Fostering change-oriented adult education

FutureLabAE guidelines for educators and adult education providers

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Contents

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1. Preface

The goal of this guide is to support adult educators, community developers, civic activist and adult education providers and associations which are working in the field of individual, social, community and social development to design and implement change-oriented adult education. The project FutureLabAE, which provided the framework for this guide was initially based on the idea that adult education needs to be proactive and not compensatory and thus reactive to changes in society. In one of the webinars organized in the project, Prof. Licínio Lima stated: "Adult education has to become more dangerous, I feel that if adult education is so naive, so gentle, so obedient, so passive, so well-behaved, we don´t need it anymore. I mean, we need salt and pepper in adult education."

According to the project consortium, adult education should play an active role in supporting and initiating processes of social change for a more just society. This can be seen in the context of the present mega trends of climate change, the widening gap between the rich and the poor and the growth of racism. Two main challenges identified by the project partners are the digitalisation of our society, concerning both access to government services and the increasing spread of fake news and conspiracy theories (especially in times of the pandemic), and the worldwide decline in democracy.

This guide aims at providing information, expertise, and very concrete examples of change-oriented adult education. The theoretical background can be found in the study undertaken by the university of Eastern Finland together with Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (Manninen, Jetsu & Sgier 2019). The basis of change-oriented adult education is in the fields of critical pedagogy (e.g. the work of Paulo Freire) and anti-racist education from the margins (hooks, Spivak).

A major debate within the project consortium was the in how far mainstream adult education, that is mainly offering education aiming at minor changes predominantly on an individual level on the one hand or more radical stances which aim for change in society and an emphasis on communities on the other, should be the mainstay of project work.

Dialogue on equal footing seems to be one of the guiding principles of change-oriented adult education. According to the Brazilian theorist Paulo Freire, dialogue is also one of the main principles of critical education. This is the reason why this guide is structured by real questions that educators asked about change-oriented adult education. In this way we try not to answer questions that nobody asked. Some of the answers, though, were added by us, to complement the picture. The impulses for these "answers" were taken from the two online courses that were organised in the framework of the project.

Thomas Fritz and Gerhild Ganglbauer
Lernraum.wien / VHS Wien

A note from the authors

We use the term educator for those guiding the educational change-oriented process as we consider teacher too restricted to schools although Freire keeps using this term. We abstain from using the fashionable term facilitator as it camouflages the role of the educator. The role of the educator should be an active guide for dialogue and a provider of ideas and questions. The term facilitator also diminishes educator as the one who supports learners/actors addressing problems that are to be solved.

We use the term learner/actor to stress the fact that learners in change-oriented adult education are active participants in the process of change, yet at the same time they are learners in the sense that reflected action is a learning opportunity. Learning here does not mean the transfer of knowledge from an educator to a learner.

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2. The purpose of this guide

This guide aims at providing practical information about change-oriented adult education. The guide is structured by questions from adult educators and educators on change-oriented adult education to make it more readable and browsable for users, but also based on theoretical ideas.

The answers to the questions are, though, always rather general and should be considered as inspirational. Do not look for recipes: there are no recipes for change-oriented adult education, it is always a question of talking the learner/actors' wishes and needs as a starting point of action. You can find more information on theoretical concepts we use in the theory boxes. Information about concrete projects of change-oriented adult education can be found in the practice boxes.

3. What is change-oriented adult education?

Theory box 1 outlines how change-oriented adult education is defined in the FuturelabAE project.

> **Theory box 1: Definition of change-oriented adult education**
>
> **"Change-oriented adult education encompasses an approach, philosophy and set of teaching and learning methods that seek to create individual and/or social change. Learners can also move beyond individual transformation to a collective empowerment based on critical awareness, new ways of thinking, and active participation.**
>
> **This model facilitates a process of conscious realization for learners as they work together taking action, including potential acts of resistance, towards a more democratic, equal and ethical world."**
>
> (Manninen, Jetsu& Sgier 2019:5)

Change-oriented adult education is thus never compensatory, i.e. solely providing skills to learners so that they can function better in their jobs or in society. An example we want to use here to make this distinction clear is basic skills programmes. If these are aimed at equipping learners with reading, writing, numeracy and information technology skills, in order to be "employable" i.e. fit for the labour market, we would define these programmes as not (at all) change-oriented. However, when these programmes aim at empowerment and participation, they are change-oriented, even if only on an individual level.

One of our main assumptions is that: (Adult) education is never neutral; it can always be seen as taking a stance in society, be it as a position of maintenance and conservation i.e. supporting existing structures in society by training learners to "fit" and accept, or it as aiming at reforming the system with the aim of more justice and participation. But adult education can also aim to play a role in structural transformation of society with the intention of radical changes in the setup

of a given society and to overcome structural injustice, class differences, racial discrimination or exploitation of certain groups within a society. (Manninen, Jetsu& Sgier 2019:5).

