

TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF YOUNG ADULTS IN THE THIRD SECTOR

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Abstract

The European Union, in view to the European Education Area and its future (2021-2030), has set the strategic objective of: “by 2025, at least 47% of adults aged between twenty-five and sixty-four should have carried out learning activities within the last twelve months”. This objective has been expanded in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (European Commission, 2021), aiming to “by 2030, at least 60% of adults should participate in training activities once a year”. This last objective was endorsed at the 2021 Porto Social Summit.

In Europe, young adults who have not completed secondary education and are not in any educational or training course fall into the category of school dropout, amounting to 36% in the case of Spanish population who have not completed compulsory secondary education (OECD. Panorama of Education. OECD indicators. 2023), twice as many as in Europe (16,5%), and with 26,5% of young people aged 25 to 34 with basic education (Education at Glance 2023).

In this context, in order to offer training and entrepreneurship opportunities to young adults (18 to 35 years old), a group of seven entities expert in the third sector from five European countries, have developed an innovative training strategy that seeks educational success through the commitment to social transformation and employability in the third sector. This strategy is directly aimed at adults at risk of exclusion with high barriers to socialization and active participation. This is a new approach, since it focuses learning on an active education where educational competences are developed along with specific skills and attitudes that help them promote their employability in the third sector or even their entrepreneurship in it, generating associations that work to remove the barriers to which they themselves are subject.

To achieve this, a strategy has been developed that takes the concept of second chance centers one step further and adapts the training strategy of vocational training centers to the field of adult education through a mixed learning that combines on-site learning in social entities throughout Europe with a virtual training generated in innovative virtual learning spaces that we have called “E2.0C educational centers”.

Through this innovative methodology and the new E2.0C schools, we have generated the “COURSE FOR ADULT TRAINING IN THE THIRD SECTOR”, which is compatible with the educational curriculum of adults while also enabling them to carry out the tasks of Third Sector technicians in paid internships, so they can develop their own social entrepreneurship project or be part of its staff.

We believe that these internships are a dynamic and living process that allows the integration of the international, intercultural, and global dimensions in education for a transformation not only of the user himself, but also of the center, of the host social organization, and of those who interact with them.

This work has been carried out within the framework of the Erasmus+ project “*E2.0C virtual adult learning centers: an opportunity to promote inclusion through educational action and social participation*”.

Keywords: Education, training, third sector, entrepreneurship.

1 INTRODUCTION

Especially after the emergence of COVID-19, the number of young adults with multiple barriers who neither study nor work is highly significant. According to the European *Education at a Glance* report (2021) [1], 19,9% of young people aged 18-24 fell into the *NEET*¹ category in 2020. These adults have very specific and significant needs (social, work, educational, cultural... but also disorders like depression and apathy) and require a capable education that not only develops skills that allow them to re-engage in formal education, but also improves their skills for their employability, enhances their active social participation, and makes them feel good about themselves by helping others.

The way to achieve this is, without a doubt, adult education. However, studies show that students who are less qualified and suffer from greater barriers are those with the least access to lifelong education (Eurydice 2021)[2]. This seems to indicate that this type of training is not appealing to them. These people, due to the discrimination they suffer and the lack of confidence derived from it, require a more practical model of adult education, appealing to them and allowing them to achieve success in the short term, but which in addition to training them to obtain basic qualifications, also favors their access to the labor market.

For its part, the European associative fabric has become in recent years one of the sectors that mobilize the largest workforce (both labor and volunteer) and which need it the most. Due to its hiring capabilities and the profile of the people it hires (where the candidate's qualifications are not valued the most, but their involvement in the entity, their experience as a volunteer, and whether they belong to a group with obstacles), the third sector is an excellent opportunity for the employability of adults, and especially for those who have barriers and experience as volunteers.

From the working group of the Erasmus+ project "E2.0C virtual adult learning centers: an opportunity to promote inclusion through educational action and social participation" [3] we have developed a unique, digital, and innovative methodological strategy for adult education that turns the education of adults with obstacles into a key axis for their social, personal, and labor inclusion, as well as a driving force for the regeneration and strengthening of the European associative fabric.

In order to implement our strategy, we have taken the concept of Second Chance School a step further and created a new model of digital and international Second Chance Schools (the E2.0C Virtual Centers) that provides adult education adapted to their needs. This is a mixed learning that combines on-site learning in social entities throughout Europe with virtual training generated in the virtual learning spaces of these new E2.0C schools, supported by digital learning tools and different digital platforms that they will use to communicate and learn.

