

Papers on

- **Innovative approaches to promotion, marketing and outreach in adult learning**
- **New trends in widening participation**

CREA

**Innovative approaches to promotion,
marketing and outreach in adult learning and
New trends in widening participation.**

Supporting the development of New Learning Pathways for Adults

**CREA –Centre for Social and Educational Research
UNIVERSIDAD DE BARCELONA**

**ERDI
Consortium of European Research and Development Institutes for Adult Education**

**INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PROMOTION, MARKETING
AND OUTREACH IN ADULT LEARNING**



1. CONTENTS

Presentation

A brief history review

APEL: the recognition of prior experience of adults

Models of adult education

Concrete experiences in adult education: two case studies

An alternative proposal

Conclusions



2. PRESENTATION

This report presents various innovative and up to date contributions for the promotion, management and administration of adult education. On the one hand, we refer to the APEL policies¹ for the recognition of prior experience, as the most efficient tool that the European governments have in order to be able to accredit the experience that many people acquire throughout their lives in different occupations and activities. This element is a clear solution in the context of constant updating and recycling of knowledge and skills, in the workplace as well as in the educational system, as Jacques Delors said years ago in the *White Paper*. An example of the recognition of learning acquired through experience is the case of volunteer work.

On the other hand, this document also includes the contributions that are made from the experience that CREA has in research in adult education. The model for DIALOGIC LEARNING is proposed as an innovative educational model, which permits overcoming situations of exclusion. In this case we refer to a concrete example, namely, the Adult School at La Verneda-San Marti in Barcelona (Spain).

This small document aims to offer a proposal for the elaboration of an innovative educational model, based on rigorous and scientific contributions of various research investigations and experiences that have been carried out and continue to function for years now.

¹ APEL is also a research project in which CREA participates as a partner. Through the years CREA has participated in various APEL research projects, but all of them have always had the policies of accrediting the prior experiences of adults as its central focus. Currently there is an APEL project in which a European guide for good practices is being created. It will be disseminated en masse all over Europe. This is the most significant result of the project, as well as an International Conference which will take place in Glasgow in November 2002.



3. A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW.

In this section we will make a brief historical review of adult education in Spain, since the onset of democracy. In this way we attempt to situate the most relevant events that have occurred in our country, in order to be able to better understand the origins of the current trends.

With democracy there was a nucleus of people who were involved in adult education who carried out different initiatives for transforming adult education. In Barcelona, for example, during the school year of 1977/1978 in the *Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación* (Institute for the Science of Education) at the Universidad de Barcelona, they had some short courses aimed at training professionals in Adult Education. That year Barcelona established that there were 71 places in Adult Education, but only 36 had been occupied. Thanks to pressure from adult entities, specifically the Coordinator of entities, there were 80 more positions for teachers in Adult Education filled in the adult schools.

During the second half of 1977 SEPT, *Servicios de Educación Permanente de los Trabajadores* (Services for Ongoing Education for Workers) was founded, in order to face the new context of change. The function of SEPT was to assume the activities that were impossible to organise in assemblies, specifically, the elaboration of materials, research and relations with institutions.

In any case, in 1979, this entire movement went into crisis, because the transfer of competencies to the Generalitat was not done correctly. At the beginning they did not want to be responsible for Adult Education. Finally, the Generalitat assumed its responsibility in terms of adult education, but the result was that it disorganised the whole movement of transformation in adult education, due to this change in charge.

In 1982/1983, the Generalitat created the *Servei de Formació Permanent d'Adults* (Service for Ongoing Adult Education). At the same time, some of the schools gained a significant level of participation in the classrooms. In response to this situation, the Coordinator of SEPT proposed the creation of an association and an editorial, to create materials specifically geared towards Adult Education. Thus, AEPA, *Asociación de Educación Permanente de Adultos* (Association for Ongoing Adult Education) and El Roure *Cooperativa de Producción de Educación y Cultura* (Cooperative for the Production of Education and Culture) are born, with the support of ESICO and *Servicios de Cultura Popular* (Services for Popular Culture). Other organizations were founded during those years, like FACEPA, *Federación de Asociaciones Culturales de Educación de Personas Adultas* (Federation of Cultural Associations for Adult Education) with the aim of coordinating the actions of Adult Education in diverse state level associations. In the *I Trijornadas de Educación de Personas Adultas* (July 6-8, 2000) in Barcelona, a new progressive movement in Adult Education is born, CONFAPEA, *Confederación de Asociaciones de Educación de Personas Adultas* (Confederation of Associations for Adult Education), that



advocates for innovative focuses in Adult Education, and continues to follow this line.

