The Role of Adult Education in Reducing Poverty

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Adult Education and poverty reduction

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Introduction

Global statistics reveal that whilst poverty levels have reduced since 1981, only China has made significant inroads into this phenomenon. The latest figures indicate that there are 1.40 billion people living below $1.25 a day, 20% of the world's population (Shah 2010). Furthermore, literacy figures for 2008 indicate there are still 776,164 adults and youth who are classed as illiterate (UNESCO-UIS 2008). It is widely recognized that countries with the poorest literacy rates often have the highest poverty levels. However, poverty is also associated with political instability, corruption, gender inequalities, poor life expectancy, low nutrition levels, high infant mortality rates, low levels of civil society involvement and low school enrolment or retention rates (Shah 2010, Sen 1999, Chronic Poverty Research Centre 2009). Adult education and lifelong learning have been cited as key to achieving international development targets designed to reduce poverty levels around the world (UNESCO-IL 2009). Yet adult education is not a development target in the Millennium Development Goals which were internationally agreed in the year 2000, and subsequent poverty reduction strategy papers rarely mention adult education as a contributory means to reducing poverty (Education International 2003, Preece 2006).

Whilst the links between education and poverty have long been understood (Oxaal 1997), the political argument for linking adult education to poverty reduction has yet to be won. This may be partly because adult education, and it relationship to the process of lifelong learning, is inadequately understood. Equally, the concept of poverty is constantly changing and needs further elaboration. This chapter, therefore, provides a definitional analysis of poverty, followed by an explanation of adult education, its principles and methodology - which, it is argued, have a potentially emancipatory relationship with poverty reduction.

Conceptualising poverty

> Poverty is a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, or lacks the essentials for a minimum standard of well-being and life. Since poverty is understood in many senses, these essentials may be material resources such as food, safe drinking water, and shelter, or they may be social resources such as access to information, education, health care, social status, political power, or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society (New World Encyclopedia 2008).

There is no one definition for poverty, though the above example indicates the dynamic and wide ranging nature of the term.

Sachs (2005) describes three levels of poverty as 'relative', 'moderate', and 'absolute or extreme'. Those in extreme poverty are 'chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter' (p. 20). The moderately poor may lack basic amenities such as safe drinking water and ventilated latrines or poor clothing, while those in relative poverty have limited access to cultural activities, recreation, quality health care and education and whose household income level is below a proportion of the average national income.

Sen (1999, 2002) broadens our understanding of poverty in terms of social dynamics and as a social justice issue. Here poverty is seen in terms of absence of freedom or capability to participate in economic life. This includes deprivation in the range of things people can do, the knowledge and skills needed to act independently for productivity or personal welfare consumption. Poor education and knowledge about how to challenge inequitable systems perpetuate exclusion and isolation.

People can move in and out of poverty depending on their circumstances, though chronic poverty can also be intergenerational. It is also closely related to development and change. For example, technological advances can create illiteracies among populations that were otherwise literate; similarly environmental disasters and national conflicts can reduce otherwise self-sufficient communities to a state of dependence and helplessness. The extent of deprivation, therefore, is context specific.

These latter observations show that poverty can also be 'consequential' (Preece 2007: 16), the result of deliberate human and political interventions on the natural or social environment, such as war, conflict and large scale industrial accidents. The harmful effects can produce participation, income and capability poverty.

We see from the above interpretations that the causes of poverty can be material, economic, political and social. They include vulnerability such as, disability or immigration status; shocks, such as family crises, natural disaster, military or civil conflict; limited services such as health and education; and empowerment deprivation - for instance not having a political say, a sense of dignity (Se-

bates 2008: 6-7).

It is now recognised that, in spite of statistical representation in monetary terms, poverty is both dynamic and multidimensional. Indeed Andress (2003) highlights a number of discrepancies in the use of low income as the main indicator of poverty. Whilst recognising the relevance of income differences and purchasing power of different economies, a simple calculation of household income ignores how that money is being used and who has access to the money.