To include a change-oriented scope to regular liberal education classes, educators and providers need to follow critical pedagogy principles. For example, according to Freire the role of the educator is fundamental in critical education. Educators must permanently reflect their roles in the educational process and they are responsible for inspiring the learners' critical curiosity. Yet, change-oriented adult education is hardly ever to be found in mainstream and official, formal adult education. As the theorist (Kirchgaesser 2019) explains, it constitutes "renewal from the margins".

However, when these programmes aim at empowerment and participation, they are change-oriented, even if only on an individual level. One of our main assumptions is that: (Adult) education is never neutral; it can always be seen as taking a stance in society, be it as a position of maintenance and conservation i.e. supporting existing structures in society by training learners to "fit" and accept, or it as aiming at reforming the system with the aim of more justice and

> **Theory box 2: Quotes about change-oriented adult education**
>
> **Jyri Manninen:** "This kind of change-oriented courses also need and have to use very different teaching methods and one of the keywords is dialogue [….], which also leads to critical reflection in many cases. And the aim is to help people to became aware of the attitudes, believes, values, ways of behaving and so called broad meaning perspectives."
>
> FuturelabAE webinar: What is change-oriented adult education?
>
> **Licinio Lima:** "Change is not a good or bad thing in itself. It depends on the values, the objectives, the interests. And that is what we have really to discuss (…) change cannot be neutral."
>
> FuturelabAE webinar: How can change-oriented adult education help face the challenges of democracy?

participation. But adult education can also aim to play a role in structural transformation of society with the intention of radical changes in the setup of a given society and to overcome structural injustice, class differences, racial discrimination or exploitation of certain groups within a society. (Manninen, Jetsu& Sgier 2019:5).

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Theory box 3: Paulo Freire's quotes on the non-neutrality of education

"Education never was and never will be neutral"

"I cannot be in the world decontextualized, simply observing life."

"Washing one´s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."

(Paulo Freire, The Politics of Education, 1985)

Theory box 4: The idea of Ubuntu nepantla

By combining the mutual dependence implied by ubuntu ([people] only exist because others do) and the precarious borderline thinking of nepantla ([societal values] are an unstable inbetweenness rather than firmly bordered entities), we can envisage an intra-Southern conceptual field that addresses more clearly the ways of thinking we want to open up here.

(Pennycook and Makoni 2020: 109)

It is from [Anazalduá's] work that we draw the term nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio (an unstable, unpredictable, precarious in-between space) Anazaldúa, 2002:1. (Pennycook and Makoni 2020: 107) One of the webinars was dedicated to the concept of ubuntu (We exist only because others exist)– yet with a more religious connotation than a socio-critical one.

FuturelabAE webinar: "Insights on change oriented-education and democracy"

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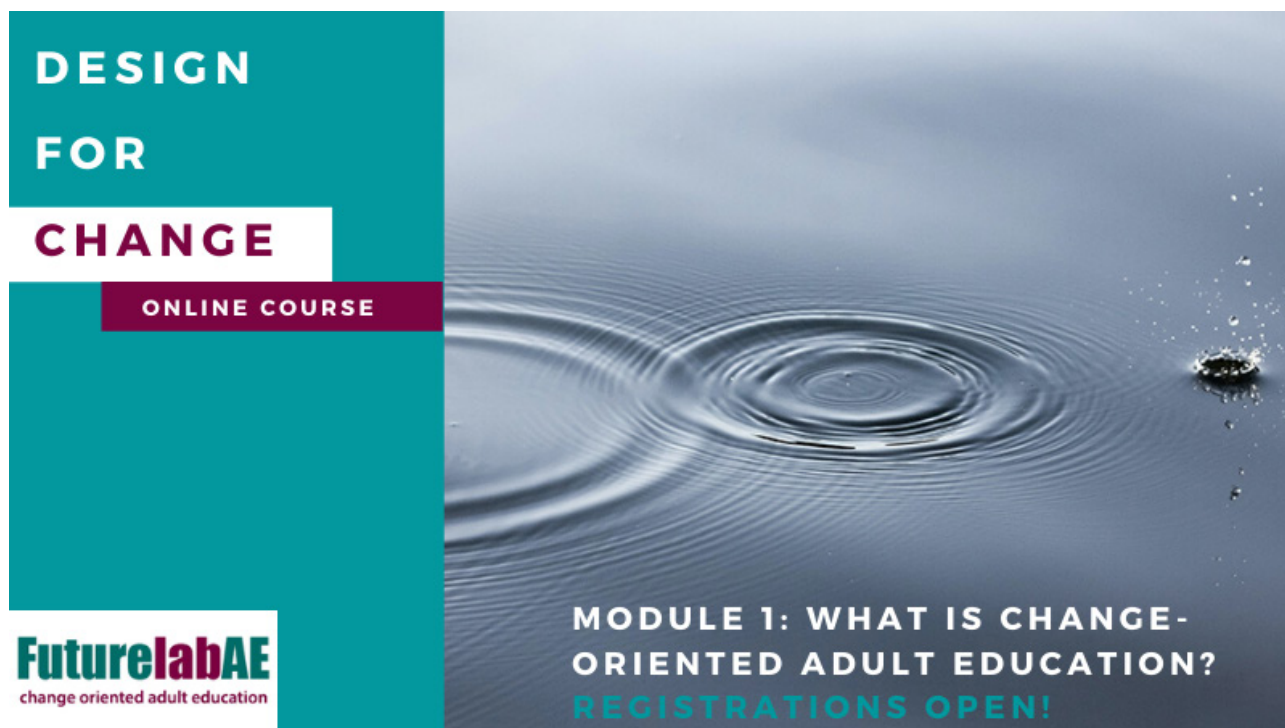
FutureLabAE project organised two online courses on change-oriented adult education. Design for change -course focused on how to respond to the challenges of digitalisation in adult education.

