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USING ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES FOR EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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Abstract

The paper emphasizes transnational findings from desk and field research performed by a European consortium within an Erasmus+ project for Adult Education. Starting from the hypothesis that engaging the most marginalised groups - especially those with a migrant background - is one of the most difficult educational assignment, our research intended to identify the necessary skills of educators and the resources available to them if any real or significant progress is to be made with the most marginalised adults. The purpose was to further develop, based on the research findings, in-service training and educational materials and resources to meant to support adult educators to address the needs of the most difficult to access adult groups who might be characterised as the 'don't want to learn or unable to learn sub-set'. Thus, the results of the survey that we have implemented based on questionnaires for Adult Educators working with migrants and migrant support workers, focusing on how to use different artistic disciplines to address disadvantage, combat failure in education and enhance pedagogic and didactic approaches in adult education to engage migrants, are shown in the paper and discussed, and solutions regarding best training programs for Adult Educators are taken into consideration.

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1. Introduction

This paper presents the research results obtained within the Erasmus+ project “*Using Artistic Disciplines for Educational and Social Inclusion*” [Art4Inc], implemented by a consortium composed of 8 partners from 6 EU countries (Germany, Ireland, Romania, Spain, Czech Republic and Finland) and one associate country (Switzerland). The study focused on how to use different artistic disciplines to address disadvantage, combat failure in education and enhance pedagogic and didactic approaches in adult education to engage migrants. In the context, the paper also approaches the training of the adult educators working with migrants and migrant support workers.

2. Problem Statement

The national compensatory programmes in place generate change processes that keep expanding the heterogenous nature of our European society (European Commission, 2018) witnessing an increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. As a result, the learning groups develop heterogeneously all over EU, across all levels of education (from 1st to 3rd level) (Fundamental Rights Agency - FRA, 2017) and are marked more and more of diversity, the most frequent differences being: school education level; commitment and impulse to learn; career development plans; linguistic barriers and last but not least, socio-cultural differences.

The challenging objectives of refugees’ and asylum seekers’ integration and inclusion can be achieved only if the wide range of necessary skills and competences (personal, social, cultural and professional) are acquired in the view of integration within the receiving countries, entering the labour market and achieving sustainable employment (EU Science HUB, 2017). The European Commission has set in 2006 a set of 8 key competences which are still relevant for the European society. They represent a target achievement for migrants and refugees and the European educators need to base their efforts on these key competences. Unfortunately, this is not so easy to achieve, because educators face the above-mentioned cultural, social and language barriers and differences. For creating key-competence profile of migrant communities the educators have to consider a large variety of alternative teaching methods. Techniques such as storytelling, drama and music used in previous centuries are only rarely accepted nowadays as suitable for pedagogical purposes, to allow the transfer of knowledge and the acquisition of key competences. But history reveals the times when few people have had access to literacy and language, and knowledge was transmitted through stories, plays, poems and songs.

3. Research Questions

The following questions have led our research:

- *which are the pedagogic skills that the adult educators working with migrants and migrant support workers need, in order to be able to efficiently work with non-traditional embedded-learning approaches using different artistic disciplines?*
- *how can we make the adult educators working with migrants and migrant support workers to capitalize on the ubiquity of new on-line learning environments?*
- *which are the different roles of adult educators working with migrants and migrant support workers in these environments?*

- which are/should be the new educational environments that the new arts-based, media-rich and interactive basic skills acquisition resources proposed by Art4Inc will potentially bring to adult educators working with migrants and support workers, into the learning process they deliver to migrants?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research objectives were to identify those (missing) skills of adult educator working with migrants and migrant support workers, which are required to make them able to:

- a) use different artistic disciplines for basic skills acquisition and be confident to further develop these approaches in the future;
- b) be comfortable when working with embedded-learning and enquiry-based learning methodologies;
- c) be fully brought into the benefits that on-line learning can bring and yet fully aware of the risks that pertain in on-line environments;
- d) be able to safeguard against possible negative on-line factors.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology was a **combined** one and consisted of (1) a desk-based research conducted by all partner organisations; (2) a field-based research conducted in all partner countries together with the established research control groups.

The **desk-based research** was achieved through review and analysis of existing relevant best practices (i.e. projects, training programmes, strategies, policies, measures, initiatives, etc.). The main findings have been collected on a common template agreed by all partners. In total, 22 existing relevant best practices have been finally selected after the analysis.

We implemented the **field-based research** by applying structured interviews to (a) adult educators working with migrants and disadvantaged persons and (b) support workers of migrant and disadvantaged persons. The interviews have been applied through a face to face approach, but flexibility existed (partners could apply the interview questions online - have sent them to their respondents by email - and later on they completed the missing or incomplete answers by contacting again the interviewees, by phone or through a short face to face meeting).

