

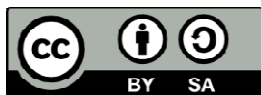
COOL



The COOL Narrative Piloting Reports Result 3.5b

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Summary

Each participant of the COOL CPD was supposed to carry out a pilot project which was based on the COOL methodology and which should contain didactic or methodological approaches related to the creation of “open learning spaces”.

The documentation of these learning experiences is 2-fold. On the one hand the professionals reported their approaches and experiences in an educational essay, describing their approach and their experiences.

In the second part on hand they report about their “learning journey” and convert their experiences in a narrative report, which should also reflect their pathway on the implementation of the COOL concept – from the first encounter with the approach, to the planning and the delivery at the own institution.

The format of these narrative reports vary – some stucked to the journey metaphor, others chose other ways of describing their experiences.

All in all we compiled 18 reports to give an overview of the rich learning experiences of the European group of Adult Educators within the COOL project.

1. The German Stories

1.1. Project 1, Sustainability Managers

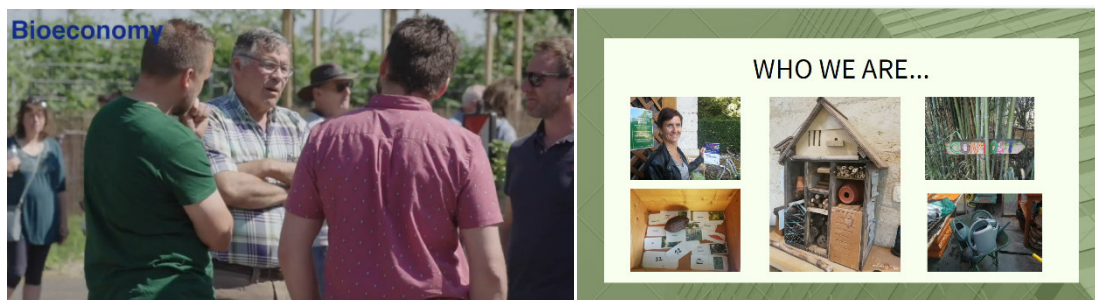
1.1.1. Summary

We intended to develop an innovative open learning space and a learning and development programme for the target group of senior citizens. The learners (who are either retired or senior employees) should improve their job quality with a specific qualification relating to the implementation of a sustainability management approach in local entities, be it in SME, NGOs or public institutions. The project also targeted pensioners.

The idea of the learning project is to equip these learners with competences that would enable them to continue to work and to take over specific “sustainability tasks”, in companies or in civic projects.

For this purpose, they participated in an open blended learning programme consisting of short inputs, extended workgroup sessions and online resources (the SDG explorer and design thinking learning, coaching and collaboration tools).

By the end of the open learning project the participants created a prototype on a specific qualification for sustainability management in SME promoted by senior employees and citizens.



1.1.2. Narrative Report

Start of the Journey

A group of 3 employees and external coaches joined to carry out the open learning project with this target group. 6 persons over 55 who worked together in a local project with the goal to spot ideas and opportunities for entrepreneurial activities.

We met them in a first workshop to create an understanding for the societal challenges.

We presented our concept of the SDG explorer and carried out a “digitalisation workshop” to familiarising them with the app.

This went pretty smoothly and it told us that the app is rather barrier free and easy to handle.

The participants went into the self-learning phase and came back with their distinct sustainability types.

On the Way

The discussion of the profiles already revealed the preferences of the participants – in this case mostly SDGs that represented environmental and (social) care themes.

Based on these findings the selection of the working hypothesis for the team was relatively easy and led to the vision of a counselling organisation of senior citizens for sustainable development.

Ideating sessions (using brainwriting methodology) and selection processes went comparatively easy since the goals had been clearly fixed. The prototyping was entirely self-organised by the learners, which was a rather strange experience for some colleagues since “facilitation” is still a new concept and the paradigm change from traditional teaching/training is still a big step for some of them.

On Arrival

The central message that I take home is the gratefulness of these learners to be taken serious and to feel the trust in their abilities and creativity. I had the feeling that they really enjoyed the learning experience and that they want to follow-up on this (since they asked for other opportunities).

We will try to convert this experience in a new project for seniors since it offers a great potential to answer to labour shortage, later life careers and to the necessity to quickly integrate a new workforce. Last but not least, it seems to be a creative and “human” way of keeping people longer in jobs or active in society.

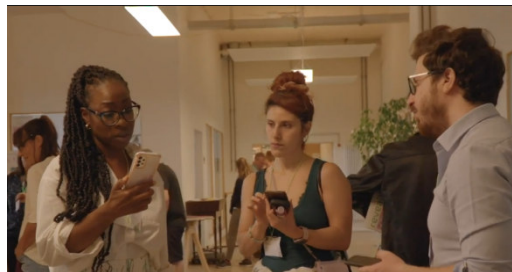
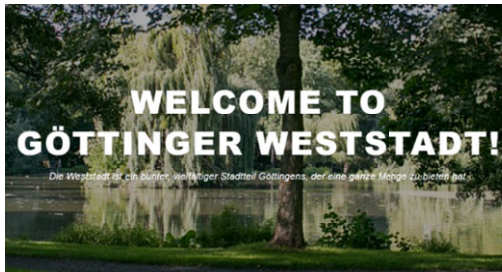
Following this first experience, we applied the same approach within a KA1 mobility learning for the same target group. This time we picked the theme of integration of refugees and worked on an approach how to counsel and train them “on the job”.

This initiative even led to innovative project designs within the EU-AMIF programme.

1.2. Project 2: Weststadt Development Initiative

1.2.1. Summary

An app called GOE West has been developed and used by the local community to create a platform for information and exchange in the Weststadt. It offers a variety of functions: a map showing locations and organisations, including filter functions and navigation, detailed information and contacts to organisations in the area, who can use their accounts to share information and to announce events via push notifications to app users, a button for users to follow their favourite organisations, and a blog function where people, activities, history and projects in the area can be presented. Also a cooperation to run and maintain the app with the community centre was agreed.



1.2.2. Narrative Report

Many of our local participants live in a quarter called Weststadt, a relatively poor working class area with a large migrant population and a bad reputation.

We were keen to apply the COOL approach in this area and to find ways how to open spaces for the learners to engage creatively in new ways, within the own team (for us as facilitators), with our learners and with other civic institutions in the area, to increase job and satisfaction, learning impact, cooperation and not least to create new cooperation perspectives.

Our journey started with a series of team workshops using the design thinking process. Over the development phase we became well familiar with the approach, and we all consider it as an excellent methodology to activate our learners and “clients”- because in the end it is them who have to use it, introduce their information and make it a useful tool.

In this first travel phase of the journey – the understanding phase - the team focused on comprehending what it wanted to achieve and to anticipate the needs of all involved. It then defined its vision: to build new ties and to learn and grow as a team, by carrying out a creative, practical project with stakeholders from the Weststadt to support the multi-cultural community development.

In the second, the empathy phase meetings were arranged with organisations in the area, e.g. the community centre, a theatre project and a cultural centre to better get to know the Weststadt and their residents. Stakeholders from the Weststadt were also involved throughout the following phases. Given the multi-cultural and multi-lingual composition of the area and the obvious need to support interaction for the sake of integration, to promote existing offers and BUPNET’s expertise in IT development, the idea most favoured during the third, the ideating phase was to develop a community guide app.

