurable outcomes in improving collaboration, professional development, and access to quality resources within the adult education sector in Portugal.

1. Growth of the Community

- Over 10,000 registered users, primarily adult educators, trainers, and training technicians;
- A dynamic and growing base of active contributors who regularly share and evaluate materials;
- High levels of return users, indicating sustained engagement and satisfaction with the platform.

2. Resource Availability and Use

- More than 15,000 educational resources shared to date;
- Frequent downloads and reuse of materials in real training contexts, especially in vocational education and non-formal adult learning;
- Topics covered range from basic skills training to digital literacy, entrepreneurship, social skills, and inclusive education.

3. Positive Impact on Professional Practice

- Trainers report feeling more connected and recognised in their professional roles;
- Use of the platform has led to improved planning and delivery of training sessions, with access to new ideas and methodologies;
- The rating and commenting system supports reflective practice and constructive feedback among peers.

4. Promotion of a Sharing Culture

- The credit-based model has successfully encouraged peer-to-peer exchange;
- A visible shift from passive resource consumption to active contribution;
- Emergence of informal networks and mentoring relationships within the platform.

5. Contribution to Policy and Innovation

- The platform has become a reference point for training providers and professionals navigating the certification process (e.g., CCP);
- It has helped bridge the gap between regulation and practice, offering practical tools aligned with official guidelines;
- Integration with the *Transforma-te* initiative has expanded its scope to include pedagogical innovation, creative methodologies, and system-level change.

In short, *Forma-te* has contributed significantly to strengthening the adult education ecosystem in Portugal by making high-quality, community-driven resources accessible and by enhancing the role of trainers as active agents of educational change

Success Factors

Several key factors have contributed to the success and sustainability of *Forma-te* as a good practice in adult education:

- Credit-Based Resource Exchange Model
  The innovative system where users gain credits by uploading resources—and use those credits to download materials—creates a strong incentive for contribution. It transforms users from passive consumers into active co-creators of the platform.
- Peer-Led and Community-Driven
  Forma-te empowers trainers by placing them at the centre of the platform's development. The quality and relevance of the content come from within the community, ensuring real-world applicability and responsiveness to trainers' actual needs.
- Practical and Diverse Resource Library
  The platform offers a wide variety of resources, adaptable to different training contexts and learner profiles. This variety is one of the most appreciated features by users and supports differentiated instruction.

- Low Barrier to Entry
  No special qualifications or institutional affiliation are required to join and contribute, making the platform widely accessible. Its user-friendly interface enables quick onboarding, even for less digitally confident educators.
- Strong Informal Recognition
  Trainers receive informal validation and peer feedback via ratings and comments, creating a positive reinforcement loop. This contributes to a sense of professional identity and motivation.
- Integration with Broader Educational Trends
  Forma-te aligns with national strategies on lifelong learning and adult education. Its integration with *Transforma-te*, a project focused on educational innovation, adds a layer of reflection, experimentation, and pedagogical renewal.
- Financial Sustainability and Independence
  The platform operates with minimal funding, relying primarily on voluntary engagement and low maintenance costs. This lean model ensures its resilience and long-term viability.

Together, these factors make *Forma-te* a robust, inclusive, and inspiring model of collaborative professional development in adult learning.

Recommendations

The *Forma-te* model is highly transferable and can be adapted to a wide range of national and local contexts, particularly those where adult education professionals operate in dispersed or under-supported environments.

Conditions for successful implementation

- A clear and simple credit system
  The core motivational mechanism should be well explained, transparent, and easy to use. It must reward contribution without creating barriers to access.
- Initial community building
  A strong start requires identifying and involving a group of engaged educators or organisations willing to share content and promote the platform among peers.
- User-friendly digital environment
  The interface must be intuitive for trainers with different levels of digital literacy, especially those less confident using technology.
- Quality control mechanisms
  Peer review, ratings, and comment systems help maintain the quality and relevance of shared materials without requiring a centralised gatekeeper.
- Local adaptation
  While the structure is replicable, content categories, languages, and certification references should reflect the national/regional adult education framework.

