



Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship



Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP)

EduMAP is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.

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1. Challenges in AE provision and access

Potential beneficiaries of the case studied in Austria are: young people up to the age of 21 or until the age of 24 with disabilities or special educational needs, learning disabilities, social or emotional impairments, who want to complete a vocational training.

Learners do not report any challenges or barriers related to the access to the Production school. The access challenge can indeed concern non-learners, those who could be potential beneficiaries of the schools but are not reached out by the programme.

Conversely, some respondents, either practitioners, or programme coordinators and policy officers, raise the concern about the access threshold of the school. The programme often fails to target the so-called NEETs, Not in Education, Employment, or Training people, and even in case of learners already enrolled, the high number of dropouts registered in 2016 sheds light on the fact that the school offer can result too demanding for some participants.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (SMS) is aware of the barriers and is working on the development of a lower access threshold to the Production school. A revision of the framework is therefore expected but in 2017 it was not clear to what extent and in which terms.

The most relevant unsatisfactory experience is related to the role of coaches and the rotation mechanism. Although it has been reported by only one interviewee, it is still worth investigating the consequences this practice may cause. Coaches play a pivotal role for the learning development of young people. Individual coaching sessions may encompass psychological counselling to participants, besides a support more closely related to the school activities. Building up a trust relationship learner-coach is therefore crucial for the individual path of learners within the school, and can take time, as highlighted by some practitioners. Thus, the rotation mechanism may hinder the development process started with the support of one coach and expected to be completed within one year, and impair the overall learning outcome. In all likelihood, this mechanism is implemented by only one provider - other providers did not mentioned it and we could not assessed it -; nevertheless it represents a key challenge that may end up contradicting the pedagogical approach of the programme and may lead to significant negative repercussions on its provision.

2. Gender and diversity aspects tackled in the studied programmes

An inclusive approach to Gender and Diversity imbues the programme design in its totality. As explicitly stated in the Guideline of the network on vocational assistance (NEBA = NetzwerkBeruflicheAssistenz) the overall provision of the programme, from access to the Production school, to the programme curriculum and the practitioner education, applies the principles of gender equality, equal treatment of people with special needs, diversity und antidiscrimination.

According to practitioners, limitations towards Gender equality directly come from learners, especially from young people with cultural and religious background, which opposes or does not completely endorse this principle. Resistance to gender equality emerges, in particular, during the knowledge workshop, when participants are invited to debate and freely exchange opinions. The Production schools, in turn, offer the opportunity to discuss the topic, for example talking about professional roles, and put the principle of equality into practice, engaging both girls and girls in practical activities regardless the traditional gender roles and tasks. The Guideline of NEBA already requires that both trainers and coaches possess intercultural skills to deal with potential clashes, such as the one around gender stereotyping. In the future revision of the programme, the persistence of gender discrimination should be born in mind to include more specific antidiscrimination measures and pedagogical methods aimed to increase awareness of the principle of gender equality.

Cultural diversity is considered enriching and deemed as an expression of different values, patterns of behaviour and beliefs. The individuality or heterogeneity of the individuals is therefore used for the benefit of all. The principle of diversity management finds an expression in the integration of minorities and the creation of equal opportunities. Specific attention is taken to prevent or eliminate discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, sex, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity, while particular consideration is given to non-German native speakers and/or to young people with migration background.

3. The concept of APC as it is defined, understood or approached in the context of the study by different respondent groups

Policymakers

The concept for inclusive implementation rules of the Production schools clearly states that the object of Production school is to enable young people to take actively part into the Austrian job market. It is worth noticing the use of the term *Teilhabe* that, as explained by an officer of an education authority during an interview carried out in Germany for the context analysis phase, differently from the synonym *Teilnahme* (participation) implies a conscious activation and willingness to take part. It will therefore be here translated into English as *active* participation to underline the terminological difference. Against this backdrop, it can be inferred that conceptually the Production school offer defines APC as active participation in the job market.

AE practitioners

In practice the pedagogical approach of the Production schools reveals that other dimensions of APC are also taken into account and cultivated. Although it is not explicitly mentioned at conceptual level, the providers' mission statements conversely refer to it. As the one programme coordinator emphasises, the role of the Production school is not limited to the professional training of participants, its mission is rather to encourage their personal development, so that they can actively contribute to society.

The local director of another provider defines APC in terms of social participation. The concept finds an implementation in relation to the cooperation with public entities or in the organisation of social initiatives, such as helping elderly people or campaigns of litter prevention. The promotion of diversity and of an inclusiveness approach aims to foster specific learners' attitudes. The conception of APC as civic engagement is also endorsed by the third provider.

