



ASL – Adult Self-Learning: Supporting Learning Autonomy in a Technology-Mediated Environment

The Desk Research Summary

IO: An operative model for teaching learning low
qualified adults in an online environment
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ADANA ALPARSLAN TÜRKES
BİLİM VE TEKNOLOJİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ



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Executive Summary

In the framework of “Intellectual Output 1: An operative model for teaching-learning low-qualified adults in an online environment” all 6 partners of the project carried out a desk research focusing on their expertise. The Polish partner “Research and Innovation in Education Institute” (INBIE) focused on adult collaborative learning. The other partner “Rezekne Academy of Technologies” (RTA) from Latvia focused on adult learning and socialization processes. The desk research led by the Turkish partner AAT Science and Technology University focused on the topic of adult learning leadership. The other partner “Three Thirds Society” from Greece made a desk research focusing on their expertise which is case studies on entrepreneurship and online classes. Another partner “Ecoistituto” from Italy focused on analyzing the adult learning in the light of contemporary societal transformations. And finally the coordinating organization “Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM)” from Turkey focused on organization of services for adult learning; family services and policies for the engagement and motivation of adult learners. All of these researches were summarized and compared by AAT Science and Technology University.

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1. Introduction

In the framework of “Intellectual Output 1: An operative model for teaching-learning low-qualified adults in an online environment” all 6 partners of the project carried out a desk research focusing on their expertise. The objective of this IO is comparing the variety of online learning approaches for low-qualified and low-skilled adult learners in order to realize an operative model that will be applied for the project training activities. This IO is motivated by the need to build a share model and exploit the expertise and experience of partners.

There are two expected impacts of this IO on the project and these are

1. Partners will reach a common understanding and view about the multifarious aspects of adult education that will be strategic for the project development;
2. The results of this IO will be of interest of the project stakeholders (governmental authorities, social services institutions, social entrepreneurs, NGOs) as well as of international stakeholders (educational institution, international organizations engaged in adult learning).

To be able to build a share model and exploit the expertise and experience of partners this summary of all reports was prepared by the Turkish Partner AAT Science and Technology University.

2. Results of the Desk Research

In its desk research, the Polish partner “Research and Innovation in Education Institute” (INBIE) basically focuses on adult collaborative learning. With respect to the general landscape of adult learning in Poland, it is stated that there is a slight increase in the percentage of people participating in adult education. There is an improvement in policy coordination at national level (the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System is implemented in cooperation with various ministries and sectoral skills councils), but not at regional level. In 2019, Poland received a country-specific recommendation from the EU Council, which recommends supporting high-





quality education and skills that meet the needs of the labour market, especially through adult education.

Throughout the desk research analysis, it is underscored that collaboration is the main factor in providing learners with effective learning environments. Collaborative learning situations are stated to possess the potential in giving learners the opportunities to discuss, argue, negotiate, and reflect on the current beliefs and knowledge and more importantly, to enable the exchange of good practices and experiences. The learner becomes engaged in building knowledge in the process of discussion and interaction with experts and other classmates. Based on many studies, it is argued that all levels of students convey satisfaction with receiving regular feedback throughout the collaborative writing process both online and in the classroom. In online collaborative learning situations, a positive correlation is claimed to exist between reaching the goals by the learners and their personal satisfaction. They realize that they achieve their educational goals only if the other learners from their group will also reach their educational goals.

INBIE concludes in its desk research that collaborative learning and the use of wiki writing tasks for adult learners working in e-learning environment has a great opportunity in times like this one we are passing. Learners and tutors have to change their teaching methodology to a more open and collaborative learning practice. Preparing the learners to collaborate online is one of the most important tasks and has a huge importance in the efficacy of the learners or group writing projects. Tutors need to provide the courses adapted to the new situation, using a wiki, Microsoft Teams and in group writing tasks.