- Strategic communication
  Promotion through professional associations, training entities, and social media can help scale engagement and embed the platform within existing networks.
- Openness and trust
  Building a culture of sharing relies on transparency, fairness, and mutual respect—values that must be embedded in the platform's governance and community ethos.

Organisations interested in adopting this model should pilot the platform with a small community of practice, gather feedback, and scale progressively. It is particularly suitable for training institutions, lifelong learning networks, or adult education consortia looking to strengthen internal collaboration and external impact.

Tips / Implementation

Based on the experience of *Forma-te*, here are some practical tips for those wishing to implement a similar practice in their context:

Before Launch

- Start with a needs analysis: Talk to trainers and adult educators to understand their main challenges and resource needs.
- Keep it simple: Avoid over-complicating the credit system or the upload/download process. Simplicity is key for engagement.
- Use open-source tools: Platforms like WordPress or Moodle (with plugins) can support basic versions of a sharing portal at low cost.

During Implementation

- Pilot with a small, trusted group: Invite a few enthusiastic trainers to upload materials and give feedback. Their early contributions will set the tone and quality standard.
- Set clear content guidelines: Clarify what types of resources are welcome, how they should be described, and what formats are acceptable.
- Use storytelling to grow the community: Share real stories of trainers who have benefited from the platform to build emotional connection and credibility.

After Launch

- Create regular challenges or sharing campaigns: For example, thematic weeks (e.g., "Digital Inclusion Tools") can stimulate activity and renew interest.
- Celebrate top contributors: Acknowledge frequent sharers or highly rated content through newsletters or social media.
- Provide micro-support: Offer brief tutorials, FAQs or even a buddy system for those unsure about how to contribute.

Sustainability Tips

- Keep operational costs low by encouraging peer moderation instead of full-time staff;
- Partner with institutions (adult education centres, universities, municipalities) to widen reach and legitimacy;

Encourage co-ownership: Let users suggest improvements and feel part of the platform's evolution.

Cultural / Creative approaches

Cultural and creative approaches in adult education place the human experience at the centre of learning. Rather than relying solely on formal instruction or data-driven strategies, they draw on arts, heritage, design, and storytelling to foster reflection, dialogue, identity-building, and community engagement.

In adult learning contexts, these approaches help participants connect knowledge to lived experience, strengthen social bonds, and develop critical and creative thinking. By integrating cultural expression into educational practice, learning becomes not only informative but also meaningful and transformative.

In practical terms, this may involve using artistic interpretation, local history, visual analysis, or narrative techniques to explore social issues, build shared understanding, and promote active participation.

Example of Good Practice

Mythology and Symbolism via Telematic tools.

Summary of the Practice

The *Mythology and Symbolism in Art* online group was created in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aimed to address the educational needs of adults in the province of Valladolid by using a simple and widely accessible digital tool: WhatsApp.

The course delivered content through short micro-lessons supported by documents, photographs, videos, and interactive activities. This format allowed participants to engage with cultural and artistic topics in a flexible and accessible way.

Even after the return to in-person teaching, the online format was maintained. It proved particularly valuable for participants who were unable or reluctant to attend face-to-face sessions due to work schedules, personal circumstances, or health-related concerns.

The practice is closely linked to the long-standing Education and Culture Classrooms programme of the Valladolid Provincial Council, which has operated in rural areas for over 40 years. The online format extended its reach and ensured continuity of access for diverse groups of adult learners.

Objectives

- To foster interest in history, mythology, and art through the study of architectural, sculptural, and symbolic elements.
- To promote independent and collaborative learning in an accessible digital environment.
- To use WhatsApp as a teaching tool to facilitate participation, monitoring, and continuous interaction between learners and educators.

