

Basic Skills and Bildung





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1. What is Bildung?
2. Democracy and Bildung
3. Digitalisation and Bildung
4. Sustainability and Bildung
5. Basic Skills and Bildung

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Contents

The Bildung project.....	2
Aim and objectives.....	2
1. Conceptual framework: Basic skills as part of Bildung.....	3
1.1. What do we need basic skills for? The context and philosophy of basic skills education 3	
1.2. Basic skills or life skills?	4
1.3. Freirean literacy.....	5
1.4. Life Skills Framework.....	6
1.4.1. Literacy capabilities (includes foreign languages).....	8
1.4.2. Digital capabilities (includes media literacy).....	8
1.4.3. Numeracy capabilities	8
1.4.4. Financial capabilities.....	8
1.4.5. Civic and democratic capabilities	8
1.4.6. Personal and interpersonal capabilities.....	9
1.4.7. Health capabilities.....	9
1.4.8. Sustainability awareness / Environmental capabilities.....	9
1.4.9. Life Skills are indispensable when thinking of inclusion, sustainability, social justice and democracy.....	9
1.5. Example of using the Life Skills approach: Life Skills for All -model	10
2. Life skills through the Bildung lense.....	11
2.1. Bildung Concept.....	11
2.2. Transferable knowledge and life skills	11
2.3. Non-transferable knowledge and life-skills	12
2.4. Expansion of the sense of responsibility and life skills.....	13
2.5. Civic empowerment and life skills	13
3. Best practices.....	14
3.1. Café Fair, Denmark.....	14
Example Summary	15
Link to the Bildung concept.....	15
Cross-border transferability	16
3.2. How to decide wisely, Estonia	17



Example Summary	17
Link to the Bildung concept.....	18
Cross-border transferability	18
3.3. La Troca, Spain.....	20
Example Summary	20
Link to the Bildung concept.....	21
Cross-border transferability	22
3.4. VHS-Lernportal, Moldova	22
Example Summary	22
Link to the Bildung concept.....	23
Cross-border transferability	24
4. Recommendations	25
4.1. Macro level (policy makers, decision takers... locally, regionally or nationally)	25
4.2. Meso level (ALE organisations, learning centre...)	25
4.3. Micro level (trainers, training the trainer courses...)	26
Bibliography.....	27





The Bildung project

The Erasmus+ Bildung project (**B**uilding **I**nclusive **L**ifelong learning systems by **D**eveloping a European **U**nderstanding of Bildung for the **N**ext **G**enerations) contributes to the innovation of the European adult learning and education (ALE) sector by adopting the holistic concept of 'Bildung' and exploring its political and practical potential for adult learning and education.

The multiple challenges and rapid changes in our European societies demand to rethink of the role of education. While Lifelong Learning is widely accepted as the main concept, we must rethink the role and concepts of adult learning and education. This is essential if we want to equip citizens with the skills to make informed decisions and take transformative action in the world shaped by e.g. climate change, digitalisation and the social divide. The Bildung project contributes to this rethinking by making use of the concept of Bildung for conceptualising ALE.

The concept, rooted in the tradition of the enlightenment and the Nordic Folkbildning envisages an education, targeting all aspects of the development of individuals, communities and societies, including e.g. ethical, emotional and scientific dimensions in a holistic manner.

Eleven partners from all over Europe have explored the use of this concept for the ALE sector in the fields of democracy, digitalisation, sustainability, and basic skills education.

Aim and objectives

The Bildung project will offer decision-makers and ALE providers on the European and national levels with:

- A conceptual framework and recommendation on how to widen ALE services and structures using the Bildung lens
- Good practices of projects from various regions in Europe already using the Bildung/Folkbildning approach
- Real and virtual spaces for exchange and peer learning





1. Conceptual framework: Basic skills as part of Bildung

1.1. What do we need basic skills for? The context and philosophy of basic skills education

In this paper, we discuss the holistic concept of Bildung and its connections to basic skills. The Bildung concept is comprehensively laid out in the project's first publication "What is Bildung?" Bildung highlights a holistic approach to adult education and learning that recognizes learning as a process which includes personal growth, moral autonomy, and active citizenship.

With our world growing increasingly complex, we are required to be multi-literate and media-critical, with a large number of data and communication channels providing the need for active searching, evaluating, interpreting and editing of information. We also need critical thinking more than ever as well as the ability to understand how we are being influenced. Our second publication "Bildung and Digitalisation" is thoroughly discussing this aspect. Besides these crucial skills connected to (digital) information processing, we also increasingly need different numeracy skills in our daily lives. Europe in the 21st century evaluates, explains, and anticipates things using numerical information and mathematical problem-solving.

Thus, handling growingly larger amounts part of information acquisition, communication and transactions via computers, smartphones and other technical devices, regardless of time and place, we need new skills and competencies for the appropriate and safe use of the devices.

All of this has an enormous impact on how we define, understand and discuss basic skills – skills that every adult needs to live in modern society. What should they cover? What do they enable? Are they something one either has or does not have? Who should be provided basic skills education? And whose responsibility is it to provide basic skills education?

Considering a wider view of basic skills, literacy is seen as a "continuum of learning" that can include digital literacy, well-being and socioemotional skills, and cross-cultural understanding, to say some. Basic skills should provide strategies to avoid political extremisms, foster social cohesion and peace, and enhance one's physical and emotional health.

Lifelong learning has been a key concept of adult education since the 1960s. The importance of lifelong learning is widely recognized, but its rationale and importance have been seen from different perspectives. German Bildung -tradition emphasises human growth. On the other hand, the need for continuous learning can be justified from the perspective of societal changes and the needs of working life as in the PIAAC study (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies: <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>) by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). For example, in Finland, continuing education is generally responding to the needs of the working life, while liberal adult education traditionally emphasises the importance of well-being, personal growth and interests. The emphasis also differs between adult education providers.

The Secretary General of the International Council for Adult Education, Katarina Popovic, has stated that "Life Skills are a need to make the most of your life", highlighting that the most important ability one can have is the willingness for constant learning. This view links the concept of life skills closely to the concept of lifelong learning.