In its desk research, the other partner “Rezekne Academy of Technologies” (RTA) from Latvia focuses on adult learning and socialization processes. In Latvia, the current basic approaches in adult education theory and practice are revealed to include action learning, experiential learning, project-based learning, self-directed learning, intergenerational learning, interdisciplinarity, problem-based learning, critical thinking, and transformative digital learning.

RTA is indicated to hold appropriate experience in work with groups of social risk, low skilled people and projects creation for them and implementation of new technologies in the socialization processes. The executor of the projects in the field of Personality Socialization is the Research Institute of Regional Studies (REGI). In 2014-2019, the operation of 3 laboratories was activated, which serve as the research





basis for the approbation of scientific studies. The Laboratory of The Social Pedagogy and Rehabilitation Technologies provides an experimental basis for the approbation of REGI scientific studies, performs methodological work and provides social services for solutions to special and social education problems. The Laboratory of Pedagogical Technologies provides an experimental basis for the approbation of REGI scientific studies, performs scientific and methodological work for the introduction of innovative technologies and the design of methodologies for solutions to education problems. The Laboratory of Special Education primarily ensures the connection of science with society and practice, carrying out the design, approbation and introduction of preventive educational and correctional integrated programmes and methodologies in special education institutions in Latvia.

The desk research led by the Turkish partner AAT Science and Technology University has revealed that adult learning and lifelong learning have been going hand in hand for a very long time in Turkey as they have done across the world. In particular, with the "Lifelong Learning Strategy Document" prepared according to the Ministry of National Education Strategy Plan in 2009, it was intended to provide different learning environments for individuals to improve their knowledge and skills. In this respect, there are also many formal institutions providing lifelong learning service. Adult education training services in Turkey include such as Public Education Centers (HEM), Vocational Training Centers (MEM), and Practical Girls' Art School.

Besides these organizations, higher education institutions play a major role in ensuring lifelong learning of many adults in Turkey. In particular, thanks to the information age, continuing education comes into more prominence and universities have started to serve as an important means of lifelong learning through their continuing education centers as well as the undergraduate courses included in their formal curriculum. With these courses and programs, universities try not only to satisfy the educational needs of Turkish society but also prepare their young adult learners for leadership roles they will hold following their graduation from university. The courses on leadership have been offered at tertiary level for a very long time; however, research has recently suggested a strong emphasis should be placed on the cocurricular experience students are receiving. Multiple approaches to leadership development on university campuses are necessary when educating students on effective leadership. The role extracurricular activities plays in a student's leadership development is supported with research and this support comes from faculty members





suggesting a broad acceptance of the need for additional experiences outside of the classroom.

In addition to traditional extracurricular opportunities, when creating effective leadership opportunities for today's generation of adult learners, it should be considered that emerging technologies are creating new opportunities and the number of adult learners using online technologies has rapidly increased over the last two decades. Through interactive web-based technologies, adult learners as leaders or potential leaders could practice and sharpen their leadership skills in a wide range of simulated virtual organizations such as massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs). In this regard, new and emerging technologies can better provide simulation training for learners.

In its desk research, the other partner "Three Thirds Society" from Greece focuses on their expertise which is case studies on entrepreneurship and online classes. The desk analysis is performed on the current literature by analyzing online databases and selected scientific journals, focusing on project and initiative promoted in Greece and Europe. The desk research involved 2 different case studies. First case study from European Commission was presented based on the conduction of a mapping exercise of examples of research on the impact of Entrepreneurial Education through a systematic country research in all 28 EU-Member States plus 14 Non-EU-countries. This case study report looked at the Entrepreneurship Education Project (EEP) which is collecting data on the impact of entrepreneurship interventions on undergraduates over a 10-year longitudinal study. The project was set up to provide participants with a common framework/survey for measuring the impact of entrepreneurship education in a standard and systematic way, using a theoretical framework based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

A second case study was mentioned from STARTENT project, where a book was created that can be used as a source of examples and materials in the field of education for entrepreneurship in Europe and to foster entrepreneurial interest and talent among young individuals. The QuestionForm.com project emerged in 2007 when the online software available for creating, publishing and analysing surveys and forms was all payable and not at all user-friendly. The tool developed facilitates the use of online surveys in a user friendly environment. It allows users who are unfamiliar with the technology to easily build an online survey and then to both collect and analyse the data.