4. Role of learners and educators in designing and implementing change-oriented adult education

Who can benefit from change-oriented adult education?

Learners/actors are central to the processes of change-oriented adult education. It is them who are the (co-)authors of the learning processes, it is them who are determining the questions to be asked and them who work on the solutions.

Learners/actors decide – sometimes with the help of an educator – what the change-oriented process should be about.

All adults are potential addressees of change-oriented adult education. For example, a middle aged, quite well-off adult may follow a destructive way of life by overconsuming natural resources and therefore contributing to local and global ecological as well as social problems could benefit from an awareness raising course. Some other persons may have problems with media literacy and share fake news in social media. However, change-oriented adult education is predominantly used with groups who live in problematic circumstances, i.e. marginalized communities.

The reasons for their discrimination can be manifold: gender, sexual orientation, low income, homelessness, race, being out of work or education, age, low social status or bad living conditions. They are very often confronted with situations that challenge their existence.

> **Theory box 5: Critical [pedagogy]**
>
> **Critical pedagogy is built on exploring personal, socio-political, economic and intellectual border identities. It dictates its politics of location where learners are positioned to operate as "border crossers" […]. It is also grounded in the ethical imperative to examine the contradictions on society between then meanings of freedom, the demands of social justice, the obligation of citizenship and the structure silences that permeates incidences of systems**
>
> **(Bishop 2014:52)**

Learners/actors can also be groups that wish for a change to improve their own or someone else's situation, to gain access to public spaces and social infrastructure.

Can any course be change-oriented?

Change-oriented adult education is – in our view – strongly linked to critical pedagogy and its principles both on the level of "teaching and learning" and of organisation. To highlight these principles, we should list the five pillars of critical pedagogy formulated by Brandt in a book on popular education under Sandinistas (1991, quoted in: Mclaren and Farahmandpur 2005:9). She states that critical pedagogy must be: a collective, critical, systematic, participatory and creative process. We might want to add that the collectiveness of these processes entails an orientation on dialogue. If a course follows all of these principles we can talk about change-orientation.

Who decides what should be changed: the educator, the learner, both, or someone else?

There are three ways to make a decision of what is to be changed. First and foremost, the need for change come from the learners/actors. They see themselves trapped in a situation that is unjust, discriminatory against some groups of society or excluding certain groups.

The second option would be a joint decision-making process, in a participatory dialogue with others, moderated by an adult educator, if needed, that involves both the topic of change and the place where the program is to take place. We consider the choice of place essential also in terms of familiarity of the environment and the fact that traditional "schools" – this also means edifices of adult education – can sometimes be overwhelming and may carry the atmosphere of traditional learning.

The third way could be that the educators themselves pose a problem to the group and invite learners to ask questions on the why and how this problem developed and how it could be solved. The latter option seems to be the less satisfactory in the context of change-oriented adult education. We do recognize, though, that the educators' role is vital in change-oriented adult education. Their role is to support learners/actors in the process of problem solving and solution finding. It is their role to pose critical questions and to question problematic situations. We regard

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it an integral part of change-oriented adult education that the problems are defined by the learners/actors and not from outside, as this process is in danger of becoming paternalistic and contradicts Ribeiro's statement of the "for" and the "with", i.e. the underlying stance of educators.