The Marrakesh Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2022) approved during the CONFINTEA VII also points out the importance of a holistic approach to adult learning and education as well as the impact adult learning can have in achieving the 17 sustainable development goals.

European Commission emphasises in the *European Pillar of Social Rights* the right of the individual to participate in society:

"Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning that develops key competences and basic skills. Key competences and basic skills are needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship."

(European Commission, 2019)

Adequate basic skills enable inclusion and participation in the complex and rapidly changing information society. Inclusion and participation require self-efficacy and the ability to influence one's affairs by making the right things and decisions at the right time. Similarly, deficiencies in basic skills impair an individual's ability to use and develop his or her potential. Strengthening the basic skills of adults promotes well-being and builds the basis of a functioning and equal society.

1.2. Basic skills or life skills?

There is no single definition of what basic skills are. We will suggest that from the perspective of adult education as a human right a holistic interpretation of basic skills is needed.

One definition of basic skills is given by the OECD. In the PIAAC study, three areas of competence were assessed for adults aged 16-65: 1. literacy, 2. numeracy and 3. digital skills. These three basic skills have been seen as the foundation for further learning but need to be combined with other capacities to allow the adult to fully participate in their individual life, employment and society. (<https://basicskills.eu>) In the second cycle of PIAAC digital skills have been replaced by adaptive problem-solving skills.

Also, socio-emotional skills are now evaluated in PIAAC, as it is stated:

"Along with cognitive skills, social and emotional skills are commonly identified as an element of the set of 'key competencies' required for success in the labour market and life more generally and feature prominently in international and national frameworks setting out objectives for skills development, the learning outcomes expected of education and training systems." (OECD, PIAAC design)

A wider and more holistic approach to viewing basic skills is the concept of life skills, which highlights the meaning of basic skills for the individuals' ability to function in society and develop their potential. Like with basic skills, there are many different understandings of life skills but no definition is universally accepted.

One of the core aims of adult education and learning is to achieve skills that enable long-term benefits for the individual. It is seen that the key motivation for learning is that the essential needs of the individual are met. Thus, from the point of view of the individual, the term life skills highlight their relevance to the individual: it connects learning with practical areas of one's life sphere and realities. Life skills stimulate engagement and thus bring about a long-





term benefit that helps acquire autonomy and an understanding of the challenges that we are facing.

The OECD has adopted a generic definition of life skills in the context of the DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies) -project (Rychen and Salganik 2001). It defines life skills on three general criteria:

Key competencies which contribute to an overall successful life and a well-functioning society.

They are instrumental in meeting important challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts, and finally,

They are relevant to all individuals.

These key competencies are:

- Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups,
- Acting autonomously and
- Using tools interactively

Similarly, UNICEF emphasises three aspects and defines generic life skills including:

- the cognitive aspect to be able to think critically and solve problems,
- the personal aspect of mature self-management,
- the interpersonal aspect, which encompasses perspectives of cooperation and teamwork, as well as the social perspective, where society is understood as a dynamic system.

1.3. Freirean literacy

The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire viewed literacy as the ability to look at and evaluate the world critically. Literacy allows one to take one's place in the world and create something new. This view of literacy connects with Andersens' fourth aspect of Bildung: civic empowerment (Andersen 2021). To take it further, this is true for other basic skills as well: they empower us to shape our own life as well as the world.

On the contrary, deficiencies in basic skills impair an individual's ability to use and develop their full potential as well as function in society in several ways. By learning basic skills, learners can take their place and influence their environment. Paulo Freire criticises "banking education" and calls on developing skills of reflection and analysis. Education should strive to emerge consciousness which enables students to take social action to improve conditions for themselves and their communities. (Freire 1970 53 – 67.)

As described above, basic skills are not something we are to learn and memorise by heart. It is more accurate to view them as the ability to analyse and evaluate the world about oneself.

Freire became known for his literacy programs for the illiterate and his work as a theoretician of critical pedagogy. According to Freire, literacy or illiteracy is never a choice of the individual. It is connected to the circumstances. Illiteracy is either due to the lack of written culture in the living environment or the denial of teaching literacy to the individual (Freire 1985, 13).

Here are two considerations independent of time and place:





- Competences and required skills depend on a situation and culture. Their development and need are always related to the environment they live in.
- Learning basic skills (e.g. literacy) is seen as a right. If an individual has not been allowed to learn the key skills in their living environment, it is a matter of oppression due to the lack of opportunities.

These considerations apply to all the knowledge and skills that enable one to become a member of one's society.

Freire opposes social injustice and oppression. By oppression, he refers to barriers that hinder social equality and limit opportunities to exercise and express one's potential (Freire 1970, 37). Injustice can be related to various factors, such as gender, the poor, ethnic minorities, gender minorities, migrants or the mentally or physically disabled. Based on Freire's ideas, basic skills are perceived to be a matter of social justice.

We would like to point out that everyone has knowledge and skills. On the other hand, as the competencies we need are shaped concerning our environment, each one of us also has skills gaps when acting in new environments or situations. Keeping basic skills up to date generates learning needs for each of us. We can and must not separate learners as "them" as opposed to "us".

Basic skills education is the scaffolding from which future knowledge can be built. It also provides tools that allow participation in the various acts of daily life. In this sense, basic education provides autonomy to the individual and, as Andersen points out in *Bildung: Keep growing*, (2020) "meaningful is the adult life in which we can be in charge of our life-situation, where we can seek and access information freely and express ourselves."

Basic skills enable us to participate in society. It means empowerment. Teaching and education cannot be top-down, but it needs to be dialogical and relevant to the learner's life.

1.4. Life Skills Framework

To stress the emancipatory and functional significance of basic skills, we suggest using a wider and more holistic approach to life skills. Using the life skills concept suggests that different, changing capabilities are needed for the individual to function in society and develop her/his potential.

In the Life Skills for Europe -project (LSE), which took place from 2016 - 2018, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), in collaboration with its international partners, developed a holistic Life Skills Framework, which highlights the importance and meaning of different skill areas for adults' lives. According to the project,

"Life skills are a constituent part of capabilities for life and work in a particular social, cultural and environmental context. The types of life skills emerge as a response to the needs of the individual in real-life situations. The concept of life skills exceeds the basic skills concept since it promotes more than just a basis for survival. The concept also acknowledges that life skills can change over time, and they depend on the individual's context."

