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# BRIDGING BARRIERS PEER LEARNING APPROACH A FRAMEWORK CURRICULUM

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FSEA has been active since 1951 as a national umbrella association in the interest of lifelong learning in Switzerland. More than 700 members count on it as a trade association, including private and state training providers, associations, in-house training departments and individuals. Information: Cäcilia Märki.

Editor:  
3s Unternehmensberatung  
GmbH, A-1040 Wien  
Wiedner Hauptstraße 18

Tel: +43 1 585 09 15

[3s.co.at](https://3s.co.at)

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# 1. Introduction

Eva Steinheimer, 3s Research & Consulting

Bridging Barriers is a two-and-a-half-year project funded by the European Union Erasmus+ framework, bringing together researchers, teachers and representatives of course providers from Austria, Italy, Slovakia, and Switzerland. The project's aims include the development of a competence matrix, a further education curriculum and the implementation of pilot courses for teachers active in Adult Basic Education (ABE). By these activities, the project intends to enhance the professionalism of educators in this field.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) forms a vital part of adult education, allowing adults to improve their basic skills in reading, writing and calculating as well as in using IT in professional and everyday life. In addition, ABE is supporting migrants who have received only rudimentary education prior to their move to acquire good skills in the use of the language of the receiving country.

ABE is organized in different ways across Europe, reflecting different historical pathways, institutional environments and policies. Teachers in ABE have entered the field based on a diverse set of educational credentials, professional experiences and competences. Skills crucial for successfully helping adults to acquire basic skills are typically not described in a systematic manner.

This is where the Bridging Barriers project comes in by its aims to contribute to the development of higher levels of professionalism of ABE teachers in Europe. The project aims at developing new approaches for making visible and systematising the specific skills and competences applied in this field, thereby supporting the development of a European profile of ABE teachers' competences while also enhancing networking among teachers in the field.

The core outcomes of the project include

- a competence matrix of skills used by ABE teachers in delivering Adult Basic Education, applying an established approach (VQTS - (Luomi-Messerer and Markowitsch, 2006; Markowitsch, Becker, Spöttl and Luomi-Messerer, 2008)) for the development of such a matrix,
- the current curriculum for a train-the-trainer course for ABE teachers targeting their skills in helping students with overcoming learning barriers,
- a handbook summarising the project's achievements and supporting the implementation of pilot courses modelled on the developed curriculum.

Started in late 2019, the implementation of Bridging Barriers has been disrupted by the events and restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic in manifold ways. Despite all obstacles and by the extension of the project duration, the project team tries to cope with the situation. In the first project phase, the grounds for the development of a competence matrix were laid. Based on desk research and 45 in-depth interviews with ABE teachers in the four involved countries, work tasks of teachers as a structural element for the competence matrix were identified. Information on competence development of teachers in the field, working conditions in the participating countries and reflections on the needs for further training of ABE teachers could be acquired through the interviews.

The competence matrix was designed according to the VQTS approach that follows a broad understanding of the term competences, including cognitive competences (knowledge), functional competences (skills) and social competences (behaviour) (Luomi-Messerer et al., 2006; Markowitsch et al., 2008). Derived from the identified core work tasks, a number of competence areas are defined. For each competence area, between two and six competence development steps capture the competence development. However, the number of levels depends on the complexity of tasks solely and on the - from an expert practitioner's point of view - number of stages of professional development observable in the particular area of work. Soft skills and key competences are understood to be required for performing the core work tasks and are therefore not described separately as specific competence areas, yet as inherent in the competence descriptions where relevant. This implies also that - while for example, high levels of interprofessional skills are required as such for all activities - it is not sufficient to have such high levels of skills, but it is required to apply these skills for complementing a specific task (e.g., sorting out a conflict within a group of learners). The approach is guided by the idea, that for ABE teachers, their key competence is related to their ability to help participants to overcome considerable learning difficulties. The latter might be traced back to issues on a cognitive psycho-social level. For helping to make learning possible, teachers are applying strategies, which can be summarised by the concept of "deliberate practice" (Hefler, Steinheimer and Wulz, 2018).

The validation process of the competence matrix was supported by feedback gathered in expert interviews and the process of discussions within the project consortium, and will be continued in the planned pilot courses and the international workshop. The matrix will then be updated accordingly.

In the second project phase, a framework curriculum - understood as a design for a train-the-trainer course for educators in the field of ABE - was developed based on the collected findings on demands for further training among practitioners. An attempt was made to translate the identified competences of ABE educators into learning processes with a focus on competences of ABE practitioners required to support adult participants to overcome specific learning barriers, rooted in cognitive, psychosocial or situated circumstances. For exploring these competences, the concept of "deliberate practice" was chosen as the key model, where the ABE educators "perceive" the difficulties, propose tailored activities to overcome them, install confidence and motivation to "give it a try", evaluate with the learner the progress made and adopt the exercises as required for allowing progress to be made. (See also Chapter 2).

In the third and final phase of the project, the curriculum will be adapted to preconditions and needs in the four participating organizations and brought to life in four pilot courses following the Bridging Barriers approach in summer 2021. The outcomes of the implementation of the courses are used for refining the approaches taken and the results of the implemented peer learning activities will be documented in a handbook that is meant to be used as an inspiration for the development of similar further training offers across Europe.

## 2. Introducing the key idea of ‘deliberate practice’ in Adult Basic Education

Günter Hefler and Eva Steinheimer, 3s Research & Consulting, Vienna, Austria

In the following, we present our approach to an essential question within Adult Basic Education (ABE): What do participants need in order to make individual progress in their learning journey? But let us first present the background of our approach: With the three-year Horizon 2020 ENLIVEN project, a project focussing on adult learning, we have done case studies on the evolving Adult Basic Education Sector in Austria.<sup>1</sup>

Within one line of work, we asked practitioners in Adult Basic Education what they do in their day-to-day work and how they have actually learned to support the learning of their participants. We interviewed eight practitioners and studied two organizations providing Adult Basic Education in Austria. Moreover, we have extensively consulted the literature and have reached out to various stakeholders in the field of Adult Basic Education.

In our work, it became clear that participants in Adult Basic Education have rather different needs and face different challenges in making progress in their learning. In consequence, practitioners need to apply a broad set of strategies and tools to help students overcome their learning barriers. We found that neither the varied needs of participants nor the required competences of practitioners relevant for providing tailored support are well captured in the literature. This is certainly unfortunate, as the key competences of teachers in Adult Basic Education remain mainly invisible for this reason. This finding has been one of the sources of inspiration for the current Bridging Barriers project.

### 2.1. Learning needs of participants in ABE

Starting with the learning needs and the related challenges faced by the participants, our literature review has shown a scarcity of approaches to classify the learning needs and the related challenges in any detail. Available typologies often do not focus on the learning needs as such - and therefore not on the practitioners' approaches required to address them - but on selected socio-economic characteristics of the learners themselves. Here is the assumption that groups of learners with some similar features have also somewhat more similar learning needs to be addressed by the programmes.

We would like to demonstrate our point by the example of an otherwise quite helpful typology of participants in Adult Literacy Classes in Germany, proposing seven main types of participants supported by seven subtypes (Drucks, Bauer and Hastaoglu, 2011). The typology uses two key dimensions. The first dimension refers to the group-specific quantity of economic and educational but also symbolic capital, in particular with regard to citizenship rights. Groups differ in their relative wealth and poverty, with some groups characterised by marked levels of poverty. The second dimension refers to the various

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<sup>1</sup> <https://h2020enliven.org/home/>

"Whys", explaining why adults have not achieved higher levels of literacy - or a much better command of German as a second language - at earlier stages of their life course.

The reasons for that include

- the effects of the social class of the family of origin
- effects of gender, bringing about disadvantage for either women (for example within some groups of migrants) or men (e.g., for young men stemming from economically deprived families).
- effects of various forms of severe stress of traumatic events, including the untimely death of close family members, illness, the illness - in particular mental illness - of a family member, dysfunctional families, violence, experience of foster care and many more.
- The effects of immigration and related forms of institutional discrimination within Germany for members of discriminated groups of migrants; a particular form of symbolic violence stems from the denial of a permanent permission of residence, which can lead to a life in absence of practically any right, given that leaving the country is not an option.
- The effects of discrimination and the experience of violence in the countries of origin

The types of participants achieved can be positioned within a matrix. For example, Type 1 refers to participants stemming from deprived households to the majority group of the society who could not complete an education during their youth and who, however, might have been considerably successful in adult life, although their low-level literacy remains a matter of individual concern. On the contrary, Type 2 refers to adults who are the offspring of well-off families from the majority group of society but who became estranged from schooling and did badly in school and thereby disappointed the high-flying expectations of their parents who did their best to delay the drop out of their children as long as possible.