In further meetings with stakeholders features and requirements for the app were defined and technically implemented by BUPNET's team of IT developers. At the stage of this report, the team is about to enter the last phase of the design thinking process: the test phase. The GOE West App has been developed. It offers a variety of functions: a map showing locations and organisations, including filter functions and navigation, detailed information and contacts to organisations in the area, who can use their accounts to share information and to announce events via push notifications to app users, a button for users to follow their favourite organisations, and a blog function where people, activities, history and projects in the area can be presented. Also a cooperation to run and maintain the app with the community centre was agreed.

The crucial milestone of our trip was the presentation of the app during the international reveal¹⁴ and later also reveal¹⁵ international conferences. Further workshops for organisations were organised to enable them to use the app to promote their work.

The development process together with stakeholders from the Weststadt has generally strengthened BUPNET's local ties and a lot of positive social interaction was generated, and plans for other common activities are already being made.

The objective to increase job satisfaction and work-based learning was reached as well. The project brought together colleagues who previously had little to do with each other and the results achieved created a sense of accomplishment and motivation to build upon what was reached.

All colleagues strengthened their facilitation competences.

The final beneficiaries are diverse citizens from the rather backward areas, some older AE learners (pensioners), people with migration backgrounds and socially disadvantaged youth. They all strengthened their digital skills and also their teamwork competences.

Insofar we can state that the objective to create joint open learning spaces was fully achieved, both for the residents and organisations in the Weststadt but also for us as trainers and IT learning designers and programmers.

“One of the most important experiences in my professional development: eventually we can offer something to a community which is really interested in collaboration. Before, it was always a big struggle to get them on board”. Sebastian

“Also for me as a programmer, the DBCL methodology is a great opportunity to test the software in practice with real projects and to get “real clients” in the pre-test and test phase.” Jens-Michael

“The app is a great means to involve youth in local activities – and we have all contributed to the development” (Julia, Jugendhilfe)

1.3. Project 3: Biochar in Community Gardens

1.3.1. Summary

PROGRASS e.V. is an association that was founded in Eschwege in 2011. PROGRASS stands for an innovative and interdisciplinary concept which, taking into account ecological, technical and socio-economic aspects, pursues the development of a sustainable form of grassland management with the aim of preserving biodiversity and cultural landscape.

PROGRASS is part of a joint project of BUPNET with the University of Kassel, in the context of which socio-ecological projects are to be developed from grass biomasses, which are not only intended to have a positive climate impact, but also regional civic projects.

These goals fit ideally with the COOL approach, as here, too, new ideas are to be generated in a participatory approach, which are to achieve local added value and at the same time have a positive effect on social relations in local communities.

2 members of the BUPNET team designed a training concept for PROGRASS e.V. based on the design thinking approach for the regional development of products from ecologically produced biochar.

The concept was tested for the first time in 2020 with approx. 15 PROGRASS partners from DE, BE, FR and UK and implemented in 2021 with a group of 25 participants from SMEs and start-ups.

The project had trained over 40 people so far. The concept is multi-purpose and promotes the development of local products that have a positive climate impact as they sequester carbon.



The design thinking approach was successfully piloted in several workshops in community gardens in Göttingen in which migrants and the local population cultivate plant and vegetables together.

The idea of the workshops is to design and create products out of the biochar feedstock, since it has a very positive effect on plant growth, soil and substrate properties and offers a rather uncountable number of different applications for ecological development and sustainable farming.

In the end 8 people joined the workshops and presented their product to an international audience during the reveal15 conference in Sep. 2023.

1.3.2. Narrative Report

Once upon a time, there was a small network in the midst of big corporations. It was surrounded by big players who produced fossil coal and had no great interest in changing energy policy in a sustainable and climate-friendly way.

What few people know: Fossil coal is not only burned. A lot of unsustainable products are also made from fossil coal. Even the activated carbon that purifies groundwater and is used in "alternative" drinking bottles has a poor sustainability record.

Our small network gathered a crowd of committed citizens and companies over the past 10 years to make charcoal from unused bio-waste. This was achieved with the technology of "pyrolysis", which makes so-called "biochar" from, for example, waste from the organic waste bin, wood waste or unused grass cuttings.

But this biochar, the network realised, is far too valuable to be burnt straight away - even if that would of course be much more sustainable than what the big corporations do.

For this reason, the network gathered its member organisations and considered what else could be done with this biochar. And since they quickly realised that these developments were not that easy to realise, they asked local people who could support them. But they were neither convinced by the offers of professional coaches, engineers or other consultancies, because these could only ever work on a small part of the "opportunity space". This is because social developments take place in complex systems in which there are no purely ecological-technical, social or economic solutions. Here, the creativity of all citizens should be used together for social innovations.

Therefore, the small network finally cooperated with a group called "Facilitators of Learning and Development". The network partners liked that they were taken seriously here and that they could contribute and implement their own ideas. General knowledge about the SDGs was made available to the participants and they could network on a platform - guided and kindly accompanied by the facilitators.

An open learning programme was set up consisting of several face-to-face modules that were worked with intercultural working groups in intercultural gardens - from the vision of a socio-ecological region to concrete products made from biochar.

Through this learning and development programme, participants also came into contact with new partners from Northwest Europe, who contributed many new ideas for products made from biochar, be it for animal health, waste water purification, odour reduction, organic soap and much more. Some of the products even won a prize and could be presented at a conference.

The programme has been so successful that there will be a several new runs in Europe, and hopefully many more later, where citizens (and also businesses) will develop climate-friendly products and services from their waste.

2. The Lithuanian Stories

2.1. Project 1, Gender Equality eMentor Network

The project, "Gender Equality eMentor Network" is designed to address gender inequality in career advancement by offering open mentorship opportunities. The project aims to empower women in their professional journeys through online mentorship, virtual workshops, resource sharing, and advocacy efforts. The ultimate goal is to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. The project seeks to combat persistent gender disparities in the workplace and provide individuals with the guidance and support needed to break down career-related barriers.



2.1.1. Summary

Starting Point / Setting the Scene

In my role as a trainer in adult education, my field of work primarily involves facilitating learning experiences for disadvantaged groups as well as AE. I also deliver training on gender equality topic to community members, employers and public institutions. The challenges in our context regarding open learning and facilitation are rooted in the need for innovation to better engage learners and address the diverse needs of marginalized groups. Open learning is necessary because it promotes inclusivity, collaboration, and empowerment, especially for individuals facing barriers to education and career advancement.

2.1.2. Narrative Report

Start of the Journey

Working in a European team was essential to gain diverse perspectives and insights into open learning. It offered an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds and educational systems. My backpack at the start of this journey contained a commitment to addressing gender inequality, and a willingness to embrace new methodologies. I

got to know my fellow travellers through a collaborative European project aimed at fostering open learning in adult education. We shared our experiences, expertise, and aspirations for innovative teaching methods. Onboard my home crew, I had the support of my institution, which recognized the importance of exploring innovative approaches in adult education.

On the Way

The journey was marked by several important development steps. One of the key milestones was the identification of the challenge: gender inequality in career advancement. This challenge was the foundation for our learning project, the "Gender Equality eMentor Network."

The most valuable experiences during this journey were the moments of collaboration and creative problem-solving. When conducting activities like the Persona Canva and brainstorming sessions, our diverse group of educators brought unique perspectives to the table. While this diversity sometimes led to longer discussions, it ultimately resulted in innovative solutions to address gender inequality.

One of the difficulties we encountered was the time constraint. While we were able to explore and define the problem effectively, we were unable to fully develop a prototype for our project. This highlighted the importance of allocating sufficient time for all phases of the design process.

On Arrival

I will take home several lessons from this journey to transfer into my practice. Firstly, I will continue to encourage open learning and collaboration among educators. The experience reinforced the importance of considering alternative viewpoints and engaging in constructive discussions to find innovative solutions.

