

Portugal

Working Paper

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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

To keep on fostering equality of access for all, maintaining the existing provision, such as recognition of prior learning and adult education and training courses, and promoting other provision that meets learner needs are the major challenges of the programme. Despite raised interest in AE by young unemployed participation rates still remain low.

Another challenge also relates to the recognition of prior learning. It is occasionally a problem of time to organise a session or a course without knowing the trainees background. They all refer to their previous knowledge when they apply but they do not refer to the actual competences they have. This asks for a new approach in assessing prior learning. Furthermore and regarding APC all educators suggest that the biggest challenge is to make APC fit in the programme in a way that makes sense to the trainees.

Occasionally trainees feel disengaged when issues of active citizenship and particularly in creating synergies with other organisations, seeking legal advice and creating relevance with entrepreneurship. It is also challenging for the educators who do not have enough skill to make the relevance more visible. One of the educators suggested that this is more difficult when it comes to the theoretical parts of the course, but it is easier when it comes to building a business plan where more practical elements are involved.

APC does not appear as such (either as a term or as a priority) in AE policy documents in Portugal. The adult education sector in Portugal is very diversified and heterogeneous, including formal adult education and training (to obtain a formal school certification and/or a professional qualification by those who complete existing forms of provision), vocational training, socio-cultural areas, and local development¹. Apart from these four streams, other non-formal and informal activities and projects with an educational and learning impact within social movements and other non-formalised are also active².

There is no overarching legal, financial and structural framework for adult education³ as a whole. Additionally, fragmented State policies have been in existence since 1974, when the Democratic Revolution occurred. At present some activities are highly regulated, such as (formal) adult education and training, others almost non-regulated or regulated such as domains that are not specifically educational, including sociocultural animation and local development.

Adult education is legally covered by the general law of the educational system (in Portuguese *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*)⁴, including formal second-chance education (basic and secondary education - in Portuguese *ensino recorrente*). Other

¹ According to Lima, L. C. et al. (1988). *Documentos Preparatórios III. Comissão de Reforma do Sistema Educativo*. Lisboa: Ministério da Educação and Canário (2013). *Educação de Adultos. Um Campo, Uma Problemática*. Lisboa: EDUCA.

² Several other authors claim that these are adult education domains to be considered, such as Cavaco, C (2009) *Adultos Pouco Escolarizados – Políticas e Práticas de Formação*. Lisboa: EDUCA - UI&DCE, and Alves et al. (2016). *Educação de adultos: aprender sempre*. In M. Silva et al. (coord.), *Pensar a Educação. Temas Sectoriais*. Lisboa: EDUCA, pp. 151-180.

³ However, this framework has been claimed by several authors, among others Lima, L. C. et al. (1988). *Documentos Preparatórios III. Comissão de Reforma do Sistema Educativo*. Lisboa: Ministério da Educação.

⁴ Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo, Lei n.º 46/86, 14/10, which was the subject of specific changes by the following legislation: Lei n.º 115/97, 19/09, Lei n.º 49/2005, 30/08 and Lei n.º 85/2009, 27/08 (this last legislation establishment 12 years of school education as compulsory education).

forms of provision such as recognition of prior learning (in Portuguese *Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências*), adult education and training courses (in Portuguese *Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos*), and modular training (in Portuguese *Formações Modulares*) are regulated in legal documents⁵. From these forms of provision formal second-chance education, recognition of prior learning and adult education and training courses lead to a formal school certification and/or professional qualification⁶. Many other non-State providers are civil society organisations promoting educational, social, environmental and civic projects and activities⁷.

⁵ Such as second-chance education (in Portuguese *Ensino Recorrente*) (Despacho normativo n.º 29/2008, 5/06), recognition of prior learning (in Portuguese *Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências*) (Portaria n.º 211/2011, 26/05; Portaria n.º 232/2016, 29/08), adult education and training courses (in Portuguese *Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos*) (Portaria n.º 817/2007, 27/07; Portaria n.º 230/2008, 7/03; Portaria n.º 710/2010, 17/08; Portaria n.º 1100/2010, 22/10; Portaria n.º 283/2011, 24/10; Despacho n.º 334/2012, 11/01), and modular training (in Portuguese *Formações Modulares*) (Portaria n.º 230/2008, 7/03; Portaria n.º 711/2010, 17/08; Portaria n.º 283/2011, 24/10).

⁶ This report includes data available in public domains concerning formal second-chance education (basic and secondary education), recognition of prior learning, adult education and training courses, and modular training.

⁷ See Canário, R. (2013). *Educação de Adultos. Um Campo, uma Problemática*. Lisboa: EDUCA and Loureiro, A. & Caria, T. (2013). "To learn and to construct knowledge in the context of the work with adult education and training: a Portuguese case study", *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Vol. 32, nº 2, pp. 149-164, among others.