At the end of their desk research, a summary of case studies in Greece was reported from economia.gr which is one of the most famous economy magazines in Greece since 1934. Some examples from Greek Businesses were compiled and brief information was shared in the report. The exemplary companies involved; Beekeeping Company Attiki-Alexandros Pittas, Phillips Hellas, ION, Giotis, Melissa Kikizas, Athenian Brewery, Interamerican, SATO A.E and Aluminum of Greece.

In conclusion, TTS chose to present examples of initiatives that are implemented worldwide and have to do with entrepreneurship education, These examples show the possibilities that individuals have if they want to become entrepreneurs. In most cases, successful examples act as driving motivation for potential entrepreneurs to take the risk and proceed with the founding of their enterprise. Especially, the economic crisis that made the situation very difficult for several countries drove people to self-employment. Moreover, technology is a major factor regarding the development of online businesses which is a popular way of running a business according to the needs of the job market.

As a result, it is important, especially for low-qualified adults, to have the opportunity to be educated in entrepreneurship and be qualified to run a business. This can be achieved through the organization, promotion and implementation of adult-learning programmes according to adults' needs.

In its desk research, the other partner "Ecoistituto" from Italy focuses on analyzing the adult learning in the light of contemporary societal transformations. The report emphasized that many current professions and jobs would undergo changes and new ones would arise. For example, smartphones and the internet are mainly used today for social purposes, but it is expected that in the near future they will be used for increasing the productivity of workers, and that they will create new job opportunities. On the Other hand, many manual works will be automated, it is undoubtedly true that professions such as barber, janitor, farm worker, house cleaner, cook, gardener, repairman, carpenter, caregiver, etc., will remain largely stable, since these jobs require complex manual abilities as well as specific intellectual skills.

Regarding the educational issues, the report mentions that experts and professionals are persuaded that investments in lifelong learning by government, industry, and professional bodies can mitigate the negative effects of technology on the labor market. Modular educational programs should be created which are constantly updated in response to changing skill demands. The research also points





out that acquiring skills in computational thinking could be more fruitful for promoting novel attitudes to thinking. Computational thinking is a method of thought that is used in computer sciences (Grover & Pea, 2013), but experts argue that it can also influence the way people solve any type of problem. Computational thinking can be understood as the mental activity of formulating a problem in such a way as to admit a computational solution. Connected with computational thinking, online learning is also considered to be a crucial means by which to sustain the skilling and re-skilling of workers. Researchers and experts argue that online learning not only reduces costs and improves access but also offers the possibility of increasing the quality of the teaching/learning experience and of the evaluation of learning achievements. Accordingly, investments in online learning are hoped for, since this would create new professional skills and facilitate the transformation of current learning programs. However, experience seems to demonstrate that the human guidance in educational processes cannot be eliminated.

The report also focuses on the the fact that self-directed digital learning plays an important role in adult education. Self-Directed-Learning (SDL), coming from Knowles (1975), is as a process in which individuals take responsibility for their own learning by taking the initiative in diagnosing their own learning needs, “formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources needed for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning styles and evaluating the learning outcomes”.

New skills and competencies related to digital technologies are required to meet the ongoing societal changes. Digital competence, creativity, entrepreneurship, and learning-to-learn are emerging as key factors for innovation, growth, and participation in society and economy. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity can be viewed as components of innovation processes.

In conclusion report shows that there are other skills, addressed as soft-skills, that play a relevant role. They encompass communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, adaptability, initiative, leadership, social-emotional learning, teamwork, self-confidence, empathy, growth mindset, cultural awareness. Other qualities that could facilitate employability are innovation, creativity, industriousness, resourcefulness, resilience, curiosity, optimism, risk-taking, courage, and business acumen.