Practitioners point out that participants firstly need to acquire awareness of their capacities, and of the possibilities of, before being active. The exercise of APC is thus implemented to different extents.

Participants

This aspect is confirmed by participants, who often bring as example of their active participation the fact of being at school, or to be able to wake up in the morning and follow a schedule. Other relates it to a social dimension, such as meeting friends or being part of a sport association, helping others. A few examples are reported about their personal approach, such as being focused or interested in looking for an internship. Relevant gender differences in the answers have not been observed from this point of view.

4. Elements that are critical and or significant for enabling learners to become active citizens, or to develop APC competencies in the studied programmes

The aim of the Production schools is to enable young people to develop their own professional orientation that best suits their possibilities and individual potentials, giving them the chance to try out their abilities through practical modules and through internships. This approach suits both young people with cognitive-intellectual restrictions, young adults with school failure experiences and formerly out of the system individuals, who can thus complete a training course that matches their individual abilities without attending a proper vocational school.

The Production schools' objective is not limited to guide participants into a professional orientation, rather to give them the possibility and the time to acquire the missing basic and social skills as well as to get to know further training opportunities.

Especially the following elements prove to be significant:

- 1) One of the key elements that characterises the Production school is the personalised and individually-tailored educational approach. This is especially mirrored in the provision of individual coaching sessions and in the development of the education offer on the basis of participants' individual plans. This learner-focus offer enables young people to become aware of who they are as individuals and, consequently, to become conscious of their role that they can play in the society. Learners confirm to appreciate individual coaching and to find it a constructive method to work on self-reflection and endurance.
- 2) A first requirement to learners' activation is taking into account their needs, and the Production school succeeds in the intent developing a relational education offer. Empathy, understanding, and a great deal of flexibility in its structure and of personnel are key ingredients for creating an enabling learning environment. This point is particularly shared by participants, who affirm that the Production school allows them to experiment, to choose what to learn, and take their time, without pressure on their performance, differently from the formal education system. This autonomy and capacity to take decisions would contribute to make them more responsible for their actions.
- 3) Inclusiveness is another key component of the educational approach of the Production schools, which welcome young people with different background and school experiences, and with specific educational needs and often social and emotional disorders. This is ensured thanks to the key role of the Youth coach and the collaboration with the AMS. Both actors are pivotal in identifying potential beneficiaries of the Production school offers. Especially, the Youth coach acts as gatekeeper and as mediator between Production schools and the formal education system.
- 4) Beside the individual support of coaching, the financial aid to cover living expenses, the DLU, is also recognised to be a key factor in making learners

more independent. Making young people responsible for their actions seems an effective pedagogical approach that paves the ways to the acquisition of APC competencies. In particular, it finds practical implementation in two methods elaborated by two providers. One consists in electing learners' representatives and the other one in collecting participants' feedback and/or complaints in anonymous form, respectively.

- 5) As practitioners point out, an important success element of the Production schools' is the close cooperation among trainers, coaches and the management. The teamwork turns out to be fundamental in dealing with young people with multiple disadvantages and in identifying the most suitable educational path for each of them. A regular exchange among trainers, among coaches, between them and with the management let monitor the learner process through all the programme provision, to tailor the education offer, and to jointly intervene in case of need.

5. Competencies and qualifications possessed, represented and/or cultivated through by the AE practitioners who contribute to the design, development and delivery of APC programmes for Participants

The Concept for inclusive implementation rules of the Production schools defines in details the qualification profiles of coaches and of trainers. Coaches shall attain a completed education in the areas of social work, social management or has a degree in psychology, sociology or pedagogy, or a comparable vocational training in the social field, and if possible, have gained three years of professional experience, alternatively shall prove many years of professional experience in the social sector. Coaches shall have completed training in case management and have previous work experience with the target group of the Production schools, further they shall be sensitive towards gender issues and previous experience in counselling and care of men and women. Trainers shall attain a completed vocational education in a relevant sector, for example, in the cooking sector, the trainer shall have a qualification as cook or waiter, and relevant professional experience. In the case of tasks predominantly related to the pedagogical or creative sectors, for instance in training modules focusing on activation, an adequate professional qualification is considered an asset.