Currently the most innovative focuses in the field of Adult Education in Spain support lines for the recognition and accreditation of prior knowledge of adults, when they matriculate in schools; the application of dialogic learning practices, on a methodological and didactic level; and the use of the information and communication technologies in the classroom. In what follows, more of these aspects will be explained providing two case studies as examples.



4. APEL – THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF ADULTS

APEL policies (*Assessment of prior experiential learning*²) are a tool that serves for systematising the forms and mechanisms that are used for recognising (that is, for accrediting) forms of knowledge that people acquire through their lives, through experience.

This learning can take place in formal situations, as in the case of people who go to academies or other educational entities that do not have authority to provide formal titles. But, at times, we also find ourselves in informal and formal situations in which we also learn. Examples of this are the experiences that are acquired in the workplace, or through carrying out volunteer activities, or the case of people who use self-taught methods.

APEL policies allow the learning centres (or the agencies, or administrations legally designated to provide titles with official validation) to be able to accredit experience through diverse tests that do not necessarily have to consist of academic type exams. Between 1997 and 1999 the University of Leuven (Belgium) was carrying out and coordinating a research project; its main objective was to compare the situation of the policies for accreditation of prior experience in different countries of Europe. The goal was to offer directions and guidelines for the implementation of these policies in all of Europe, through the exchange of knowledge and good practices. This aim was attained with the construction of an interstate database, where information was offered from several hundred centres from all over Europe, which put into practice different forms of accreditation of prior experience.

The case of Spain

While in other countries the APEL policies are very systematized and there are procedures already recognized on an administrative level by competent authorities (like in France,³ for example, or in United Kingdom⁴), in the case of Spain, currently, there is no such institutional recognition.

² *Assessment of prior experiential learning*. These initiatives can have very diverse names. Referring to the acronyms used for naming these policies, we can encounter “APEL” (“Assessment of prior experiential learning”) (*Acreditación del Aprendizaje Experiencial Previo*), also “APL” (“Assessment of prior learning”) (*Acreditación del Aprendizaje Previo*) o “APCL” (“Accreditation of prior certificated learning”) (*Acreditación del Aprendizaje Certificado Previo*). In France the terminology used can also vary. Some of the concepts used are *Reconnaissance et validation des acquis* (Recognition and validation of that which is acquired) and *Bilans de compétences* (Competency Scale).

³ In France the process was initiated in the mid 80s, with a legislation that allowed people to claim greater access to training. In 1992, however, the idea was defined according to which anyone with labor experience could request validation for their professional competencies. From then on, the final decision about the concession of credits fell on a jury made up of professionals. With respect to this jury everyone who had exercised a professional activity during five years, within the field that they want to be able to have their experience accredited, could ask for validation of their professional



In any case, on the one hand, we do find attempts to accredit experience (like in the case of the reform of professional training) or more specific experiences, such as the case of the Adult School at La Verneda – Sant Martí.

For example, with respect to mid-level training (the so-called mid-level training cycles) people access: after passing the level corresponding to the level of *Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria* (ESO) (Secondary Obligatory Education), or through an access exam. In order to be able to realize this exam, one must complete two requisites: 1) minimum age is 17 years old (this is people are considered of adult age); and 2) to have minimum of work experience. This last requisite is that which touches our concerns, because it implies the evaluation (even in terms of an access exam) of prior experience. With respect to higher level training (the so-called upper level training cycles, which are different from university training)⁵ the requisites for access for people who do not have a prior degree are similar to those mentioned earlier: 1) minimum of 20 years of age; and 2) able to accredit a minimum of labour experience. If the person can demonstrate both conditions, he/she has the option of entering through the selection exams as well as the exemption of the specific exam.