Research confirms the importance of these qualities and new educational programs should be developed to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) and enhance learners' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence

In its desk research, the other partner "Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM)" from Turkey focuses on organization of services for adult learning; family services and policies for the engagement and motivation of adult learners.

The research starts with the information about the historical development of adult education in Turkey regarding the laws and regulations. Adult education related applications to be addressed by the government started with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. An educated society was the only prerequisite to perpetuate the establishment, survival and development of a new form of governance. On 3 March 1924, by the law of Unification of Education, all the educational institutions were engaged to Ministry of Education. The first official organization for adults, under the name of "Community Training Department" was issued on March 25, 1926 within the authority of the Ministry of Education with the Organization Act 789. During the initial years of the Republic, implemented educational policies had three main objectives; supplying the unity of national culture, promoting citizenship education and educating the qualified people who The Republic of Turkey needs.

The research mentions that According to the Basic Law of National Education No. 1739, the Turkish national education system consists of two main sections: formal education and non-formal education. Formal education contains pre-school education, primary education, and secondary education and higher education institutions. Non-formal education, on the other hand, covers all of the educational activities organized beside or outside the scope of formal education. In the legal foundation of the Turkish education system, adult education and other continuing education activities lie in the scope of non-formal education. The specific objectives of Turkey's non-formal education program are to: teach reading and writing to adults who have never attended any formal education program or dropped out of a formal education program or who are currently enrolled in a formal education program.

In Turkey, adult education services are provided mainly by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and other related Ministries such as the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Industry and Technology and formal, semi-formal institutions, local administrations, universities, civil societies and non-governmental organisations.





Lifelong Learning in Turkey came into the agenda with 1739 numbered the Basic Law of National Education, National Education Councils and five-year development plans. In the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan covering the years 2001-2005 and the Ninth Five-Year Development Plans covering the years 2007-2013, a special importance was given to lifelong learning, and the aim of “lifelong learning for all” was pursued. In the eighth and ninth five-year development plans, the ultimate goal of lifelong learning is to allow all citizens, as in the EU, to adapt to the cultural, economic and political changes taking place within the country.

The research also gives information about SHEM’s Experience in Adult Learning Services. As one of the main providers of non-formal education, SHEM has various opportunities and experiences to work with social risk groups, low-skilled and low-qualified people and offer them adult education activities. The adult education activities implemented by SHEM are Literacy courses, Vocational courses and Socio-cultural courses and activities. Refugees and asylum seekers can also attend the training courses (including Turkish language courses) provided by our institution. Syrian adults under temporary protection, who wish to develop their occupational skills, can benefit from the adult education training services provided by SHEM. They can attend courses of Turkish language, skill development, hobby courses and vocational courses free of charge. Literacy courses and Turkish language training for foreigners are also carried out by SHEM in all districts of the region and those who successfully complete the courses are given the documents equivalent to the formal education diploma. SHEM also provides activities for prison inmates in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice.

In conclusion, the research emphasizes that in today's changing and developing information society, adult education is observed to have an important place in education policies of countries as an indispensable value. Adult education has an important place in the future development policies of countries as well. Adults need in-depth knowledge of what, why and how to learn. If the adult cannot access the information he / she needs, and this information does not match his expectations, the learning motivation decreases rapidly and his interest in learning decreases. Adults also have a realistic and problem-oriented orientation. Therefore, to motivate adults; their needs should be known, the environment should be adjusted accordingly, motivating factors in adult education, the motivation theories used and the types of





motivation should be known and motivation plans should be prepared considering all these factors.