Objectives by Competence Area

1. Historical and contextual understanding
    - Identify and contextualise key historical processes shaping urban and cultural development.
    - Understand the role of religious, social, and political institutions in shaping cultural heritage.
    - Relate historical debates to broader ethical and human rights discussions.
2. Artistic observation and interpretation
    - Analyse architectural and sculptural elements as expressions of power, belief, and identity.
    - Interpret artistic styles from different historical periods.
    - Recognise the symbolic and formal characteristics of classical and pre-classical art traditions.
3. Interpretation of mythology and symbolism
    - Interpret mythological narratives through artistic representation.
    - Connect iconographic elements with their social, religious, and cultural meanings.
    - Compare sacred spaces and their ritual and aesthetic functions.
4. Communication and critical reflection
    - Participate actively in digital discussions and group tasks.
    - Formulate reasoned opinions on historical and cultural topics.
    - Produce written and oral contributions (texts, audio, images) with clarity and coherence.
5. Digital and autonomous learning skills
    - Use WhatsApp as a tool for learning, communication, and collaboration.
    - Select and share relevant digital resources.
    - Manage individual learning while engaging respectfully in group dynamics.

Methodology

The course methodology is based on continuous interaction via WhatsApp, using its various formats (text, audio, images, and links) to diversify learning activities. The approach integrates multimedia resources and active techniques such as debate, oral storytelling, guided research, and visual analysis. All assignments were designed to be accessible via mobile phones and

compatible with flexible schedules, supporting adult learners in balancing study with personal and professional responsibilities.

- Weekly mini-lessons**:** Content was divided into short modules delivered through concise texts, explanatory audio clips, and visual materials (images and videos related to the artistic and historical topics studied).
- Questions and debates**:** Participants were encouraged to ask questions, comment on materials, and engage in structured discussions to promote critical thinking.
- Multimedia resources**:** Links to image galleries, 3D reconstructions, and virtual tours supported deeper understanding.
- Practical exercises**:** Short tasks focused on identifying artistic elements, symbols, or mythological references in visual materials.
- Shared repositories**:** Participants contributed relevant articles, images, or videos, fostering collaborative knowledge-building.

The online course followed the same academic calendar as the in-person version, running throughout the 2024–2025 academic year.

Outcomes

The results obtained have been largely satisfactory, as they are based on the idea that adult education should respect the diversity of life paths, enhance students' prior experiences, and foster horizontal dialogue. This has allowed for the creation of a dialogic "virtual community" in which all students feel they are participating in a common programme with common goals and content.

Success Factors

Several elements contributed to the success of this practice:

- The use of a widely accessible and familiar digital tool (WhatsApp), reducing technological barriers.
- Flexible structure adapted to adult learners with diverse schedules and responsibilities.
- Short, well-structured micro-lessons that maintained engagement.
- Combination of text, audio, images, and multimedia resources, supporting different learning styles.
- Continuous interaction between participants and facilitator, fostering a sense of community.
- Strong connection with the existing Education and Culture Classrooms programme, ensuring continuity and pedagogical coherence.

Recommendations

This practice is highly transferable and can be implemented in various adult education contexts, especially where access to computers or advanced platforms is limited. For successful implementation:

- A facilitator capable of moderating online discussions and providing regular feedback is essential.
- The group should remain consistent to build trust and continuity.
- Content should be adapted to participants' cultural background and interests.
- Clear weekly structure and communication rules help maintain engagement.
- The online format can effectively complement face-to-face classes.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Divide content into short, manageable learning units.
- Use varied formats (text, audio, images) to maintain attention and inclusivity.
- Encourage active participation through questions and small reflective tasks.
- Set clear expectations regarding response time and communication etiquette.
- Provide regular summaries of discussions to reinforce key learning points.
- Ensure materials are fully accessible via smartphones.
- Maintain a balance between structured guidance and open discussion.

Collaborative / Partner-based approaches

Collaborative or partner-based approaches refer to strategies in which two or more organisations, groups, or individuals work together toward a shared and mutually beneficial goal. The core principle is the pooling of resources — such as knowledge, expertise, funding, or technology — to achieve outcomes that would be difficult to accomplish independently.