2. Gender and diversity aspects tackled in the studied programmes

Although there was no direct reference to gender and diversity as such, the maintenance of the diversification of forms of provision is important, with special emphasis to the ones that are not formally certified. Literacy for vulnerable young women, migrants and Roma will have to be included through specific orientations and programmes, concerning basic skills and advanced reading and writing skills. Non-formal/liberal education (approaching different aims, contents, pedagogic methods and assessment strategies) need to be included too. In-service training, referring to informal learning in the workplace should also be part of this policy reform.

Valuing diversity is an aspect that is not entirely addressed in the programme. The educators suggest that it relies on the educators' genuine commitment to its implementation which may be critical to trainees' success. In order for trainees to be successful, educators need to become culturally more competent. Cultural competency for them refers to the continuous learning process that enables them to function effectively in the context of cultural differences both in the classroom and in the work environment.

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

Policy-makers: The concept is traditionally understood as identity and belonging - at local, regional and national level. More recently it has come to have an international and global scope. APC means to designate a membership status of individuals to a politically articulated community and which grants them a set of rights and obligations. Although it is strongly connected to the dialectical notion of public and individual rights and duties, it has undergone many modifications as to its scope and nature especially in the last decade in Portuguese policy making.

Educators: APC is about understanding one's limits as a citizen. This essentially means to understand your 'space' in society and respect other people space. APC is a dynamic feature which should evolve following the progress of modern societies. The reinforcement of the idea of building solidarity and inclusive societies unleashes rising expectations of citizens in their rights and freedoms as well as the enforcement of civic participation as an integration via a social project that is intended to be equitable, binding, inclusive and fair. Education for citizenship is thus a tributary of values, morals and ethics. An education exclusively oriented to knowledge cannot guarantee that the subjects of this education are both competent in performing professional duties and socially able to manage the space of rights and duties that society provides them. On the other hand, the concept of citizenship today tends to refer to other spaces within and beyond nationality. It also involves a psychological and social dimension with a strong focus on labour issues and social solidarity, to add to the civic intervention embodied in the right to have rights and the fulfilment of duties.

Learners/Participants: The concept is related to political rights like voting and decision making, for some others it is about volunteering and helping the community.

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

Learning outcomes statements are always supported by the inclusion of *performance elements*. Performance elements or indicators as they are sometimes called, provide a more specific picture of ability. They define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the learning outcome. In effect, the elements are indicators of the means by which the learner will proceed to satisfactory performance of the learning outcome. That is, they help to address the question, "What would you accept as evidence that a student has achieved a certain level, or is in the process of achieving the outcome?"

It is also essential to understand that the volume of educational activities and independent work includes Self-Directed Learning (SDL) that cannot be prescribed, and that any such attempt must follow a pattern that considers the following principles:

- See learners as owning and managing their learning. That means learners decide upon the context, the resources, the way of learning and how to keep track of whether they have achieved what they set out to learn.
- Recognize that self-motivation and initiative are important in the learning process. The SDL belief is that a learner's motivation to learn about something is what drives him to become a participant in the learning process.
- Aim to shift the responsibility and control from the teacher to the learner. Learners set their goals, decide how to achieve those goals and how to approach learning the information.

Also, the programme employs a blended-learning approach for developing all the training activities. This approach refers to the complementary use of e-Learning in the standard education model, due to the benefits it offers on a broad scale, to name a few, self-paced learning, testing and quizzing, monitoring and feedback. The advantages of this approach are far more important than one might think, as they affect not only the trainees, but also the trainer and the learning process itself! The advantages can be summed to the following:

- 1) Learner is more engaged using a variety of content types
- 2) Different learner, different learning style
- 3) Instructor or trainer can assess learner trends and act accordingly
- 4) Improved feedback
- 5) It can make learning fun

The above elements essentially direct trainees to do their homework and research their situation thoroughly. By gathering information in several key areas, they better prepare themselves to create a relevant and customized training plan.

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 VYAs

At present, a large number of adult educators hold a higher education degree, even if there cannot be found a specific adult education pathway for these practitioners at the *Licenciatura* level in higher education institutions. This is a different situation from some decades ago when only a few adult educators held specific knowledge and skills to work in existing forms of provision as well as in other adult education projects and activities. This situation is due to the emergence of professionalisation paths for adult educators in specific those hired in *Qualification Centres*, but also owing to the development of research and critical thinking in this scientific domain. This situation suggests a higher quality of education provision that needs to be reinforced. What is needed for supporting APC for VYAs is a more specific training for acquiring competences like intercultural communication, empathy and tolerance. One educator also stressed the importance of volunteering as practice by adult educators since many of them provide courses voluntarily to NGOs. This is a competence that needs to be recognized.