To take another opposition, while one group of participants comprises of highly skilled migrants (Type 7) with a non-disputed right for residence who are mainly struggling with learning German as a second language (being thereby no particular target group of Adult Basic Education), another important subgroup (Type 5c) comprises of displaced persons who are denied the refugee status, although their life histories are characterised by a series of traumatic experiences or their former lives by severe forms of repression, which hampered all educational projects.

While the typology might capture the reasons well why a participant is in need of Adult Basic Education, it tells surprisingly little about the learning required, the learning difficulties encountered and the type of support required. For taking a fresh starting point, we suggest falling back to a fictitious example from the highly recommended tragic comedy "Italian for Beginners", a Danish movie first screened in the year 2000, directed by Lone Scherfig. In the movie, we meet Olympia, in her late 30s, one of the story's main protagonists, taking part in an Italian for beginners class. Now, what has Olympia brought into the quite empty classroom of the local adult education centre as one of six participants? Let us start with the trigger. Olympia lives with her father, depends economically on him, but has also been already taking care of him for some years as he is suffering from dementia. Moreover, he abuses his caregiver and tries to control every aspect of her life. One day, she decides to take a leap of faith and leaves the house in the evening (i.e., not for work). For her, this is a major act of self-empowerment. She selects the Italian course as it being the only social activity accessible to her.

Her choices are restricted for various reasons. She has heard that the "for beginners" lesson does not include any writing, which appeals to her as she cannot write due to a learning disability and a handicap not addressed well, meaning she would not be able to write down any notes. She can read, yet not write more than single words. However, having lived as a functional analphabetic her entire adult life, she relies on her memory and typically does not forget anything.

To come back to our topic, it is clear that Olympia's needs and challenges are multifaceted.

- First of all, participating in a social group forms one of the most valuable assets available in any type of adult learning and the present course is not excluding the protagonist based on her low level of literacy. She does quite well within the group despite the fact that she is afraid of potentially negative reactions by others in response to her disability.
- Second, she is not motivated by the distant opportunity of progressing on the educational ladder, but by the very outcome of each lesson, given their practical value for her day-to-day work.
- Third, she has quite a specific profile of strengths and handicaps - for making progress in writing, she would need a tailored training and access to life hacks, so that she could communicate in written even prior to an improvement of her motoric abilities, the latter only improvable in the long run. She would drop out certainly from any course not taking into account her needs, thereby repeating the situation in initial education, where she was found "too impaired" for being worth the efforts of extensive support.

In reality, in the basic education classrooms, with large differences between locations and times welcome individuals with highly different reasons for attending the courses, with a broad variety of learning barriers, and rather different individual goals for their future learning pathway.

## 2.2. Content- versus "learning challenges"- and solution-centred approaches

While the field of Adult Basic Education can be approached by referencing to a "common participant" who requires standardised educational support following a curriculum, for example, equivalent to parts of the curriculum of lower secondary education, this might not capture the essence of Adult Basic Education.

Therefore, we focus on a "close up" of specific learning challenges presented by the participants and on the solutions imagined and applied by their teachers for bringing up change, so that over time learning can take place despite difficulties that might have looked impenetrable at first sight.

It is also important to emphasize the fact that learning needs and related challenges are not on a cognitive level alone, but can be equally present on a psychosocial level. Moreover, it is of key importance to secure the relevance of the learning achieved for the participants' current lives and not to rely on a vague significance of today's learning for a distant future.

Participants in Adult Basic Education can certainly be mapped according to their key learning needs and their key tasks and challenges, stemming from their current life

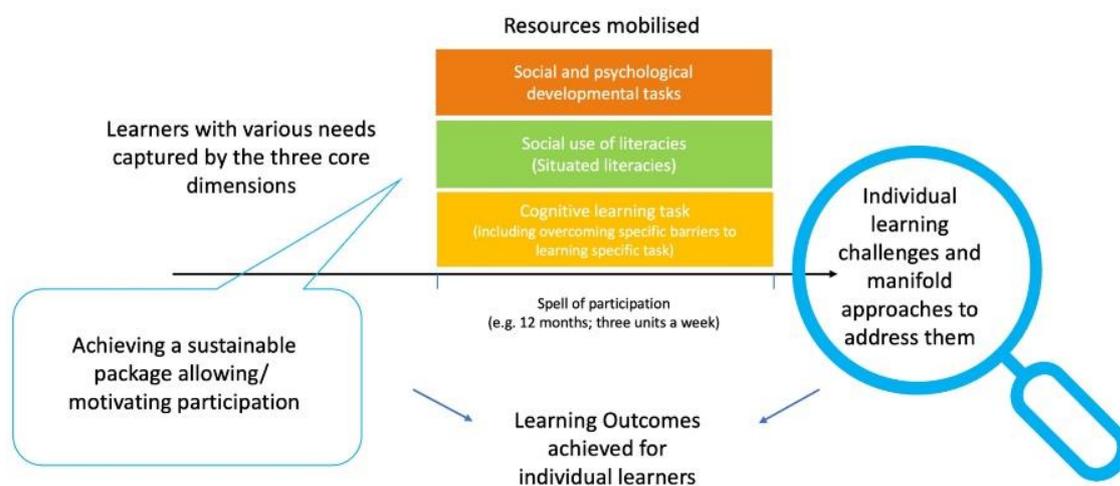


situations. Their needs can be roughly in line with what is anticipated for the common participant in adult learning. However, in many cases, their needs might be more specific and requiring a more tailored approach for allowing them to gain from their participation.

Speaking of their learning needs in the content domains like literacy or numeracy, participants also differ by the fact that some participants profit from a broad set of teaching provided, while others are in need of one-on-one highly tailored provision in order to overcome learning barriers that had undermined progress in the past.

We summarise our view on Adult Basic Education in the following figure.

FIGURE 1 - TYPOLOGIES OF CHALLENGES/TASKS ADDRESSED IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION.



Source: 3s

Learners enter Adult Basic Education courses, which may last considerably long and can have quite a high number of teaching units, with different needs and they might face different challenges or barriers hampering their learning progress.

For allowing them to stay with the course, the course needs to guarantee a sustainable package consisting of

- a framework responding to psycho-social needs of the participants, with special provisions to answer their individual sensitivities, if required
- an appropriate way to make learning of immediate use for the participants, so their motivation can be sustained even during phases where their learning progress is slow
- a flexible approach for providing tasks tailored to a learner's current abilities, and sensitive to the fact, that even rather elementary tasks can include difficulties which cannot be overcome by participants without the proper support.

Making arrangements for such a package is already a demanding task, calling for a high level of professional competence on the side of the practitioners. However, in Adult Basic Education, even more is required.

Given that many participants face rather specific barriers potentially blocking their progress, adult educators need to be able to detect and explore the difficulties, make up

their mind what type of intervention might be helpful, suggest appropriate exercises to overcome the difficulties and examine, together with the participants, whether the way of working around the difficulties was successful. We suggest understanding this core element of professional practice within Adult Basic Education by the help of the concept of "deliberate practice".

## 2.3. The idea of "deliberate practice"

The concept of deliberate practice has been promoted by the work of the Swedish psychologist Anders Ericsson, who spent most of his academic life in the US. He studied the acquisition of expert levels of performance in fields as different as playing the violin, playing chess, interpreting sonograms, giving military commands in combat situations. Not practice alone, as measured by the hours of exercising, but a thoughtfully planned practice, with hints/targeted exercises provided by a knowledgeable expert teacher for how to overcome specific difficulties, allows for the acquisition of higher level of expertise.

Ericsson 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 challenging task best with a student, the latter experimenting with the suggested approach and coming back with his/her experiences whether the arrangements made have provided a way forward; the transmission of expertise is a kind of guided practice based on mainly tacit knowledge, as developed and held by communities of practice on how to acquire expert levels of performance involving considerable difficulties to be mastered by the learner (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer, 1993).

Ericsson's main interest lies in the sources of expertise. He agrees with the fact that in practically any domain of professional expertise including the performing arts, expert performance can do things completely out of the reach of lay people. However, he took an interest in reconstructing how these superior levels of expertise had been achieved in the first place. How do experts acquire their advanced levels of skills? He starts with the obvious assumption that "practice makes perfect", something expressed in German by "Übung macht den Meister", which has no equivalent in English. However, more exercises - more of the same - do not typically lead to higher performance levels.