In adult education and community contexts, these approaches promote shared responsibility, horizontal relationships, and long-term sustainability. Rather than relying on a top-down expert-client model, collaborative frameworks encourage co-creation, dialogue, and local ownership.

Feature	Traditional Approach	Collaborative Approach
Power Dynamic	Top-down / Directive	Horizontal / Mutual
Problem Solving	Expert-led solutions	Community-led solutions
Sustainability	Dependent on external aid	Built on local ownership

Communication	One-way reporting	Continuous feedback loops

Example of Good Practice

Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers

Summary of the Practice

Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers is a continuing education course designed for adult trainers who wish to develop or enhance their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate e-learning activities. The course equips participants with digital pedagogical skills, enabling them to use online platforms, design digital content, and create interactive learning environments. It supports the professionalisation of trainers working in adult education, particularly in blended or distance learning contexts.

The emergence and expansion of digital learning environments, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed a critical gap in the digital pedagogical skills of many adult educators and trainers. Traditional training methods no longer met the demands of online or blended learning contexts, creating a need for targeted professional development.

The target group includes trainers and adult educators working in professional training centres, vocational institutions, or freelance settings. Many had experience in classroom-based teaching but lacked the confidence and methodological knowledge to deliver learning effectively through digital platforms.

This practice is usually implemented within the framework of continuous professional development (CPD) and may be delivered by organisations accredited by DGERT in Portugal. It can also be part of national or European funded programmes, such as POISE, Portugal 2020, or Erasmus+ KA1 mobility projects.

Objectives

The main goals of the practice *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* are:

- To improve digital literacy and confidence among adult educators in using online platforms and tools.
- To develop pedagogical strategies that are effective in virtual and blended learning environments.
- To promote learner engagement through interactive and multimedia content.
- To ensure inclusive and accessible learning, adapting materials to different learner profiles and digital access levels.
- To foster a culture of innovation in training, encouraging educators to experiment with new formats such as microlearning, gamification, or collaborative tools.

- To support the transition of traditional training centres to hybrid or fully online delivery models.

Overall, the practice seeks to bridge the digital divide in adult education and ensure that trainers can deliver high-quality learning experiences in any format.

Methodology

The course *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* is typically delivered in a blended or fully online format, with a duration ranging from 15 to 35 hours. The methodology follows a hands-on and reflective learning model in which trainers apply tools and approaches directly to their own teaching contexts. The focus is on practical implementation, peer interaction, and gradual skill development.

Step-by-Step Implementation

1. Needs Assessment
   Participants complete a short diagnostic or self-assessment to identify their starting point in terms of digital competence and familiarity with e-learning tools.
2. Introductory Module
   An overview of digital education is provided, including the benefits and challenges of e-learning and the key pedagogical differences between face-to-face and online formats.
3. Toolbox Exploration
   Participants are introduced to a range of commonly used digital tools, such as:
   - Moodle or Google Classroom for course organisation
   - Canva, Genially, or PowerPoint for content creation
   - Padlet, Mentimeter, or Jamboard for interaction
   - Screencast-O-Matic or Loom for recording lessons
   - Kahoot or Quizizz for gamified assessment

   The emphasis is placed not only on how these tools function, but on how they can enhance pedagogical effectiveness.
4. Design Activities
   Participants design their own e-learning activities, adapting digital tools to their professional context and applying instructional design principles (e.g. ADDIE or SAMR models).
5. Peer Feedback and Reflection
   Trainers engage in structured peer review through forums or synchronous sessions. They share their work, provide constructive feedback, and reflect on ways to improve their digital teaching practice.
6. Final Assignment / Simulation
   Each participant delivers a short online training session or module segment using the tools and strategies explored during the course.
7. Follow-up and Support

Optional mentoring or the creation of a community of practice may be offered to support continued implementation and knowledge exchange beyond the formal training period.