Learners responded positively to our approach. Feedback from the learners was particularly encouraging, as they gained a deeper understanding of gender equality issues and found value in sharing their experiences and knowledge.

One of the participants, an adult educator from Lithuania, shared: "This training opened my eyes to new possibilities in adult education. I gained an understanding of the effectiveness of working together and employing creative thinking. I am excited to implement some of these innovative approaches in my work with disadvantaged groups."

2.2. Project 2: Waste Art Wonders: Inspiring Sustainability

2.2.1. Summary

The project aims to address the issue of waste generation and the lack of awareness about proper waste sorting and environmental sustainability. It involves the establishment of a community action group focused on environmental protection. The project includes three main components: the creation of a Waste Museum, the organization of an environmental film festival, and various educational activities. The Waste Museum serves as an interactive learning hub where community members can create exhibits from waste and participate in educational activities, seminars, and film festivals. The project's goal is to increase awareness of waste sorting, pollution issues, and environmental benefits, motivating more people to contribute to environmental causes.



2.2.2. Narrative Report

In our field of work as adult educators, we apply different teaching and learning approaches. However, we notice that there is a need for more innovative and open learning approaches to engage disadvantaged groups effectively.

Challenges in our context usually include disengagement, lack of interest, motivation and limited resources to create engaging learning experiences. It is necessary to be innovative because traditional methods aren't reaching our target groups effectively. We need to find new ways to inspire learning and address the specific needs of our learners.

Working in a European team enriches by providing access to diverse perspectives, cross-cultural learning, and resources that enhance the quality and effectiveness of our educational initiatives. It fosters innovation and helps us address the unique challenges faced by disadvantaged learners in different European contexts.

In my backpack, I carried my experience as adult educator, a passion for sustainability, and a commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by disadvantaged groups. I also had a belief in the power of open learning to drive positive change.

Back home, we gathered our own crew of adult educators who were eager to join our journey. They brought their expertise and insights, ensuring that our project would be well-suited to our specific context.

The project's innovative approach resonated with our target groups, addressing their specific needs, nurturing creativity, and inspiring innovation.

The most valuable experiences were the active involvement of the adult educator's team, whose expertise accelerated the project's development. The use of Design Thinking method, which helped us develop a relevant project for our target group. The development of competence in learners, who gained skills in problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity. As well, the creation of a Waste Art exhibition flyer by participants during the pilot.

As a trainer, I will take several valuable insights and strategies from this experience into my future practice. I've learned the importance of tailoring training approaches to factors like the topic, timeframe, group size, and background. Adaptability during training is crucial to ensure that

2.3. Project 3: Start – Educational Tourism

2.3.1. Summary

6 migrant women during the piloting developed the project “Start – educational tourism”.

Migrant women addressed their needs and developed idea that would be most valuable for them. They focused on inclusion of youth and their family members.

The main goal of the project is to increase inclusion of youth in the labour market through educational tourism, which includes career guidance, educational excursions and work-related visits in selected foreign country.

The seminars and meetings, consultations regarding traveling to another country would take place in advance in the organisation “Start – educational tourism”.

The results – increased level of knowledge and practical experience during the seminars, career guidance, educational activities and excursions would provide sense of security in a new environment, cultural awareness and facilitate a quicker integration into the job market or help to choose a study path. Family members would participate and accompany youth during the visit in another country.



2.3.2. Narrative Report

I am working in the field of adult education. Providing trainings for disadvantaged groups – unemployed, migrants, senior citizens, etc. that focuses on their inclusion in the society.

Our organisation is developing and implementing different educational methods of work with different target groups, such as organizing e-learning courses, dialogic groups, implementing social pair and group mentoring, providing various competence trainings.

As the context are rapidly changing, more flexible approach to learning is needed. Innovative and flexible training can empower disadvantaged individuals by boosting their self-confidence and self-efficacy. When people believe in their abilities to learn and succeed, they are more likely to pursue education and career opportunities.

Working in a European team is beneficial because it offers diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultural insights. Collaborating with individuals from various European countries enriches the project with a broader range of ideas and approaches. It promotes cross-cultural understanding and fosters creativity by combining different backgrounds and viewpoints.

At the beginning I brought a background in training and facilitation and eagerness to explore and implement Design Thinking method.

I got to know my fellow travellers through close working relationships formed during trainings, seminars and meetings.



To involve my home crew in the project, I presented the concept and goals. I emphasized the potential benefits of the Design thinking method, including the opportunity to learn from European partners and bring innovative practices back to our organization.

The key milestones were getting to know open learning principles, which emphasized learner-centric approaches. Implementing Design Thinking as a creative problem-solving methodology. As well, equipping learners with new skills and competences and developing a tangible prototype as a result of the learning process.

The most valuable experiences during this project included witnessing the transformation of migrant women into creative problem solvers through the Design Thinking approach. The best moments were when participants shared their personal stories, strengthening their connection and enhancing collaboration.

One of the most significant challenges was managing time constraints, especially during the team-building activity and idea generation sessions. The specificity of the target group required more time for personal storytelling and bonding. Adapting to this unexpected need was challenging but essential for the success.

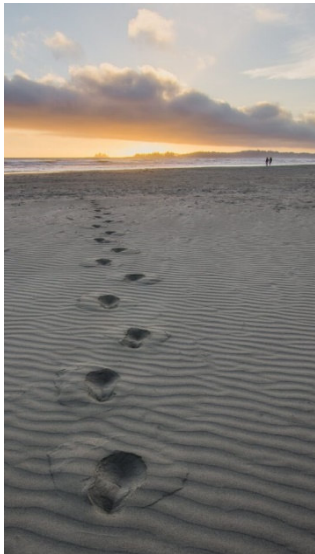
From this learning project, I will take home a deeper understanding of Design Thinking and its applicability in diverse training contexts. I will incorporate interactive, hands-on activities.

At home, my crew was excited about the potential of implementing new concepts and methodologies. Learners were engaged and satisfied with the project, particularly as it encouraged their creativity and equipped with new knowledge and competences.

3. The Spanish Stories

3.1. Project 1: Walk4Health

3.1.1. Summary



As we have a lot of elderly people from all over Europe (but mostly the UK, Germany and the Netherlands) who retire to the Costa del Sol region in Spain.

Typically, this group of people has little knowledge of the Spanish language, does not integrate well into the Spanish society and tends to at best establish a parallel society of its own with other people of its kind.

Most often, these people have however only limited social contact overall and can find their retirement to be quite lonely.

Based on this background, Walk4Health is a concept to combine three important elements to help elderly expats in the region: healthy physical activity, social interaction and cultural learning.

Participants are invited to group strolls and hiking trips (depending on the level of activity acceptable) where they also can socialise with others, as well as talk about cultural topics.

3.1.2. Narrative Report

I typically work in social development projects in the region for a variety of local target audiences. My work typically includes the development and implementation of educational content for disadvantaged groups or people working with those groups. This typically also has a strong focus on competence-learning as we try to especially focus on imparting practical knowledge and skills over formal learning and certification processes, as we are not a formal education facility. Personally, I also have a background in other similar education methods, such as Basic Education for migrants, which I have done in the past and which was a blend of formal and non-formal learning which was mainly competence-oriented to provide competences to move on into formal education.

I find working in the European context to be useful, because it allows me to draw on experiences in other European countries, gain different perspectives, but also to work with European partners on solutions that might be applicable to problems in other countries too, as the situation might not be unique to our local context.