Referring to the second option Carlos Ribeiro calls for a change in stance of education which can be summed up by a change from the - what Freire calls – banking principle of education to a collaborative process: doing with and not for:

> "It´s our vision of the world, that we need [to] mutualise in our professional action. […] We need to be a citizen to be someone who contributes to the local and global development. And for that our keyword or key approach in terms of methodology is doing with and not doing for"

<div align="right">

Carlos Ribeiro in FuturelabAE webinar
"Where change-oriented adult education could take place?

</div>

This also implies that learning is a very open process with no pre-given aim and result. It is the process that counts and the way of achieving the aims that are important. This also implies that the What and the How of the action are central. The collaborative process includes the place where the learners/actors are and can include changes in the local environment as for example in "community development". (See Info box 1: Zrejme)

> **Info box 1: Zrejme**
>
> **Zrejme contributes to inter-generational co-operation and dialogue, integration of the elderly people into the family, community and society. One of the activities was civic protest against the loss of public space for people (older and younger). Different activities bringing the generations together – have been developed.**
>
> **The topic of aging, regardless of gender or skin colour, concerns us all.**
>
> <div align="right">https://zrejme.sk/</div>

How do you promote change-oriented courses to potential participants?

Change-oriented adult education is not an educational process that can be advertised in a catalogue and to which learners subscribe. Change-oriented adult education is based on dialogue and participation, i.e. it is aimed to solve already existing problems that are relevant to groups of learners/actors. The main underlying principle here seems to be co-authorship and hence ownership of the programmes. This involves a joint critical analysis of the problem and a joint, dialogue-based, participatory identification of possible solutions.

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The educators' role here is to guide and support the process and, most of all, to be open and curious, instilling the above-mentioned critical curiosity in leaners/actors it is mandatory that the educators themselves show the same. Change-oriented adult education does not have clearly defined and measurable goals, imposed from outside, instead the goals are often generated from within the groups. The educators show their professionalism by being didactically competent in process development and guidance, their consistency in doing their work and most of all by being politically clear and transparent during the process. (see Chambers 2019: 7)

Another very important task for the educators is that of (permanent) critical reflection, mainly on the issue of never being neutral but at the same time never being opaque in their aims and attitudes.

Info box 2: Some change-oriented methods

<u>Time out</u> **is a method that facilitates a constructive way of discussing and debating.**

<u>Fish Bowl</u> **is a more dialogical and democratic version of a panel discussion, which tries to lessen the distance between so-called experts and the audience.**

World Cafe is a method for bigger groups. There are a number of tables which address different questions. Each table has a host who is responsible for moderating and documenting the debates. After an initial discussion people stroll to the next table and continue their discussions. The documentation serves as a summing up of all debates.

How to foster the right kind of group dynamics for change-orientation?

We would like to start the answer to this question with two quotes from Jyri Manninen which sum up the role of the educator:

> "Adult education is a kind of intervention to people's lives and in organisations and in society in many ways. So, we have to be aware of what kind of political options we are actually following and what are we trying to do with these adult education interventions."

> FuturelabAE webinar: What is change-oriented adult education?

> "Every time when an adult educator starts to do something with the learners […] [s]he has a kind of political aim, political option […] It´s never neutral what people are doing."

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As stated above, educators need to be open, aware of the problems and issues that are at the centre of the envisaged change process. They need to instil and support critical curiosity and accompany learners/actors in their collaborative search for solutions. Yet, educators also have to add their own expertise into the process and guide the process, they need to be directive and make use of their authority in fostering group processes and avoiding unnecessary conflict yet allow divergent opinions and not seek a consensus at all cost. They are to be neither authoritarian nor laissez faire. They also must be transparent and not try to appear neutral as no educational process can be neutral.

> **Theory box 6: On voice**
>
> **The concept of voice describes the conditions for speaking in society as proposed by Dell Hymes and Pierre Bourdieu (see: Blommaert2015) Spivak and hooks added to this concept the so-called hegemonic listening which means that one integral condition for speaking is being heard. Blommaert describes this in the abovementioned article in the case of refugees who do not have a voice.**
>
> **"When we dare to speak in a liberatory voice, we threaten even those who may initially claim to want our words. In the act of overcoming our fear of speech, of being seen as threatening, in the process of learning to speak as subjects, we participate in the global struggle to end domination. When we end our silence, when we speak in a liberated voice, our words connect us with anyone, anywhere who lives in silence. It is important that we speak. What we speak about is more important. It is our responsibility collectively and individually to distinguish between mere speaking that is about self-aggrandizement, exploitation of the exotic "other," and that coming to voice which is a gesture of resistance, an affirmation of struggle."**
>
> **(bell hooks: Talking Back. Thinking Feminist. Thinking Black 1989 South End Press)**

Educators must ensure that the problem-solving process is a joint effort and strengthen learners/ actors in a situation that is in most cases ambivalent (see the concept of ubuntu nepantla in theory box 4).

