



# TransformMe

## TRANSFORM ME: DEVELOPING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ADULTS AS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNERS

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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

## OBJECTIVES

By implementing this project, we aim to provide adult learners in adult educational institutions and organizations, adult educators, adult educational institution administrators and adult NGO, SME staff and managers, adult institution volunteers to understand the importance of transformational learning, to develop their capacity to cooperate with other adult educational institutions in Europe, and to improve the social participation of adults in society.

## ACTIVITIES

- Getting knowledge about the adult learning theories, models and practices.
- Presenting the current situation in participating countries.
- Creating the framework of transformational learning practices.
- Organizing experience centered sessions for adult learners, educators and administrators.
- Sharing good practices , cooperation on socially inclusive and community issues.
- Raising the educational capacities of adult learning organisations.

## RESULTS

- Enable adult educational institution educators and administrative staff to learn transformational learning strategies.
- Enable adult learners to understand transformational learning.
- Increase the participation of adult learners in social life.
- Increase opportunities for European cooperation in adult educational institutions.
- Better integration of adults into life as transformational learners contributes to their social development and enables them to
- Create a harmonious environment.

# PARTNERS

## TURKEY

**GUZELBAHCE HALK EGITIMI MERKEZI MUDURLUGU**  
[www.guzelbahcehem.meb.k12.tr](http://www.guzelbahcehem.meb.k12.tr)

Guzelbahce Halk Eğitim Merkezi is a public education center that has been officially established in Guzelbahce Central Town of Izmir/Turkiye . It has been founded to meet the educational needs of young people and adults. Its main activities are:

1. Vocational-technical courses: To give students work habits, to make them from passive producer to active producer, to be able to work in a workplace, to provide them with the knowledge and skills to start their own business; on the other hand, it is organized for the purpose of developing employees in a profession or those who want to acquire a profession, preparing them for innovations, and training them as the employees needed by the labor market.

2. Social-cultural courses and practices: Courses are organized to raise the cultural level of the society and to support the social and cultural development of individuals. To develop talents in the field of culture and art, to develop the exchange of culture and art at the local, regional and national level, to promote cultural values.

## SLOVAKIA

**Topcoach**  
[www.topcoach.sk](http://www.topcoach.sk)

Topcoach is a SME in the field of adult education. We focus on trainings, workshops and keynotes for individuals (B2C segment) as well as companies (B2B segment). We have rich experiences in the design of trainings and workshops, to educate adults and youth, as well as executing them. We have also created our own product - academy for future leaders - NewLeaders Academy and a keynote concept that introduces soft-skills topics - leTalks. We participated in a collaboration with a university to execute our leadership project for MBA students. And our latest collaboration also includes a partnership with the Tomas Bata Foundation from Czech Republic to introduce the Bata philosophy and seminars to the Slovak audience.

We also have experience in Erasmus Plus projects, both as a partner (28 projects) as well as the leading partner (2 projects).

## PARTNERS

### SLOVENIA

VEDOMA  
[www.vedoma.si](http://www.vedoma.si)

VEDOMA is a privately-owned, non-profit organization that focuses on non-formal education in the fields of entrepreneurship, employment, environment, national and cultural heritage. The organization arranges events, workshops, and meetings that cater to the specific requirements of target groups, including young individuals, women, entrepreneurs, and the unemployed, covering basic areas of activity as well as lifelong learning. VEDOMA actively participates in the development of plans for growth and development for local communities, companies, farms, associations, and other organizations. The organization possesses extensive experience in various European and national projects that cover a range of areas, including sports and health, social management business competencies, European literacy, and citizenship education, teacher training, improving teacher resilience to stress, business growth and investment, innovation, start-up development, social activities, farming and supplementary activities on farms, rural area development, and green tourism.

### ITALY

EduVita  
[www.eduvita.it](http://www.eduvita.it)

EduVita is an educational, cultural and intergenerational centre in the heart of Lecce, Southern Italy, founded in 2019.

EduVita is a place of connection between past, present and future: it creates learning opportunities to improve the quality of life of elderly and young people through intergenerational dialogue. They are active both locally and internationally, participating in Erasmus+ research and mobility programmes in the field of Adult Education.

EduVita focuses on pedagogical research, innovating teaching and learning processes, designing learning settings and developing new methodologies based on Adult Education and Intergenerational learning approaches.