During the development process of the initiative, the most important milestones were the identification of target group needs and the development of adequate measures. The challenge was to identify methodologies that are accepted by the target group as something of interest and especially does not try to be a lecture, something that many might feel would be patronising and disrespectful, as the target group often already has plenty of life experience and is reluctant to assume the role of pure learners. The social interaction and exchange in my opinion does provide a decent avenue to engage in informal learning and avoid conventional teacher-student settings, while also addressing two core needs of the target group, which are physical exercise to maintain health and overcoming

potential social alienation and isolation, which is not uncommon among expats in the region. The most difficult aspect in my experience however is the compromise between making the target group feel familiar enough with the activity and other participants, which caused the focus on groups of expats, while not creating a room that fosters further isolation from the host society by providing grounds for mutual reinforcement of negative thoughts and opinions on the host society (which is a risk and has to be taken into consideration).

The practice has helped me acquire new organisational skills and I appreciate the clear structure of the Design Thinking approach. I do think that the approach is well-suited to my field of work for developing initiatives and helps avoid oversights when it comes to target group needs and attitudes. This obviously is important and has been occasionally an issue in the past and has always been especially problematic to resolve. Thus the ability to make more structured decisions and making sure the development process starts with the identification of target group needs and attitudes should be helpful.

3.2. Project 2: EU-Chances

3.2.1. Summary



Spain. We called the project „EU-Chances“

Among Western European countries Spain's youth is comparably not very mobile on a European level, especially in the Southern parts of the country. At the same time, this would offer great benefit to this demographic professionally when Spain still has the highest youth unemployment rate within the EU.

While many young have in recent years expressed interest in going abroad to work, in practice in Malaga province we can observe a certain reluctance, especially among people who have low skills or low levels of English language proficiency.

For this reason, we decided to work on activities that could function as an incentive to move abroad using low threshold activities that encourage further engaging with opportunities and foster interest in intercultural and language competences which are useful for professional development whether they go abroad or stay in

3.2.2. Narrative Report

Onboarding

Over years I was working as self-employed counsellor for agricultural and rural projects, mostly funded by national funds and FEDER. As I like to be in contact with other people and speak various languages in summer I am additionally working as a tour guide. I was very happy to have been invited by Asociación Caminos to this learning opportunity of the COOL project. I did already several activities together with them, but I never had such a big insight in project development in an international context.

On the journey

For me working in a European team seems always very helpful to see a problem from multiple standpoints, there are countries who face similar challenges, but also there are countries who are already ahead and might provide best practice. Having being active mostly in the national context it was only clear to me that situations (unemployment level, gender pay gap,...) may differ from the stories tourists were telling me in summer, but I could not always believe it and thought some of the things were made up.

So, it seems good to know about the situation in your partners countries to know how far it makes sense to collaborate with them or not in a European project. Our group was mixed up of people from different organisations or free lancers like me, some people already working in European projects for some years and some, who were more active in the national /local work. This mix was enriching for both sides to get to know more about the needs and activities of the others. It was not always easy to follow the vocabulary and terms of EU projects, but we were well guided and this explanations helped to structure the idea into a concept note.

Milestones

There were two important steps: The one we said we have to think European, because other countries might not have the same problem. This was kind of “aha” experience as some of the group were really fixed to situations in Spain.

Another very important step was the start of talking about possible methods instead of re-shaping the problem and what young people do not do. To focus on what we want to do instead of blaming somebody for not doing something. In this phase we could really observe a change of energy. People started to be more creative and enthusiastic on possible activities and challenges to face within the tool we want to develop.

On arrival

This were all very valid experiences which will help us in structuring future project applications on EU but also on national level, even for local initiatives. Difficult was the time schedule, to fit it into my normal day as freelancer. For me as often I am in trainings or around with tourists during the day, it

fits better in the evening to meet, but this was a problem for others who wanted to do the meetings during normal office hours.

I think we should more often do such exchanges to develop our ideas, beside the concretizing new ideas it also helps to promote mutual understanding in between us and our work and our stakeholders. I am happy that I can go on with this idea of trying to raise the interest of young people for Europe, I already talked to a friend of mine, who is teacher in a secondary school to see what she thinks of such a project and I hope that we can make a project out of it, which will be submitted next year.

3.3. Project 3: JOB

3.3.1. Summary

The JobOutoftheBox (JOB) learning project concept was drawn up to deal with the issues of unemployment.

Challenge Tackled

Women in rural areas face structural disadvantages to find employment and an own income, as there are less employment opportunities or supporting infrastructure is missing. Digital Jobs might be an opportunity to overcome structural disadvantages. But for these women might need additional skills and new life patterns, new job choices, etc.



Solution

- Selecting a specific region for implementation to be able to conduct an analysis of areas for future employment
- Providing the participants with
- Knowledge on alternative job/income opportunities
- Provide relevant transversal professional training needed
- Create 10 personalized training or business plans, which later in the project also serve as best practice examples.
- Emotional support with upcoming doubts and self confidence

Innovation

- Provision of all relevant tools needed to conduct such an approach in one specific region and digitalize it in a way that it might be applied by interested parties in another region

Unique Selling Point

- Specific solutions for specific regions and targets; support them in their solution finding process and tutor them

Impact

- Raise employability of targets
- Create new visions and alternative life plans with them
- Raise understanding for new working opportunities
- Build networks for mutual support and development

3.3.2. Narrative Report

Onboarding

Over years I was working as self-employed counsellor for agricultural and rural projects, mostly funded by national funds and FEDER. As I like to be in contact with other people and speak various languages in summer I am additionally working as a tour guide. I was very happy to have been invited by Asociación Caminos to this learning opportunity of the COOL project. I did already several activities together with them, but I never had such a big insight in project development in an international context.

On the journey

For me working in a European team seems always very helpful to see a problem from multiple standpoints, there are countries who face similar challenges, but also there are countries who are already ahead and might provide best practice. Having being active mostly in the national context it was only clear to me that situations (unemployment level, gender pay gap,...) may differ from the stories tourists were telling me in summer, but I could not always believe it and thought some of the things were made up.

So, it seems good to know about the situation in your partners countries to know how far it makes sense to collaborate with them or not in a European project. Our group was mixed up of people from different organisations or free lancers like me, some people already working in European projects for some years and some, who were more active in the national /local work. This mix was enriching for both sides to get to know more about the needs and activities of the others. It was not always easy to follow the vocabulary and terms of EU projects, but we were well guided and this explanations helped to structure the idea into a concept note.

Milestones

There were two important steps: The one we said we have to think European, because other countries might not have the same problem. This was kind of “aha” experience as some of the group were really fixed to situations in Spain.

Another very important step was the start of talking about possible methods instead of re-shaping the problem and what young people do not do. To focus on what we want to do instead of blaming somebody for not doing something. In this phase we could really observe a change of energy. People started to be more creative and enthusiastic on possible activities and challenges to face within the tool we want to develop.

On arrival

This were all very valid experiences which will help us in structuring future project applications on EU but also on national level, even for local initiatives. Difficult was the time schedule, to fit it into my normal day as freelancer. For me as often I am in trainings or around with tourists during the day, it fits better in the evening to meet, but this was a problem for others who wanted to do the meetings during normal office hours.

I think we should more often do such exchanges to develop our ideas, beside the concretizing new ideas it also helps to promote mutual understanding in between us and our work and our stakeholders. I am happy that I can go on with this idea of trying to raise the interest of young people for Europe, I already talked to a friend of mine, who is teacher in a secondary school to see what she things of such a project and I hope that we can make a project out of it, which will be submitted next year.