In terms of competencies, the Guideline of NEBA points out that coaches should possess communication and team skills, while trainers should exhibit understanding, patience, and sensitivity to gender and diversity issues. The latter are further requested to follow compulsory trainings, in particular, first aid courses or, for example, in the area of hygiene regulations, safety regulations, or in the pedagogical sector.

As emerged by the interviews, most of the coaches, but not all of them, are qualified workers in the social sector. As claimed by one local director, pedagogical and psychological training is considered a basic requirement but it is not sufficient; previous experience in working with young people seems to be more important.

With reference to trainers, previous work experience and a general knowledge of the job markets would help them in their role as internship facilitators.

Many respondents stress the importance of having a specific personal attitude and a set of soft skills. Practitioners, local directors and programme coordinators are aligned in their positions about competencies both trainers and coaches should possess.

6. Critical factors and conditions (favourable and unfavourable) that affect the potential of AE policies to cultivate APC for Participants

Favourable

The new framework of the Production school has brought along a great deal of benefits to the programme provision. First of all, the management responsibility shifted from the Austria Public Employment Service (AMS), thus the labour sector, to the Ministry of Social Affairs (SMS), the social sector, with significant conceptual implications. Further, the new 5-year financial mechanism based on calls for tender has triggered healthy competition among providers improving the quality of the service. Moreover, the prolonged time perspective allows organisations to build up their identity as providers and to secure their funding for that time-frame. In addition, the establishment of the NEBA agency has led to a systematisation of the education offers and to an increase in consistency and efficiency.

The implementation of a new monitoring mechanism, called Monitoring Professional Integration (MBI - *Monitoring Berufliche Integration*), has enabled to gain a more comprehensive and detailed picture of the characteristics of the target group and then to better tailor the education offers to the needs of the young people. The monitoring system has been developed in order to assess the effectiveness of projects on behalf of and in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, and currently involves more than 30 organizations, among which the Production schools' providers. MBI has been implemented throughout Austria since 2014, and two years ago was presented at the European Parliament, in the working group Employment services, as example of good practice.

A close collaboration of all the actors involved in the programme development and implementation is recognised to be a favourable condition for a successful Production school offer provision, and the consequently learning process of participants. Since the conceptual development of the programme, providing organisations and experts in the field have been engaged with the aim to promote an inclusive and shared approach. Periodically, a two-day convention takes place, where relevant actors, such as policy officers of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs at regional and federal level, the providers, coaches and trainers take part in thematic workshops and have the opportunity to meet and networking. This interaction system reveals to be positive also in terms of education access, and has particularly reinvigorated the synergy between the Youth coach, the Production school and the Austria Public Employment Service.

From the point of view of the target group, the new revised programme has lowered the access threshold, although further work is needed in this direction. The inclusion of other categories of people suffering from multiple disadvantages situations has made the Production school and the Youth coaching offers more inclusive measures.

Unfavourable

Not all potential beneficiaries are reached. The problem is that the Production school's target group is not represented at policy level and cannot rely on an

advocacy or lobby association that can represent its interests and influence the policy-decision making, contrary to other categories, such as people with special needs.

Also mentioned is that the programme impact is not consistent throughout the country. While the offer is designed at federal level and is homogenously implemented across Austria, Production schools in some regions or in some cities report a higher dropout rate, whilst other can count on closer cooperation with local companies and more possibilities to organise internships for participants.

7. Lessons learnt from laws and policies that contribute effectively to cultivating APC for Participants

EDUCATION FOR APC OR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (POLITICAL-LEGAL DIMENSION)

Austria can count on a solid tradition of citizenship education. In relation to EduMAP project, citizenship education can be framed within the political-legal dimension of the APC concept. Teaching and cultivating APC in the formal education sector started in the late '70s, when the subject citizenship education was introduced in the final years of upper secondary school. More recently, the reduction of the active voting age to 16 in 2010 gave new boost to the topic. In 2008, the curriculum was redesigned and competence orientation was introduced as new component. The Working Programme of the Austrian Government 2013 – 2018 adopted by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, expanded the provision of citizenship education within schools in secondary education based on the vision that civic education is one of the most determinant core element of the students' learning development. As a consequence, citizenship education has become a compulsory module from the 6th school grade as part of the curriculum subject History and Social Studies/citizenship education. The concept of APC in the formal education system is in line with international documents, as proved by the direct references and citations to international conventions and covenants, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010).