The Life Skills Framework developed in the project consists of eight capabilities. They represent the knowledge and skills that adults need to live and work in contemporary

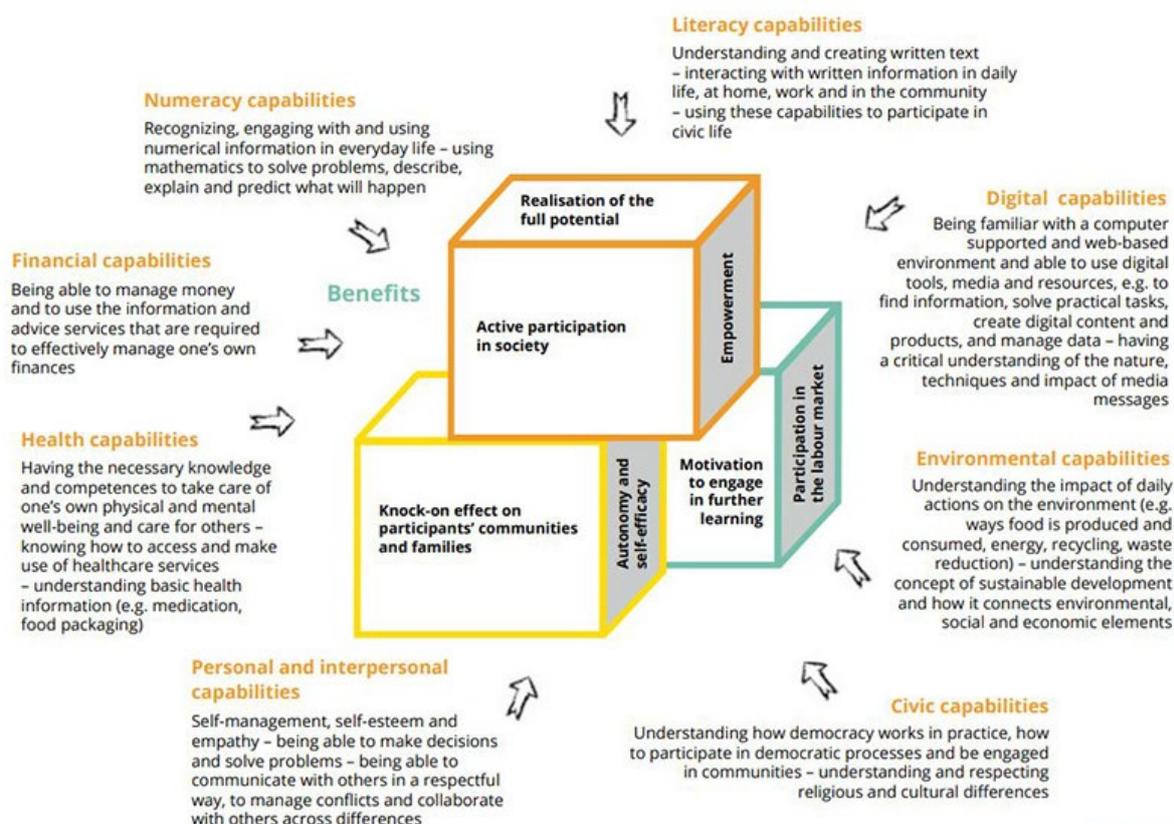




societies. They are combinations of capabilities that in general enable adults to become lifelong learners, solve problems, manage their lives and participate in the community. This means, for example, taking care of their physical and mental health, actively contributing to their well-being, mastering financial matters and coping with the digital environment.

The following illustration presents the eight types of capabilities that are incorporated in the definition of the life skills framework.

- literacy capabilities
- digital capabilities
- environmental capabilities
- civic capabilities
- personal and interpersonal capabilities
- health capabilities
- financial capabilities
- numeracy capabilities



Picture from Life Skills for Europe -project <https://eaea.org/project/life-skills-for-europe-lse/>



Life Skills Framework



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1.4.1. Literacy capabilities (includes foreign languages)

‘Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.’ (UNESCO 2004). Literacy in the frame of LSE is seen as a means of emancipation, enabling people to control their lives, challenge injustice and become autonomous and critical, participating citizens in a democracy. It is also a set of functional skills that help people meet the demands that society puts on them, especially in terms of employment. Modern literacy describes a competence in a mode of behaviour for understanding printed information in daily use at home, at work and in the community, using it to reach self-set goals and to enhance one’s knowledge and the ability to act.

1.4.2. Digital capabilities (includes media literacy)

Digital capabilities involve accessing, managing, evaluating, integrating, creating and communicating information individually or collaboratively in a networked, computer-supported, and web-based environment for learning, working or leisure.^{3,4} Media literacy⁵ as part of ICT capabilities refers to a critical understanding of the nature, techniques and impact of media messages, thus media literacy encompasses not just critical thinking, but also communication and information management skills that reflect the realities of living in a digital world.

1.4.3. Numeracy capabilities

Being able to recognise, engage with and use numerical information in everyday life. This involves a combination of practical skills, experience in identifying, using and working with numbers and a readiness to engage with math. Numeracy means applying mathematics in different situations. Being numerate means being able to reason and use mathematical concepts, procedures, facts and tools to solve problems and to describe, explain and predict what will happen.

1.4.4. Financial capabilities

‘Financial capability is the internal capacity to act in one’s best financial interest, given the socioeconomic environmental conditions. It, therefore, encompasses the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours of consumers about managing their resources and understanding, selecting and making use of financial services that fit their needs.’ (World Bank)² In the frame of the LSE, financial capabilities are a combination of skills, knowledge and understanding, concerning both managing money and the use of information and advice services that are required to effectively manage one’s finances.

1.4.5. Civic and democratic capabilities

The civic and democratic capabilities involve knowledge, understanding and critical reasoning on how democracy works in practice, participation in democratic processes, engagement and contribution to communities. It also involves intercultural competences such as understanding and respect for religious and cultural differences.





1.4.6. Personal and interpersonal capabilities

Personal and interpersonal capabilities involve decision-making, problem-solving and self-management including abilities such as empathy, trust, self-esteem and critical judgement. It also involves being able to participate in social activities, take on responsibility, manage conflicts, respectfully communicate with others and collaborate with others across differences.