For the creation of the new E2.0C Virtual Centers, we, the aforementioned working group, have created all the tools and platforms needed by any association to create their own E2.0C Virtual Center and provide training courses aimed at adults with obstacles to teach the "Course for the training of adults in the third sector", created within the framework of the aforementioned project.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy we present is aimed at the training of young adults (between 18 and 30 years of age) with obstacles related to early school leaving, situations of migration and refuge, specific socio-economic situations (unemployment), or a lack of qualifications in basic training, accrediting them as users of ADULT TRAINING. We propose a new model of adult education committed to social transformation and employability in the third sector.

This is an innovative methodology, since adults with obstacles not only receive inclusive training, but also makes them active agents in the fight against the discrimination they suffer and motivates them to undertake or opt for a job in the third sector. This methodology rejects traditional forms of learning, and is adapted to both the needs of users and to the employment possibilities of the third sector.

To this end, our methodology is based on the combination of virtual and on-site learning. The first establishes digital active volunteering through virtual learning as the basis for self-learning, and it is reinforced with synchronous sessions with experts, tutoring, asynchronous training sessions, and collaborative learning sessions. Through this learning, students acquire the necessary training and develop a practical project related to third sector activities in each subject. These projects combine to culminate in a final project that allow them to create their own social project or association. The second is

based on paid two-month internships in EU countries, where students will manage projects or entities in collaboration with social organizations that belong to the ININCLUDED network, promoter of this program.

Our methodological strategy opts for practical learning based on “learning by doing”, which is itself based on the theory that people learn best through active practice, by directly experiencing what they are studying. Learning is not limited to traditional theoretical training: students apply the knowledge acquired in real situations, allowing them to develop skills through experience.

We consider this methodology to be especially useful for the management of social projects and associations in the third sector, where practical experience is essential to understand its dynamics.

3 RESULTS

Via the aforementioned methodological strategy, and thanks to the new E2.0C Virtual Centers, we have generated the “Course for the training of adults in the third sector”, which is compatible with the adults education curriculum, in which the virtual learning generated in the virtual learning spaces of the new E2.0C schools is combined with on-site learning that supports the training they acquire and allows them to carry out the functions of third sector technicians in paid internships in a social entity.

The course consists of a two-phase training itinerary.

3.1 Phase 1: Virtual learning

The first phase of the course is designed to provide students with the key tools necessary to plan, develop, and manage impactful social projects. Throughout this phase, students learn all the stages and mechanisms of project management; they are guided in the use of project management methodologies, ranging from the inception of the project to the evaluation of its results. The creation and management of third sector entities is also delved on, including legal obligations, teams, and economic sustainability. Lastly, the transversal techniques necessary to develop critical thinking are addressed.

This virtual learning is comprised of 16 subjects that combine various learning modes, in order to offer a complete experience adapted to their needs. Students undertake in asynchronous learning sessions complemented by weekly synchronous virtual lessons where they can contact teachers and other students, and teamwork sessions (of a maximum of four people per team) that encourage collaboration and the exchange of ideas, key critical thinking skills. They also have synchronous tutorial attention designed to offer personalized support to each student according to their needs. Monthly masterclasses are also held by experts from the third sector, who share their knowledge and experiences on the subjects covered in the course.

At the same time, students must throughout this phase put into practice the knowledge acquired in the subjects to design a real project that allows them to undertake in the third sector, with the support of the tutors and tools provided by the E2.0C Virtual Center.

Thanks to the combination of these learning modalities, when students finish this phase of the course they are ready to design and implement social projects or associations that allow them to undertake in the third sector.

3.2 Phase 2: On-site learning

The second phase of the course consists of a learning that includes an internship in a third sector social entity abroad, and in which the student must carry out the tasks of a project technician.

We consider it essential for users to have a unique experience that contribute to their development as persons and as workers by improving their inclusion, employability, initiative, and training. In this sense, collaborating with a social entity is a great opportunity to establish achievable objectives that impel adults to study, by generating practical training that allows them to develop educational skills while contributing to improve the European society, strengthen the social fabric, and enhance their active participation.

We understand the internship not just as a user’s journey to get to know an entity that may be more or less distant and force them to promote the use of foreign languages; it goes further than that: we consider it a dynamic and living process that enables the integration of the international, intercultural, and global dimensions in education for a transformation not only of the users themselves, but also of the center, the host social organization, and those who interact with them.

This learning offers students unprecedented opportunities to overcome their obstacles and access the third sector as participatory agents that promote a better Europe, and also as technicians capable of contributing to the development of social entities with their efforts.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Thanks to the methodology created within the framework of the Erasmus+ project mentioned above, we have contributed effectively to both the education and inclusion of adults with obstacles (by developing specific and key transversal skills, and enhancing their access to the labor market in the third sector) and social entities (that now find profiles of trained technicians to hire or from whom to receive help).

In this regard, to date we have created three E2.0C Virtual Centers in Valencia (Spain), Le Puy-en-Velay (France), and Lesvos (Greece).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, within the project 2022-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000089775; Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE).

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