4. The Italian Stories

4.1. Project 1: Re-Pad Me Sewing Kit

4.1.1. Summary

The project “Re-Pad Me Sewing Kit” involves the development of an innovative sewing kit for sanitary towels, a perfect way to ensure that every woman has access to affordable and sustainable sanitary products. The sewing kit, which allows women to make their own sanitary pads, includes pre-cut pieces of fabric to reduce the cost and environmental impact of traditional sanitary products. With easy-to-follow instructions and all the necessary materials, the kit can create comfortable, high-quality fabrics at a lower cost. It is the perfect solution for those looking for an economical and environmentally friendly sanitary towel.

The kit contains :

1. Sanitary pad of all sizes as models.
2. Absorbent fabric.
3. Sewing patterns with all instructions.
4. Waterproof fabric.
5. Cotton fabric



1



4.1.2. Narrative Report

CESIE's Adult unit is committed to assisting individuals in acquiring and enhancing fundamental skills and essential competencies.

¹ Grafic retrieved by pch.vector

This involves nurturing valuable, high-quality proficiencies to boost employability, socio-educational and personal development, and encourage active participation in civic and social life. Our objectives encompass several key areas:

- Expanding and enhancing the provision of top-notch learning opportunities tailored to the unique needs of adults with limited or no educational backgrounds.
- Exploring and implementing innovative educational, training, and youth practices.
- Acknowledging and validating knowledge, skills, and competences attained through formal, non-formal, and informal learning.
- Facilitating collaboration between local authorities to advance educational, training, and youth systems and integrate them into regional and local development initiatives.
- Supporting students with special needs in completing their educational cycles and transitioning into the workforce.
- Developing and delivering education and training for professionals to address equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges within the learning environment.
- Participating in transnational initiatives that promote entrepreneurial mindsets and skills, encouraging active citizenship and entrepreneurship.

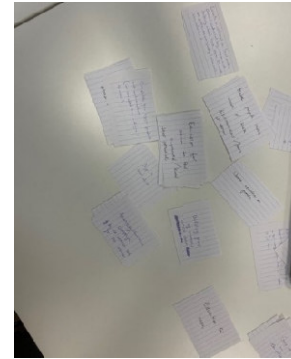
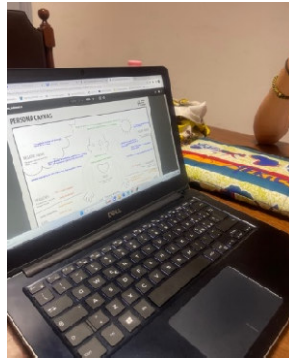
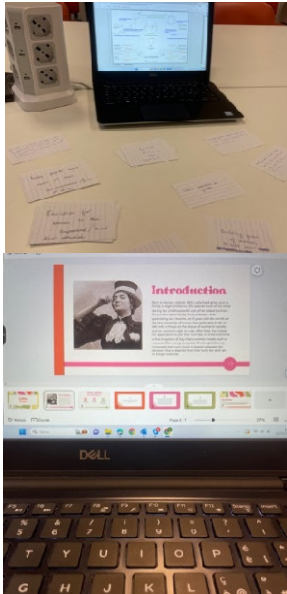
Our primary teaching and learning methods encompass non-formal learning, blended learning, e-learning, MOOCs, and micro-credentials.

Concerning local challenges in implementing these learning methodologies, it's essential to highlight the need for educational support for individuals who haven't completed their education or have limited educational backgrounds. Innovative tools, such as open learning spaces and the mentioned methodologies, are crucial in addressing these challenges.

Collaborating within a European team is vital in this context as it provides diverse perspectives that foster innovation and creativity. European-level cooperation allows access to a broader pool of knowledge and skills, making it more effective in addressing local and global issues. European collaboration offers advantages such as diversity, expertise, cultural understanding, and the ability to collectively tackle complex challenges.

While our organization already incorporates various non-formal learning modalities, the activities carried out within the COOL project have increased our knowledge and engagement with different approaches and methodologies. The collaboration with the women's group has been particularly enlightening and productive. It has encouraged open-mindedness, idea sharing, and thinking beyond personal limitations and backgrounds.

The productive methods employed, such as Speed Ideas and "Now, How, Wow," will be employed for future needs. The project underscores the importance of creating a safe space for open and honest discussions and debates. The development of three prototypes has demonstrated that, with the right support and resources, it's feasible to create cost-effective, eco-friendly, and sustainable solutions even under time constraints.



4.2. Project 2&3: Kaleidoscope & Equaliser

4.2.1. Summary Kaleidoscope

"Kaleidoscope!" is a kaleidoscope of female stories, reflections, and narratives come together to create a beautiful, symmetrical tapestry of life. Through interactive book and theatre performance, we explore the stories and issues faced by women, and open up a world of possibilities. The kaleidoscope is a compilation of different life stories of women that mirror each other and are symmetrical. All the stories produce a mirror game that raises awareness of the problems faced by women and opens up the field of possibilities.



1. Procedure 1: Gamebook known as "heroine's books" is interactive, with the storyline depending on the reader's choices.
2. Procedure 2: Exchanges and reflexion at the end with the facilitator
3. Procedure 3: My own storytelling : write it, draw it, scrapbook it.

For the development of the project, the story of Lidia Poet was chosen as an example because her story shows perfectly the impact of gender discrimination on her possibilities to achieve her dreams and goals. Being born as a woman is not a choice, being held back in our prospects because of our gender is not a choice, the success in overcoming these challenges is not a choice, what is a choice, is the way society evolves and improves to treat human beings equally and give the same chances.

4.2.2. Summary Equaliser

The Equaliser is an innovative platform that makes it easy and effective to fight back against gender pay inequality. With its comprehensive database of salary comparison, powerful search tools and transparent analytics, we ensure that women everywhere have the data to know if they are being paid fairly. The Equaliser helps women assertively and confidently negotiate for higher wages that accurately reflect their professional worth. Whether you're a working professional or a career-changer, The Equaliser is here to empower you with the knowledge to tackle gender pay inequality, and help you create the life you deserve.

The users of the platform would have to start by defining their mission and responsibilities, either for their current positions or for the one they are aspiring to. They then will need to complete their profile with details about their experience, including job titles, industry expertise and previous salary.

Finally, they would be able to use the data set from the pay grid and make a supportive argument why they should be paid more for the same position, and confirm their salary raise request. This platform would be available for both employers and employees, as it could be a beneficial tool to bring transparency and guarantee gender equality in wages.

4.2.3. Narrative Report

Onboarding

CESIE's Adult unit is dedicated to aiding individuals in acquiring and enhancing fundamental skills and essential competencies. This involves nurturing valuable, high-quality proficiencies to enhance employability, socio-educational and personal growth, and fostering active engagement in civic and social life.

On the journey

While our organization already incorporates various non-formal learning modalities, the activities carried out within the COOL project have increased our knowledge and engagement with different approaches and methodologies. The collaboration with the women's group has been particularly enlightening and productive. It has encouraged open-mindedness, idea sharing, and thinking beyond personal limitations and backgrounds.

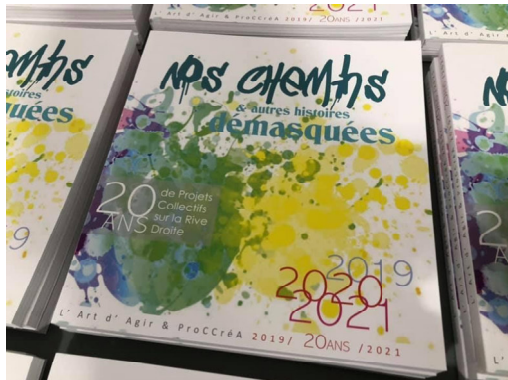
The productive methods employed, such as Speed Ideas and "Now, How, Wow," will be used for future needs. The project emphasizes the importance of creating a safe space for open and honest discussions and debates. The development of three prototypes has shown that, with the right support and resources, it's possible to create cost-effective, eco-friendly, and sustainable solutions even under time constraints.