1.4.7. Health capabilities

Health capabilities are the knowledge and competences necessary for an individual to take care of their own physical and mental well-being, as well as to care for the people around them. This includes being critical and understanding what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, how daily choices affect health, and the ability to make and maintain lifestyle choices that have a positive health impact. Health capabilities also include understanding basic health information (e.g. medication, food packaging) and knowing how to access and make use of healthcare services in the individual's living environment.

1.4.8. Sustainability awareness / Environmental capabilities

Include an understanding of the impact our everyday actions have on the environment and the adoption of behaviour with a positive environmental impact, in areas such as food production/consumption, energy, recycling and waste reduction, as well as understanding the connections between the environmental, social and economic components of sustainable development. Sustainability awareness as part of these capabilities calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and the planet through the harmonised connection of three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

1.4.9. Life Skills are indispensable when thinking of inclusion, sustainability, social justice and democracy

The benefits of well-developed life skills are important for both the individual and society. According to LSE project, the main advantages of well-developed life skills are:

- improved autonomy and self-efficacy of the individual
- realisation of the full potential of the individual
- equipping the individual with essential capabilities to face challenges
- improving social inclusion and gaining civic competences for active participation in society
- empowerment
- the knock-on effect on participants' communities and families
- motivation to engage in further learning
- increased participation in the labour market

The Life Skills Framework is in line with UNESCO's recommendations on adult education. In UNESCO's new report "Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education





(2021), the ultimate goal of education is to make a change and enable a just transformation of societies. In the report, it is stated that:

“The new social contract for education must help us unite around collective endeavours and provide the knowledge and innovation needed to shape sustainable and peaceful futures for all anchored in social, economic, and environmental justice. It must redress past injustices while preparing us for environmental, technological, and social changes on the horizon.” (UNESCO 2021)

Following this rationale behind all learning, basic skills or life skills should be understood as the skills that form the necessary basis that enables people to participate in the common task of building sustainable and peaceful futures.

1.5. Example of using the Life Skills approach: Life Skills for All -model

Traditional basic skills training often focuses on narrow aims defined as particular competencies and tasks, instead of paying attention to the humane needs of the whole person. Thus, adults do not always experience such training as engaging.

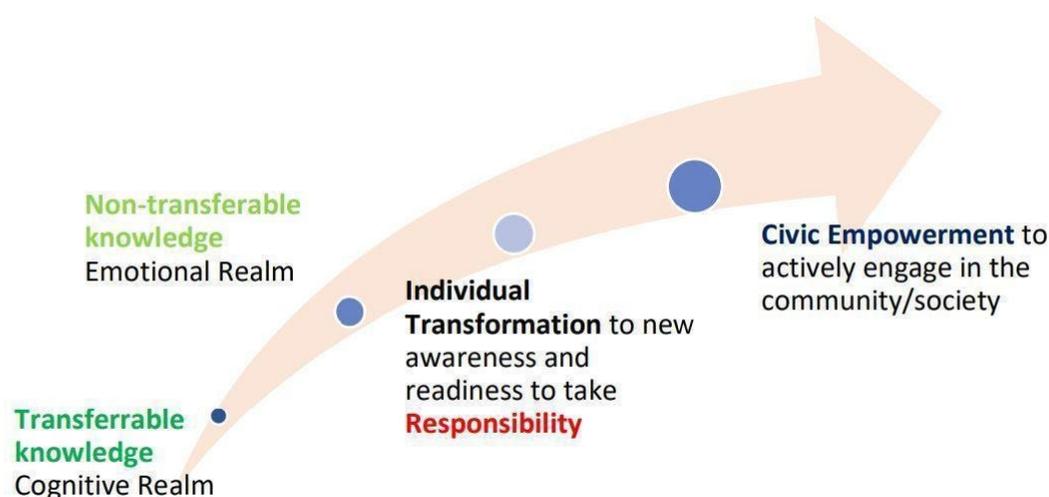
In Finland, these problems were tackled in a project by the Siviis Study Centre (one of the twelve study centres in Finland) and the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation. The European Social Fund supported the project and developed the Life Skills for All model in 2018–2020. The model is based on the Citizens’ Curriculum model developed by the Learning & Work Institute in the United Kingdom (Schuller & Watson 2009). Besides, the model followed the guidelines outlined in the Life Skills for Europe project (Javrh & Mozina 2018). Also, the model applied Paulo Freire’s pedagogical ideas in basic skills education (Suoranta, Hjelt, Tomperi & Grant 2022).

The Finnish model was tailored to work for adult learners in the Finnish societal context. The Life Skills for All model expanded basic skills thinking to include life skills, emphasising peoples’ ability to solve their everyday life problems. Peer learning among the participants was crucial to enhance everyone’s involvement in the project. In addition to the learners’ peer group, the local community played a key role. Communal authorities and associations took part in the planning and implementation of training courses. Most importantly the teaching was based on learners’ real needs and not posed on learners from the top down.





2. Life skills through the Bildung lense



The four pillars of Bildung from publication "Digitalisation and Bildung" (2022)

2.1. Bildung Concept

What is the connection between life skills and Bildung? We have chosen to use the holistic Life Skills Framework as a basis of our analysis, combining it with the Bildung -concept summarised in the What is Bildung? publication by Lene Rachel Andersen.