To be more concrete, we want to show some of the methods used during the project seminars (see info box 2) stressing at the same time, that it is never a question of methodology but one of attitude and stance that characterizes change-oriented adult education.

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What kind of and how big is the change we are talking about?

In our understanding, change-oriented adult education should aim at improving society as a whole and not changing the condition of an purely individual only: that means we should not aim at helping one person to improve their position in society - thus to change from the side of the discriminated and marginalized to the side of the "privileged", as a neoliberal understanding would pertain. Yet, change in attitudes, for example overcoming racist positions, is a change that involves the individual on the first level but also provoke a change in society. Change in the local environment, e.g. fostering participation and giving people a "voice" certainly, is a change that we should also aim for.

Should change-orientation be a "hidden agenda" or an outspoken objective?

In the understanding of change-oriented adult education as a motor for social change towards more social justice it has to be transparent and outspoken. Similar to the role of the educator, programmes that aim at change have per se to be transparent in their attitude and scope. Change-oriented programmes – as defined in the project – are based on collaborative decision-making and dialogue, hence they cannot run on a hidden agenda.

The starting point of any change-oriented education must be the wish for change by a group of learners/actors. Course planning should be led by this wish. As Carlos Ribeiro said in one of the project webinars, the main principle of course organization is that of co-construction of the programme. Learners/actors need to be co-authors of the course as it is their own development which is at the centre of the program.

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He went on saying that we have to understand the "idea of learning as a very open process" and that "training is a tool not a goal" which means that the planning of the programme has to guarantee this openness and flexibility. We might add to Ribeiro's statement that change-oriented learning is not easily measurable; the only indicator of success being the envisioned change taking place and the impact of that change for the individuals and groups involved. We could take this one step further and claim that educators become learners in this case as they can learn from the learners/actors who are specialists for their own contexts and situations.

We are aware that this constitutes quite a challenge for both institutions and educators as they have to move away from the tradition of the curriculum, transfer the power to the learners/actors and reduce themselves to supporters of learning processes, while still acting professionally and transparently.

What kind of new skills are needed to organize change-oriented courses?

The roles of the educators are central to change-oriented adult education: they are the linchpin of the process. Not only do they function as guides, they also put their expertise at the service of the learning process. Educators are learners / actors at the same time, as bell hooks succinctly puts it:

> "This pedagogical strategy is rooted in the assumption that we all bring the classroom experimental knowledge, that this knowledge can indeed enhance our learning experience. If experience is already invoked in the classroom as a way of knowing. That co-exists in a non-hierarchical way with other ways of knowing, then it lessens the possibility that it can be used to silence. " (bell hooks, teaching to transgress, 1994. P.8)

Hence, there needs to be an equilibrium in learning and educating. Roles are reversed at certain points: all actors in the process are experts, albeit for different aspects of the process.

This in turn also requires special training for the educators. This training, though, is not merely skill based but should address the development of attitudes and stance, and the ability be an expert guide who is transparent in her aims and agendas. Regular supervision and peer support seem to

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be essential in this context as well.

Are there any ethical questions which should be solved?

Again, we want to refer to the role of the educator as a critical, transparent and democratically oriented actor in education. The ethical questions addressed in the question are thus inherent in the process of the adult education programme.

Together for change online course focused on democracy and change-oriented adult education practices.

5. Adult education providers and policymakers as enablers of change-oriented education

What should adult education providers do to foster change-oriented education?

Sometimes institutions, no matter which level they work on, and especially those in need of financial support, are experienced not as supportive agents for change, but as obstacles.

Patrik Krebs, the Project coordinator of "Theatre With No Home", says in an interview about the lack of national funding of their change-oriented project, which gives homeless people and/or with physical limitations the opportunity to express themselves and their world before an audience:

> "To work with homeless people is not hard. Really not. Very hard is to work with institutions. That's the hard part. Homeless people are very happy that they can work or they can do something. [...] This is the healthy part of our work. But to explain to institutions – and especially national institutions – it is many times even impossible [...] We were basically just existing because of international projects."

> FuturelabAE webinar: "Where change-oriented adult education could take place?"

Rubia Salgado, an educator in Austria at maiz/kollektiv, paraphrased Freire by asking the FutureLabAE webinar attendees: "For whom are you working? Are you working for the state or for the people?" (FuturelabAE webinar: " Addressing and counteracting right-wing populism and racism")

One step towards this change are mission statements formulated by institutions. In the project consortium we agreed that institutions should have the aim of providing (organising) change-oriented adult education in their mission statements. Most adult education institutions already declare their commitments to democratic societies, to anti-discrimination and anti-racism, from there it is only a small step (but a giant leap from the aspect of commitment to change, at the same time) to include the aims of change-oriented adult education in these statements.