In Spain, the case of professional training (and, in a broader sense, of occupational training) there is a lot of relevance given to training acquired through practical courses in enterprises. “Practices” (as they are commonly termed) are always recognized through the number of credits (that is, the educational centre, whether secondary school or university, recognizes these practices with credits”⁶). In fact, this is one of the big innovations with respect to previous professional training plans: from 1996, all of the legislative documents that have been approved in the General Courts in Spain, always attempt to find the connections between training and the labour market, in the line established by the *Cumbre Extraordinaria sobre el Empleo*,

learning. The jury would evaluate the professional competencies that everyone attains through their labor experience and forms of knowledge and the knowledge that people use in their daily practices, with the aim of facilitating people to get their academic validation.

⁴ The main characteristic of these policies in Great Britain is that they are developed on an institutional level. In order to settle the differences in the implementation of distinct educational fields, a network was created on a national level, which is in charge of guaranteeing the quality of all of the training curriculum and assuring the equivalencies between the different educational sectors. Thus, Great Britain guarantees that everyone who gets a certification or title in a specific educational field can have this title recognized in the rest of the educational arenas, even though each one of these arenas implement the accreditation mechanisms autonomously.

⁵ See the annex of the Spanish educational system.

⁶ The credits are a measure of the weight of the academic contents of the course which appears in the official program approved by the Council of University Coordination, in accord with that which is stipulated in article 35, point 2, of the equivalency of study and degree plans, of the *LOU*. “2. Prior to sending it to the Council of University Coordination, the Universities should advise the corresponding Autonomous Community of the study plans, to the end of obtaining a favorable report relative to the economic evaluation of the study plan and its adaptation to the requisites, which are referred to in section 3 of article 4.” (BOE, December 26 2001, page 475).



in Luxembourg on November 20 and 21, 1997.⁷ On the other hand, it is also important to stress the efforts made by the unions, in order to reach agreements in which training appears within the policies of active employment.

The National Program for Professional Training⁸ of 1998 presented a model of integrated professional training, establishing criteria for articulation and unification of three subsystems: professional training regulated by the educational system, professional and occupational training managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or the autonomous governments; and continuing education, administrated through FORCEM. This new model is structured in a flexible manner, given that it permits recognition of learning that people have realized in the past, as well as the recognition of training received in other educational centres.

In this way, professional training that is currently being implemented in Spain does not solely consider the academic aspect (that is, the whole of the courses), but looks at the acquisition and learning of demonstrable competencies in the working processes. The degrees and credentials that are given to people accredit both practical and theoretical forms of knowledge, which are necessary in every profession. In addition, another important aspect to highlight is that they also promote recognition (not the accreditation) of knowledge in the workplace itself.

In December of 1996, the *II Acuerdo Nacional de Formación Continua* (2nd National Agreement of Continuing Education) was approved. In this accord various new elements were introduced, among which the certification of continuing education and accreditation of prior learning was emphasized, in accordance with the process of the renewal of the sectorial systems of professional classification.

In the same way, in 1998, *II Programa Nacional de Formación Profesional* (2nd National Program of Professional Training) was approved. This program is the framework that articulates and integrates the different subsystems of professional training. The main objective of this program is to consolidate a National System of Qualifications, in an attempt to institutionalize a single national system, which is a reference point for employers, trainers and for the entire active population. One of the measures that are foreseen for the constitution of this National Institute of Qualifications is the definition of the procedures for the accreditation of competencies, aimed at contributing to the consolidation of professional training for the European context. In this National System of Qualifications, it is very important to address the professional subsystems transversally as well as the convergence with the prioritized policies of the EU.

⁷ From 1996 the laws that regulate professional training are reformed, with the intention of transferring educational responsibilities to the Autonomous Communities.

⁸ The National Program for Professional Training incorporates the objectives and measures aimed at orienting and promoting professional training in Spain. It includes the catalogue of professional degrees and certificates. They are also looking at the creation of a system of professional qualifications for the articulation of professional training curriculum.



Therefore, all of this makes it possible to say that the current trend, in Spain, in adult education (in the case of professional training), is to establish a link between teaching and the labor market. With respect to the recognition of prior competencies, a necessary criteria for adults without prior degrees is to have accreditable work experience. At any rate they have to pass an access exam for entering the mid or upper level formative cycle.

