

# Bridging Barriers - Competence development at the cutting edge for educators in Adult Basic Education in Europe



Introduction

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# Adult Basic Education – A vital field of activity in search of representation

\_\_ Notwithstanding its much longer tradition, Adult Basic Education (ABE) has emerged only within the past two decades as field of provision in its own right in many European countries – or is just about to enter this stage of development.

\_\_ Only a few people outside the field have a clear vision of what Adult Basic Education is all about and what is going on within the courses



Youth course – Vienna (Interface)\*



# Adult Basic Education – A vital field of activity in search of representation

It is key to acknowledge the variety of participants in adult basic education, and their

\_\_ manifold learning goals (literacy, numeracy, ICT, any really ‘useful knowledge’; Learning the locally dominating language as a Second Language without an ‘academic’ background)

\_\_ manifold needs, that need to be sufficiently met, so that they can enter the course, stay with the course and make progress in their learning/ by help of the course



# Adult Basic Education – A vital field of activity in search of representation

It is essential to represent what educators in Adult Basic Education actually do and what professional competences they apply in their work

\_\_what they do to make learning happen and helping participants to stay with the course and progress *against all odds*

\_\_how they develop their professional competences, contribute to their field, defend their professionalism and fight for sustainable employment conditions and fair pay.



# Content versus problem-, task- and solution-centred approaches

*Content centred perspective*

How to deliver – for the common participant

e.g. the curriculum of lower secondary education adjusted to the needs of adult learners

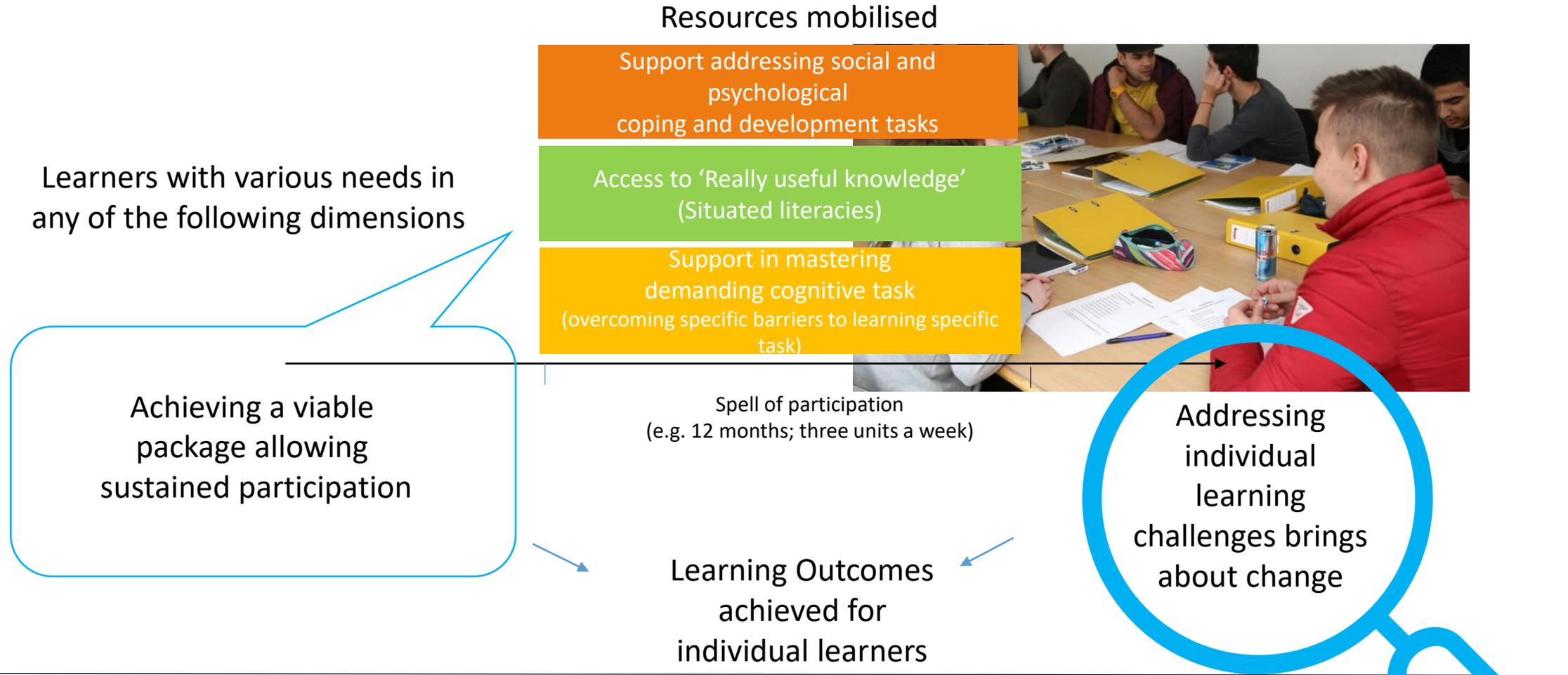
Role (and competences) of the ABE teacher/professional

*Problem-, task- and solution-centred perspective*

How to allow participants to learn by responding to specific learning barriers on levels including

- the cognitive level
- the psycho-social level
- the situated/motivational level

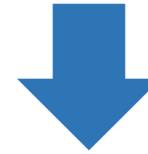
# Responding to participants' needs allowing them to enter in, stay with and profit from Adult Basic Education



# Solution-oriented approach to teaching in ABE as an emerging profession

Modelling types of tasks and levels of performance

Which (specific) tasks need to be accomplished?