Outcomes

The implementation of *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* has led to several concrete and measurable outcomes:

- Increased digital confidence among trainers
  Participants report feeling more autonomous and comfortable using online platforms, integrating multimedia resources, and managing virtual classrooms.
- Improved training design
  Trainers develop more structured and engaging e-learning modules, with stronger alignment between learning objectives, content, and assessment methods.
- Enhanced learner engagement
  Courses redesigned by trained educators demonstrate higher levels of interaction and reduced dropout rates, particularly when incorporating interactive and gamified tools.
- Greater inclusivity and accessibility
  Participants apply accessibility principles and adapt materials to meet the needs of adult learners with varying levels of digital competence.
- Development of peer support networks
  Many editions of the course lead to the formation of informal communities of practice, where trainers continue to exchange resources, ideas, and challenges beyond the formal training period.

Overall, the practice contributes to the professionalisation of adult education and enhances the quality and relevance of digital and blended training provision.

Success Factors

Several key elements contributed to the success and effectiveness of *The Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* course:

- Practical and hands-on approach
  The course focuses on real tools that participants can immediately apply in their own teaching contexts, increasing relevance and motivation.
- Step-by-step progression
  Trainers are introduced to tools gradually, in a structured sequence that avoids overwhelming them with too much information at once.
- Peer learning and sharing
  Participants learn not only from the trainer but also from each other, through peer feedback, discussions, and collaborative tasks.
- Flexible and self-paced structure

The e-learning format allows busy adult educators to learn at their own pace, with optional synchronous sessions for deeper support.

- Focus on digital pedagogy, not just tools
  Beyond learning how tools work, participants explore how to design effective learning experiences online.
- Supportive and inclusive environment
  Trainers are encouraged to ask questions, make mistakes, and reflect on their own teaching style, which creates a space for genuine growth.

These elements contribute to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the course.

Recommendations

The Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers course is highly transferable and can be adapted to different contexts, regions, and learner profiles. It can be implemented by training centres, NGOs, public institutions, or even freelance trainers, provided the following conditions are met:

- Access to digital infrastructure
  Basic access to devices (laptop, tablet, or smartphone) and internet connection is necessary for both trainers and participants.
- Facilitators with digital and pedagogical competence
  The course should be delivered by trainers who understand both educational technology and adult learning principles.
- Customisation to the target group
  Examples, tools, and case studies should reflect the reality of participants (e.g. vocational trainers, literacy educators, community facilitators).
- Clear and intuitive LMS
  A simple and user-friendly Learning Management System (such as Moodle or Google Classroom) is essential to avoid digital barriers.
- Support mechanisms
  Providing tutorial videos, a FAQ section, or mentoring options can enhance the experience, especially for trainers less familiar with technology.

This course model is particularly recommended for adult education centres transitioning to blended learning, for new trainers entering the field, or for continuing education initiatives aimed at digital transformation.

Tips / Implementation

For organisations or facilitators planning to implement a similar practice, the following advice and checklists can support success:

Before the course

- Conduct a needs assessment to tailor content to participants' prior knowledge.
- Choose a platform with low digital barriers (e.g. Moodle, Google Classroom, or NAU).
- Prepare a welcome module with navigation tips and basic digital literacy support.
- Ensure accessibility compliance (e.g. font sizes, colour contrast, captions).

During the course

- Use microlearning units: short, focused modules work best for busy adults.
- Integrate interactive elements like quizzes, forums, or group tasks every few lessons.
- Create clear instructions and provide examples for each activity.
- Offer regular check-ins or Q&A sessions, even if short and informal.

After the course

- Encourage participants to implement what they created during the course.
- Offer optional follow-up support (mentoring, community of practice).
- Collect feedback and revise future editions based on participant input.

Tip: Always frame tools as means to enhance learning, not ends in themselves. Focus on pedagogy first.

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Co-funded by the European Union