Finally, in Spain today, with regards to basic education, they are applying the LOGSE educational reform. This establishes the replacement of the earlier law "*Graduado de Educación Obligatoria*" by the *GES (Graduado de Educación Secundaria)*, which implies two more years of schooling. This means that everyone, whose degree is the old title, has to validate their title with the GES (which are two more years), so that the adult schools today are establishing ways to be able to carry out this validation. In Catalonia, the *Departament de benestar* (Department of Welfare) of the Generalitat is responsible for education; they establish a period of three months to attain the title, organized in trimesters. In any case, the centres end up defining the GES curriculum, in the centre projects.



5. MODELS OF ADULT EDUCATION

The two main models of Adult Education are: 1) the scholastic model; and 2) the social model. Óscar Medina carried out a study where he analyses the trends of these two models, as well as the characteristics of each one. Other authors have also worked on this theme, such as J. García Carrasco (1997) and Agustín Requejo (1995), among others. From Óscar Medina's analysis, we make the following summary:

Scholastic model of Adult Education	Social model of Adult Education
<p>Model based on instruction and not learning. Model that excludes space and time. It does not recognise competencies obtained outside of the school context or outside of scholastically regulated time. Model of dependent student body. Staff as a figure limited to applying and administering education. Additionally, it identifies learning with the teaching of the professor; ultimately a belief that limits the role of the professor to work in the classroom, without recognising his/her role as social educator. Closed curricular model, with small or no relation to society. Excessively bureaucratic model of organization, where the organization of the learning and educational practice can only be done in one way. It is a rigid and standardized model that does not accept different ways of acting.</p>	<p>Learning over instruction. A more open form of learning. It takes into account non-formal forms of learning and experiences. At the same time it breaks with the traditional spacial-temporal relation. New educational goals: to educate for change, accredit prior learning and experiences, and connected to local and community development. Participants: participants in Adult Education, with their own experience and culture, with skills developed and competencies for developing activities in daily life. Educators: educators distance themselves from the scholastic model of learning and also in relationship education has with the community. Educational system: Adult Education must be shaped as an autonomous system, increasingly more separate from the formal system.</p>

Source: written by A. Medina and R. Flecha based on the findings of O. Medina (1997).

Scholastic Model

The scholastic model is based on the identification of basic education with curricular design of formal education, that is, with compulsory education that is given at school age. Therefore, they identify the EBA with compulsory education for boys and girls.



As Medina says, the result is that according to the scholastic model, only formal learning imparted in the classroom is valuable. Forms of learning are recognized as such when they are learned in the school, within this formal context. In this way, all forms of knowledge that people acquire throughout their lives (in informal arenas like work, in leisure spaces, in the home, through activities of self-teaching) do not have the same recognition, so that the scholastic model becomes a significant barrier to education.

On the other hand, and completely related to this is the conception of space and time. From the point of view of the scholastic model all pedagogical practice has to be carried out within the classroom. Outside of these spaces learning is not recognised as such, and therefore, these forms of learning are not valued in the classroom. The classroom becomes an exclusive space.

In terms of the student body, in the scholastic model the students are completely dependent, characterised by the absence of critical capacity, given that what they value is precisely the contrary: they expect students to be receptors of the words emitted by the teacher in the classroom.

Referring to the curriculum, the scholastic model deals with a decontextualised curriculum separate from social needs, and therefore, without any utility for preparing people to be competent in everyday life. On the contrary, in the scholastic model the teachers define the needs and design the curriculum in terms of what suits them, not based on what people will need outside of school (in the labor market, for example).

Thus, we see that the scholastic model is a very rigid and bureaucratized model, where they only consider one way of giving classes, and it is the people who study that must mold to the organizational dynamics of the school.

Social Model

The social model⁹ comes from the recognition of the forms of knowledge that people already have. It is a model that not only includes teaching in formal contexts (that is, within the school), but also takes into account the informal and non-formal contexts, because it is not based on the conception of learning as if it were a process of instruction. It is based on the concept of learning that can take place in all arenas of daily life.

⁹ Various investigations and studies have been done in different disciplines like sociology, psychology, anthropology and pedagogy. Castells (1997-1998), Erickson (1981), Schaie (1983), Cole and Scribner (1977), Habermas (1987), Freire (1997), among others, have made contributions and overcome the conception of compensatory adult education.