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

Favourable conditions:

- The favourable conditions relate more to the innovative forms of provision (different in structure, contents and evaluation and closer to adult learners needs) that were established since 2000, such as recognition of prior learning, as well as adult education and training courses. These forms of provision have allowed the improvement of learners disposition towards learning, the delivery of learning that meets adult learner needs, in specific when they attended recognition of prior learning. It has raised the equality of access, and seen an increase of adults' participation rates and of certification and professional qualification. Meanwhile, these provisions made people consider education as a relevant domain that all could attend and benefit from.
- For some adult educators Adult education includes several streams, apart from the ones (of a formal kind) included in adult education policies. These other streams suggest the diversity of projects, activities, adult educators and participants. Activities that can be found are implemented by a large variety of organisations: state-dependent, private/profit-making and civil society/non-profit making. These organisations forma a wide network that has even established adult education centres, and has implemented existing forms of provision (like recognition of prior learning, adult education courses and modular training). Therefore, these streams could be involved in a future adult education policy of a global and integrated nature in order to promote other provision and to improve equality of access to non-formal and informal education.

Unfavourable conditions:

- Most of policy discourse since 1974 refer to the “historical educational delay” of the Portuguese population. Illiteracy rate in 2015 of 5.2% (3.5% for men and 6.8% for women) was still of concern. According to research such as IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) literacy levels of the adult population were low involving several personal and social constraints for most people, the economy and society. Currently, school abandonment and dropout still present high rates when compared with other European Union or OECD countries. Additionally, non-participants have been hard to involve in lifelong learning as all of the educators noted. Even if education policies in the last decades have had a significant impact by increasing educational attainment, there is still a long way to go and existing adult education forms of provision do not seem enough for solving this long-term problem. Additionally, current adult education policy only includes major kinds of provision: recognition of prior learning and adult education and training courses. Owing to the wide variety of education activities, involving organisations and people involved in

formal, non-formal/liberal and informal adult education, the current adult education policy seems insufficient to solve long-term educational problem of the Portuguese population and to benefit from a wide spectrum of providers, participants and activities.

- Only in very few occasions has the adult education policy been considered a central point in policy agenda, and a relevant issue for the Portuguese population. Formal and school education for young people has received the main attention from different governments and State departments in charge of education. Even if adult education policy was relevant from 2000 to 2011, the improvement of participation rates in the last decade has not revealed a consistent pattern, which explains the recent decrease of participation rates in lifelong learning. Non-participants still represent an important percentage of the population. A preference for short term programmes is a characteristic of adult education policies and of projects implemented by many non-State, civil society and non-governmental organisations. The limited national funding and the importance of European Social Fund is another expression of the lack of importance attributed to adult education. Therefore, the lack of social, economic, political, cultural and civic relevance of adult education is a significant weakness that might only be overcome by long-term and stable aimed policies.

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

There are essentially two issues that stand out. The first is the recognition of prior learning for participant trainees. For the educators but also for some of the trainees The Portuguese NQF facilitates the progression of trainees through qualifications by giving credit for learning outcomes they already have achieved. Credit outcomes may allow for entry into a qualification and/or provide credit towards the qualification. Credit given may reduce the time required for a trainee to achieve the qualification and this is important for many of them. Exercising APC in this context becomes particularly challenging however considering that the Portuguese school system provides a course on citizenship that is compulsory for all students in high school. What the school does not do is to assign specific learning outcomes to the course that are directly relevant to APC competence. This then means that the course on citizenship at school cannot be recognised and therefore APC needs to be included in the training syllabus. The second issue relates to the competences of the trainers and educators. Most trainers feel inadequately prepared to include APC as a separate module and they are trying to blend it in the existing syllabus not always successfully. Even those trainers with relevant studies and degrees like law and political science cannot always relate APC to the training they provide. This again asks for a new approach to the training of the adult educators. For most of them the training should be more focused and relevant to the specificities of the learners and trainers rather than being generic and non-specific.

The National Reform Programme and the Stability Programme for 2016-2020 refers to one of the four pillars that concerns the *“historical qualifications deficit of the Portuguese population”* as well as the high levels of underachievement at school and school the level of dropout. Facing the need of policy reform for specific target-groups, additional programmes and qualifications are foreseen, covering domains such as education, qualification and training within the frame of a *“comprehensive policy regarding the inclusion and employability of low-skilled workers”*, especially for the long-term unemployed. These programmes are to be considered a complementary to other programmes, regarding the reduction of the segmentation of the labour market in order to achieve stable working conditions, improve productivity and competitiveness of the Portuguese economy. Mr Rebelo however further claimed that if adult education is the fourth pillar in policy discourse, there seems to be no relevant effective policy. The existing programme, the qualify programme (in Portuguese *Programa Qualifica*) launched in August 2016, only includes a short range of provisions for promoting lifelong learning policies and improving the quality of the learning processes. Therefore, this new policy (recently implemented) is directed at fostering the achievement of education and training pathways leading to qualifications (school certification and professional qualification). These pathways are based on valuing learning developed through life, through the achievement of recognition of prior learning, and the acquisition and development of competences by the attendance of education and training courses and modular training. However, this seems to be clearly insufficient when observing the social, cultural, economic, political and civic problems that the Portuguese

society is currently facing.