As a result increasingly more sophisticated indicators are being used to 'measure' poverty. The latest attempt in this respect is the multidimensional poverty index developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (Alkiri and Santos 2010) used in the 2010 Human Development Report (UNDP 2010). Poverty, in this index is measured in terms of multiple deprivations, showing that there are variations in the nature and intensity of poverty and that there are different interconnections between the different deprivations. The core indicators are GDP per capita, the percentage living on less than one or two dollars a day, literacy rates, life expectancy, HIV prevalence, primary school enrolment figures, infant mortality, maternal mortality and similar targets related to the MDGs. It is noticeable, however, that, apart from literacy rates, participation in adult education – in spite of earlier Education for All (UNESCO 1990) targets – is not mentioned in the OPHI.

Tackling poverty

How one defines poverty also influences how one interprets intervention strategies. In Europe, for instance the Lisbon Council in March 2000 and its subsequent Nice European Council in

December 2000 linked poverty to primary indicators of social exclusion such as income distribution below 60% of the national equivalent median, unemployment, early school leavers not in education or training, life expectancy at birth, access to health services, and educational attainment levels (Nolan 2003: 75-85). Other, secondary, indicators included housing conditions, homelessness and those living in institutions such as homes for the elderly, orphanages and prisons.

A more recent way of addressing poverty, in line with the aforementioned OHPI recognition of multiple deprivations, is to focus on the interrelatedness of deprivations and see preventative resources in terms of capital. Shaffer (2002) offers a diagrammatic representation of the interlocking dynamics of poverty. He shows how negative pressures (such as life cycle pressures, wages and crop yields) and shock (such as wars, civil violence, drought, floods and famines) can be offset by positive pressure or opportunities such as new technologies, conflict resolution, employment and access to public services. But the impact of these opportunities is dependent on coping and enabling strategies for the respective stresses and opportunities. Some strategies can be learned, others have to be provided. These strategies are resourced through different forms of capital. Other authors also associate various forms of capital with poverty reduction, with different influences on the role that adult education can play in reducing the risk of poverty.

Sachs (2005), for instance, identifies six forms of capital that impact on extreme poverty. These are human (health, nutrition and skills for production), business (mechanised resources such as transport and production machinery, infrastructure (such as road networks, ports, telecommunication systems) natural (such

as arable land, well functioning eco systems), public (such as legal frameworks) and knowledge (scientific and technical knowhow).

In European contexts many of these capitals are now givens. Shaffer (2002: 53) narrowed them down to four capitals: economic (including access to credit and capital assets such as land); socio-political (including having a network of organisations and contacts); environmental (such as having a natural resource base which can be managed); and physiological (including having a healthy body). The recent UK based NIACE (2009) report Learning Through Life narrowed this list down even further to three major kinds of capital. These are human (skills and qualifications), social (the social networks that provide opportunities for sharing and contributing to common goals) and identity capital (relating to psychological needs of self esteem, confidence and sense of purpose in life). This latter aspect brings into recognition the concept of freedoms and capabilities identified by Sen (1999).

It can be seen from the above list that education has a role to play in nurturing the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for both reducing the risk of poverty but also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressures in today's fast changing and unpredictable world.

It has also been strongly argued that education for skills alone are not enough. Since poverty is also intertwined with socio-political and environmental systems learning must also include instilling a deeper understanding of the power relations and underlying causes of poverty itself (Lister 2004) as well as the capacity to prevent poverty creating situations.

The dynamics of such poverty relations,

and life in general, however, inevitably require not only initial or basic education but also ongoing learning, including into adulthood. Furthermore, since not all adults have received the same educational or social opportunities in childhood or adolescence, the range of educational provision in adulthood must be broad. However, the nature of adult education itself must also reflect an understanding of who the adult learner is. The next section looks specifically at adult education and how its goals may contribute to poverty reduction.

Adult education

In 2006 the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) produced a comprehensive documentation of adult education trends in Europe. That document highlighted the historically evolving perceptions of adult education that continue to this day (Agostino, Hinzen and Knoll 2008 for example). This is partly because adult education serves a broad range of purposes (second chance, vocational, social and emancipatory, social welfare and individual self development - EAEA 2006).

These purposes are reflected in different definitions of adult education. An instrumental description is identified in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) as:

> The entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abili-

ties, enrich their knowledge with the purpose: to complete a level of formal education; to acquire knowledge and skills in a new field; to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field (cited in UNESCO 2006: 49).