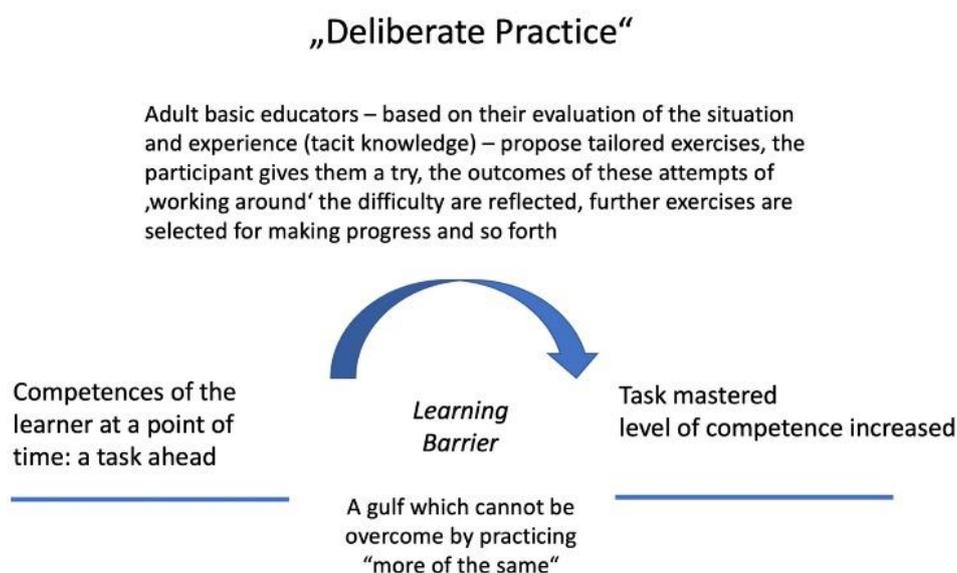
In his most seminal study, he followed students playing an instrument over longer stretches of time, measuring their efforts made and their progress achieved (Ericsson, 2009). By solely investing more time in exercising, their progress remains limited, with more hours of training leading to poor outcomes, but considerable health problems. Only by following the useful suggestions how to work around a technical difficulty in a piece, students were able to make progress. Not the number of hours spent on exercising, but the effectiveness of the hints given and the readiness to give the recommendation a try and reflect on their outcome turned out to explain differences in the students' progress achieved.

In the following, we explain how we propose to use related ideas in the field of Adult Basic Education. Our idea to use the concept of deliberate practice starts with the observation, that learners experience many tasks as if they are facing highly complex problems in playing a particular sequence in a piece of music. It is simply beyond their reach. For teachers, it is essential to understand that for the learners tasks may involve striking

difficulties which are practically invisible for anyone who has already internalised the related skills. It also helps to see which active role the teacher can play in designing tailored exercises. For this, he or she needs to assess the current situation and rely on his/her experience to make helpful suggestions. Moreover, he or she needs to cooperate with the student so that together, a way forward can be found.

Figure 2 summarises the ideas underpinning the idea of deliberate practice in the field of Adult Basic Education. A learner cannot solve a task as the current competences do not allow it - practice alone does not allow to make substantial progress. The learner faces a barrier. For bridging the gulf, the practitioner evaluates the situation, detects the likely source of the difficulty, and suggests specific options for working around the problem. Together with the learner, the experiences made with giving the exercises a try are evaluated and new solutions are sought for, if required. In the end, the original task will be completed, although by ways which might require more efforts than anticipated, however, with the learner having achieved a higher level of competence in a particular domain.

FIGURE 2 - DELIBERATE PRACTICE AS A MODEL OF LEARNING



Source: 3s

The problems of learning might often be in the cognitive domain, but it is clear that they can also stem from the psychosocial domain as well.

Any "deliberate practice" is rooted in an intense relationship between a teacher and a learner. Although we are not going into any details here, we would like to remind ourselves that learning is often approached best as something taking place between two persons populating the very same interpersonal field. The teacher provides specific resources to the shared field as well as the learner, and learning can be captured as a specific form of combination, where the teacher first takes in the difficulties presented, modifies them by working them through in his/her mind, provides the very same problem in a transformed way to the learner who then experiences the difficulties in a new light as they become commensurable - "thinkable" - to him and her, so that it is possible to relate differently to problems which had initially been overwhelming or impenetrable.



"Deliberate practice", in this interpretation, echoes the lessons of a psychodynamic interpretation of "learning from experience", when what needs to be learned has to be contained by a person first in order to become "thinkable" by the learner later, following the suggestions of the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1962). Therefore, it is important to see that deliberate practice is a shared activity of both teacher and learner.

## 3. Introducing approaches selected for supporting ‘peer learning’

In the Bridging Barriers project and its key activity, the implementation of train-the-trainer courses for teachers in adult basic education, methods of ‘peer learning’ play a key role. In the first phase of the project, interviews with ABE teachers showed that exchange among peers, meaning colleagues and other ABE teachers, is a major source of learning and support for teachers at all stages of their professional development. Informal exchange and sharing experiences with one another during breaks are the most common way of day-to-day peer learning. More structured forms of peer learning are sometimes established as super- or intervision, in multi-professional and team-teaching settings. Yet, methods of peer consulting or collaborative learning are rarely used in organised further education courses for ABE teachers and far from all teachers in the field report to have sufficient access to peer learning. We want to test various of such approaches in our pilot courses and share our learning with the ABE community to support and inspire others to design and organise similar offers.

### 3.1. Peer learning, collaborative or cooperative learning – finding directions

The term peer learning describes different activities, from simply sharing information or experience, over counselling or coaching activities to group learning or collaborative learning activities. While definitions of different types of activities show some overlap or blurred boundaries, some of the expressions used for peer learning activities are used interchangeably in colloquial use. Those activities share the common characteristic of a small group of people coming together to talk about a certain topic or experience learning together. The word peer adds the aspect that the people that meet as group members are equals in some way. Shared characteristics of such groups include for example age, gender, being a parent, common interests, or shared leisure activities or experienced (health) problems.<sup>2</sup> While peer groups can come together for positive or neutral reasons/topics to learn new things together, peer groups often deal with rather negative aspects of life as well. A widely known example are groups of Alcoholics Anonymous dealing with addiction.

In the Bridging Barriers project, we use the term peer learning in a broad sense for different approaches and methods that support learning from exchange among equals. For the pilot courses we plan, group members will share the characteristic of being active as teachers in ABE under the given conditions in each partner country and in this sense qualify as peers.

Even though the two phrases collaborative and cooperative sound very similar and are often wrongly used interchangeably, they mean slightly different things. They have in common, that for both people are working together on something and to a certain degree divide labour. The how and why differs though. With collaboration the group of people

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<sup>2</sup> See for example <https://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/psychologie/peers/11291> or <https://www.socialnet.de/lexikon/Peergroup>

usually share the same goal and a mutually engaged as it requires a coordinated effort to reach the goal. For cooperation on the other hand a team does not necessarily work together on one common piece but rather help each other with their tasks for which one can expect the others to do the same and thus advancing together but with different outputs (Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye and O'Malley, 1995).

Following the Bridging Barriers approach we consider methods of collaborative learning best suited to allow teachers to get in touch with their tacit knowledge and their competences they use to help students overcome learning barriers. The methods described below and in the country specific chapters provide a solid basis and participants will benefit from the common exchange of experiences and reflections and they will learn new methods to apply in their own day to day professional work. Organisations and institutions who consider providing similar peer learning activities are free to mix or combine the here described approaches with other methods they know and deem useful in their respective context.

In an article, that was published during the final editing phase of this document, Winther, Paeßens, Ma, Tröster and Bowien-Jansen (2021) highlight the importance of further education for teachers to better support inexperienced teachers but also experienced teachers in their professional life and the challenges it may bring. This is exactly what we aimed for in our project. Furthermore, they refer to numerous studies that prove the significance of collaborative learning activities in teacher professionalisation (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; OECD, 2019; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Winther et al. (2021) present seven conditions for successful teamwork in collaborative working groups: (1) the development of a team organisation, (2) leadership, (3) task sharing, (4) a shared understanding of the context the group is working in, (5) mutual support in planned actions, (6) looking at topics from other perspectives, (7) controlling the output together. The Bridging Barriers pilot courses follow these preconditions to a high degree. The team organisation is supported in the sense, that the required material for the training is available on an online platform where all participants have access to. Providers are encouraged to engage a facilitator to guide the workshop, which supports the leadership condition. Task sharing ensures that all participants in a workshop can contribute individually without feeling any pressure of competition. Targeting ABE teachers with at least some experience in the field invites participants with a shared understanding of the working context. This will be enhanced through an introductory session. All participants in the workshop are invited to support each other during sessions and taking on different perspectives is a focal point in the suggested methodology which is particularly important for teachers.

## 3.2. Example Reflective Team

Partners are invited to apply collaborative methods of their choice. Methods they or their facilitator is experienced in or new methods they want to try. In the country specific chapters methods like collegial counselling, mini labs, “competence gossip” or reframing are mentioned. One of the suggested methods for the pilot courses is called “reflecting team” and originates from systematic therapy and counselling in clinical settings (Andersen, 1991; Andersen, 1995). It has also been applied as a teaching technique, but mostly again for counselling and the supervision of counsellors (Cox, 1997).