In the non-formal education sector, Adult education dealing with the political-legal dimension of APC took roots in the workers' associations and in the middle-class literature clubs with the aim of mainly promoting citizens' empowerment. APC in non-formal sector is not systematically defined as in the formal one and is highly dependent on the organizations providing non-formal education. Overall, citizenship education needs to be compliant with the Austrian Constitutions and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Key Competencies of Lifelong learning, in particular to the Civic competence, also constitutes an important framework for its provision.¹

SOCIAL AND YOUTH SECTOR (SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION)

Moving from the education to the social sector, the 2012 Austrian Youth Strategy presents a clear link to the concept of Active Participatory Citizenship, as conceptualised in EduMAP Project. Defined as participation and commitment (*Beteiligung und Engagement*), it is one of the core action fields of the Strategy informing the youth work, among employment and education, quality of life and community, media and information. As stated on the website of the Federal Ministry for Women, Families and Youth, a vibrant democracy needs committed young people who want to participate and have a say - and framework conditions that make this commitment possible.² The field of action therefore serves to strengthen

¹Steininger S. (2015) Citizenship education in Austria. Networking European Citizenship Education. Retrieved from: <http://www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/netzwerke/nece/206038/citizenship-education-in-austria>

²2012 Austrian Youth Strategy See <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/jugend/jugendstrategie/handlungsfelder.html>

the political and social participation of young people and to develop up-to-date recognition and incentive systems for the youth voluntary engagement.

Investigating the specific interrelations between education, youth sector and vulnerability, special measures have been adopted to offer equal and inclusive opportunities for all people, so that they can actively participate in and benefit from the economic, social and cultural participation in the Austrian society. In relation to early school leavers and training dropouts, the main disadvantaged group considered in the case-study in Austria, the 2012 National Strategy to Prevent Early School and Training Leavers³ represents a key reference document. Its education policy priorities for 2020 have been set in alignment with the European 2020 Strategic Framework for Education Cooperation (ET 2020), and in particular with the benchmark aiming to reduce the proportion of early school leavers and graduates to less than 10%. The focus is on early school leavers who have not completed upper secondary education or an apprenticeship, and are not in training. The Strategy embraces the EU definition of early school leavers, namely young adults between the age of 18 and 24, who dropped out education before reaching the apprenticeship certificate or the diploma. They represent a very heterogeneous group with different educational experiences, social backgrounds and different needs and goals, as recognized in the document. The Strategy is based on a three-level model of intervention *school-system-person*, macro, meso and micro levels respectively, and in turn is structured around prevention, intervention and compensation measures. The case-study of the Production school is indeed mentioned as form of compensation, whilst Youth coaching, as a central component of the Austrian Strategy against school drop-out and the risk of exclusion, focuses primarily on prevention and early intervention and encourages cooperation between schools, intensified at both secondary and non-school counselling systems.

LABOUR MARKET (ECONOMIC DIMENSION)

The labour market, specifically for the case investigated in Austria, has played a crucial role in the promotion of participation of young adults according to the economic dimension of the concept, and for the inclusion of young people at risk of marginalisation. The Operational Programme Employment Austria 2014-2020 (ESF OP) represents another policy paper complementing other social strategies, containing clear measures and investment priorities with the aim of increasing labour participation, reducing the number of early school leavers and curbing poverty. Framed within the National Reform Programme⁴, it is also targeted at disadvantaged people and summarises all measures co-financed by the European Social Fund.

A particular key concern of the Austrian education system is to guarantee the transition from school to work. Therefore, advising learners about further educational opportunities and career options and supporting them in this critical decision is central in many documents. Within this scope, youth coaching and the related educational policy goals in this area are set out in the National Lifelong Guidance Strategy⁵, which establishes a general framework for the qualitative and

³2012 National Strategy to Prevent Early School and Training Leavers See https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/schulabbruch_eslstrategie_24401.pdf?5i81vg

⁴National Reform Programme See <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/nationale-reformprogramme-europa-2020>

⁵National Lifelong Guidance Strategy See <http://www.lifelongguidance.at/qip/mm.nsf>

quantitative further development of educational counselling and career guidance as an integral component of the entire education system.

8. Existing practices of information access and communication (emerging patterns and tendencies; people/social networks; media/platforms/channels; content/messages) about adult education in the studied programmes

All the providing organisations are members of the umbrella non-profit association, called dabeï-Austria⁶. The association has an advocacy and consultative function and promotes lobbying activities in the decision-making system. The association sees itself as a platform of communication and a networking opportunity for members. Currently, it represents 85 organizations throughout Austria that are involved in the implementation of six programmes of professional integration, among which the Production school offer. The representation of providers through the dabeï- Austria association enables providing organisations to speak up as a single and authoritative actor in front of the donor, bring up common issues and to be consulted for the development of the programme content.⁷

In the access and provision approach, NEBA relies on the Federal Disability Equality Act to implement appropriate and concretely necessary measures to enable persons with special needs to benefit from its offers and services. Its approach is multidimensional, in the sense that structural, communicative and intellectual dimensions of accessibility are taken in due account.