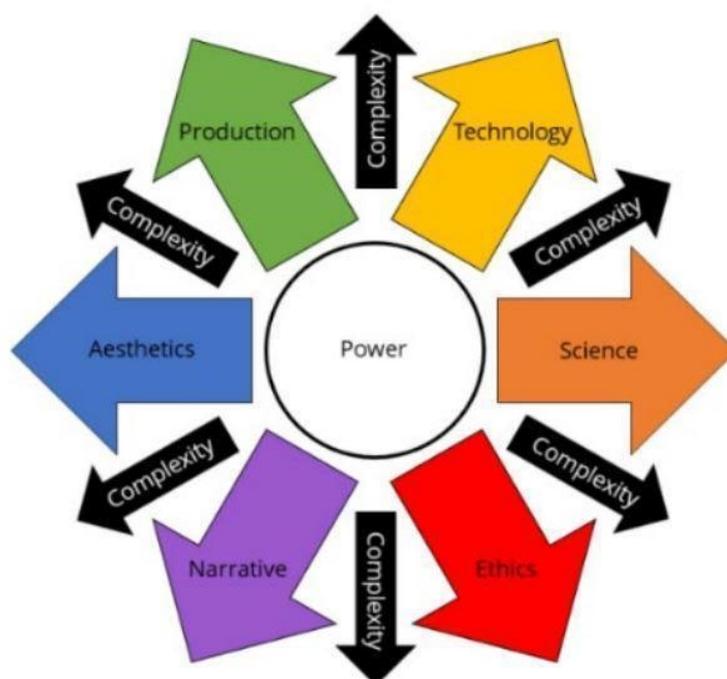
As stated previously, life skills include literacy capabilities, digital capabilities, environmental capabilities, civic capabilities, personal and interpersonal capabilities, health capabilities, financial capabilities, and numeracy capabilities.

The concept of Bildung is based on four pillars: transferable knowledge, non-transferable knowledge, expansion of the sense of responsibility and civic empowerment.

2.2. Transferable knowledge and life skills

In the Bildung concept, transferable knowledge represents the realm of knowledge. Transferable knowledge regards the ability to understand the world in which one lives and the knowledge we can teach each other to acquire this understanding. Among transferable knowledge is science, maths, crafts, language, stories, reading a map, how to fix a bicycle, the traffic rules, how to book a train ticket, etc. Transferable knowledge can be learned from books, for example.

Transferable knowledge is linked to the *Bildung Rose*, which illustrates how society is made up of seven domains: production, technology, aesthetics, (political) power, science, narrative, and ethics. All individuals should understand these seven domains to some extent to participate, thrive in and contribute to society. The complexity of the domains is constantly increasing which requires us to expand our understanding.



Bildung rose. Presented in What is Bildung? by Lene Rachel Andersen (2021)

In the life skills model, knowing is also important. For example, when taking care of one's health and well-being as well as reaching out for one's goals in life we need to have adequate knowledge. For example, which exercises options I have, what should my employment contract cover, what kind of food is healthy and so on.

The Bildung Rose can serve as a model to evaluate the topics or content that should be covered in education. However, the understanding of society as presented by the Bildung Rose or any similar model covers only a part of the concept of life skills. Functioning in society demands not only knowing things but also asking for several capacities, attitudes and civic engagement.

2.3. Non-transferable knowledge and life-skills

In the Bildung concept, non-transferable knowledge regards individuals' emotional and moral development. According to Andersen's theory on Bildung, this is the kind of knowledge that comes from life itself. It's personal growth through experience and social interaction with other people.

In the life skills model, non-transferable knowledge has a close link to interpersonal capabilities, which include building empathy, trust and self-esteem. These capabilities are growing in various life situations, and they can't easily be learned by attending classes on self-esteem, for example.

Knowledge does not automatically turn into motivation and action. For them to arise we need to touch on emotions. Adult learning and education should provide opportunities for people





to develop their emotional and moral depth. As mentioned before, social and emotional skills have even been added in the second cycle of the PIAAC assessment.

For emotional and moral development to happen, a learner-centred approach is necessary: learning should be made a personal process. To enable it, adult learning and education need to engage learners in all stages of learning: choosing a topic with a close connection to their lives, and creating personal learning objectives and means to achieve them.

For example, problem-based learning or project learning can deepen the influence of learning and move it to a motivational and practical level. There are many ways to facilitate the learning of non-transferable knowledge. For instance, peer learning can bring emotional elements and empathy into learning. Feedback as well as the concrete reward of reaching a practical learning goal are aspects which take learning further from learning facts about a topic.

2.4. Expansion of the sense of responsibility and life skills

In the Bildung concept, the successful application of transferable and non-transferable knowledge leads to the third pillar, namely the recognition of societal challenges and the expansion of one's responsibility. It regards the social groups we identify with and what we are capable of taking responsibility for.

In the life skills concept, for example, environmental capabilities have a close link to the third pillar of the Bildung concept. Having environmental capabilities includes an understanding of the environmental challenges our society has, the impact our everyday actions have on the environment as well as the adoption of more sustainable ways of consumption. This aspect of the Bildung concept is thoroughly examined in the fourth publication of the project, Sustainability and Bildung (EAEA 2023).

Also, basic skills training should aim towards the third aspect of the Bildung concept: the recognition of certain societal challenges as well as completing the transformation towards the willingness to take responsibility. This can be reached by making sure the content and goals of learning are relevant to the learners' life and everyday needs. By taking this into consideration learners are encouraged to understand the challenges and relationships in society that affect their lives.

2.5. Civic empowerment and life skills

To achieve the transformational aim of Bildung, the comprehension of societal challenges and the readiness to take responsibility leads to the fourth pillar, namely civic empowerment. This means that the learner feels equipped and motivated to engage as a citizen, with the overall aim of contributing to the improvement of society.

In the life skills model, both civic and environmental capabilities have a close link to the fourth pillar of the Bildung concept. For a person to have civic capabilities, they should have a critical





understanding of how democracy works in practice, as well as a willingness to contribute to the development of their communities and societies.

If we look at the Freirean concept of literacy as reading the word and the world, we find that it is not adequate to mechanically understand what is said. Literacy is rather the ability to understand, evaluate and use written material. Literacy means the ability to think critically and act to make a change.

This is the final aspect we consider in selecting the best practices combining Bildung and life skills concepts: Learning should aim towards societal change. Equipping learners with the knowledge and motivation to engage as citizens, with the overall aim of contributing to the improvement of social conditions should be the targeted outcome.

3. Best practices

In selecting the best practices for this paper, we have taken into account the four pillars of Bildung:

- Transferable knowledge,
- Non-transferable knowledge,
- Expansion of the sense of responsibility, and
- Civic empowerment

Combining a holistic understanding of life skills with the idea of Bildung, we have formed the following criteria for selecting best practices for learning basic skills. Not all of them are necessarily included in the same example. Nevertheless, a holistic approach is essential and at least one of the other aspects should be included:

The best practice example has a holistic approach. The example widens the understanding of basic skills in the direction of life skills.