5. The French Stories

5.1. Project 1: ACTIV' CREA EMERGENCE

5.1.1. Summary

This project is implemented upon commission by Pôle Emploi, the French national employment services and aims at promoting entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups. In the framework of a public procurement, INSUP via its branch CREDER, has been offering this guidance course to young, adult or senior jobseekers who are not opposed to the idea of setting up a business or taking over an existing activity, but who are hesitating by fear or anticipation of potential risks, as well as by lack of knowledge of the existing guidance and support schemes. The project also welcomes would-be entrepreneurs without a set project, or promoters of an idea or project which is insufficiently



developed.

The learning project consists of 4 workshops and 4 personal interviews conducted over a maximum period of 82 days. Design thinking is the baseline of the course approach and its principles are applied to guide and support the participants through the different phases of their project, from needs definition to testing.

Once ACTIV'CREA is completed, the beneficiaries may if they wish so, benefit from a follow-up and support service to the new entrepreneur can last up to 3 years.

5.1.2. Narrative Report

I am an adult education trainer and have focused in competence learning approaches, specialising in guidance and support to business creators from all origins, levels and lines of business.

In adult education, the main challenge is dealing with many different profiles and backgrounds.

The final outcome of the project ACTIV'CREA is not necessarily to create a business.

My role as a guide and trainer is to take learners through a personal voyage, from their dreams and aspirations, to their final decision.

What I have learned from my professional practice during COVID and after, is that some elements appear in life and are reproduced over time, such as pandemics. Such constraints have a huge impact on businesses. Questioning the resilience of the model or project is therefore essential to envisage innovative and sustainable solutions. All new projects must embrace the principles of a circular sustainable model, aiming at reducing waste and the use of all types of resources.

I love counselling people in business creation and entrepreneurship. The exchanges that take place as part of this course are also very enriching for me, because they enable me to gather new data on varied business activities. This general knowledge combined with my constant personal research engages me in a search for continuous improvement to offer the best possible follow-up to the beneficiaries I meet.

My experience as former manager of an environmental engineering consultancy and as a conference lecturer, is very appreciated by the beneficiaries as an added value. I am also the chairman of a small non-profit organisation managed like a small business. My skills and experience reassure the learners I follow-up. They all understand that the success and sustainability of their project involve strategy, management as well as sharp command of all the skills they will need to control when they become business managers.

Regarding my experience of the COOL project, I unfortunately was invited to contribute to discover the project approach and contribute to some activities late, but I am glad to find out that its philosophy and some activities converge with the work I have been leading with my beneficiaries. For example, I use a similar web diagram to report the participants progress on entry and at the end of the course.

In future, hope to learn even more about the COL&V and DBCL approach as well as the LEVEL5 validation system.

5.2. Project 2: PROCCREA - L'ART D'AGIR

5.2.1. Summary

The training course is called PROCCREA - L'ART D'AGIR

It consists of 2 combined training courses, run over a period of 8 -9 months and meant for disadvantaged young persons aged 16-25, with a NEET profile residing in disadvantaged districts of several municipalities around Bordeaux.

PROCCREA participants come from the municipalities of Ambarès, Ste Eulalie, Carbon-Blanc and St Louis de Monferrand. L'ART D'AGIR covers the municipalities of Cenon, Floirac and Lormont.



The project is mainly funded by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region, but the municipalities co-finance these integration projects for their young people in difficulty as part of a scheme known as “Priority neighbourhoods”

15 young people per year participate in each strand of the project, i.e. a total of 30 beneficiaries per year.

The educational team consists of 4 instructors:

- Roland: in charge of Improvisational theatre, sciences and ICT
- Sofia: Trainer in culture, applied and plastic arts
- Manon: In charge of the writing workshop; social and daily environment, Institutions and procedures, relations with support associations
- Binti + Mickael (ADA) and Annick (PROCCREA): Guidance trainers supporting the trainees in their professional project.
- Héloïse and Nadia: Psychologists for the 2 groups
- Judith : Sophrologist
- Magali : Administrative assistant

5.2.2. Narrative Report

The essential objective of the project is resocialisation. The relationships developed among the participants reflect immediately and visibly the outcome of the course program. The learners’ capacity

to take part in the project and to start building personal plans and to contribute to common objectives testify of their willingness to bring change in their life and to maintain relationships. Their attitude during the placements and the feedback received from the company tutors mean a lot in the evaluation of their enhanced soft skills.

The trainees also developed artistic skills and curiosity for different forms of expression they were less familiar with: theatre, improvisation, cultural visits.

They have all gained in maturity, social awareness, interest in social and political issues and ability to focus on an objective.

The group product developed is the joint artistic project developed during the course duration and published as an album. Each of the group participants contributed by producing a piece: a text or poem, a painting, a self-portrait or self-description, a collage, a cartoon... All the material was later on compiled into the group's joint album.

This training approach is particularly well-suited for people who have dropped school and suffered from desocialisation. Communication is the main focus of the course and is offered under different forms to suit all tastes and personalities.

Innovation comes from the positive focus placed on young persons who have never been the centre of attention or listened to. They are invited to contribute in a quality artistic project sponsored and valued by the sponsoring municipalities.

The project insists on collaboration and working with other partners in open learning spaces.

Our learners are happy for being treated with a different approach to school. They are given sufficient time to reconnect to themselves, their personal and family history and to be given a chance to rewrite their personal story.

Progress and projects are not always easy, but the results emphasise their soft skills, the support and guidance they receive...

Our benefit as trainers...

Each group of participants, thanks to its own composition, requests and needs, invites us as trainers to question and refocus on our skills and performance. This open dialogue serves our motivation and search for better results.

The non-formal approach is the key to the success of this project. By allowing participants to embark on non-formal activities, they reveal themselves and voluntarily refocus on the formal objectives of the project.

In the future, we would like to develop the DT approach to the Mission Locale guidance counsellors, who are responsible for spotting and directing the beneficiaries towards the course. We also want to extend the network of prescribers, to include high schools and thus identify school dropouts as early as possible.

5.3. Project 3: The Friendly Basket

5.3.1. Summary

THE FRIENDLY BASKET, aiming at reducing food waste at the instigation of city councils, was set up as a collaborative project conducted by the extended community of the COOL project and partners, in an attempt to tackle the challenge of reducing food waste, when increasing numbers of disadvantaged citizens rely on food donations to survive.



The project was developed by the COOL partners by implementing the principles of Design Thinking, with the intention of offering local councils, businesses and communities an array of ideas and options to reduce food waste significantly. The basis for this project is a 4-session online DT course including workshops during which the partners collaborated to define, brainstorm, design and fine-tune their ideas. The REVEAL meeting in Gottingen was the opportunity to develop a prototype likely to meet the needs that had been identified during the design phases.

5.3.2. Narrative Report Gisèle

My name is Gisèle Massol and I have been working as an adult education for many years and on European projects and partnerships for two decades.

Even if we have observed an evolution in adult education practices, most of the courses remain trainer-centred and follow a set framework, mostly because of limited time and means. Even if online courses have brought a certain degree of flexibility, they do not apply to all types of courses or learners. We therefore try to focus on the most efficient learning approach in consideration of the time and means available.