All research data have been processed and interpreted and the main findings were used to elaborate National Needs Analysis Reports. A Summary Research Report, at transnational level, was then conceived.

6. Findings

Few of the most relevant best practices analysed and selected during the **desk research** phase are mentioned in Table 01 below.

Table 01. Best practices relevant for the Art4Inc training programme

Best practice	How can this best practice be used in Art4Inc?
<i>Story-Way</i> (Germany) www.story-way.com	<i>“Do you become the stories that others tell about you? Are you able to exert influence on these stories? OK, let’s start to change your stories!”</i> The Story-Way approach is applicable in all countries of the project consortium.
<i>ArtsTrain</i> (Ireland) http://www.youththeatre.ie/training/artstrain/	ArtsTrain can be used to teach how to use drama techniques in group leadership and facilitation, as well as focusing on the specific skills required to use this creative discipline in an education setting.
<i>INTEGRA - Migrants' Integrating Kit - Basic Language for Dealing with Financial Matters</i> (Romania) http://integra-project.eu	A core aspect of INTEGRA project is using drama to support integration for migrants and it proved the value of the drama exercises and how they can be applied to many other areas of life and education, therefore this project could be used in Art4Inc for successfully adapting the methodologies of drama and theatre to explore issues related to education.
<i>LACAMPA, A Space for the Meeting</i> (Spain) https://www.caritas.es/santander/qhacemos_programaas_proyectoInfo.aspx?Id=52	The work techniques proposed by LACAMPA project can be used in all those varied activities that are organized for building a new society based on respect and diversity, mainly in the development of personal learning workshops and attitudes.
<i>The Beloved Concert</i> (Czech Republic) http://www.fddcr.cz/nejmilejsi_koncert	The ideas and activities that were created for young disadvantaged persons during the implementation of “Beloved concert” - various types of performances, literary works, etc. – can be fructified within Art4Inc methodologies and materials.
Able Art Club (Finland) http://www.minnihirvonen.net	The idea of this kind of work/activity (to collectively ponder upon the various forms of domination through dance improvisations, contemporary circus and discussions) can be adapted and used in Art4Inc. Minni Hirvonen can be used as an advisor in field of dance, for example.

Through the **field-based research** 46 adult educators (31 women and 15 men), managers and migrant support workers have been interviewed in partner countries. The interviewees have different roles in their organisations working with migrants and marginalised groups: adult educators (trainers of adults), migrant support workers (i.e. cross-cultural mediator, educator of unaccompanied foreign minors, counsellor, language mediator, social worker, volunteer board member of youth projects, youth worker, clerk working on combating illegal migration, responsible for the Employment Service, psychologist specialising in intervention with minors in risk of exclusion, coordinator of Childhood and Family Programme, caregiver, etc.), managers.

The age of the interviewees varied between 24 years the youngest (in CZ) and 70 the eldest (in RO), while their professional experience in the current role (through the length of service) goes from one month (in ES) and 25 years (in RO).

Currently, our interviewees work in training centres (10), further education centres (5), private organisations (1), NGOs (21), secondary schools (1), authorities (1), foundations (1), children homes (6).

Over 70% of the interviewees (33 persons) answered that they use artistic disciplines for basic skills acquisition in the view of migrants’ educational and social inclusion, namely: music / traditional music, storytelling/digital storytelling, dance, drumming, intercultural customs, theatre/drama, creative working with food, art & craft (woodwork), photography, film/video, drawing/painting, origami, creative and factual writing, bibliotherapy and other aesthetic therapies.

Among the art-based activities they use, the participants in the interview mentioned: "*Fictitious biography work*" (development of fictional characters for theatre scenes parallel to their own professional biography), constructive storytelling as construction of own life stories writing activities, design of art projects, learning songs together, playing music and theatre, Henna workshops, organising intercultural meals, dance exhibitions, attending concerts/theatre, visiting art exhibitions/museums.

The participants in our study appreciated that the pedagogical skills necessary for an adult educator working with migrants or for a migrant support worker, in order to efficiently support migrants' educational and social inclusion through the use of artistic disciplines are (in the decreasing order of their occurrence frequency in the answers of the respondents): empathy, communication skills, listening skills, being a flexible person, motivational skills, open mindedness, social (inclusion) skills, creativity and creative thinking skills, skills for work group and cooperative learning, storytelling skills, mentoring skills, risk-taking skills, presentation skills, media and methodological skills, crisis/conflict management skills, adaptation skills, patience.

When asked if they have these necessary skills, 23 respondents answered positively (50%), 39% negatively and 11% did not answer or could not appreciate. 59% of the participants in the transnational study declared that they would like to attend a training course, meaning that not only those who lack these skills but also some of those who have already necessary pedagogical skills to work for migrants' integration would like to acquire more or to improve the current skills.