The best practice example has a learner-centred approach. The learning needs of participants are the starting point rather than a predefined curriculum.

The best practice example has a dialogical methodology. Learning is not “top-down”, but everyone’s knowledge is acknowledged. Peer learning is facilitated. The teacher is learning as well.

The best practice example has an inclusive approach. Everyone can participate and learners from different generations and/or backgrounds are involved.

The best practice example has a participatory/civic empowerment approach. By this, we mean that learners are guided on how to advocate for change and create an impact. Self-efficacy and autonomy are strengthened.

3.1. Café Fair, Denmark





Example Summary

CaféFair (<https://www.kaffefair.dk/om>) helps young people further in jobs and education by gaining experience in daily kitchen work. Since the beginning of its operations in 2006, CaféFair has been a friendly “hand in the back to people who deserve a fair chance”. CaféFair’s mission:

“Our goal is for all students and staff to experience that they are part of a community where everyone contributes to the smooth functioning of everyday life and acquires skills for use in future employment.”

CaféFair is owned and run by Fokus Folkeoplysning (Focus Bildung) and it offers training for people who have experienced difficulties related to employment and education. CaféFair offers a holistic approach where the focus is on the special needs of the individual combined with a strong focus on the community.

Target groups of CaféFair are people in need of basic skills education, people who need to prepare for vocational training, people with low literacy skills and people with mental illnesses. On average the training lasts for 1 year and 30 percent of the participants continue in ordinary education.

A flexible composition of approaches and differentiated teaching characterises the training process. Practical work in the kitchen is combined with adult education or dyslexia training and training in Danish and Mathematics leading to formal qualifications. At the same time, CaféFair helps the participants perceive the labour market as more inclusive.

CaféFair has three types of learning opportunities:

- Special offer is an individually planned course for young people between the ages of 18 and 30 with mental vulnerability, including issues related to anxiety, self-harming behaviour, eating disorders, compulsions, and autism. It focuses on clarification and personal development concerning further education or a job.
- STU combines practical training at CaféFair or Aalborg Zoo with studying general subjects like maths or Danish or IT skills. STU is for young people aged 16-25 with professional, personal and/or social challenges who do not have the opportunity to complete an ordinary education. For example, young people with cognitive and/or social disabilities.
- CaféFair protected employment is for persons below state pension age who, due to significantly reduced physical or mental capacity or special social problems, cannot obtain or maintain employment under normal conditions on the labour market.

Link to the Bildung concept

The motto of CaféFair is “*We believe everyone can flourish when given responsibility*”. In the case of CaféFair, young people and adults have a chance to develop their skills and contribute to the operations of the café or in a zoo in a real-life educational setting. This in turn will help them to realise their skills, find a new direction and take more responsibility for their lives.

CaféFair has a holistic and learner-centred approach to learning, as it takes into account the individual situations and needs of the learners. In this way, CaféFair is also a good example of applying the life skills approach, because learning happens in a real-life environment and





several skills are developed at the same time, including personal and interpersonal capabilities. Peer learning and dialogue with other learners, mentors and clients is a central part of the learning process.

CaféFair is also an example of social responsibility and contributing to the community, thus it's fostering the third pillar of Bildung, "expanding one's responsibility. The learners at CaféFair start by learning to take responsibility for themselves, and at the same time, they have a chance to expand their circles of belonging by connecting with their co-workers, mentors, clients and the larger community. Training at CaféFair fosters curiosity and motivation to expand one's circles of belonging.

CaféFair also shows responsibility towards the environment. It has the bronze label in ecology which means they carefully select local suppliers who share their values of taking good care of our planet, animals and resources. Working at the Aalborg Zoo in one of CaféFair's programmes even teaches concrete skills in how to take care of animals. Working with animals is a good example of learning which fosters moral and emotional development, as described in non-transferrable knowledge in the Bildung concept.



CafeFair, Denmark

Cross-border transferability

CaféFair has great potential for cross-border transferability, and we believe many countries already have similar examples of providing inclusive, real-life learning environments for young people and adults. As with any project, it must be adapted to the specific circumstances of the country and the needs of the participating organisations as well as the learners.





3.2. How to decide wisely, Estonia

Example Summary

How to decide wisely is a study circle in which participants learn how to participate in society and interact with different institutions and social organisations.

People often do not understand the functioning of society, do not know the roles of the state and local authorities or under what preconditions democracy and the rule of law work and why the separation of powers is necessary. They do not know what civil society is, including their role as citizens in society.

This study circle aims to raise citizens' awareness of the following topics:

- If I do not like something and would like to have a say - I should turn to the President, the Parliament, or the local government.
- How to have a say in societal decisions
- How to participate wisely in decision-making
- How not to go along with demagoguery
- How to reach a decision
- What was promised, and why it is wrong
- How I decide as an individual
- How I relate to society

These are also essential questions in the communication skills context. The study circle discusses cases based on real-life examples of recent years. The problem/dilemma study takes the topic closer to the participants.

Study circles combine different approaches: Acquisition of knowledge, discussions with the study circle leader and other participants, self-expression practice, and active listening (shortly communication skills) – which are all essential to both Bildung and active citizenship.

As a result of the learning activity, the participants understand the functioning of civil society, know their rights and responsibilities as citizens and the duties of state and local government institutions, and know the possibilities of influencing decisions and forming views in elections.

How to decide wisely aims to raise awareness and empower its participants by offering an inclusive and equal space where everyone has the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge. The study circle is open to all and focuses on enhancing the understanding of civil society, individual rights and responsibilities as citizens, and the responsibilities of state and local government institutions. Through these discussions, participants can take thoughtful positions in elections, realise their rights and responsibilities, and participate in civil society in a meaningful way. The ultimate goal of the study circle is to equip individuals with the knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed decisions and play an active role in democratic processes.



How to decide wisely, Estonia

[Link to the Bildung concept](#)

The study circle is linked to the Bildung concept because it refers to the potential of personal development, and expanding one's responsibility towards taking civic action, which are crucial parts of the Bildung concept.