EBA is understood to be a process of lifelong learning, and a tool that allows people to overcome situations of social exclusion. According to the social model people have the right to access education, in order to have the same opportunities as people who already have an academic degree.

From the perspective of the social model, the aims of education are educating for change, and accrediting learning and knowledge that people have acquired throughout their lives. It is a model that understands learning as a process of transmission of contextualised forms of knowledge, linked with experiences from daily life (and, therefore, useful learning).

On the other hand, people who are studying are adults, with a wealth of experiences that they can bring to the development of a class. According to the social model of learning the relation between teacher and student is egalitarian. Participants are not unthinking receptors of the teachers explanations, rather they adopt a critical attitude and contribute all of there experiences to the class.

Briefly, we highlight the following characteristics of the social model:

- In education, every participant contributes his/her knowledge to learn mutually.
- The themes that generate learning are chosen through rigorous research in which the participants participate equally to the researchers.
- There is no significant difference between educators and participants: everyone in the classroom has the same opportunity to speak.
- The language that is used is that of the participants, with the aim of reaching mutual understanding.

Finally, the social model¹⁰ surpasses the erroneous approaches of compensatory education. It is always based on the characteristic traits of adults, which are very different from that of boys and girls. They are traits that must be taken into account in all theoretical perspectives and in the subsequent pedagogical practice.

The social model of education is defended by all of the scientific communities (AERC- Adult Education Research Conference from the U.S. and Canada, ESREA- European Society for Research on Education of Adults): all of the international organisms (UNESCO), internationally renowned authors (Freire, Jarvis, Mezirow) and prestigious universities. They carry out theoretical support and have been committed to the defense

¹⁰ The social model of Adult Education is defended by diverse democratic associations of participants and entities. For example, we highlight movements like FACEPA (Federación de Asociaciones Culturales y Educativas de Personas Adultas), an entity that integrates associations of participants who manage their projects and in the same line there is AEPA (Asociación de Educación de Personas Adultas de Cataluña), and CONFAPEA (Confederación de Asociaciones de Educación de Personas Adultas). The development of the social model from organizations of participants in Adult Education (or EBA) has become one of the most important movements in Adult Education.



of the aims of transforming the traditional academic model to the social model.



CREA – Centre for Social and Educational Research

6. CONCRETE EXPERIENCES IN ADULT EDUCATION: TWO CASE STUDIES.

Adult School at La Verneda – Sant Martí

The school at La Verneda¹¹ is a school for adults situated in the Civic Center of La Verneda-St. Martí. It was founded in 1978. Through the initiatives of the people in the neighborhood, an adult education project was built that provided a public space where people could share knowledge and learning.

It was the people of the neighborhood who, with a lot of enthusiasm, created this learning centre founded on the contributions of the community. It is a centre that has played a part in the transformation that took place in Adult Education in all of Spain at the end of the 70s, and has demonstrated that learning is not limited to childhood and adolescence.

Different people attend the school: young and old, men and women, with or without studies, and so forth. They aim to create opportunities for as many people as possible. Therefore, there is a broad schedule with very different activities, like literacy classes, Spanish for foreigners, English, computers, literary gatherings, painting, etc. Of all of them, it is literature that has received the greatest interest, which has resulted in many recognized authors being invited to the gatherings.

The functioning of the school at La Verneda is based on dialogic learning therefore one of its main characteristics is egalitarian dialogue between educators and participants. The experiences at the school have proven that equality among everyone is the way to learn; all opinions and arguments are taken into account equally and are defended and criticized based on the content of their arguments and not on the status or academic level of the speaker.

It is very important to have a careful plan of the class, the contents to work in each session, and participants always must know what is happening in the classroom, why things are done in a certain way and they have the option of changing it. The consequences of this are many: on the one hand, there is a relationship of collaboration between people which makes way for more knowledge and quality of arguments, and on other hand, there is an atmosphere of familiarity and belonging to the school.