> **The mission statement of VHS Vienna:**
> We stand for an open and socially just society, there have to be equal opportunities for everybody to develop all their potentials and to actively take part in society. We contribute thus to the quality of life of everybody living in Vienna and to their peaceful co-existence and stand against all forms of discrimination and exclusion.
> We understand learning as a personal as well as societal process. In this sense we contribute to the self determination of our learners. […]
>
> (Leitbild der Wiener Volkshochschulen, translation Thomas Fritz)

If the institution aims to foster an open and socially just society it must also be prepared to undertake measures to achieve this aim. If learning is defined as a personal, but at the same time societal process, and its aim is self-empowerment where the path to achieve this is described

Info box 5: The dark side of literacy

The dark side of literacy was a series of discussions and debates among critical literacy protagonists, organised by the Federal Centre of adult education in Austria. Some of the issues debated included the use of (non-)discriminatory terminology, alternative models of literacy education and a critique on mainstream, neo liberalist developments in literacy education.

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as egalitarian collaboration, the logical next step would be to state: "We subscribe to the self-determination of people living in this city and support activities - even extra mural– to achieve this."

A clear commitment to outreach activities and close co-operation with communities seems to be necessary here. At the final FutureLabAE conference, Fergal Finnegan calls to a movement back to the roots of adult education which was strongly linked to social movements and the workers' education. Learning is not a service provided by an institution, but an active process undertaken by groups of learners/actors with the support of these institutions or initiatives. A vital role that institutions must play is the support of the educators in order to let them know that change-oriented education is wanted and intended by the institution. Again, this can and should be reflected in the mission statements.

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Another – even more important - aspect is providing spaces for critical reflection on change-oriented educational work. This can be achieved by organising workshops in which educators can – jointly, and with guidance – reflect on their work, their challenges and positive incidents in the learning / teaching processes. It is also crucial to provide training in change-oriented education that cannot be normally found in academic courses or in-service seminars.

In a more general perspective, we may ask ourselves at this point whether state funded institutions can carry out change-oriented education at all, as the state might not fund critical developments that endanger the social order as envisaged by it.

An example for this can be seen by the short series of meetings of members of critical literacy in Austria which was hosted by the official adult education institute (Dark Side of Literacy, info box 5) and terminated after three events as being too critical and counterproductive.

Info box 6: Community education/education in and for communities

In the context of adult education, Carlos Ribeiro refers to the responsibility from educators as citizens. New places (third places) would have to be appropriated for this purpose. For community education the so-called "third place" (neither the private sphere nor the workplace) is recommended, in and with the social environment.

"We need to think about our participation not only in education not only in training, but at local level, local development, in community development", says Ribeiro.

FuturelabAE webinar:
"Where change-oriented adult education could take place?"

We see a realisation of this approach in the work of Longford Women's Link**, which supports women in building more capacities for action for themselves, their families and their neighbourhood.**

FuturelabAE webinar with Tara Farrell:
"Experiences with change-oriented adult education, lessons learned"

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What kind of organisations can provide change-oriented adult education?

As pointed out before, we think that as learners/actors are co-authors of the events they are also the ones who decide the rhythm of the meetings. When we think about change-oriented adult education we do not think in terms of courses and learners who enrol to these but of groups that take the initiative and decide the place, the time and the frequency of meetings.

Change-oriented adult education is not a set of methodologies but is based on a set of principles i.e. dialogue, co-authorship and empowerment. This approach to adult education entails a slight paradigm change in our thinking of education. It is not us, who decide and provide but the learners/actors who decide, the educators' role is "reduced" to accompanying the learners /actors and augmented to be critical guides in an unforeseeable process of change, to keep the commonly decided goal in mind and to support. Adult education institutions can support processes of change by entering into dialogue with groups of learners, reaching out to them and providing spaces and infrastructure for learners.

Info box 7: "Adaptive" policy documents

Policy documents are without exemptions written using adaptive expressions, for example:

"an increased burden is imposed on individuals to adapt their skills in order to remain prepared for future changes" (Council of the European Union (2008). Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies)

"Access to up-to-date information and knowledge [..] are becoming the key to strengthening Europe's competitiveness and improving the employability and adaptability of the workforce" (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Commission of the European communities 2000)

In one of the FutureLabAE webinars Jyri Manninen asks:

"Why can´t we write these policy documents and change our practices so that adult education not only helps people to cope with life but also helps them to change their lives and develop the society?"

FuturelabAE webinar: "What is change-oriented adult education?"

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In terms of organisational parameters we think that the choice of places of learning are important. These places can be community centres, libraries, parks or any other place where learners/actors feel safe and free. (See info box 6.)

What kind of new thinking do institutions and educators need to have??