In Germany, the approach has also been used for therapeutic counselling sessions by Jäckel and Weber (2014) where they encountered a counselling barrier as the sessions with a particular client were not progressing but stagnating. After the consent of the client to try something new, they had two slightly different sessions. In a first step, the counsellor and the client worked in a one-to-one setting, where the counsellor first took the role of the listener and then switched to a reflection of the session so far to provide feedback on what had been said. In a second step, a second therapist joined in an observing role and took over the reflecting part in the second part. This takes pressure from the counsellor that can fully concentrate on leading the conversation. The client found the new setting enriching as they enjoyed the respectful feedback. The counselling team came to the conclusions to recommend to have a team of more than one person to observe and comment on the conversation - a 'reflecting team' -, as this increases the variety of perspectives (Jäckel et al., 2014).

Another example of how the approach has been used is the one of the training of group workers by Cox, Bañez, Hawley and Mostade (2003) and serves as a template for how we think that the participants in our pilot courses can benefit from working with each other. Cox and her colleagues describe a setting where one group of participants, the so called "reflecting team", observes the participants in the other group interact. After a given time, the reflecting team shares their observations, notes and reflections under the condition that the "comments were not only focused on positive actions but incorporated a view that was more 'both/and' than 'either/or'; that is, reflecting team members were encouraged to frame their comments in such a way that expanded, rather than limited, options. For example, team members were encouraged to generate many perspectives on the group process rather than reach a consensus." (Cox et al., 2003). Next, the interaction team discusses the comments and suggestions from the reflecting team, without the latter being involved yet. Only in the last phase both groups come together to discuss their experience and reflections. All in all, this method opens up a space of cooperation in which all participants bring in their perspectives, suggestions and solutions (Jäckel et al., 2014; Von Schlippe and Schweitzer, 2019).

For the pilot courses, we plan to adapt the reflecting team method as follows. In a group of 10 to 20 people at first one person will present a case where she or he encountered a learning barrier in her/his teaching methods, while all other participants form the reflecting team and listen closely. This can take up to five minutes and the presenting person will not be interrupted. Afterwards a group member of the observing participants will act as interviewer and ask the presenting person questions about the case to understand the case and its setting better. This interviewer role may also be shared by other/all group members. One condition of this interviewing process is that no comments or immediate criticisms or suggestions are allowed only questions. In the next step the roles are switched as the group will discuss the case and the answered questions, while the person who presented the case now observes the group exchanging their views and thoughts on the case. In the following step the participants divide into two groups to discuss and develop possible solutions to different aspects of the case. In the final step of this process the observing person who initially presented the case will now share his/her observations of the previous step. We estimate for this entire process of working on one case about 80 minutes. After a break the group can work on another case again for approximately 80 minutes.

As presenting a case of one's own failure leaves the person in the middle rather vulnerable it is very important that the questions and later on comments are expressed in a value-free

and non-judgemental way. Otherwise, this method will not be very helpful as peer learning activity. In a peer group of ABE teachers though, it is more likely that the participants will be understanding and supportive as probably every participant will have encountered a situation that was difficult for her/him.

If this method is carried out properly, not only the person who presented the case will benefit, but also the group as a whole. Every participant will learn from the perspectives and experiences of the other group members and might incorporate the learnings in her/his day-to-day teaching practice. Just as peer learning intends to do. And if the content of the discussions might not be that helpful for some individuals, they might benefit from having experienced and learned this method first hand or simply because it allowed everyone to develop a greater awareness of the teaching struggles of their peers and they will come to appreciate the multiple perspectives shared by everyone as was the case with group workers in the Cox et al. (2003) study.

## 4. Ideal type course module

The goal of the Bridging Barriers project is to develop the design of a further training activity for teachers active in the field of adult basic education (ABE) addressing challenges met by the teachers in their day-to-day work supporting learners to overcome learning barriers. The ideal type design of such a training is described in the following sections. It is based on research on the working context and further training needs of ABE teachers undertaken earlier in the project and draws a framework that can be adapted to specific needs and circumstances of a provider that intends to implement a training activity of that type. Within Bridging Barriers, it is planned to implement four variations of this course in the participating countries. These adaptations are presented in Section 5 of this document.

### 4.1. Target groups and outreach

Participants addressed by the course are mainly practitioners in Adult Basic Education with at least two years of experience in the field. This is essential for the peer learning activities of the course when teachers in the field shall profit from sharing their experience. A smaller number of practitioners with less experience may complement the group. As for the size of the group, it is recommended to take on at least ten but not more than 20 participants in order to allow for well balanced and functional group activities.

For participants not living close to the course site support in finding travel options and accommodation should be provided. While participation in the course is free of charge in the realm of the Bridging Barriers project, travel costs need to be paid by the participants. Possible cost-sharing options or subsidies should be explored against the background of the regional context.

The pilot courses in Bridging Barriers will be held in one of the main languages of the participating countries: German, Italian or Slovak. For certain parts where it is suitable also English input may be considered (e.g., short input by other consortium members). Written material, e.g., background reading suggestions, may be provided in English or one of the local languages. The e-learning platform used for elements of the course allows access to all material across countries and for optional reception of additional literature.

Course activities should be planned with enough temporal distance in order to have sufficient time for promoting the course and reaching out to potential participants. For announcing the course, the use of a variety of channels should be considered. Starting with the provider organization's professional network and enhancing word-of-mouth advertising, the course can be promoted via online communication channels (e.g., newsletters, social media channels etc.). Establishing a cooperation with a partner organization that brings in additional knowhow AND potential participants can be another outreach strategy.

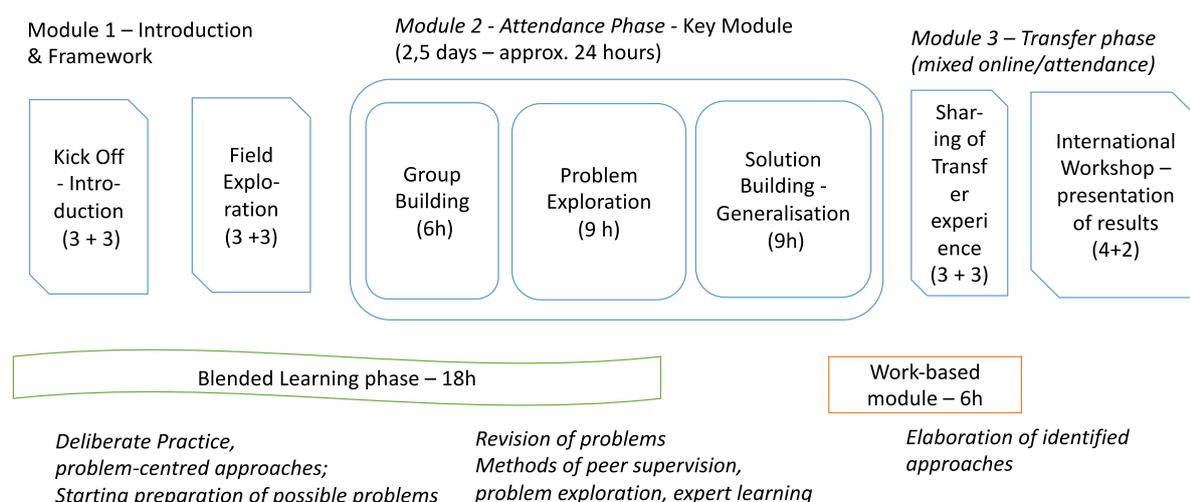
## 4.2. Didactic design and organisation of the course

The model foresees, that the course takes place over the run of six to twelve weeks. It includes elements of blended learning and work-based learning. Three modules (48 hours in total) are accompanied by an e-learning module (18 hours) and a work-based practical module (6 hours). The core module constitutes in a 2,5-day workshop.

The course foresees most group meetings being held as presence sessions. Physical meetings are compulsory for the 2,5-day workshops. The introductory module at the start and the finalising module can be held (partly) online. This can support the feasibility of implementing the course under uncertain conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, although a mixed online-presence mode that potentially reduces travelling time and cost and thereby reaches a broader audience can also be attractive for course participants.

The elements of the course and their sequence are displayed in figure 3. This framework can be understood as flexible. In the following country specific chapters, it will be shown how these elements were arranged in slightly different ways.

**FIGURE 3 - DESIGN OF THE IDEAL TYPO OF COURSE**



Source: own description

The course starts with an opening kick-off module that can be held online or in presence. The goal of this introductory module is that the group meets for the first time and a common understanding of the learning activity's targets is created. The framework of the Bridging Barriers project and how it builds on the concepts of competence development, deliberate practice and the VQTS approach in describing competence development is presented and discussed.