Another one of the defining characteristics of the school at la Verneda is democratic participation. Both teachers as well as participants are committed to the management and joint work in decision-making and responsibilities. To this end,

¹¹ There is an article published in *Harvard Educational Review* which explains the way this school for adults functions. See Sánchez Aroca, M. 1999: “La Verneda – Sant Martí: A school where people dare to dream”, in *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 69, nº 3. Fall.



the participants have created two associations: AGORA and HEURA; the first one represents the participants in the decision-making of the school, and the second, made up of women, fights against the barriers that women encounter. The volunteers also participate in the management, and once a year, in the assembly, a neighborhood representative and from the Civic Center also participate in the decision-making.

The way in which this democratic form of functioning at la Verneda is maintained is that there are no decisions accepted that do not take into account the interests of all of the people involved, no positions of power accepted, and in the case that any arise, they are fought against unanimously.

The fact that the school functions, in an environment of collaboration and solidarity, grounded on the principle that people have the same abilities when we have the same opportunities to learn has provided opportunities and abilities for people who never would have thought they had them.

In order to facilitate access to the Adult School at La Verneda -Sant Martí for the recent arrivals to the Centre, there is an initial interview, during the time of formalizing the inscription, where there is an accreditation of the knowledge and experience that adults have acquired throughout their lives. They also accredit the academic courses that people have taken previously, that are recognized with the presentation of the documentation.

The initial interview is done through an egalitarian dialogue; it takes place between the people who are doing the inscription and the recent arrival. The people who do the inscriptions are collaborators, educators and participants in the Centre for Adults at la Verneda-Sant Martí. The newcomer never sits in front of a table but next to the person who will do the accreditation. There is a welcoming climate, one that favors egalitarian dialogue.

The interview is carried out with each person who arrives at the Centre for the first time, for example immigrants who want to take classes in oral Catalan or Spanish also have an interview, through which their needs are learned.

Accreditation for the Modular System allows the placement of the person in the corresponding level of Mathematics, Social and Natural Sciences, Spanish, Catalan and English. Once all of the modules are taken, the person can receive their basic title.

There is a written model that is used for the interview for incoming participants, which does not have to be done in an exhaustive, ordered or literal fashion, but it is a list of ideas that allows for the recommendation of a level and adequate models.

During the interview the following areas are explored:



- Motives of those who come to the centre, and the vision that they have of adult education and its possibilities.
- Studies carried out previously (school and other types) and how long ago.
- Current occupation or last job that worked at and how long ago.
- Entities in which he/she participates and hobbies.
- Writing: if they use it normally, quality of writing, spelling mistakes and whether or not he/she likes to write.
- Mathematics: mastery of basic operations, and the use of instruments like a calculator and automatic cash machine, use of numerical calculations in daily life.
- Catalan: level of comprehension, conversation, reading and writing.
- English: level of comprehension, conversation, reading and writing, and if he/she studied it in secondary school.
- Skills for summarizing and selecting information.
- Reading: whether he/she likes to read, if they read the newspaper and with what frequency.

OMNIA

In recent years, we have been seeing how there are many changes taking place in our society in all spheres. The new society that is taking shape around all of these changes is called the Dialogic Society, and implies changes on all levels: in the professions, at work, in education, familiar relations, etc. On the other hand, in the Dialogic Society, more than ever we become oriented towards an exchange between cultures, which means promoting that which unites us as well as respecting our differences.

So, currently, people who have the ability and know how to develop them with the technologies, have many more opportunities, given that these abilities are sought out in the labor market, and are also important in the development of the lives of each person. Social inclusion and the possibility of social promotion are conditioned by the acquisition of these skills and the mastery of these media.

Nevertheless, not everyone has access to the use of these new technologies and the opportunities that these offer: these are the people who are the most susceptible of suffering social exclusion in society.

OMNIA point

In light of this, Omnia point promotes access to the new technologies for everyone in the neighborhood and community. It is a community project, which makes it a priority for educational opportunities to arrive to all of the people in a democratic way, that is, those who have and have had the fewest opportunities to accessing the new technologies can have it. Thus, the Omnia point offers free access to the



technological infrastructure and promotes the participation in processes of participation through different types of activities, while fostering ways of doing and working required in the new Information Society.

Part of the purpose of the Omnia point is centered, also on the creation of meaning in relation to this access. People build their own meaning through access to the new technologies and this fosters transformations on a personal level as well as in their surroundings.