There is also a more radical focus such as the one produced after the fifth international conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA V, which placed greater emphasis on critical citizenship and action for change:

> The objectives of youth and adult education, viewed as a lifelong learning process, are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote co-existence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities; in short to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society in order to face the challenges ahead' (UNESCO 1997: 2).

To further complicate matters, the term 'adult education' has, at different stages, been conflated with related terms such as continuing, further or recurrent education. It can take different forms – for example, under the descriptors of formal, non-formal, informal, vocational, and basic education. In many cases it is simply interpreted as literacy education.

With the advent of lifelong learning discourses, the public perception of adult education becomes even more confusing. For the purposes of this paper, adult education is a distinctive feature of lifelong learning (which relates to learning for all ages) starting in most cases – in the European context at least – at an age

after initial basic schooling is completed. Theories or perspectives on adult learning are premised on a number of assumptions about adult, as opposed to child, learners. Illeris (2003) has argued, for instance that adults have distinctive learning needs that reflect their experience of life, psychological and cognitive maturity. These characteristics of adults reflect those articulated by Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998) whereby adults are seen as having the skills to think critically, require learning that is problem centred, that draws on their experiences and which recognizes the adult's capacity for self-directedness. The adult educator, therefore, should operate as a facilitator, rather than teacher, with the aim to nurture critical thinking and transformative learning. The process is one of empowerment, whereby the learner is enabled to critique and question with a view to encouraging action for change.

These reflections have been widely critiqued, with the arguments that not all adults are at the same level of educational experience and such assumptions do not take account of power dynamics in learner-facilitator interactions (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 1997). Furthermore it has also been argued that education itself is not automatically emancipatory. Education, in reality, is often highly controlled; class based and may well perpetuate social disparities if it does not raise awareness of rights, responsibilities and potential for change (Preece 2007). Equally, education alone, as the above reflections on forms of capital indicate, must be accompanied by wider political systems and structures that create an environment for participatory development.

In spite of these concerns, research shows that if the educational provision takes into account the above perspectives for adult learning, there are some common factors that contribute to reducing the risk of poverty, both on an individual and community level (McGivney 2000, Oyen 2002, UNESCO 2002, Preece 2009, Nampota, Biao and Raditloaneng 2009). Such systems include the provision of supportive learning environments, culturally sensitive and multidimensional curricula, the use of partnerships and multi-sector networks in developing programmes, a bottom-up approach to decision making, reaching people in their natural settings, a focus on social mobilization, advocacy and community leadership, with learner support and adequate follow-up systems.

The remainder of this document looks at case studies which examine the success or otherwise of such adult education provision in a range of European contexts, followed by some policy recommendations.

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Good Practice examples

Many members of the EAEA – European Association for the Education of Adults – have been running projects which have great impact on the social situation of the participants. Issues such as basic skills training (e.g. literacy), learning opportunities for migrants, family learning, training for low-skilled workers or unemployed people, prison education etc. are all on the agenda of EAEA members. Below you will find a small selection of excellent examples of how adult education can contribute to fighting poverty and social exclusion.

Topic: Literacy and basic skills

Organisation/Country
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband
Obere Wilhelmstraße 32
D-53225 Bonn

0049-(0)228-97569-0

info@dvv-vhs.de
www.dvv-vhs.de

Please visit us at www.grundbildung.de (starts on November 15, 2010).

Target group(s) Persons with insufficient basic skills, notably persons whose first language is German, but who are not sufficiently literate in that language

Description of activities The Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband participates in a number of projects promoting literacy and basic skills, all of which are sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research:

ALPHABIT has elaborated an interactive Game Based Training which allows players with a basic level of literacy and numeracy to improve their knowledge. Players enter a fantasy story full of suspense. To make the story go on, they have to solve tasks taken from real life.

EQUALS promotes networking for adult literacy. Partners do not only include schools, colleges, and libraries, but also job centres and local NGOs. This the project promotes cooperation that goes far beyond the institutions of adult education

Ich-will-lernen.de ("I want to learn") is Germany's biggest open learning portal. It provides free learning materials to increase the users' literacy skills and basic education. It also offers exercises to promote the learners' employability and ability to obtain a school leaving certificate.