In a next step, the group is accompanied in exploring the field of ABE in their own country and the other participating countries. This can be implemented in online meeting sessions. This process is supported by presenting insights gained from the interviews in the initial phase of the project and the case studies that were drafted to summarise the framework for providing ABE, the funding structures and the policy context in the countries involved. Based on the discussions of this input from the project results, the preparation of the

workshop starts. The group discusses the problem formulation for the next steps and identifies three to five topics they want to address.

Starting from the kick-off module, self-study material and directions on how to approach the material will be provided on an e-learning platform that allows access to all material across countries and for optional receiving of additional literature. The learning platform will be accessible beyond the project runtime and is open for use to all interested parties.

The core activity in the course is a 2,5-day workshop where the group meets in person. Ideally, this is organised on one weekend. The first half day is dedicated to initiate a process of forming a group and building trust. It is important to save sufficient time for these activities to build the foundation for the demanding peer learning process ahead.

The second day and the first half of the third day is allocated for the exploration of example cases. Every group member is invited to contribute case descriptions from their work experience. The group decides together on which cases they will focus. The goal of this case exploration is to mobilize the tacit knowledge of the group for "overcoming learning barriers" by applying methods of peer learning. It is suggested to engage a facilitator with good knowledge of applying such peer learning methods and knowledge in the field of ABE to support the process. The last part of the 2,5-day workshop is dedicated to collect the results and initiate a generalization process of the discovered outcomes. After the workshop, participants are encouraged to take their newly gained insights back to practice and reflect them in their daily work in a work-based module. For this, it is suggested to agree on a common framework based on the discussions in the workshop. Participants should provide a short written report on their experiences that they can bring to the follow-up modules.

A first follow-up module for the pilot courses on country levels aims at sharing the transfer experience from the workshop outcomes to day-to-day work. Furthermore, the group comes back to discuss and provide feedback on the attempt to "codify" the used competences and the steps of competence development as presented in the competence matrix. In a last step, goals and activities for the international learning event are defined.

For the pilot courses implemented in the run of the Bridging Barriers project, it is foreseen to complete the activities on a national level with a "Learning, Teaching and Training Event" on an international level. In this two-day event, the experiences and outcomes from all four participating countries are brought together. All participants are invited to join the event where they also meet other practitioners from the field and the participating organizations beyond the course participants.

### 4.3. Common content, Methods and Course-Spanning aims

The approach used in the Bridging Barriers project as the common ground all activities build on is also presented and discussed in the introductory modules of the course. This covers the topics VQTS approach (Markowitsch et al., 2008), competence development and deliberate practice and expert learning (Ericsson, 2009; Ericsson, 2018; Ericsson et al.,

1993). Dealing with those concepts is supported by rich material presented in the e-learning platform including scientific literature, learning videos and presentations.

Each country is encouraged to design the course according to its needs and the needs of its targeted audience, and each course group shall be given space to choose the cases and specific teaching and learning barriers they want to discuss in-depth. As a guideline for implementing the courses, the following common aims were agreed on:

- for participating educators to reflect their day-to-day professional practice in a structured way
- to make participants' tacit knowledge regarding the support for students to overcome learning barriers visible and thereby available for deliberate use in daily work
- to increase the scope of action and strengthen teachers' agency
- to gain insights in the competence development of adult educators and describe educators' competences based on their activities
- to question educators' inner attitudes in the teaching and learning process and its role in creating and dismantling learning barriers
- to strengthen educators' networks in the field of Adult Basic Education

For reaching these goals, the use of methods developed for peer learning, collaborative learning, peer supervision and case exploration are proposed. The organizations implementing the course are invited to choose appropriate methods from their wide range of experience or to take into account the facilitator's specific methodological competences when choosing a facilitator.

In the country specific chapters of this publication, it will be shown how the partner organizations adapt the common approach that is flexible enough in its modular design to be tailored to specific needs. There may be deviations in the chronology of the different building blocks (e.g., online and presence modules, blended learning phases) and the overall duration and time arrangements made (e.g. workshop on one weekend or more). Implementers may choose to engage a facilitator to guide through the activities or find other settings for facilitation.

## 5. Country specific variations - approaches for supporting the ‘tailoring’ of the framework to country specific interests/needs

### 5.1. Austria

Martin Leitner and Claudia Miesmer, ISOP

#### 5.1.1. Target Groups

The content of Adult Basic Education is not only taught by ABEs, but also by counsellors, social pedagogues, German trainers and specialist trainers. We want to address teachers from all relevant fields in order to reach the widest possible spectrum of people from different educational fields.

#### 5.1.2. Content and Objectives

- identify and name learning barriers
- identify and apply deliberate practice as a tool to overcome learning barriers
- explore the importance of attitudes and the role Adult Basic Educators
- make the experiential knowledge of Adult Basic Educators explicit and visible
- identify existing competencies of Adult Basic Educators, develop professional competencies
- compare the results with the competence matrix of 3s

#### 5.1.3. Methods, Models, Concepts for the Approach

##### *Peer Learning*

In case studies from practice, learning barriers need to be identified, specific actions (as Deliberate Practice) to overcome the learning barriers should be named and compared, and then competencies should be derived from these actions. "Peer-to-peer learning" describes an equal learning situation in which professional partners exchange their knowledge, ideas and experiences and learn with and from each other.<sup>3</sup>

Also due to the different terminology that exists in the English and German language areas, we use the terms "peer learning" and "joint/collaborative/cooperative learning" as synonyms. We deliberately decided against external or internal moderation and thus against a too influential control by us as hosts. We believe that experts in ABE are their best in talking and giving information about their own professional knowledge. Therefore, we want to use joint/collaborative learning as an access point and thus create a non-hierarchical space to promote equal participation and awareness. It is in our interest to participate directly in the group's shared thinking process - without facilitation by others. For this reason, we do not see ourselves as "knowledge carriers" but also as learners.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weiterbildungsberatung.nrw/themen/glossar/peer-to-peer-learning>

We are well aware of our multiple roles: the dichotomy of being hosts and communicators. We are planning the pilot course, the modules and its content, possible outcomes and developments in advance. We also defined a framework of methods, approaches and procedures that seem to make sense to us. However, we always want to mediate: Peer learning means that experts work and learn together.

## *Work-Based Learning (WBL) - Learning in and from Practice*

Work-based learning refers to learning that occurs when people do real work. This work can be paid or unpaid, but it must be real work leading to the production of real goods and services.<sup>4</sup>

Learning on the job is a natural part of Adult Basic Education. Challenges in the teaching-learning process and the necessary confrontation with these processes are natural companions of Adult Basic educators. In the case of our pilot course, we want to look at situations from personal professional practice from a new perspective. Under the impression of concepts presented, we want to work on cases we have experienced ourselves. We want to look at our past actions (successful and not successful) and to reflect: What problematic issues might be present? What approaches were taken to overcome barriers in the teaching-learning process? What new interventions were used? How did overcoming the barrier become noticeable? We were inspired largely by questions that had been asked in interviews with ABE teachers beforehand.

## *Blended Learning*

Blended learning in the project is planned to take place "conservatively" via messenger services and e-mail as well as online conferences. Via these media, we will distribute documents, literature worth reading, links and tasks. Certainly, due to the pandemic, the online meetings are going to be held via Zoom, where we can exchange information in plenary and "live". In principle, however, our meetings are designed as face-to-face events, as we believed that the virtual space could not offer a fully adequate substitute.

### 5.1.4. Country-Specific Methods and Models

#### *Bloom's Taxonomy*

Using Benjamin Bloom's Competence Model<sup>5</sup>, we plan to work on case studies from our own practice in the so-called Core or Key Module. We want to name, explain, analyse and examine our actions from the case studies we experienced ourselves. Following this procedure, we later want to derive implicit competencies of Adult Basic Educators from the named actions.