Which competences of the teachers (bundles of competences) are mobilised in order to accomplish a task? How complex/demanding are these required competences?



How are these competences acquired? How can one support the acquisition of relevant competences? How can novel competences be systematically developed?



# 'Deliberate Practice' as a model of learning

## The roots of the concept

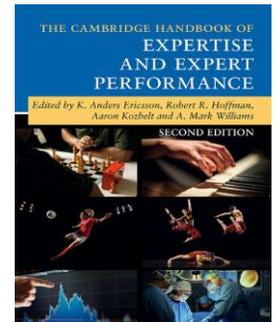
Rooted in the research on the acquisition of expert levels of performance in fields as different as playing the violine, playing chess, interpreting sonograms, giving military commands in combat situations

Not any practice, but a thoughtfully planned practice, with hints/targeted exercises provided by a knowledgeable expert teacher for how to overcome any difficulties, allows for the acquisition of higher level of expertise

He coined the term 'deliberate practice' (in the sense of planned, reflected, but also in the sense of negotiated between two parties) for a type of practice, where one expert shares his/her knowledge about how to approach a difficulty best with a student, the latter experimenting with this approach and coming back with his/her experiences; the transmission of expertise is a kind of guided practice based on mainly tacit knowledge hold by communities of practice on how to learn something presenting considerably difficulties to the learner



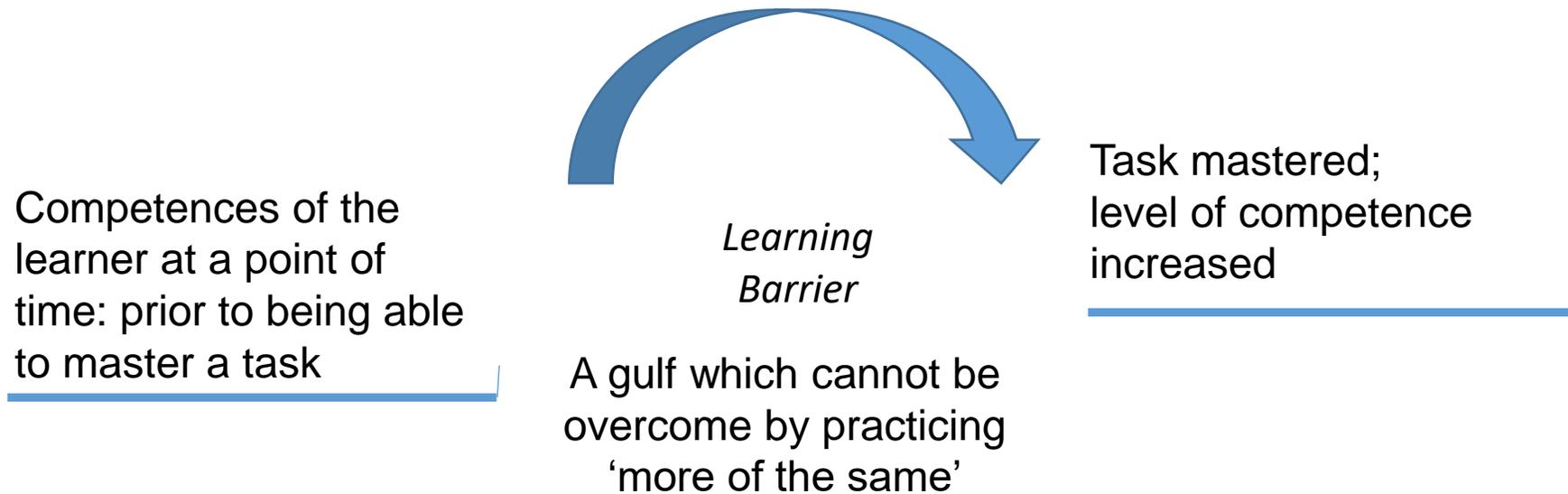
K. Anders Ericsson  
1947-2020



# Deliberate Practice as a model of learning/teaching

## Deliberate Practice

ABE practitioner – based on their evaluation of the situation and experience/tacit knowledge) – proposes tailored exercises, the participant gives them a try, the outcomes of these attempts of working around the difficulty are reflected, further exercises are selected for making (any/further) progress and so forth