Even if all trainers advocate for open learning approaches and facilitating, we do not often have the opportunity to put into practice the most innovative approaches. This is why I particularly enjoyed my journey on the COOL project and the opportunity to reconsider practice and place facilitation for innovation at the heart of our concerns.

Innovation in training practice is essential, but innovation must also lead the practice of our learners. In a fast-spinning world, being open to innovation and aware of the need to always question one's practice is the key to survival. As facilitators, we must therefore guide our learners through a personal and project pathway to help them become better aware of their skills and of the challenges ahead of them.

Open learning brings in this highly flexible approach which, unfortunately is not always easy to implement in our courses, mostly for time management reasons. However, once the trainees have perceived the added value for them to nurture their thoughts through self-analysis and to challenge their ideas with counterparts, they develop life skills and can engage more confidently in projects that mean a lot to them.

I truly enjoyed the opportunity given by the COOL project to have time to reflect on our practice and how to foster innovation in our practices and institutions to give disadvantaged learners competitive advantage. The trainers' training in an intercultural partnership brought this added value we are looking for in EU projects. The transnational events, projects, prototypes and objects or tools developed led to the collection of a wide range of projects and applications to address many issues. The dimension of sustainability of the projects is also amazing and is the best gain from this partnership. Design Thinking allows to create novelty in projects, but long-lasting novelty.

The encounter with the project partners and the other participants of the online course was brilliant. We hardly ever have the chance to contribute with foreign partners and these workshops together were a great time to exchange views on our approaches and levels of use of open learning tools.

I have particularly enjoyed being introduced to online tools like the MIRO collaborative whiteboard, applicable even with a large group of participants, having the opportunity to use CANVA again to generate prototypes. I deplore the lack of time to perfect my skills in the use of such tools. This would be a definitely important development step for me to gain better command of these online tools to engage learners in future courses.

The live transnational meeting in Göttingen during which we completed the online project was the best moments of all as we were able to confront our viewpoints, negotiate and finally agree on a prototype that was the fruit of genuine collaboration, even if some colleagues were more agile with design software.

My gains at the end of this project relate to: collaboration; opening to new methodology; need to integrate varied tools to accommodate different types of learners and projects.

The colleagues who participated in the trainers' training module at INSUP were particularly interested in the application of Design Thinking in their daily practice and are looking forward to be able to use the online module and the Level 5 evaluation approach.

5.3.3. Narrative Report Naémi

My name is Naémi Monfeuillard and I work at INSUP as Digital Learning Designer

My experience with Design thinking has been very positive not as a trainer, but as a learning content design. It is a collaborative and efficient project methodology which is very motivating. I was already familiar with Design Thinking, as a course we covered during my Master's studies. I wanted to take part in this project to learn more and see a tangible application in different projects. The fact COOL was an international project made it interesting to understand the different ways of working in different countries, and gave us an open-minded view of our subject on a global scale.

My experience with the Cool project was really great!

We started the ZERO WAST project by online video conferences. First, there was an introduction to Design Thinking by the Reveal 15 collective, then we practiced this method directly within a group on a project. In the sessions that followed, our facilitators guided us through the various stages of DT:

First of all, we chose a theme, which enabled us to work as a group, then we brainstormed on the different topics of this theme, once the topic had been chosen, we tried to conceptualize the actors, advantages, inconvenient, needs....

Once this stage had been validated, we proposed different ideas, analysed them and selected one. We then had to think through every detail of the project together, in order to create a prototype. For our part, the theme was sustainable development, our topic was fighting food waste

After analysing the ways and means food is wasted in our societies, we decided to create an application that local authorities could use to reduce the phenomenon; allowing discounts on restaurant leftovers for individuals, anti-waste cooking tutorials, and events to raise awareness about food waste. The most difficult part was to take into account each country's particularities, so that it could be used for all of them. Some countries, notably on the African continent, do not waste food at all. Others, such as Germany, already have this kind of application in place, without necessarily adding the educational aspect that we can find in our project.

We then had to think about every detail, and take everyone's ideas into account, which was very interesting! For my part, I participated in every step of design on the way and produced the visual prototype of the Zero Waste app with the recommendations of my project mates.

The Reveal team was really nice and made us feel at ease. Their explanations were clear and they guided us through the project in a dynamic way! If we had the slightest problem or blockage, they were available to help us. The learners were also very friendly and funny, which enabled me to meet people from other cultures and learn more about certain countries. We were also happy to be part of an international project and each of us to represent a different country! We loved our time together, even though it was work! The COOL project brought collaboration, reflection, enriching discussions and fun.

The contents covered during this training were: project management, sustainable development education, energy and social transition, teamwork, English language, science, philosophy, sociology, design and conception. We could use this methodology during group work, adapting it to the level of the learners, or while designing new projects.

Impact

The concept was innovative in the way that the learning process was experiential right through to the final product, giving the learning process a concrete end in view: the approach was professional and comprehensive, not just theoretical.

As a learner, I was personally very satisfied and my positive is 100% positive.

Perspective

What must definitely be kept is the added value of collaborative work. What I would improve is preliminary research to identify any pre-existing tool to support our research.

Professional Development

I have been able to learn a scripted project methodology that can be reused in professional projects with learners. We could think of a need drawn from a professional situation, and use this methodology to give a concrete response to the problems of professional sectors. This would enable learners to become aware of their ability to make proposals and come up with concrete solutions.

6. The Swedish Stories

6.1. Project 1: Digital Traveling Curation

6.1.1. Summary

The Digital Traveling Curation is the learning project developed by trainers at Folkuniversitetet after completing the Design-Based Thinking course in the COOL project.

The project aimed to enhance the learning experience of adults participating in the English Language Course by improving their digital curation skills, fostering community engagement, and increasing their erudition.



Objectives:

- Cultivate attitudes of curiosity, digital literacy, community engagement, and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Recognize that active engagement in education and digital skills acquisition decreasing the risk of becoming NEET.
- Develop digital curation skills, podcast creation skills, and improve their English language proficiency.
- The Digital Traveling Curation learning project yielded several positive outcomes:
- A strong sense of community was fostered among adult learners, encouraging active participation and peer collaboration.
- Participants demonstrated improved digital curation skills by curating content related to travel and literature.
- The open virtual learning space provided a supportive and inclusive environment where adult learners actively participated and collaborated.
- High levels of engagement within the learning community contributed to a sense of belonging and purpose, reducing the likelihood of learners disengaging from education or training.

6.1.2. Narrative Report Ali

Our expedition began with a common aspiration: to create an educational journey that went beyond the conventional confines, one that truly placed the learner at the centre of the experience.

As I embarked on this adventure, my backpack was not just laden with essentials; it bore the weight of an unquenchable thirst for new wisdom, a burning fervour to empower learners, and a resolute commitment to embracing collaboration with an open heart and mind.

Significant milestones, each representing a crucial step forward, marked the path we tread. We initiated the journey with the birth of the Digital Traveling Curation project, a concept that would later evolve into the bedrock of our educational philosophy. Here, we meticulously applied the tenets of Design Thinking, weaving innovation and empathy into every thread of our endeavour.

In the midst of our voyage, we breathed life into thematic learning modules, carefully designed to ignite the curiosity and passion of our learners. The culmination of our efforts found expression in the creation of competency-based assessments, serving as a beacon for measuring true understanding and growth.