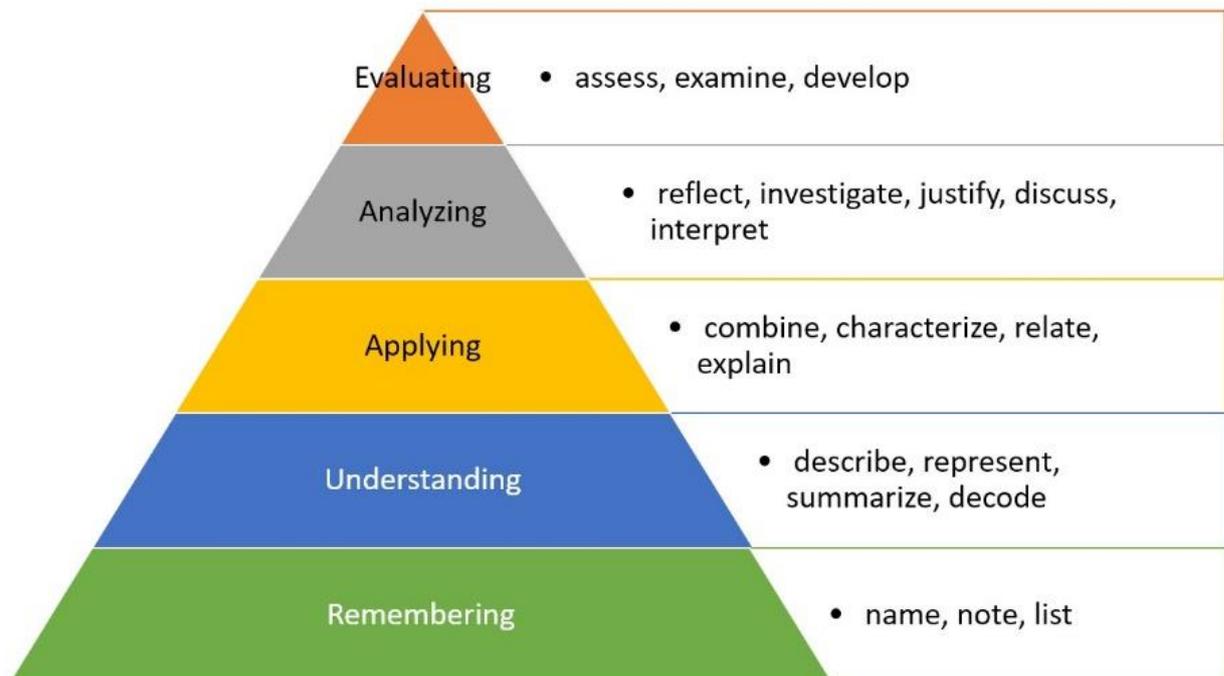
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<sup>4</sup> Work-based learning: A handbook for policy makers and social partners in ETF partner countries <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/work-based-learning-handbook-policy-makers-and-social-0>

<sup>5</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Bloom](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Bloom)

BLOOM ´S TAXONOMY: DEFINITIONS OF COMPETENCIES				
I. Remembering	II. Understanding	III. Applying	IV. Analysing	V. Evaluating
To remember previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.	To demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.	To solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.	To examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.	To present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas, or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

FIGURE 4 - BLOOM´S TAXONOMY



Source: ISOP

## Learning Outcome Orientation

The inclusion of the concept of "Lernergebnisorientierung"<sup>6</sup> (Learning Outcome Orientation or Guideline for the Creation of a Learning Outcome Oriented Curriculum) proved to be helpful already in the planning phase, and will still be during the implementation of our pilot course. In a very simplified way, it describes a starting situation and a desired end situation, i.e. learning outcomes that should be made transparent and negotiated at the beginning of a learning situation. In a next step, the necessary learning steps or learning

<sup>6</sup> Reinhard Zürcher: Lernergebnisorientierung in der Erwachsenenbildung. Begriffe, Konzepte, Fragestellungen. Wien 2012. <https://wba.or.at/de/fachinfo/lernergebnisorientierung.php>.



contents are named and described in order to achieve the negotiated learning outcomes. That way, teachers can plan small learning units that have realistic, achievable and consensual objectives. That way, desired objectives are not only questioned in terms of their feasibility, but all participants are involved in the teaching-learning process.

## 5.2. Italy

Matilde Tomasi and Elena De Zen, Il Mondo nella Città, Schio, Italy

### 5.2.1. Target Groups

Adult Basic Education in Italy is not a formally defined field. It includes different experiences: from public school, active in this field through "CPIAs" (Provincial Centres for Adult Basic Education), to private organization experiences in teaching various adult courses.

The majority of participants who will be involved in the Bridging Barriers project's activities carried out in Italy are ABE teachers working both for CPIAs and for non-profit organizations. Our network of acquaintances and collaborators at a professional level is mostly made up of teachers of Italian L2. This is one of the reasons why we decided to target our pilot course at teachers of Italian L2, in addition to the fact that it is our daily work and, therefore, an area in which we feel we have experience and knowledge.

Our choice of setting up the workshop as an exchange of good practice stems from the importance we give to peer learning as a real opportunity for the individual subject and the peer group to discuss freely and develop intense exchange moments by giving priority to the horizontal dimension in the sharing of knowledge and experiences among the members of a group.

The Pilot Course is designed as a training and an exchange of good practice for Italian L2 teachers, as we have been working in this field for several years gaining experience and knowledge.. Some of them taught Italian to foreigners in South America, the majority were teachers working with refugees and asylum seekers or other kinds of vulnerable migrants in Italy. They taught both in public schools and in private Adult Basic Education organizations. However, there was also a small group of people with no or little experience in this field but interested in the topics proposed or in doing this job in the future.

### 5.2.2. Content and Objectives

Starting from the specific goals of our pilot course, we can summarise them as follows:

- to share and discuss the topics of the Bridging Barriers project
- to provide information on ABE in the different partner countries
- to create an opportunity for L2 Italian teachers to meet and reflect on their daily work, with a focus on supporting motivation, literacy in adult learners and managing intercultural groups
- to make participants experience and reflect on the importance of peer learning in our daily work
- to give participants new teaching tools through the exchange of good practice
- to start creating a local network among L2 Italian teachers

Regarding the contents, we decided to focus on:

- barriers for learners
- becoming aware of implicit knowledge of us as ABE educators
- working through case studies
- cooperative/peer learning

Once we had identified the target group and the course objectives, we thought about the specific course content, both for the online lessons and the in-presence workshop.

For the online meetings, we propose the following topics:

- presentation of the Erasmus+ European project Bridging Barriers
- Adult Basic Education in Italy, Austria, Slovakia and Switzerland
- interviews with ABE teachers
- coordination for the 2,5 days' workshop

Concerning the workshop, the three main topics are selected after reading the interviews conducted with ABE teachers during the IO1. That is why we decided to focus on:

- 1st day workshop: Supporting motivation in adult learners
- 2nd day workshop: Literacy of adult learners
- 3rd day workshop: Managing intercultural groups

### 5.2.3. Methods, Models, Concepts for the Approach

#### *Peer Learning*

Peer Learning can be defined as "an educational strategy aimed at activating a spontaneous process of transfer of knowledge, emotions and experiences from some members of a group to other members of equal status; an intervention that activates a process of global communication, characterized by a deep and intense experience and a strong attitude of searching for authenticity and harmony between the subjects involved."

7

The perceived similarity between the individuals involved in peer learning activities is the basis of their effectiveness: feeling some commonality with the other people involved, sharing similar problems or common experiences with them promote a natural process of change. Peers, in fact, are seen as models by which to re-read one's own experiences and thus acquire knowledge and skills of various kinds on the one hand and modify one's own behaviour and attitudes on the other.

On this basis, we designed our pilot course, trying to apply the peer learning approach both in the online meetings and in the 2,5-day workshop in presence. Specifically, during the online meetings we will ask some participants to prepare a short presentation on a topic they are experts in. We will involve a retired teacher of the CPIA who has worked for years in this institution observing its transformations and changes; an Italian L2 teacher who has been working for many years in reception projects for asylum seekers and refugees; a colleague of ours who gave a short presentation on the importance of cooperative learning in our daily work, a topic he had explored in a paper during a university post graduate course.

During the 2,5 days' workshop, we also propose different activities based on peer learning methods. A few examples:

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<sup>7</sup> Panzavolta S., Peer education: l'educazione tra pari che passa conoscenze.  
<https://www.indire.it/content/index.php?action=read&id=1133>

- "Case work": The group is divided in half, and each sub-group discusses a case taken from the interviews. One participant presents the case, the others discuss what could have been the possible intervention. Then each sub-group shares their reflection in a plenary session.
- "The problem tree": Divided in two groups, we will carry out a group reflection about causes and consequences of lack of motivation to learn in adult learners. The causes will be symbolized as the "roots" of the "problem tree", the consequences as the "branches". We will create the "leaves" for our "problem tree", writing down what can help learners increase their motivation.

## *Work Based Learning*

Course participants will be asked to think up and prepare some activities to propose during the workshop or to bring some teaching materials to be presented and shared with other participants, aimed at exchanging good practice. In order to coordinate and organize the presentation of the activities, a couple of weeks prior to the workshop we will share a file that participants have to fill in with the activities or materials they would present during the 2,5 workshop.

## *Blended Learning*

The first part of the course will be carried out online, due to the restrictions of the pandemic situation. In doing this, we give everyone the chance to take part at least in the first part of our pilot course. We choose Zoom as an online platform as it gives the option to work with breakout rooms, thus giving us the chance to divide the participants in small groups during some activities.