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⁶the participation occurs upon payment of a fixed fee that is financed from the project budget

⁷Dabeï-Austria. Retrieved from: <http://www.dabei-austria.at/startseite-des-dabei-austria>

conceptual development of the programme, providing organisations and experts in the field have been engaged with the aim to promote an inclusive and shared approach. Periodically, a two-day convention takes place, where relevant actors, such as policy officers of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs at regional and federal level, the providers, coaches and trainers take part in thematic workshops and have the opportunity to meet and networking. This interaction system reveals to be positive also in terms of education access, and has particularly reinvigorated the synergy between the Youth coach, the Production school and the Austria Public Employment Service.

9. Leveraging on VYA's information access and communication practices about adult education

In the case of the production school young people's communication practices do not play a significant role and are not used as leverage. Nevertheless in one of the production schools it was foreseen to open a new focus on media by employing a media trainer. Young people use all social media, but none of them to access information offers.

Access to the Production school may occur in two ways: directly through the Youth coaching counselling or through the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS).

Youth coaching counselling addresses young people, who are still in the formal education system. In cooperation with school teachers, the Youth coach identifies among students at risk of dropping out from school or people who need further support for the development of social and basic competencies, potential participants of the Production schools. The goal of Youth coaching is indeed to keep young people in the education and training system as long as possible in order to ultimately improve their chances on the labour market through the acquisition of higher and more qualified competencies.

Young people outside the formal education system, such as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs) people, early school leavers, or people who are interested in have also the possibility to access in the Production school through the Austria Public Employment Service (AMS). The latter informs the Production school or puts into the contact the potential beneficiaries with a Youth coach. Being registered at the AMS is a precondition to be accepted in a Production school, as it gives the right to benefit from the social financial assistance.

As it is stated in the Guideline⁸, access to a Production school is achieved through a close partnership between the Youth coach, the Production school coaches and the AMS, and the former is deemed as an interface service between the formal education system, the job market and the Production schools.

Once the contact has been activated, future participants are invited to visit the Production school, during the so-called *Schnuppertage* (literally taster days) to get a sense of the environment. This may last a few days or can occur during the Open Days thought with this intent. All participants are officially accepted after a probationary period.

⁸Bundesministers für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz zur Förderung (2015) *Richtlinie NEBA – Angebote zur Durchführung der Angebote des „Netzwerks Berufliche Assistenz“ - Jugendcoaching, Produktionsschule, Berufsausbildungsassistenz, Arbeitsassistenz und Jobcoaching*. P. 9. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2t5aAKv>

10. Information accessed and used during the design of AE for APC programmes

The concept and principles informing the programme as well as the programme structure are defined in the Guideline (2015) and in the Concept for inclusive implementation rules of the Production schools (2014), both produced by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. The programme is object of constant monitoring and further adjustments are expected.

PROCESS STRUCTURE

The Concept and implementation guideline of the production school offer are defined in a programmatic way in the relevant documents. The conceptual design of the offer is the result of a concerted effort mainly guided by the by the Ministry of Social Affairs with the involvement of the concerned parties (See actors involved or consulted). The programme is subject of constant development thanks to the close monitoring mechanisms that allows the Ministry to collect aggregated data and to readjust the Production school offer according to the emerging needs.

The new call for tender mechanism has introduced a different system deeply influencing the design process structure. The definition of the terms of reference in the call is not entirely top-down imposed. In particular, the development of the Production school offer could rely on ten-year experience in the field and on the implementation of similar project addressing the same target group. On this basis, the group of beneficiaries of the Youth coaching has been for example expanded and the concept revised in 2014.

With specific reference to the investigated case-study and the new policy framework of the *Ausbildungbis 18* schemes, Austria has introduced an information platform, called **BundesKOST**⁹, with the aim of controlling the transition from school to work as well as of reinforcing the coordination and cooperation among the different actors involved in the school system.

This is the main information pool that understands itself as a network of relevant stakeholders.

⁹BundKOST see <https://www.bundeskost.at/startseite/ueber-uns.html>

<http://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/>