MONITOR is a national monitoring system which centralises information on basic skills activities all over Germany and helps to diffuse innovation in this field. Encouraging and organizing cooperation that goes far beyond the institutions of adult education.

PRO GRUNDBILDUNG offers new opportunities for literacy and basic skills teachers to improve their teaching methods. Five modules on different topics have been developed by bringing together practical experience and latest research results

VERBLEIBSSTUDIE is a joint project of DVV and four universities carrying out research on the biographies of persons with low literacy. The DVV team runs a digital network for learners in the portal ich-will-lernen.de, it develops a course for basic skill teachers on biographic approaches, and it has published a book with humoristic texts written by learners.

All projects are sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Most of them are joint projects with several partners: Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE), DVV, Fraunhofer IGD Rostock, Landesverband VHS Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (ALPHABIT); apfe e.V., DVV (EQUALS); Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung, DIE, DVV (MONITOR); Bayerischer Volkshochschul-Verband, DIE, DVV, Münchner Volkshochschule, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, (PROFESSIONALISIERUNG/ PRO GRUNDBILDUNG); DVV, HU Berlin, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover, Universität Hamburg (VERBLEIBSSTUDIE).

Emancipatory / outreach approach:

The projects aim at

- reaching people with low education and encouraging them to take up learning again
- enhancing social, economic, political and cultural participation
- combating and preventing marginalization.

Topic: Basic skills

Organisation/Country
The Vocational Training Centre "DAFNI"
Ms.TSEKOURA VASILIKI
Nik.Nteve 22
Ovria, Patras 26500
Greece

Tel: 0030 2610 526771 / 624213 / 525815
Fax: 0030 2610 526771/ 525815

e-mail: kekdafni@otenet.gr or mftsek-va@upatras.gr
www: www.kekdafni.gr

Target group(s) Migrants, low-skilled women, disabled people , unemployed persons

Description of activities DAFNI KEK organizes courses that aim directly at combatting social inequalities , to provide job opportunities and enhance the confidence and communicative skills of the trainees .

Courses like
- "Greek Language for unemployed migrants and those at risk in order to enhance their job and social integration"
- ' Bio agricultural methods for unemployed habitants of rural areas'
- ' HOME CARE skills for unenmployed women' etc.

are held in the Achaia Region, mainly , and the trainees are selected according to socio economic criteria such as:
- poverty (low family income, handicapped , marginalized)
- inhabitants of disadvantaged areas / communities
- single mothers
- interesting for learning
- motivation for work

Emancipatory / outreach approach All the courses are developed through a modular system of sessions targeting to:
- advance communicative and personal awareness skills (personal consciousness, self –identification , job seeking techniques and strategie)
- introduce a positive attitude (deconstruct the 'feeling the lack of…)
- social networking (team working, visit to workplaces, fun activities, informal interactions)
- support services beyond the course period

Topic: Education in Prison

Organisation/Country:
European Prison Education Association
Dr. Anne Costelloe
Drammen Videregaende Skole, Marienlyst,
Drammen
Norway

Tel: 00 353 1 8302818
Fax: 00 353 1 8301175

www: www.epea.org

Target group(s) Prison Inmates

Description of activities The EPEA has been keen to promote projects and practices that work towards increasing such objectives. Projects concerned with raising the cultural capital of prisoners, such as the PAN project (www.panproject.org) and The Will to Dream Project were especially promoted by the EPEA. Similarly, the Pipeline Project (http://www.pipeline-project.org/) which attempted to widen prisoners' access to new technology and tackle deficits in digit literacy were also promoted. With the ICCEPE Project (Socrates program Accompanying Measures) the EPEA produced a compendium of all EU funded projects that had dealt with varying aspects of prison education. In this capacity it served to both disseminate and promote prison education-based projects. In addition, the project involved the establishment of a web-based contact forum for sourcing perspective partners for future prison education focused projects. More details can be found at www.epea.org under the heading projects on the left side of the page.