The simple answer to this question would be: they need to let learners/actors do what they need to do in order to achieve the changes they are looking for. To be more seriouswe would suggest that what they must do is reflect their own roles in the educational process, their roles and positions in the power relationship between the ones who "learn" and the ones who provide learning, that means they have to unlearn their own traditions and let learners /actors be free to co-author learning.

What should policymakers do to foster change oriented adult education?

Policymakers are mainly concerned with "official" tasks of education that is providing qualifications and certifying the learning process. The main priority in the agenda of EU Member States (and the European Union itself) seem only to be the improving of the general state of qualifications of the population. This is very often based on economic parameters. An often quoted number is the growth of GDP by an augmentation of qualifications, (EDU NAEC Paper Series n° 1.).

Policy documents state that the so-called knowledge society needs more qualified people without critically questioning the concept of this knowledge society and its social implications. As early as the Sixties, a group of theoreticians including Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich formulated that more education does not produce more jobs. (see Manifesto of Cuernavaca:1974). Civic education and democracy education do not look out to provide measurable and certifiable qualifications but to improve the lives of, often marginalized, groups of people.

The FutureLabAE policy recommendations provide concrete suggestions on how change-oriented adult education can be supported by European, national and regional/local authorities.

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TOGETHER FOR CHANGE
ONLINE COURSE

MODULE 3:
MEDIA LITERACY FOR MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

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Photo: Karoliina Knuuti

On Together for change -online course we heard examples on how change-oriented adult education can advance democracy.

6. How can we foster democracy education?

Democracy education calls for a democratic way of learning. As Manninen states: "Is it possible to teach democracy? The answer was yes - of course, but only through the practice of democracy, of active citizenship, of active participation" (20.30ff).

Looking at what we have written on the educators' role and responsibility we see that they first and foremost are partners in dialogue, take up learners/actors problems and guide the process of finding a solution. They need to be transparent in their own political agenda and convictions. The educational process is one of collaboration on equal terms with the educator binging in his/her expertise but also allowing the learners/actors to bring in theirs.

As you can see from this short description, this is also the way that democracy can work: a debate on urgent issues among equal partners with no hidden agendas and no manipulation. There is no place for discrimination in the change-oriented adult education process and no place for racism, sexism, linguicism or ageism. Change-oriented adult education provides a safe space for trying out democratic processes and co-determination. Three more quotes from Manninen can serve to underline this: "dialogue is the heart of democracy" and with this collaboration and respect for others. In these safe spaces, learners/actors can develop their voice, "speak that voice and make a difference". In these contexts, learners/actors will be heard and listened to. As we have defined learning as an open process, with no result (even if the changes envisaged have been achieved new challenges might arise), the learning process such as democracy "is never completed" and needs to be pushed forward again and again.

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Info box 8: Preparing women for political action

SHE is a feminist, community-led, rural initiative providing pathways for women into political life in Ireland. Local and national representation and advocacy of and for women is the aim of the project. A series of programmes and seminars exploring and learning about politics are provided which build women's capacity to participate in public life.

https://www.seeherelected.ie/

Democracy education also needs to look at what people can already do – their competences. We find the competences propagated by the European Union helpful but slightly limiting in this context. They need at least to be complemented with competences for change-oriented adult education (or as in the original formulated by Negt (see: Zeuner 2013)) societal education.

If we follow Manninen's requirement that "adult education must be directed to prepare adults to change the world", this also entails critical self-reflection. That means taking a closer look at what situation learners/actors find themselves and what the wish to change, or as MacLaren and Farahmandpur say, to find out "In what way has society produced me that I now wish to reject?" (2005: 113). We might add to this also the need to look at the way society has produced my environment "that I wish to reject".

In a more practical level we can say that methods such as Time out and Fishbowl (see Info box 2) are tools that can be used to try out a way of debating that involves actors on equal footing.

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Theory box 7: Competences for change-oriented adult education

We would like to introduce an alternative or rather additional concept to the eight areas of competences formulated by the European Union which are stated as:
- Literacy
- Multilingualism
- Numerical, scientific and engineering skills
- Digital and technology-based competences
- Interpersonal skills, and the ability to adopt new competences
- Active citizenship
- Entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

Recommendation for key competences on lifelong learning

These alternative competences were formulated by the German theoretician Oskar Negt and aim at covering mainly the areas of active citizenship. Negt labels them as societal competencies:
- identity competence
- historical competence
- awareness, and competence in, social justice
- technological competency
- ecological competency
- economical competency

The aim of acquiring these competences is to "understand existing relations in the contemporary world and to relate critically to the existing reality in order to initiate necessary reframing processes" (Negt, 1993: 662 (quoted in: Zeuner 2013: 145). Negt continues that the experiences as subject play a decisive role in the unfolding of 'societal competencies'. (Zeuner 2013: 146)

Referring to Manninen's statement (and to many of Freire's statements), a democratic way of learning is not achieved through the "traditional" way of teaching, i.e. as transmission of a "predefined canon of knowledge [...] Learners should instead develop their competencies, reaching a stronger orientation, by uncovering the relations between 'the interest of the learning subjects and the objective world'. (Zeuner 2013: 147)

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One of the modules on the Design for change- online course explored how digital games can be used in change-oriented adult education.