Now, as I return from this transformative odyssey, I carry within me a treasury of insights and experiences that will forever shape my approach to teaching. The learner, once a passive receiver, will now take centre stage in my classroom. The principles of Design Thinking will infuse every aspect of my pedagogy, ensuring that engagement and innovation become the norm, not the exception. With the compass of learner interests and needs guiding me, I am determined to forge ahead.

Testimonials:

"The Digital Traveling Curation project brought a breath of fresh air to our institution's approach to language learning. The innovative use of thematic learning modules, podcast creation, and digital curation not only engaged our adult learners but also equipped them with practical skills." - Philip Söderström.

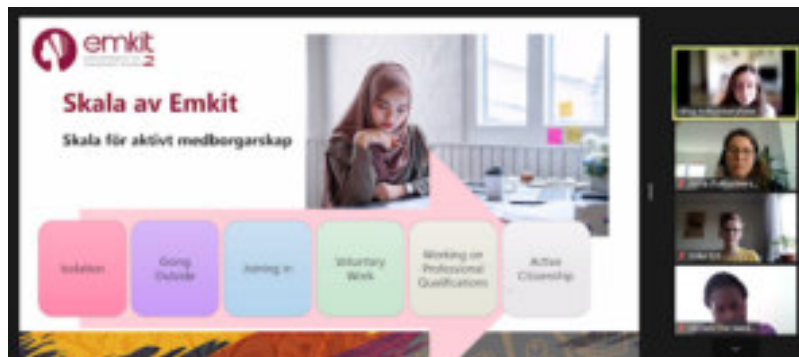
"The Digital Traveling Curation project introduced a new level of engagement and motivation among our adult learners. The thematic approach and the emphasis on practical skills development have set a new standard in our language courses." – Ali Rashidi.

6.2. Project 2: Fresh News Café

6.2.1. Summary

The Fresh News Café is a virtual learning space developed by English teachers of English Course Department at Folkuniversitetet Uppsala through Design-Based Thinking in the COOL project.

It serves disadvantaged learners, particularly students with migrant backgrounds, and their parents. The project combines English language learning and media literacy in an intergenerational setting, promoting critical thinking and communication through the analysis of current news on Padlet.



The project had the following objectives:

1. Improve participants' English language proficiency, enabling them to engage more effectively with English-language media.
2. Teach critical thinking skills and the ability to evaluate news sources, fostering media literacy.
3. Create a collaborative space where students, trainers, and parents come together to share knowledge and experiences.

Regarding the final results of the learning project, learners demonstrated enhanced fluency and comprehension in English, enabling them to engage more effectively with English-language media content. Moreover, participants developed critical thinking skills and a keen ability to evaluate news sources, making them discerning consumers of information. Beyond individual gains, the project succeeded in building a tight-knit community among students, trainers, and parents, fostering a supportive environment for intergenerational learning. This empowerment translated into increased confidence among participants to express their views and actively engage in discussions, marking the project's success in achieving its objectives and contributing to their personal growth and societal engagement.

6.2.2. Narrative Report from Youlia, Olesia, Helena

In our role as trainers at a community adult education institution, we typically engage in conventional teaching and learning approaches. These often involve structured classroom settings, predefined curricula, and limited opportunities for learners to actively shape their educational journey. Within this context, the challenges primarily revolve around ensuring learner engagement, adapting to diverse learning needs, and keeping pace with the rapid changes in education and technology. Innovation becomes a necessity to address these challenges effectively and provide a more engaging and adaptive learning experience.

Recognizing the need for innovative approaches to adult education, we embarked on a journey to collaborate with our colleagues. This project brought together educators, trainers, and facilitators who shared a common interest in reimagining adult education. My home crew, consisting of colleagues from my institution, was equally enthusiastic about exploring new approaches to teaching and learning.

One of the most pivotal milestones was the introduction of Design-Based Thinking (DBT) methodology into our project. This approach emphasized empathy, creativity, and adaptability in curriculum development, challenging our traditional teaching methods. Another milestone was the realization that intergenerational learning, involving students, trainers, and their parents, could be a powerful and innovative approach.

The best moments were when we saw learners in our project actively engaging with real-world news, analyzing media critically, and enhancing their language skills. Witnessing the sense of community that developed among participants and their parents was incredibly rewarding. However, challenges also arose along the way. Adapting to diverse learner needs and ensuring consistent participation proved to be demanding.

As we conclude our journey, we carry home a profound appreciation for innovative teaching methodologies like DBT. This approach will undoubtedly shape our future practice, making it more engaging, adaptable, and learner-centric. Most importantly, the learners found the experience transformative, with testimonials highlighting improved language skills, critical thinking, and a sense of empowerment in engaging with media.

Testimonials:

"The Fresh News Cafe project was a game-changer for me as a learner. It made learning English fun and relevant. I feel more confident in understanding news and expressing my opinions." – Yuliia Poberezhets.

"Working collaboratively with European colleagues opened my eyes to the potential of innovative teaching methods. I can't wait to implement Design-Based Thinking in our future projects." – Olesia Zhovnych

"The DBT learning aspect was a revelation. It created a sense of unity and mutual support among our participants. I believe this approach can enrich our institution's educational offerings." – Helena Spännar.

6.3. Project 3: Study Buddy

6.3.1. Summary

The Study Buddy learning project was developed by trainers of English Course Department at Folkuniversitetet Uppsala following the Design-Based Thinking (DBT) course within the COOL project. Study Buddy is an innovative virtual community on Twitter aimed at fostering communication, support, and motivation among adult learners and young people identified as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). The primary focus of Study Buddy is to facilitate English language learning while creating a safe and inclusive environment for disadvantaged learners.



The key objectives of the Study Buddy learning project are as follows:

- to provide a platform for learners to practice and improve their English language proficiency through interactions and discussions;
- to empower adult learners and NEETs by building their confidence and providing a sense of belonging within the community;
- to create a safe and welcoming space for disadvantaged learners to engage in learning and personal development.

Regarding the results, participants reported significant improvements in their English language skills, self-confidence and motivation to pursue further education or employment opportunities. The virtual community on Twitter grew steadily, facilitating connections and relationships among learners. Consequently, the learning project succeeded in creating a secure and inclusive environment that promoted respectful and supportive interactions among participants.

6.3.2. Narrative Report Helena, Daria, Lina

In my role as an educational trainer at Folkuniversitetet, I have been involved in delivering adult education programs, primarily focused on language learning.

Recognizing the need for innovation and open learning, I embarked on a journey that led to the creation of the Study Buddy project. It was essential to work in a European team during the DBT training because collaboration allowed us to combine diverse perspectives, experiences, and methodologies.

In my backpack, I carried a desire to create a more inclusive learning environment, and an understanding of the challenges faced by adult learners.

The most valuable experiences on this journey were:

- Witnessing the growth of Study Buddy participants in terms of language proficiency, confidence, and community engagement.

- Learning from colleagues in the European team about innovative pedagogical approaches and best practices from their own contexts.
- Overcoming challenges related to digital literacy and creating a supportive online community.

What I will take home and transfer into my practice is a deep appreciation for learner-centric, innovative approaches to education. Study Buddy has demonstrated the power of creating safe and inclusive virtual spaces for learning, where learners can actively shape their educational experiences. This approach will inform my future teaching practices and course designs.

"Study Buddy changed my perspective on learning. I feel more confident in my English skills and have made friends from around the world. It's been a fantastic experience!" – Helena Shwartz

"I was initially sceptical, but Study Buddy's impact on our learners has been impressive. It's a reminder that innovation can lead to more effective and engaging education." – Lina Sandgren

"Study Buddy is a testament to the potential of open learning in adult education. It's a model of inclusivity and innovation that I'll be exploring in my own courses." – Daria Korovii