Emancipatory / outreach approach The European Prison Education Association (EPEA) considers social exclusion to be the economic, social, cultural and political marginalisation, disempowerment, and in some cases, disfranchisement of clearly identifiable sectors of society. Consequently, the EPEA views prisoners as being among society's most clearly identifiable excluded; if only because the act of imprisonment itself physically, socially and psychologically removes them from society. It is thus not difficult to see that the social exclusion of prisoners and ex-prisoners inevitably leads to limited life chances and results in a diminished quality of life. While criminologists may differ as to the exact relationship between social exclusion and crime, much longitudinal research has established clear and direct links between social deprivation and imprisonment and it is easy to conclude that that poverty and socio-economic deprivation is a considerable factor in the criminalisation of an individual.

Topic: Education in Prison

Organisation/Country
Centrum voor volwassenonderwijs Turnhout (CVO)
Boomgaardstraat 56, 2300, Turnhout
Belgium
Contact: Gert Hurkmans

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gert.hurkmans@cvoturnhout.be

http://www.cvoturnhout.be/joomla/index.php
http://littlestories.net/

Target group(s)   Prison Inmates

Description of activities   The aim of the project is predisposing an autobiographical activity inside penitentiaries for promoting and encouraging the reconsideration of one's own past and re-planning one's future "beyond the bars". Italian, Belgian, French, Portuguese, Romanian and Turkish partners co-organise the realisation of this proj The projects pursuits different goals: making prisoners look back, encouraging them to reflect about their past and at the same time preparing them to re-plan their future "beyond the bars" by making them write; encouraging prisoners to enjoy this creative writing and be stimulated by collaborating, by listening to and learning from each other. Prison writing helps prisoners to understand themselves, to voice their hopes and desires. In this way they are stimulated to open up and share their writings with others.

According to the socio-psychological aim, there is also a linguistic approach according to which writing is an avenue through which the "healing process" begins.

The project focuses on diverse key competences: "thinking and managing yourself", "participating, contributing and relating to others", "linguistic competences". ect.

Emancipatory / outreach approach: Low self-esteem, lack of trust and the isolation of the prison cell make people more and more solitary. Getting these participants to open up and tell – or write – about themselves has not always been easy. Asking them to participate, share and communicate about it has even been tougher. This prison writing course, the linguistic approach, is all about gaining trust and gaining someone's trust is something that comes with time.

Topic: Literacy skills for minority groups

Organisation/Country
Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research
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Tel: +34-972 200 785
Fax: +34-972-203 169

www: http://www.acefir.org/

Target group(s)   Migrants

Description of activities: One of the main objectives of ACEFIR is to collaborate to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, providing resources to enable all people to learn to read, write.
For this reason ACEFIR believes that the first resource that everyone should have is the ability to learn to read and write. In a few years, Spain became a country with a very high rate of immigrants. Women, mainly, were excluded from the direct access to work, health services, shopping, etc by not knowing the language of the country.

Children learn Catalan very early at school, and so ACEFIR facilitates the literacy of their parents in Catalan. ACEFIR uses the method El Nostre Món, which provides teaching material for migrants with no or low literacy levels. Throughout the year, ACEFIR organizes "Days" to introduce this method to persons engaged in professional or voluntary activities in order to help illiterate immigrants to settle in the country with dignity and avoid poverty and social exclusion.

Emancipatory / outreach approach: If migrants are fluent in the country, they have easier access to services and a workplace. This is especially important for mothers, who would always be accompanied by their children as interpreters, therefore without independent access to and relationships with people in the country.

The method of learning that immigrants have access to the resources of their environment to interact with others, to study or to have access to a job with dignity and respect.

Topic: Higher education

Organisation/Country
TED FLEMING
Ireland

Target group(s)   Disadvantaged mature students

Description of activities   This study explores how graduates who entered college as mature students and in particular 'disadvantaged' mature students view and value Higher Education after graduating with a primary degree. The rationale given by and for the state in supporting mature and disadvantaged students in Higher Education is that it will yield economic and social benefits for both the students and society. As a consequence a wide range of access policies have been developed to support the entry of 'non-traditional' students. However, to date very little research exists on what happens to such students while in Higher Education and after graduation. The research gathered quantitative and qualitative data from the graduates of three institutions: NUI Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Emancipatory / outreach approach: Educational qualifications enabled many graduates to move away from routine work often with low levels of autonomy, status and pay. Overall, the research showed that for working class mature students, students with disabilities and ethnic minorities Higher Education is highly valued transitional space which affords a greater level of career choice and also the opportunity to renegotiate aspects of their personal identities.