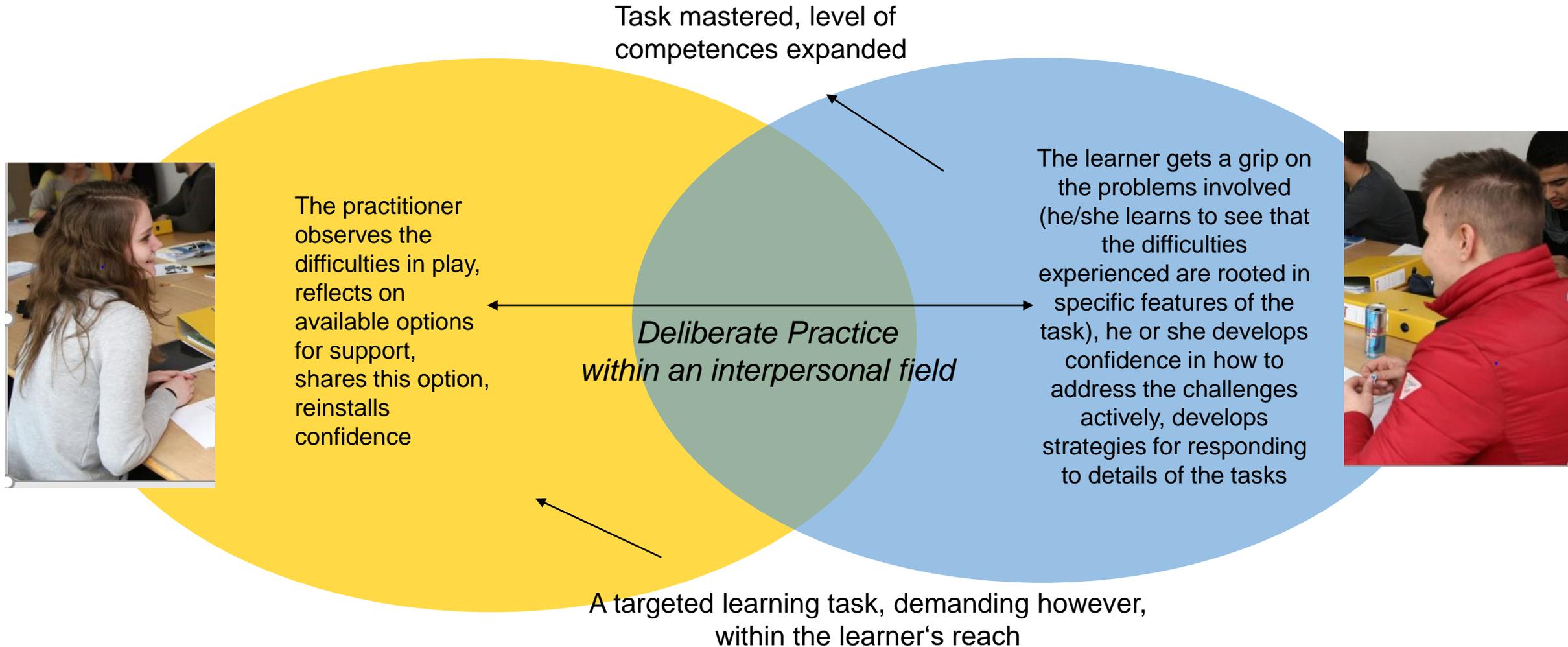


# Deliberate Practice as a Model of Learning

	Example general
	Piano playing
Learner encounters an unsolvable barrier	Complicated fingering pattern/rhythm/phrasing
Teacher recognises the barrier and suggests a solution ('detour')	Suggestion of an exercise (e.g. more complicated but specific, easier but more focussed)
Learner takes the 'detour' (practices), 'unlearns' the problem, learns to differentiate approaches ('take the right turn')	Learner practices while getting further support (e.g. feedback, encouragement)
Learner goes back to initial task and A) learns to solve it and (partly) generalises the experience or B) the deliberate learning process starts over	Learner goes back to initial sequence of music and A) succeeds or B) fails and restarts the process with another alternative

Transfer to ABE	
Learning to read	Teaching reading
Learn a language	Teaching a language
Connecting letters; pronounce a certain sound	Not successful in supporting the learning process with usual set of exercises.
Suggestion of an exercise	Sharing the experience on which exercises may support possible barriers and which signs may lead to possible pathways of solutions ('professional confidence')
Learner practices while getting further support (e.g. feedback, encouragement)	Learner practices while getting further support (e.g. feedback, encouragement)
Learner goes back to initial letters/sounds and A) succeeds or B) fails and restarts the process with another alternative	The learning barrier can A) be overcome (in a good enough way) or B) not be overcome and the process to search a solution starts over

# Learning as an interpersonal experience



# Conclusions

- \_ Helping learners to 'work around' – to bridge – highly specific (individual) learning barriers is a vital area of competences of teachers in adult basic education
- \_ Making the tacit knowledge available in the field visible, thereby supporting the opportunities for transfer between educators, is key
- \_ Identifying the gaps and the available approaches for overcoming learning barriers is an important field for future development
- \_ Highlighting teachers' competences for bringing up change – for bridging barriers – can help them in their quest for fair pay and sustainable employment patterns (in places where this has not been achieved)