3. Results of the SWOT Analyses

Concerning the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analyses of the partner institutions, it could be suggested that each partner approach the components of SWOT analysis from different perspectives.

a) Strengths

The strengths of adult education in Poland are revealed to include many years of experience, flexibility in adapting to the environment and self-development of educators, access to internet and equipment for both educators and students, more and more social campaigns informing about the possibility of retraining and further training of adults. As for the strong aspects of adult education in Latvia, they are indicated to involve academic work opportunities for people with disabilities, adolescents, low-qualified and low-skilled adults, scientific outcomes transfer in practice using modern laboratories with modern equipment, and providing support for successful socialization of people with disabilities, adolescents, low-qualified and low-skilled adults. In the strengths section of its SWOT analysis, the Turkish partner AAT Science and Technology University puts more emphasis on the public education centers. These centers are pointed out to provide a wide range of courses, to be main providers of non-vocational and informal education, to have readily available modules for the courses which have diverse learning materials and are instructed by experienced people in the field. It is further stated that Turkish Employment Agency provides financial supports for adult learners who would like to gain experience and expertise in a specific field and there are even courses focusing on subjects such as web designs, computer operations, IT and hardware, photoshop, typing, etc. The other partner Three Thirds Society focused on businesses and especially on online business environments. Their strong points were easy navigation through the website and many available facilities, specialized staff, distinctive website, high gross profit margins, as the company does not only refer to the national market but also to the global, new ways to encourage repetitive visits. The other Turkish partner “Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM), focused on their experiences in adult education. Their main strong points were being the main providers of non-vocational non-formal education, located





in various districts and are valuable for adult people of all ages, varied and extensive lifelong learning program to satisfy different needs, free of charge and a wide range of courses, have readily available modules for the training activities, diverse learning materials, available not only in big cities but also in towns.

b) Weaknesses

With respect to the weaknesses of adult education in Poland, the partner refers to the insufficient access to e-learning platforms or online meetings (expensive access to platforms, non-intuitive service, most platforms in English), the adults with low earnings and qualifications who may not be ready to start learning online, and the educators who may not want to master the use of all modern methods and tools supporting education. Latvia mentions only one weakness in its analysis, which is the lack of capacity / staff for the work with low-skilled adults since RTA is a scientific institute. In the weaknesses part of its analysis, AAT Science and Technology University continues placing stress on the situation in public education centers. The weak aspects of these centers are suggested that their materials are not specifically designed for online platforms, the content is not planned or adapted according to students' individual needs, there is a lack of flexibility in terms of timetable, educational content and materials, exam procedures, etc., and a lack of systematic and continuous support or time slot for learning. It is further stated that the programs are not interdependent, and the programs as well as other learning facilities do not have interdisciplinary approach. The other partner Three Thirds Society mentioned its weaknesses as competitors can immediately offer the consumer something identical or existing competitors can change their entire costing system, limited costs to set up an online portal (low entry barriers), limited pricing flexibility and high labour costs. The other Turkish partner "Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM) mentioned its weaknesses in adult education as required a minimum number of people to start and continue a course, mandatory participation, the content is not planned or adapted according to learner's individual needs, the lack of flexibility in terms of timetable, educational content and materials, exam procedures, etc. , the lack of systematic and continuous support or time slot for learning, the programs are not interdependent, the programs and other learning facilities do not have interdisciplinary approach, suffers from a lack of funding, low awareness to lifelong learning opportunities

c) Opportunities





While listing the opportunities of adult education, the Polish partner mainly concentrates on globalization and its inherent benefits such as shrinking time and space, creating global economic, trade and financial markets, creating supranational political and military structures, simplifying mass culture, integration of formerly divided countries, and the progress in the rapid provision and exchange of information on a worldwide scale. Additionally, technological progress, many EU-funded programs for adult education, and increasingly popular universities of the third century are counted as the opportunities related to adult education in Poland. Latvia mentions only one opportunity, which is the project development and financial support for activities with people with disabilities, adolescents, low-qualified and low-skilled adults. In the opportunities section of its analysis, AAT Science and Technology University goes on with the potential of public education centers in Turkey. These centers are underscored to have a wide range of network all over the country and to be available even in very small regions of the country. Furthermore, Adult Learning Programs are noted to be supported by the National Education Ministry continuously. In line with the current pandemic crisis, it is stated that there is a rise for the use of portable devices such as smart phones and tablets to support learning of adult learners and online teaching and more courses could be introduced to encourage online teaching methodologies and online teaching platforms. Three Thirds Society mentioned its opportunities as continuous and growing demand for online shopping, new technologies to improve the user experience, emerging new markets that are untapped, more effective Marketing tactics. Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM) mentioned some of its opportunities as that they have a wide range of network all over the country/ have the necessary infrastructure to reach more adult learners, they are available even in very small regions of the country, adult learning programs are supported by the Ministry of National Education continuously, there is a rise for the use of portable devices such as smart phones and tablets to support learning of adult learners and online teaching, driven by the current pandemic crisis, the existence of policy and procedures regarding Life-Long learning, the awareness of society regarding sustainable education systems, the existence of promotions to boost educational programs and identifying of education is a fundamental cause, increase of demand for quality education, usability of technology in education and industries' openness to vocational and technical education.