Quite few interviewees use non-traditional embedded-learning approaches in their activities, namely only 33% (15 of 46 respondents) and all of them said they feel comfortable with using them. They also provided examples of such approaches that they use: storyification, gamification, transmedia approach, systemic family constellation sessions, e-learning platforms, craft, clay work, photography, tapestry, cookery, candle work, arts (theatre, film), problematisation, Team coaching, project work, group work, functional methods, constructivist pedagogy.

In relation to their opinion about the on-line learning and the new on-line learning environments, most of the interviewees opined that they like them, see them as effective and enjoyable, they represent 'a normal part of learning nowadays'. However, there were respondents who emphasized on their advantaged and some who mentioned certain challenges, while others pointed out that a balance should be reached between traditional and online learning environments.

The roles of adult educators working with migrants and migrant support workers in these on-line learning environments are multiple in the opinion of our respondents: 'trigger', listener, storyteller, story changer, tele-teacher (teacher in media), mediator in transmitting the information, promoter of the values of tolerance and solidarity, guide of the migrants towards their integration in society, facilitator, monitor, coach, developer of online contents.

The interviewees displayed a long list of benefits of using online environments (from *learning at your own pace* and *cost savings* to *accessibility, availability* and *the creation of communities of knowledge*) and also mentioned potential risks such as motivation loss, hacking or viruses, less affective/empathic interaction between learner and educator, lack of control or the risk of leaving out the learners without necessary technical skills – to name few of them. Therewith, the participants provided solutions and ways for counteracting and managing these risks, like for example using interesting contents, applications, practical exercises and case studies in a combination with modern teaching and

evaluation methodology, double checking sources and only use reputable or credible websites, offering a proper privacy and security terms, offering training for users, coaching, providing feedback.

Regarding the types of new educational environments and resources arts-based, media-rich and interactive for the basic skills acquisition of migrants that the interviewees would like to receive from the Art4Inc project, the answers were mixed, as the respondents did not differentiate between environments and resources. Their answers referred to YouTube, Pinterest, filmmaking workshops, video tutorials, Google instruments, animations, virtual tours of museums, Game Art program, storytelling, drama, music and painting.

More details on the findings from the research may be found within the National Research Reports that have been elaborated by partners and which are available online (<https://www.art4inc.eu/>).

Based on the research findings, the Art4Inc proposed **solution** for training the adult educators working with migrants or migrant support workers is a comprehensive in-service training course to support them in the use of artistic disciplines like storytelling, drama and music for training with heterogeneous student groups to build the key-competences. This in-service training focuses (1) on developing pedagogic skills for working with non-traditional embedded-learning approaches by using different artistic disciplines and (2) on capitalizing on the ubiquity of new on-line learning environments. The training explores the different roles of educators and migrant support workers in these environments. The proposed new arts-based, media-rich and interactive basic skills acquisition resources brings a wide range of new educational environments into the learning process.

All key Learning Outcomes identified through our research have been described as knowledge, skills and competences and presented in analytical format of a Learning Outcomes Matrix. The proposed Art4Inc in-service training is organised around five major Learning Units: Communication, Soft and social skills, Managerial/organizational skills, Inter- and multi-cultural education, Online learning, Learning through art disciplines and methods (storytelling, drama/theatre, music, drawing, etc.), that may be applied to various learning fields within the context of supporting migrants' integration, such as learning languages, learning in the view of personal development or development of own personality, learning media literacy, learning to acquire digital skills, etc.

7. Conclusion

Pursuing a multi-faceted approach to support the integration of adult migrants should begin with adult educators and migrant support workers, who are the key intermediaries. Their in-service training should necessarily reflect the innovative nature of the art disciplines-based training materials.

The provision of appropriate in-service training contributes to the continuous professional development (CPD) of adult education professionals and migrant support workers, which can have a long-term positive impact in a sector of education and training where CPD supports are currently limited. In-service training of adult educators to enable them harness the full potential of art-based alternative methodological approaches will be just as relevant to any educator working to support the inclusion of marginalised groups in any educational setting.

The use of artistic resources for migrants' basic skills acquisition represents an effective method in fostering their social inclusion. Using a unique blend of different artistic disciplines to develop bespoke

training resources that support key competence acquisition among the growing migrant communities in Europe is a viable and innovative solution.

It is essential that front-line education workers and migrant support workers are adequately resourced to engage with the growing numbers of adult migrants. If teaching in nowadays heterogeneous environments, where even basic communication can sometimes be a challenge, is to be successful and have the desired impact, alternative methodologies to the normal intervention measures are needed.

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