## 5.2.4. Country-Specific Methods und Models

### *Good Practice Exchange*

In our opinion, one of the most effective ways to learn how to teach is by observing other teachers and exchanging good practice in a "peer-learning" context. That is why we decided to propose the exchange of good practice in our 2,5 days' workshop as a way of working to implement the "peer learning" approach. At the same time, it was also a request that emerged from the interviews conducted with Italian ABE teachers. We believe that the exchange of good practice is a source of motivation and inspiration that has a positive effect on teaching activities, both for experienced teachers and people with little experience in this field (volunteers, practitioners). In addition, it can be the basis for creating a network among teachers who do the same job in different local institutions and organizations.

We will ask the participants to possibly prepare an interactive activity to present the practice they decided to share; trying an activity first hand is usually more effective than just listening to a description. Actions support learning in a very effective way, they

remain in our memory and give stability to what we learn. Acting in a group, in a relational dimension, has a motor and affective components that give body and strength to learning.

## *Theatre Activity*

In our reflection activities, we will use an empathy activity inspired by the Theatre of the Oppressed method, specifically by Forum Theatre. The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) was founded by theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in the 1970s. Boal was influenced by the work of educator Paulo Freire; TO techniques use theatre as a means of promoting social and political change.

## *Autobiographical Storytelling*

We are going to implement some autobiographical activities, as we often do in our language lessons in ABE context. We choose them among other exchange activities, because the autobiographical method unhinges the typical model of training where only the trainer is the holder of knowledge and it promotes a rebalancing of knowledge-power within the training process. At the same time, it stimulates self-reflection and possibly triggers a change in professional practice and attitude.

"Autobiography is in fact a real training methodology that, before developing knowledge and skills about something, aims at developing self-knowledge. " (D. Demetrio)

In our practice, autobiographical activities are often introduced by some manual and/or creative activities. The time spent in a manual activity, focusing on the topic, allows the participant to reflect and to organize their thoughts about it. After reflecting and creating something, participants are usually more prepared and more willing to share their experiences with the group.

## 5.3. Slovakia

Radoslav Vician, e-code, Krupina, Slovakia

### 5.3.1. Introduction

#### *Imbalances in Skills*

Skills imbalances are costly for individuals, firms and the economy as a whole as they lead to lower investment and lower overall productivity. Slovakia experiences shortages both among higher- and lower-skilled occupations. There are also strong skills mismatches among younger workers and tertiary educated workers. The low responsiveness of the secondary vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary education system have contributed to skills shortages and skills mismatches, whereas emigration and brain drain have been major drivers behind shortages.

Slovakia has opportunities to reduce skills imbalances by:

- Improving the dissemination of information on labour market and skills needs. Strengthening the responsiveness of students and their families to labour market needs.
- Strengthening the responsiveness of secondary VET and tertiary education institutions to labour market needs.
- Moving from "brain drain" to "brain gain".

#### *Low Participation in Adult Learning*

Adult learning is particularly important for Slovakia. The Slovak economy is strong and catching up with higher-income countries. Employment and wages are growing and the unemployment rate is historically low. Nonetheless, Slovak production and exports are concentrated in a small number of manufacturing industries and the risk of job automation is particularly high. In this context, adult learning is, and will continue to be, essential for boosting the skills of adults and can generate a range of personal, economic and social benefits. More effective Adult Basic Education and training will be needed to maintain or increase the level of skills to keep pace with these rapidly changing conditions.

Slovakia has opportunities to foster greater participation in adult learning by:

- Improving the governance of adult learning.
- Increasing participation among adults out of work.
- Supporting the capacity of employees and firms to engage in adult learning.

#### *Weak Use of Skills at the Workplace*

There has recently been growing awareness of the fact that how well employers use skills at the workplace may be just as important as the skills their workers possess.

The skills of adults are not used to their full potential in Slovakia, and the use of most types of employees' information processing as well as job-specific and generic skills could be intensified. The use of reading skills at work in Slovakia is below the OECD average, while the average literacy proficiency of adults is above average, and the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) skills could be strengthened. Despite the

strong link found between the intensive use of skills and the adoption of high performance workplace practices, such as flexibility at the workplace or teamwork, Slovak firms are adopting high performance workplace practices at a lower rate than their counterparts in most other countries.

Slovakia has opportunities to strengthen the use of skills at the workplace by:

- Creating the conditions to facilitate the adoption of high performance workplace practices in Slovak firms.
- Providing incentives and support to Slovak firms for the adoption of high performance workplace practices.
- Enhancing the governance of policies and strategies that affect skills use.

## *Target Groups of Adult Basic Learning in Slovakia*

Above described areas of adult basic learning helped us to identify the following most vulnerable target groups in need of basic adult learning:

- Socio-economically disadvantaged learners - particularly represented by Roma population.
- Long-term unemployed - represented by Roma population and low-skilled youth and adults.
- Low-skilled employees - represented by youth and adults in direct danger of losing their work due to automation of jobs and increased need of digital skills.

## *Important Skills of Adult Basic Educators*

The skills identified as most important for Adult Basic Educators in Slovakia are the results of a number of interviews organized in the project. In our case, these are very much target group oriented and form the basis for the design of our pilot course. In fact, there are a number of areas identified as important for Adult Basic Educators, but three of them turn out to be the most common and most critically evaluated ones by the educators. In short, these are:

- Ability of Adult Basic Educators to motivate learners to engage and successfully complete their educational process, especially with the most vulnerable groups (socio-economically disadvantaged learners, long-term unemployed and low-skilled employees) who do not have much understanding of the importance of their education.
- Skills of Adult Basic Educators concerning psychological approaches towards the above identified target groups, as their successful education is often based on an individual adaptation towards learners.
- Practical experience of Adult Basic Educators in managing individuals and groups in Adult Basic Education.

### **5.3.2. Target Groups**

Our group of pilot course participants will consist of educators with various degrees of experience.

### 5.3.3. Content and Objectives

The entire pilot course is planned in the form of seven modules, but at the end, we decided to simplify the modules, use the opportunity for face-to-face interaction and reduce the modules to three. Two of them without physical presence, the last one as a real meeting of educators and organizers of the pilot courses. The following chart presents the details of the pilot course organization:

Title	Topics	Hours	Methodology
Kick-Off/ Introduction	Presentation of Bridging Barriers project Presentation of participants Presentation of pilot course Resources for pilot course	1	The kick-off/introduction is planned to be organized in the form of a short online meeting securing that the participants are aware what the project and pilot course will be about, what kind of resources will be used and that it will also serve as a platform for introducing each other.
Self-study	Exploration of resources, particularly:  Competence development (Dreyfus), Deliberate practice framework (Ericsson), VQTS competence matrix, other resources in Slovak language.	12	It is planned that in this phase the pilot course participants will be given time for accustoming themselves to the most important educational materials used for the project and pilot course. The educational materials are available online, so each participant has a chance to download them and use them according to their needs.
Workshop Organization	<b>Topic 1:</b> Motivational factors in ABE  Icebreaker, group building, case studies, involvement of participants in group activities.  <b>Topic 2:</b> Psychological Factors of ABE  Icebreaker, theoretical background, case studies, involvement of participants in group activities.  <b>Topic 3:</b> Individual and Group Management in Adult Basic Education  Icebreaker, theoretical background, case studies, involvement of participants in group activities.	3+4+4	The actual workshop is planned as a face-to-face course with defined topics over three days. The format is defined as fairly informal and based on peer learning, first presenting theoretical background and then continuing with exchange of experience and case studies contributed not only by the pilot course organizers but also by the participants. Topics of the workshop are defined in the phase of research and based on the outcomes of interviews with experts in Adult Basic Education. However, the plan is also to keep them flexible and focus on those topics that will turn out to appear as the most important for the pilot course participants.

### 5.3.4. Methods, Models, Concepts for the Approach

#### *Peer Learning*

The actual workshop is based on a predefined concept and facilitated by the organizer. Nevertheless, the methodology we will use is very much concentrated around peer

learning. It is planned that we will use some theoretical background and icebreaker activities and then continue with the active involvement of participants. The format for this involvement is planned in the form of case studies presented by the participants, role playing - modelling situations in Adult Basic Learning, exchange of experience between participants, individual and group assignments and active discussion moderated by the facilitator.

## *Debriefing*

The debriefing methodology is planned to be used in the first part of the pilot course that was organized online. The methodology is based on a simple introduction of the project, the pilot course and resources available for the pilot course's participants. It is also planned that the facilitator and participants would introduce themselves to each other. Another debriefing methodology will be used during the actual face-to-face workshop. The overall workshop is planned to start with an icebreaker and a debriefing activity of introducing the facilitator and participants to each other.