The Omnia points foster every participants ability to acquire the skills and procedures that are required by the Information Society, such as the constant learning of contents, team work, knowing how to choose relevant information, learning new ways of doing things, knowing how to interrelate concepts, and learning through experience and through the exchange of knowledge.

At the same time, the act of “being” in the Omnia points (at least at la Verneda, because each one of them functions in a different way) means the definition of the norms of participation and functioning between all of the participants. This helps, for example, to overcome a fear of the new technologies, to resolve the lack of information, work with people of initial levels and promote an environment of high expectations in the Omnia points.

On the whole, it is being in the project through active participation. All of the spheres of the project are developed with the contributions of the participants. The Omnia point is constructed from the contributions of each person and from the richness of the group. The management of this must be democratic, organized by the participants.

The Omnia point is defined by actions that are considered relevant for attaining the objectives that are proposed. There are activities that have been defined in these actions, like hours of independent learning, in which people have the technological infrastructure at their disposition to carry out tasks that they want, organized courses, work groups, etc. That is, different possibilities for using the technology as an instrument and tool for their lives.

Methodological Structure of Omnia

The Omnia points are based on a methodological structure that links theory and practice in the day to day of the Omnia points. This methodological structure consists of a Base, and basic Elements that must be elaborated by each Omnia Point.

The Base



The Omnia Point is sustained by a Base, which is made up of seven principles of dialogic learning¹². This base is reflected in the practice, which is defined and enriched enriched by the nuances that all of the participants, dynamizers and agents of each community and neighborhood bring to each one of the Points.

The Pillars

On the basis of the Methodological Structure of Omnia lie the so-called Pillars. These pillars are as follows:

- People: are the life of the project, in that, the project is for them and made through their participation and contributions.
- Contents: are the aspects referring to contents and skills that must be acquired from and the organization of training activities.
- Actions: these are understood as the initiatives that the project must take with the aim of consolidating a road towards the future.
- Infrastructure: this deals with working out ways to fully take advantage of the resources and possibilities that are available.
- Organization: it includes the organization of schedules, way of administrating computers with regard to the people who want to use them.

Each one of these pillars are present in the seven principles of the Base of the Methodological Structure of Omnia, and for each one of the Pillars there is a series of basic Elements to work on.

The Elements

In order to guarantee the presence of the basic Elements contained in each pillar, that must be kept in mind when building a Technological Point they have been explained in detail. Certain objectives and concrete actions have been set for making them possible.

Analysis of the Needs and Competencies

The Omnia project is built on the basis of the needs and competencies of the people. There are three avenues that they use, in order to become aware of the needs and the competencies of the people who use it:

- Asking the participants.
- Observing in the classroom.
- Dialogue.

¹² Flecha, R. 1997. *Compartiendo palabras*. Barcelona: Paidós. The seven principles are: the equality of differences, solidarity, transformation, instrumental learning, meaning creation, egalitarian dialogue and cultural intelligence.



Educational needs.

There are two types of educational needs: specific and collective. The collective needs are the whole of the abilities that everyone needs, because they are required in the Information Society. They are the abilities that guarantee the inclusion of people in the labor force and promote their opportunities for social promotion. In order to analyze the specific needs of the people who will receive an education they must ask them what their needs are, what they want to do, given that one cannot intuit or organize an activity based on what we believe are the needs of people. It is only by speaking with people that we can define an appropriate and effective activity.

Discovering competencies.

Normally training programs are designed based on deficit theories,¹³ which consider participants as lacking skills and competencies, and they place the teacher as the “expert” over the participant.

To avoid this, in Omnia they do not design the training programs based on the idea that participants do not have knowledge, rather they take advantage of their skills and competencies and they are included in the whole training process. The program is not based on the idea that people “don’t know”, or that “they are lacking”...but on the skills that they already have. Strategies are elaborated to include participants during the entire training process.

Just as knowing about people’s needs is important for defining activities, learning about people’s competencies is important in order to orient people in the Omnia Point, with regards to their participation and accreditation in the sphere of training. Another very important advantage to recognize with respect to the competencies is that they can guide the methodology that is used in the sessions, since these are organized on the basis of the abilities that are already known in order to get to new ones that we want to acquire through the application of the Point.