It also places a strong emphasis on self-directed, ongoing learning and personal development. Members of the study circle actively seek out new knowledge and skills, and they are motivated to learn and grow as individuals.

“How to decide wisely” is characterised by a supportive and collaborative learning environment, so peer learning brings an emotional aspect to learning. Members work together to share knowledge, ideas, and resources to engage in meaningful discussions and debates.

The study circle fosters both intellectual and personal growth. Its members are encouraged to challenge their assumptions and beliefs and to think critically and creatively about the world surrounding them.

[Cross-border transferability](#)

The ideas and practices presented in the study circle can be easily shared across other countries and applied to other contexts.

European citizens face a range of global problems. These problems include climate change, economic inequality, political instability, and social injustice among others. Global problems often have local implications; thus, it is important to consider how individuals can contribute to positive change in their communities and countries.





“How to decide wisely” study circle advocates for policy change and social justice, which is one of these global issues, and they may be applied in different communities and countries.



How to decide wisely study circle, Estonia





3.3. La Troca, Spain

Example Summary

La Troca ('The Barter', in English) is a meeting and learning space open to all young people and adults in the multicultural neighbourhood of Sants, Barcelona. It is a project born from the roots (bottom-up) that understand adult learning and education as a basic and indisputable right of all citizens and as a tool for empowerment and social transformation.

La Troca is a community learning centre funded with public money that fosters community management. At its very beginning, residents of the area were involved in the creation of this centre through a participatory process. Since then, assemblies are regularly organised to gather data from the learning needs and wishes of the community.

Currently, La Troca is made up of all those who are engaged in some way in the project: those who are participating in the courses and workshops, collaborating as volunteers or working professionally, turning the project into a multi-coloured mosaic of languages and cultures, which already counts with almost 2000 people and keeps growing.

In an area with no public adult learning and education centre and low offer of basic skills training, this community centre responds to these shortcomings with a wide and varied offer and a new management model that gives sovereignty to the community, offering training in basic skills for adult life that allow participants to become autonomous, critical and involved people in the environment in which they live.

La Troca addresses the training provided to the whole community, paying special attention to those groups that find themselves in a situation of inequality due to various circumstances. Classrooms become meeting spaces for diverse people, practising co-education in a broad sense (of gender, age, origin, social class, and academic level...) and promoting knowledge and the creation of social ties between neighbours.

Networking is a distinctive feature of this project, which is part of a diverse and rich network of socio-educational resources and services from the neighbourhood and the rest of the city, becoming a door to the services and resources of the territory. This enables La Troca to also act as a bridge between their participants and other associative spaces from the area.

Throughout La Troca's career, they have also noticed that all adults, without exception, have the knowledge to share. For this reason, they have created the Knowledge Exchange Network, a network where the residents of the neighbourhood can share their knowledge with people interested in learning it. Thanks to this program they can expand and diversify their basic and transversal training offer, from ITC or literacy courses to sewing, dancing or swimming training courses.

Ultimately, La Troca is a meeting and learning space for young adults that promotes a more sovereign and autonomous citizenry, with the ability to decide what and how they want to learn and with more tools to participate in society.





"La Troca is everyone"

[Link to the Bildung concept](#)

La Troca is aimed at the entire young and adult neighbourhood that values the ability to exchange and share the knowledge acquired. It eases the practice of inclusive education and coeducation, with a comprehensive education that takes into account the multiple dimensions of people from a global and non-fragmentary approach, delivering both formal and informal training courses and valuing the learners as multidimensional individuals. This is directly linked to the first two elements of Bildung. In La Troca, participants can learn both transferable and non-transferable knowledge, leading to not only broadening their horizons but also deepening their self-consciousness.

La Troca follows an inclusive approach as it is made up of people of all ages, with and without academic backgrounds, with heterogeneous work experiences, origins and diverse migration trajectories. In this context, participants can expand their belonging circles, as they can meet and get to know trainers, learners, and volunteers, and learn together and from each other.

The project also offers contextualised and participative methodologies and is connected to the trajectories and experiences of the participants, facilitating meaningful learning and fostering a more thorough awareness of oneself and others. The methodologies and activities that are proposed place people and their learning process at the centre and promote empowerment and autonomy to develop skills, promoting learning to learn and critical sense, while participants expand their sense of responsibility toward their belonging circles.





Learners are engaged in the learning process through a dialogical methodology. The training offer is defined based on the permanent detection of unmet training needs in the territory and the needs expressed by the participants. As an example of that, several assemblies are organised during the year to offer a space for the participants to express their wills and real needs, and training courses are organised based on the information gathered during these processes.

Collaborators and recipients have an active role, not only when acquiring new knowledge or through their collaboration, but also participating and collaborating in the organisation of activities, the operation and monitoring of the school through the different participation spaces within La Troca. With this participatory and civic empowerment approach, which is the fourth pillar of Bildung, participants learn how to communicate their opinions, respect others' points of view and build up a consensus within the community.

Cross-border transferability

La Troca is a public training space since they are financed with public money, that has achieved the goal of actively engaging its participants through community management. Its horizontal structure makes it possible for participants to be a basic axis of its operation, offering a participative, democratic and open model that guarantees that the project responds to the real needs of the neighbourhood, generates social cohesion and works to improve living conditions and social transformation.

This system also assures the optimization of resources and may be appealing to those entities seeking sustainable structures. While the training offered meets the real needs of the participants, they also make use of the resources that can be found in their environment, generating a network within the territory and fostering a lifelong learning culture in the community.

We can see that the vision of how training courses are implemented can be transferred to other countries since it follows a holistic approach connected to every own environment. In this sense, the training offer can flexibly be adapted and revised according to the needs of the inhabitants of a territory, whether they live in an urban or rural area.

3.4. VHS-Lernportal, Moldova

A training course for the development of skills for the reintegration of detainees, [NGO Inițiativa Pozitivă](#), Moldova

Example Summary

VHS Lernportal includes a course targeted at prisoners and focusing on the development of the primary skills necessary for a reintegration process.

The course covers three types of skills as follows:

- Basic digital skills (computer use at basic user level, information search skills, gadget using skills);
- Basic social skills (relationships in a work environment, assertive communication, forming positive social relationships);





- Small group relationship skills (parenting, couple relationship, conflict management).