## *Self-Study*

In the case of self-study, the methodology planned is very simple. Participants of the pilot course will be given an opportunity to use online resources gathered from the project's website, to consult with the facilitator in regards to the content and to organize mid-session meetings if the need would arise.

## 5.4. Switzerland

Cäcilia Märki and Lea Pelosi, SVEB, Zürich, Switzerland

### 5.4.1. Introduction

The aim of the pilot course is to create a framework for reflection on relevant competences of facilitators in Adult Basic Education. On an immediate level, this means giving those professionals an opportunity to reflect on, to make explicit and to document their (tacit) knowledge and their competences. The long-term benefit could be to rely on these insights for creating and promoting useful educational settings in a field not even at the margins of public attention.

The main components of the mentioned framework are (1) the notion of *learning barriers* as a kind of marker for the complex challenges with which one has to deal with in Adult Basic Education, (2) the concept of *deliberate practice* as an approach meant to explain the development of expertise, which should be examined from the point of view of the professionals as well as the participants in Adult Basic Education, and (3) *collaborative learning* as an approach to reflective learning processes which we also consider relevant for facilitators as well as participants in basic skill education.

Considering this framework, we ask ourselves some questions to be answered at least in part during the pilot course.

*What are relevant competences for facilitators in Adult Basic Education?*

*What is the relationship between the expertise of the participants as learners in the pilot course and the expertise of their participants in Adult Basic Education?*

*What are we talking about when we talk about "learning barriers" in Adult Basic Education?*

*How does the notion of deliberate practice apply to the participants of the pilot course and how to the participants in Adult Basic Education?*

*What is needed for collaborative learning to be productive?*

*What does the casework show to be important for the conception and implementation of ABE?*

*What follows for the education and further qualification of facilitators in Adult Basic Education?*

### 5.4.2. Target Group

We plan to invite experienced professionals to the pilot course to assemble a wide range of expertise and to work with a large bundle of competences. Having scheduled the pilot course at the beginning of the summer holidays, some of the experts we invited might not be able to attend. Therefore, some of the participants could actually be much less experienced than others. The participants do not have to pay for the course but will be asked to engage in collaborative learning settings and to contribute to the development of a European competence matrix.

We limit the number of participants to 12.

### 5.4.3. Content and Objectives

The pilot course will consist of a *Kick-off* and a *three-days-workshop* three weeks later. In between, the participants will work on a *transfer assignment* which consists of subject-matter-related and methodical preparation (competences, learning barriers, deliberate practice, collaborative learning) as well as the choice of case studies to work on during the workshop.

The objectives of the Kick-off are primarily to get to know each other and to create the confidence necessary for productive collaboration settings. Moreover, the participants are given opportunities to familiarise with the "instruments" and the issues of the collaboration: project framework, theoretical notions, methodical approaches, casework.

The objectives of the transfer assignment are to deepen the theoretical knowledge and to reflect on the implications of the methodical approach as well as to get to know specific methods for collaborative learning and to connect the theoretical framework to the practical experience.

The objectives of the three-days-workshop are to reflect on those kinds of learning barriers that are relevant in Adult Basic Education, to become aware of competences relating to planning and implementing concrete didactical settings, to reflect on one's own competences and attitudes as a facilitator in Adult Basic Education as well as to experience collaborative learning and to evaluate it - for the workshop and for one's own practice. Each day is labelled differently: "knowledge", "skills", "attitude" - relating to different kinds of resources building competences<sup>8</sup> and respectively focused on situational analysis, interventions, and reflection on professionalism/attitudes.

<b>Kick-off (4 hours)</b>
Introduction / Familiarization: My (work-related biographical) path to this workshop
Overview workshop / questions & concerns of the participants
Definition of competence / Ko-Re-Model: Implications for practice, for professional self-understanding, for this workshop (input and short exchange in plenum)
Learning and learning barriers: Areas, manifestations (input and exchange of experiences in mumble groups)
Collaborative learning (Assignment for "mini lab" in small groups: What is it? How is it related to my experience? How could it work in the workshop?)  ----- or -----  Deliberate Practice (Assignment for mini lab in small groups: What is it? How is it related to my experience? How could it be related to the contents of the workshop? What do I think about the distinction between expertise and "ordinary" competence?)

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<sup>8</sup> Le Boterf, G. (1994): *De la compétence. Essai sur un attracteur étrange* [About competence: Essay on a strange attractor], Paris; Le Boterf, G. (2000). *Construire les compétences individuelles et collectives*, Paris

Sharing - with the option of making more extensive communication or discussion needs available for the further process of the workshop (documentation of results).
Transfer assignment (explaining and answering eventual questions)
Feedback

<b>Kick-off (4 hours)</b>
Check-in: What do I want to use the workshop for?
Pool for questions and topics for further discussion (based on the transfer assignment) with short comments / explanations
Collection of cases
Lab 1: Situation Analysis (Reflecting Team)
Sharing / Collecting material for documentation: How did we proceed & what did or didn't work well? What were the thematic learning barriers? Which competences did we "pinpoint"?
Interim evaluation: Please more of... / Please less of ... / Please continue ... / Please not again ....

<b>Day 2 (6 hours)</b>
Check-in: Looking at yesterday - Which competence in dealing with learning barriers do I attribute to myself, which to another person (cards, labelled front and back)?
Method input on request: Inner team, Storytelling
Lab 1/2: Situation analysis/interventions respectively options for action (Reflecting Team, Inner Team, Storytelling)
Sharing / Documentation
Debriefing case work (dealing with method)
Lab 2: Interventions / Options for action (Reflecting Team, Reframing, Storytelling)
Sharing / Documentation

<b>Day 3 (6 hours)</b>
Check-in: What is still left hanging?
Topics / Questions - What should the facilitator allocate space/time for?
Learning barriers - What are we dealing with? (Brainstorming) What competences are required to deal with this? (competence profile of trainers)
Lab 3: Attitude - Professionalism, standards

Sharing / Documentation (Flashlight: Where/how was my attitude questioned in a productive manner?)
"Competence gossip": The participants attribute competences to each other in pairs and react to attributions.
Evaluation of the labs: methodical, thematic
Identification of competences (bearing in mind the competence profile mentioned above, considering attitudes as well as taking into account the situation)
Balance/personal outcome: A personal competence that has become tangible for me/ A competence that I would like to develop further
Feedback: The workshop ..., because ...

## 5.4.4. Methods, Models, Concepts for the Approach

### *Peer Learning*

Even as there was a facilitator planning and framing the workshop, peer learning is a core dimension of the workshop setting. The main aspects are listed and explained in the following.

### *Mini-Labs*

Knowledge acquisition during the Kick-off will partly take place in small groups of peers discussing inputs (controversially) and relating them to their experience.

### *Labs*

Case studies will take place in small groups of participants without the intervention of the facilitator. They will decide about the case, the method to apply, the presentation of results. The need of some "meta-talk" (with or without the facilitator) to assess the productivity of the process for all participants involved might emerge, but this would also be a learning experience.

### *Sharing*

Since the casework will not take place in the plenary, there will be sequences with the purpose of making the main results available for the other participants and for documentation.

### *Debriefing*

Most of the participants are expected not to have much experience neither with structured casework and the related methods (see below) nor with settings of explicit collaborative learning. Therefore, exchanging opinions on a meta level about the challenges and the opportunities experienced will be a learning process.

## Other forms of peer learning

- Eventual discussions about controversial attitudes and approaches
- "Competence Gossip"
- Learning from the other person's perspective on my acting and reflecting in a specific situation

And finally, there needs to be noted that the facilitator also is a peer who is an experienced professional in Adult Basic Education.

## Work Based Learning

Casework is of course a form of work-based learning. The choice and adaptation of cases suitable for the labs would generate learning for most of the participants not specifically used to casework.

During the interval between the Kick-off and the workshop, participants will have opportunities to bring their reflections on learning barriers into their practice, which will eventually, also generate a learning process about the possible differentiation and identification of learning barriers. Hopefully, there will be transfer of insights into practice after the workshop.

## Blended Learning

We did not plan any online settings, because we thought that the three-days-workshop in presence will allow for an informal exchange during breaks and eventually at the end of the days. We expect to get the participants in touch and in confidence with each other more directly in presence, which we consider an important precondition for fruitful and open exchange in the labs.

### 5.4.5. Country-specific Methods and Models

The above-mentioned labs are designed explicitly for the pilot course. For the casework taking place in those labs, the participants will be provided with methodical inputs and models for collaborative learning (*Reflecting Team*), situation analysis (*storytelling*, *reframing*, *inner team*), interventions (*4-factors of TZI*, *cube model of Cohen / Smith and Reddy*) as well as with questions aiming at the reflection of attitudinal factors and professional self-understanding. The method of *flipped classroom* is a means to limit the input to what matters for the participants.

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## 7. Annex