Recognition of prior learning makes it possible for low qualified adult learners to obtain school certification and/or professional qualification by means of validation of non-formal and informal learning at different stages of an individual's life/career progression. It is carried out according to different areas of key competences and levels of school certification and professional qualification, according to the existing standards of competences (in Portuguese *Referenciais de Competências-Chave*). It has the same legal value as any other way of obtaining school certification, allowing learners to pursue further studies in other forms of provision of the national education and training system, and professional qualification. The validation of non-formal and informal learning is directed at acquiring school certification (equivalent to 6, 9 and 12 years of schooling, levels 1, 2 and 3 of the national qualifications framework and of the European Qualifications Framework) and/or professional qualification (equivalent to levels 2 and 4 of the national qualification framework and of the European Qualifications Framework).

Adult education and training courses are directed at low qualified adults older than 18 years. These courses are developed according to school certification and/or professional qualification, and, whenever suitable to adults' profiles and experience, for school certification only. These courses provide adult learners with the possibility to acquire school and/or professional competences, aiming for (re)integration or progression in the labour market.

Modular training courses are targeted at adults aged over 18 without suitable qualification, and not having concluded basic and secondary education, for integration or progression in the labour market. These courses involve obtaining one or more qualifications included in the national catalogue of qualifications (in Portuguese *Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações*) and can allow the creation of flexible paths of variable duration, characterised by different training modalities, targets, methodologies, training contexts and validation processes.

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

- Access is easily made through the relevant application platform. An online application is available. Candidates who submit their applications by post or to the office are also considered for the programme, but they are also urged to upload their application to the application platform as well. Any other communication is either by phone or e-mail but only with the secretary.
- Communication is made in by e-mail between the VYAs and the programme staff by e-mail when they are recruited to the programme. All applicants receive a message from the secretary of whether they have been accepted or not. Those selected are then contacted by the programme manager for the time-schedule and other details on the programme.
- The programme provider sustains a Moodle based learning platform and all communication takes place from within the platform. All the relevant material, televised communication, VYAs questions, messages, students' forum etc. appear in the platform for all participants to have access to them.

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

VYAs communicate among them via e-mails and SMS messages. They also have their own facebook page in Citeforma and they send and receive messages there as well. The Citeforma practitioners also suggest that they twitter and facebook to communicate with the students who have completed the programme. Communication is relevant when the VYAs need to find information on their assessments, feedback on their performance or other relevant programmes. Through the learning platform VYAs (i.e. long term unemployed) have access to all the material, communication conduits, etc. They claim that the platform works well, but occasionally televised meetings with some practitioners is problematic because of the bad connection.

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

The programme employs an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) model. This model focuses on organizing for results: basing what we do instructionally on the outcomes we want to achieve. Outcome-based practitioners start by determining the knowledge, competencies, and qualities they want learners to be able to demonstrate when they complete an educational or training programme or activity and face the challenges and opportunities of the work environment. OBE, therefore, is not a "programme" but a way of designing, delivering, and documenting instruction in terms of its intended goals and outcomes. The model embraces the following standpoints:

- There are clear criteria for what constitutes a learning outcome
- Instruction is thoughtful and adapts to learner needs
- Learners are assisted when and where they have challenges
- Learners are given adequate time to achieve learning outcomes
- There are clear criteria for measuring fluency/proficiency
- Teaching material and methodology is adaptive to learners' needs
- Learner support is provided when and where it is needed most
- Learners are given sufficient time to achieve learning outcomes
- Learners are engaged to produce meaningful content based on their experience
- Assessment is constructed around the learning outcomes that are achieved
- Learners are supported with regular and substantive feedback and interactivity

As most trainers suggested this is largely a matter of their training and licensing procedure. APC was never an issue during their training as adult educators, therefore more focus is required in their training on APC and also competences and skills that relate to "building a safe learning environment for the trainers".

The majority of VYAs claimed that finding work that makes them feel secure is the most important priority for them. Training for VYAs like those who are long-term unemployed is mostly about getting a job. Some respondents stressed the fact that knowing how to develop their CVs is the most important element in taking your chances with employers in Portugal. It is not about "the paper" they receive but about the skills that the paper reflects upon, and this is something they do not learn during the course of the programme.



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