d) Threats





Considering the threats of adult education, INBIE in Poland still underscores the fact of globalization and its inherent drawbacks such as social stratification, marginalization of groups and regions, and concentrations of wealth and mass exclusion. Besides, unwillingness of adults to expand knowledge, benefits paid by the State to unemployed persons, and low motivation to take up education are listed as the threats related to adult education in Poland. With regard to the threat part, RTA only emphasizes the economical situation after the Covid-19 outbreak and decreasing EU finance for the projects development. As for AAT Science and Technology University, the threats associated with adult learning are shown that trainees' low education levels have negative effect on trainee's drop out levels and course effectiveness, subsidized courses might undermine the trainee's drop-out rates attending freely available courses, and adaptation of low qualified adults to online and digital learning platforms has effects on the efficiency of the courses. Three Thirds Society mentioned its threats as the global economic crisis, possible tax changes that could affect the business, possibility to upgrade users' browser software. Sarıçam Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (SHEM) mentioned its threats related to adult education as the trainees' low education levels have negative effect on trainee's drop out levels and course effectiveness, subsidized courses might undermine the trainee's drop out rates attending freely available courses, adaptation of low qualified adults to online and digital learning platforms has effects on the efficiency of the courses, problems with quality of information obtained from internet, the rapid changes in movement of population and fast urbanization and the low budget of the ministry.





Conclusion

As a conclusion of all desk researches conducted by the partner organizations of this project, the importance of new and innovative approaches to the methodologies and implementation of adult education were once more revealed. Adult education has an important place in the future development policies of countries as well. The European Union has established the general framework of human resources policy with a lifelong learning project. In this respect, Lifelong learning approach can be described as today's education strategy. With the lifelong learning approach, appropriate human resources will be provided on the one hand in terms of economic development and employment, and on the other hand, it will be possible for people to realize and update themselves as individuals, to adapt to the changing society and not to be excluded.

The digital and technological advancements will also have a great impact on the future of adult education. We can expect that in developing countries the impact of digital technology does not appear to be immediate, but in the next few decades the effects of the digital divide, both physical and cultural, could be really disastrous, and will only serve to reinforce existing inequalities. In fact, the digital divide will prevent access to essential services, media, and information that will be ever more sophisticated and require broadband connection as well as digital skills.

With the advent of digital technologies, learners are faced with unprecedented opportunities and a wide range of alternatives to engage in their self-directed learning through tools and resources available on the internet. However, the selection of learning applications and materials requires expert knowledge and expertise that, usually, an autonomous learner doesn't possess. How can a learner engaged with technology-mediated environments meet his/her learning needs and goals and how can his/her autonomy effectively evolve in an online environment? In the last few years, researchers in the education field agree that "pattern-based learning" can be used to overcome the above issues.

Another important impact on the adult education has been the recent pandemic. Collaborative learning and the use of wiki writing tasks for adult learners working in e-learning environment has a great opportunity in times like this one we are passing. The Pandemic virus COVID-19 has changed the reality of learning in classes and in groups. Most of adult organizations for first time started to use collaborative learning applications and platforms that involve learners and tutors in the same virtual environment. Learners and tutors had to change their teaching methodology to a more open and collaborative learning practice.