# THE EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AT ADULT AGE

For a long time, adult age has been defined as the achievement age; the adult usually had a well defined identity, the necessary tools to face daily life; the adult was in possession of knowledge. For such reasons, education has been initially conceived to be connected to the first phases of life or purely limited to professional updating.

Throughout the years, society's needs have evolved into a more capable subject who must be able to face the complexity of real life. This is why the adults have perceived the need to re-orientate their choices, gain new skills and new instruments to reinvent their own existence. Lifelong learning then became a resource for success and personal development, employability, social inclusion, a sustainable life-style, a fruitful life in a peaceful society, a management of life with regards to health and the support to an active citizenship.

Also territorial policies have been active and have started raising people's awareness about lifelong learning which, in 2006, was configured as a key competence needed to respond to the always-changing society's requests.

Humanist psychologies sustain that human beings' aim is self-achievement and their own potential development and, for these exact aims, adult learning facilitates and supports the subject's self-achievement.

Adult education aims to value experience, people's interiority, the deeper meaning that experiences represent to each one of them. Learning means:

- having the chance to catch opportunities of enrichment and personal growth
- having the instruments to achieve one's goals and to choose for one's own well-being
- understanding diverse opportunities and choosing the ones that best correspond to our individual needs.

# ADULT LEARNING THEORIES

Several pedagogical theories sustain **the importance of adult learning**. Among the experts who significantly contributed to define Adults Education, we spot:

## KNOWLES

has defined his andragogical perspective; an area of knowledge which studies how adult age is involved in educational processes, and gives operative promptings to adequately sustain and facilitate the processes of adult teaching and learning.

Knowles identifies six assumptions on which to base adult learning:

1. **Self-concept.** Adult learners have a self-concept. This means that they are autonomous, independent, and self-directed.
2. **Learning from Experience.** Experience as a rich resource of learning. Adults learn from their previous experiences. Thus, it is a good repository for learning.
3. **Readiness to Learn.** Adults tend to gravitate towards learning matters that matter to them. Their readiness to learn things is highly correlated with their relative uses.
4. **Immediate Applications.** The orientation of adult learning is for immediate applications rather than future uses. The learning orientation of adults tends to slant towards being task-oriented, life-focused, and problem-centric.
5. **Internally Motivated.** Adults are more motivated by internal personal factors rather than external coaxes and pressures.
6. **Need to Know.** Adult learners have the need to know the value of what they are learning and know the why's behind the need to learn them.

### PAULO FREIRE

defined education as correlated to the individual and collective subject's action, namely, to the historical subject who transforms themselves and the social context by removing the causes that have generated the need for education. According to Freire, whoever is in the process of education, especially adult, aims to understand the way social structures have influenced their way of thinking and of developing a self-identification process which allows them to recognise their own strength and world. Hence, a necessary step regards the "conscientisation": the process of individual awareness which allows us to reflect and act according to our own limits and resources. A person aware of what can or cannot do; a society that respects his/her dignity and freedom.

### MEZIROW

developed the "transformational learning theory" and sustained that every human being works inside a system of meanings, of a complex and dynamic structure of believing, psycho-cultural theories and biases which interpret and mediate the individual experience, and distort their perception of reality. In order to go over those biases and start the education process, there must be a critical reflection so that the meaning that has been previously in-taken would be evaluated and reformulated to allow a more inclusive perspective of thought.

### PETER JARVIS

was a humanistic expert who analysed learning through life experiences. The learning process model presented by Jarvis is rooted in the different life situations of adult individuals with their own experiences, roles and responsibilities related.

To Jarvis, adult learning begins with or through an experience which is perceived as incongruous with the rest of one's biography. The individual is pushed, through learning, to search for an answer with the regards to the incongruence experienced. The learning process is able to create new experiences from which to obtain new knowledge and competence.

### SARAH MERRIAM

summarised all the theories above on adult learning to 3 dimensions:

- ANDRAGOGY, intended as the art and science of helping adult people learning;
- THE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING, namely the model aimed to identify the resources utilised by adult during the process of education, the learners' quality, the necessary skills to commit into this type of education, the personality characteristics of the learning subjects.
- THE "TRANSFORMATIONAL PERSPECTIVE THEORY", a theory which, on the grounds of the analysis of the cultural processes that underlie the production of meanings, and the thought structures, defines how these are transformed through reflection, rational discourse and emancipation acts.



# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING THEORY

Mezirow recognised in the critical reflection the grounds of how and why the adult lives, acts, thinks, loves and relates. Reflection becomes the means through which we can go over distortions and mistakes, determined by reference frames that induce the subject to mechanically adopt a lone vision of reality, limits the points of view and new experiences integration. The reflecting capability becomes a characteristic of an adult who is mature and responsible, and becomes the main goal of contemporary adult education.

Mezirow, who focused on the importance of reflection in adult age, elaborated the Transformational Learning Theory around the '80s and indicated the conditions on which adults can keep changing and re-projecting themselves throughout their lives. The Transformational Learning Theory is composed of 3 components which facilitate the in-taking of knowledge:

## CRITICAL REFLECTION

generates a change in perspective and determines a higher consciousness and understanding of ourselves.

## RATIONAL DISCOURSE

discussion to disprove wrong assumptions and beliefs.

## CENTRALITY OF EXPERIENCE

the individual life story (what they do, what they believe in, what they are willing to suffer for, the way they react to certain situations)

The Transformational Theory focuses on the way of learning about how to negotiate and to act according to one's purposes, and on values, feelings and meanings in order to have better control on our life and to act as social actors aware and socially responsible. Each one of us, as Mezirow affirmed, has their own reference frame, namely perspective of meaning composed of fundamental assumptions and expectations that serve as a filter and allow us to understand experiences and delimit and shape expectations, perceptions and feelings. A reference frame comprises cognitive, conative and emotional components, and is composed of two dimensions: mental habits and points of view.





Mental habits are the ways we think and, consequently, act, that allow us to orient ourselves in the world and interpret the meaning of our experience (cultural standards, learning styles, visions of the world, self-concept). They articulate into a point of view which encloses schemes of meaning that influence judgement, categorisations of objects and causal attributions. The gaining of these schemes and, as a consequence, of one's own point of view, induces the subject to perceive as a distortion of reality any interpretation which does not fall into their standards.

As a matter of fact, as Mezirow explained, all this causes the person to have a unique line of action which tends to follow automatically and which limits the perception of reality and determines a difficulty in relating to other people.

Mezirow defined transformational learning as the transformational element of the reference frames that became problematic in order to make them more inclusive, reflexive, open, able to discriminate and change.

## DISORIENTING DILEMMA

01. The new meaning learned does not coincide with previous experiences.

## SELF-EVALUATION

02. Self-evaluation of beliefs and assumptions that connect past experiences to the recent dilemma.

## CRITIC EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESIS

03. Past hypothesis must be evaluated, critically corrected and their validity must be verified. This allows one to always maintain the mind open to new information.

## REALISING THAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SHARED SUCH A TRANSFORMATION

04. One's discontent has been shared with others.

## EXPLORATION OF NEW ROLES OR ACTIONS

05. In learning, the individual might search for new roles compatible with the new abilities.

## DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PLAN

06. Trusting one's own beliefs and understanding to make decisions autonomously.





07.

**ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCIES FOR THE PLAN'S ACTUATION**

After modifying past beliefs with the new perspective, we plan a new line of actions.

08.

**TRIAL OF THE PLAN**

Experimenting the meanings learned, always taking into consideration the possibility of new perspectives.

09.

**DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES AND OF SELF-CONFIDENCE INTO NEW ROLES**

Understanding all the changes, working actively to gain new experiences.

10.

**REINTEGRATION IN LIFE ON THE GROUNDS OF NEW PERSPECTIVES**

Once developed a plan, we acquire new knowledge and abilities needed to put such plan into force.

In the Transformational Process, Mezirow paid special attention to socio-cultural dimensions of learning given that the relation and dialogue with others influence the interpretation of experience and the built, validation and reformulation of their meaning.

In such context, transformational learning becomes the epistemology of how adults learn to think autonomously, reflect for themselves and evaluate reasons on the grounds of which to formulate a judgement (2016); it becomes a mean of liberation for the adult to structure upon, frames of meaning and paradigms assimilated unquestioningly throughout a personal, educational and professional history. As Mezirow explained, learning represents a construction of meanings which is the way adults should learn and should also have the instruments to sustain their need for learning for the entire duration of their life.

Adult Education operates through promoting the perspective of lifelong learning, in which learning becomes a means of compensation/consolidation of knowledge and competencies, but mostly a means of personal growth and transformational opportunity.





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