7. How can we foster a critical perspective on digitalisation?

Before we start talking about digitalisation in the context of democracy, fake news and the dependency on e-government tools, we would like to mention some very basic and general ideas that became vital during the COVID-19 pandemic. Government agencies and also educational institutions keep stressing the importance of digitalisation of learning and social interaction forgetting (or rather) excluding a number of people whose access to information technologies is limited. We know from various sources (research in a EU funded project "WeStart" and the experience of the last year in an adult education institution) that access to and skills to work with electronic media are rather limited especially for so-called marginalized groups, i.e. women, families and people with low income, older people and refugees. These groups may have and use smart phones but only for limited purposes. They very often are dependent on others to install apps and use the smart phone for reasons other than communication, photography or video or social media. Most of these groups do not possess tablets or PCs. This strongly impacts on digital learning and uses of e-government tools.

Those who have the electronic tools sometimes fall prey to misinformation or "fake news" as this is also called. The vast amount of digital information calls for critical scrutiny and research, something not all learners /actors are familiar with – or for what they do not have the tools. This means that critical media literacy is called for and change-oriented adult education must supply learners /actors with these tools and the means of critical questioning of knowledge, or whatever is claimed to be knowledge.

You will find two examples of these tools in Infoboxes 2 and 3. These are also two ways to go about counteracting "fake news" in a productive way.

We think it has become clear from the above-mentioned examples that digitalisation and democracy education are strongly interlinked.

Info box 9: Gamification

Because serious games (online and offline) often try to solve a real-life problem or try to tackle a real-life issue this is one possible approach to both issues related to democracy and digitalisation. Thus, a broad spectrum can be addressed, ranging from a critical approach to conspiracy theories to raising awareness of marginalized groups in society.

FuturelabAE webinar: " Use of digital games in change-oriented adult education"

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Appendix 1: The FutureLabAE project

The FutureLabAE project provides staff and trainers of adult learning and education (ALE) organisations with the knowledge, expertise, and tools to become more change-oriented in their adult learning provision and practices.

In particular, the project addresses two main challenges Europe is currently facing, where adult education could play a crucial role: democracy, as there is an increasing number of citizens who are discontent with politics and start leaning towards xenophobic and populist parties or choosing not to vote; and digitalisation, as there is a high number of people in Europe who need support with basic skills, especially digital skills, and are not able to benefit from it.

In the last three years, the project developed the following outputs:

- A collection and analysis of change-oriented practices in the fields of digitalisation and democracy. The outcome is a source of inspiration not only for ALE organisations, staff, and trainers but also to policymakers at different levels
- Two online courses on change-oriented adult education and digitalisation / democracy addressed to ALE organisations, staff, and trainers
- Two hands-on methodologies for change-oriented workshops on digitalisation and democracy
- Guidelines for ALE organisations and staff on how to work more pro-actively and more effectively with the topics, to successfully reach out to and support people with low digital and civic competences
- Recommendations for policymakers on the policies needed to better implement change-oriented provision for both digitalisation and democracy.

FutureLabAE is financed with the support of the Erasmus+ programme and gathers the following partners:

- Institut National de Formation et de Recherche sur l'Education Permanente (INFREP) – France
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) – Belgium
- National Adult Learning Organisation (AONTAS) – Ireland
- Asociacia institucii vzdelavania dospelych v Slovenskej republike (AIVD) – Slovakia
- Kvs Foundation (Kansanvalistusseura sr.) – Finland
- University of Eastern Finland (UEF) – Finland
- Amar Terra Verde, LDA. (EPATV) – Portugal
- Die Wiener Volkshochschulen GMBH (VHS) – Austria
- Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SVEB) – Switzerland

Appendix 2: list of theory boxes

1: Definition of change-oriented adult education
2: Quotes about change-oriented adult education
3: Paulo Freire's quotes on the non-neutrality of education
4: The idea of Ubuntu nepantla
5: Critical [pedagogy]
6: On voice
7: Competences for change-oriented adult education

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Appendix 3: list of info boxes

1: Zrejme
2: Some change-oriented methods
3: Learners/actors voices
4: Media literacy in Palestine
5: The dark side of literacy
6: Community education/education in and for communities
7: Adaptive policy documents
8: Preparing women for political action
9: Gamification

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