Recommendations

The Europe 2020 strategy formulates poverty reduction as one of its main objectives. It also recognises the fact that strong actions are needed to upskill the 80 Mio low-skilled workers in Europe.

We would like to underline that we also need a greater understanding of how these two facts are linked as well as a larger understanding of the connection of education in general but adult education in particular and the fight against poverty. We need, as Julia Preece explains in her article earlier, a clearer understanding about the role of adult education in reducing the risk of poverty. Nevertheless, again referring to Julia Preece, adult education alone can never be enough to – wider political systems and structures are necessary.

We also need a clear understanding that fighting poverty also means an investment – to reach those most in danger and most concerned often needs a complex and very supportive structure.

- Governments also have to recognize that it is a problem that **lower-educated and poor people participate a lot less** in adult education and learning than higher-educated ones. A European benchmark tackling this issue would be very helpful.
- An **integrated national and local approach** is needed as the only effective way to address educational disadvantage. Issues such as welfare, health, transport, and childcare need to be addressed, together with learning support needs. This requires local agencies of different types to collaborate closely in the interests of their service users.
- Poverty is a complex problem related to many other areas. Coordination and co-operation are therefore necessary in the development and implementation of different strategies, in order to achieve synergy effects, use resources efficiently and reach the best results. In particular, poverty reduction, lifelong learning and employment strategies should be compatible.
- EAEA suggests an initiative that follows the recommendation of the EC Action Plan on adult learning, which is based on a Swedish initiative that took place in the late 1990s. We suggest a **'one step up' adult education initiative** that is built on cooperation with stakeholders and which will qualify a certain number or percentage of the population to secondary-level schooling.
- EAEA proposes a **combination of measures and incentive schemes** – it is tempting to think that the introduction of a single measure will increase participation. Governments need to be aware that certain initiatives on their own might increase educational and social inequalities (tax relief etc.) and / or might not contribute to poor people being able to participate.
- **EAEA underlines the importance of simultaneously acting at various levels in a coherent way.** For example, guidance and counselling are important, but governments (national and local), stakeholders and providers need to make sure that there will be appropriate courses for those interested. In combination with campaigns and promotion, we need **investment in learning infrastructure and adult education staff,** as well as training and courses.
- **Non-formal adult education** has the possibility to reach people who are distant to educational achievements. EAEA recommends a boost to non-formal adult education combined

with a national campaign underlining the personal and social benefits of learning. All too often, education and training are presented as necessities and obligations (e.g. not to lose one's job), which will keep away those with negative learning experiences.

- The need for **public investment** in adult learning is crucial - especially for those who left initial education without any qualifications and those who are living in poor households. Participation rates for these groups will not increase without public investment and such investment needs to be made in consultation with the potential learners who are currently under- represented in adult learning, to ensure that the money is well spent. Public investments must make it possible for poor people to participate in lifelong learning, with particular emphasis on participation fees, income or support while participating, access to study loans – people should be able to participate in adult learning without having to pay for it and without losing their benefits.

- Learning offers should be **tailor-made** so they are relevant to groups in danger of social exclusion (e.g. migrants, the elderly, the physically disadvantaged, prisoners). One size does not fit all and unfortunately when innovative and successful projects are set up to attract particular groups, these projects are often short lived because of a dependency upon short-term funding and the methodologies not being mainstreamed.

- EAEA underlines the special role of **civil society organisations**. In order to achieve a higher participation rate and to overcome barriers to learning, a close cooperation with civil society organisations is necessary. EAEA thinks that **partnerships on different levels** are necessary and that the fi-

nancing of CSOs is crucial so that they are able to reach out to learners.

- EAEA would like to underline the helpful role that adult education can have in **times of crisis** (both personal and social). Participating in learning activities can provide a stable time framework, a community, a chance for re-orientation, a safe place, a new challenge, social recognition, and end up being an important tool for **empowerment**.

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