The implemented course results from the experience of more than 15 years of working with persons deprived of their liberty. Besides, one of the trainers delivering the course is an ex-convict and has benefited from the programme in the past.

It is a unique course for the Republic of Moldova and focuses on a particularly vulnerable group with limited access to quality educational programmes. It is oriented to the real needs of the beneficiaries, and it focuses on the limits of a penitentiary place on a person's life.

Beneficiaries of the course can acquire solutions to the problems they will face after release, namely these skills are primarily needed and are conducted by peer counsellors who have an experience of deprivation of liberty, and drug use, and are therefore highly credible and by specialists from outside the penitentiary, a fact that does not cause internal conflicts among the inmates.

[Link to the Bildung concept](#)

Offering learning opportunities in prison not only offers a second chance for prisoners to gain valuable skills but also to develop the capabilities needed to better manage their lives following release.

The provision of education and training in prisons should be contextualised at a local level and personalised. However, formal education and its importance in prisons should encompass a well-rounded formation across all areas: social, personal, and educational... and provide individuals with learning 'journeys' that can be continued after release, so that prisoners can engage in learning that meets their needs and aspirations and has a positive impact on their lives.

Education and training are interventions that combine to form a holistic approach to rehabilitation and collaboration between partners and others.

Part of a holistic concept of rehabilitation while education and training are important stepping stones in a prisoner's journey to rehabilitation and reintegration into society, it is important to prepare for this transition through pre-release education and training.

The skills development could also be seen as a tool to empower individuals and improve their social inclusion or recognition. These skills will help them to earn a living on release and to integrate effectively into their families and communities. Offering learning opportunities in prison not only offers a second chance for prisoners to gain valuable skills but also to develop the capabilities needed to better manage their lives following release.

The provision of education and training in prisons should be contextualised at a local level and personalised. However, formal education and training provided in prison should be an integral part of mainstream education and provide individuals with learning 'journeys' that can be continued after release, so that prisoners can engage in learning that meets their needs and aspirations and has a positive impact on their lives.

Education and training are interventions that combine to form a holistic approach to rehabilitation and collaboration between partners and others. While education and training are important stepping stones in a prisoner's journey to rehabilitation and reintegration into





society, it is important to prepare for this transition through pre-release education and training.

The skills development could also be seen as a tool to empower individuals and improve their social inclusion or recognition and will help them to earn a living on release and to integrate effectively into their families and communities.

Therefore, the course is adapted to the needs of the group and takes into account the intellectual level of the person and other essential aspects such as the recidivism rate, previous experience, etc. The example has a holistic and inclusive approach and the methodology of delivering the course is dialogical and interactive, centred on the learner.

Cross-border transferability

People in prison are one of the most marginal and excluded groups in society. In addition, a considerable proportion of the prison population has low levels of educational achievement, with many prisoners having poor basic literacy and numeracy skills. Also, the delivery of learning opportunities in the prison environment is an important part of the rehabilitation process and can help people to make good use of their time in prison, as well as offering a 'second opportunity' to develop skills and competences that can help them to find employment, access education or training opportunities, or just to better manage or get on with their lives on release.

The physical environment in which learning opportunities are provided also has a role to play in influencing motivation and the sense of 'normalisation' that education and training in prisons can offer.

The diversity of the prison population is also something that needs to be taken into consideration in the design and delivery of learning opportunities, which need to be flexible so that they can be adapted to meet the requirements of the prison and the prisoners. It is about working with and as close as possible to the person.





4. Recommendations

4.1. Macro level (policy makers, decision takers... locally, regionally or nationally)

Recommendations at the macro-level aim at widening the concept of learning and what is considered necessary skills in contemporary society.

- Value lifelong learning and non-formal learning: In a rapidly changing society, we need flexible models and new spaces for learning. This should also be considered in the funding instruments.
- Adult education helps people to adjust to new realities. It should be recognised that we need learning for life, not only learning to gain employment. Broader-purposed, holistic learning is needed now more than ever.
- Leave no one behind - this should be a guiding principle in all societal development and specifically in adult learning and education
- Involve civil society representatives and organisations in planning education and learning policies. They can voice the needs of adult education providers and learners.
- Provide spaces for basic skills learning. Invest more in basic skills training. Recognise the needs of different target groups.

4.2. Meso level (ALE organisations, learning centre...)

Recommendations at meso level aim at providing flexible learning environments, involving learner communities in the planning of the learning offer and finding new ways to do outreach work.

- Provide spaces where the learning community can share their views and participate in decisions concerning the organization of learning. Organise participatory practices through which learners can express their interests, needs and curiosity.
- Ensure that people can learn in a less formal environment and provide learning opportunities connected to real-life contexts and situations. Teaching can still be goal-oriented.
- Support and guide learning opportunities for adults.
- If we want to increase participation in learning, we need to be more flexible and creative in the learning provision. For example, learning environments connected to real-life situations can increase commitment and facilitate learners' emotional connection to the topic.
- Invest in outreach work: People with many learning needs are often not seeking learning opportunities. Although deficiencies in basic skills or life skills hinder the chances to learn and develop one's potential and participate in society, people do not always perceive the link between the challenges they face in their everyday life and the lack of skills.





- Network with other organisations to get information on potential learning needs. Co-designing courses help to develop learning opportunities that meet the real needs of learner groups. Also, cooperation can create pathways to further learning.

4.3. Micro level (trainers, training the trainer courses...)

Recommendations at the micro level aim at adopting a learner-centred approach and methods in learning, as well as empowering the learners in their learning path towards widening their circles of belonging, as stated in the Bildung approach.

- Aim at empowering the learners to personal growth and an increased sense of responsibility for the environment.
- Use methods that engage learners and facilitate cross-curricular learning, such as problem-based learning, peer learning, and case studies.
- Adopt a learner-centred approach. Be open to the learners' interests and life situations and show flexibility to adapt the learning program to their needs
- Create a safe environment where everybody is a valued member of the group and a knowledgeable participant in mutual learning. Spark emotional connections to others by facilitating cooperation and sharing.
- Foster dialogue.
- Consider appealing to all the community, regardless of social status or educational background. We all learn from each other so try to gather people from different backgrounds in the learning process.





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