¹³ See specifications of the Scholastic model above.
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7. AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL.

Our proposal for the innovative focus in adult education is based on dialogic learning. It deals with a learning model that has seven fundamental principles:

- Egalitarian dialogue
- Cultural intelligence
- Transformation
- Instrumental dimension
- Meaning creation
- Solidarity
- Equality of differences

The first principle is egalitarian dialogue. According to this principle, the contributions of the different people are taken into account and valued according to their content and not based on the position of power of the speaker; therefore, when evaluating the experience of people, they should not only take into account the criteria of the evaluator, but also the opinion of the person about his/her own life.

Secondly, cultural intelligence must be taken into account. Cultural intelligence is a broader concept than those normally used of intelligence. It is not reduced to the cognitive dimension based on teleological action, rather it considers the plurality of the dimensions of human interaction. It encompasses academic and practical intelligence and the other abilities for language and action of human beings that make it possible for them to arrive at agreements in different social spheres.

Everyone has cultural intelligence and learning abilities, but not everyone expresses it in the same arenas: there are people who are more skilled in the academic context and others in the more practical context. The inequality between people occurs when we prefer one way of doing things and certain explanations over others, not with respect to their ability to provide explanations, but based on ascientific criteria. The principle of cultural intelligence establishes that all forms of intelligence (academic or practical, inductive or deductive, elaborated or simple) are valid if they really help to explain what happens in the world and/or resolve problematic situations that arise; and there aren't certain explanations that are more valid than others.

Thus, the mechanisms for accreditation of experience must take into account, in addition to the knowledge acquired through academic channels, traditionally considered more important, those studies that were attained through practical experiences in different contexts.



The third principle is transformation, given that dialogic learning transforms relations between people and their surroundings. It is a form of learning that is based on Freire's premises (1997/1995), which affirm that we are beings of transformation and not adaptation. It is an education and form of learning aimed at change, in order to break with a reductionist discourse based on conservative theories about the impossibility of transformation. They use arguments that only consider ways in which the system can be maintained through reproduction. Dialogic modernity defends the possibility and need for egalitarian transformations as a result of dialogue.

The fourth principle is the instrumental dimension. All learning has an instrumental dimension, that is, it serves a purpose; it transmits a series of concrete forms of knowledge, etc. The instrumental dimension does not exclude or oppose dialogue, and it implies that one never has to lower the level of expectations in learning. Furthermore, it seeks formulas to assure that everyone learns. Dialogic learning adopts all of the aspects that are agreed upon to learn. Thus, it includes the instrumental part that is intensified and deepened from a critique of the technocratic colonization of learning.

The creation of meaning is another principle of dialogic learning. In order to overcome the colonization of the market and bureaucratic colonization and to avoid the imposition of a utilitarian logic that reaffirms itself without considering the identities and individualities that we all possess, we must foster learning that makes possible an interaction between people that is guided by them. In this way, they can create meaning for each one of us.

In sixth place, is the principle of solidarity as an expression of the democratization of the different social contexts and struggles against exclusion. Solidarity generates change; commitment is the vehicle for making our societies advance and it is the only basis on which we can ground egalitarian and dialogic learning.

The final principle of dialogic learning is the equality of differences. This is contrary to the principle of diversity, which has governed some of the educational reforms. The culture of difference that forgets equality leads to exclusionary situations to be reinforced as diversity. It fosters adaption and not transformation; in short, creating, in many cases, greater inequalities. The equality of differences means a respect for the differences of all people and offers them the same opportunities. So, from this practice, accreditation of prior experience should be able to provide people with the same opportunities to develop; based on the different experiences and forms of knowledge of each person.



8. CONCLUSIONS.

The conclusion of this report is that an innovative focus that promotes Adult Education has to take into account the following aspects:

- Ways of recognizing prior experience of adults that matriculate to a specific course of study.
- An innovative pedagogy, based on the principles that are grounded in the possibilities of the participants in Adult Education, as is the case in dialogic learning.
- An intelligent and close application of the information and communication technologies in class.
- Pedagogy of maximums, based on an educational model that springs from the knowledge of people and not their deficits.

In the second report that we present, we make a more detailed proposal following these elements.



NEW TRENDS IN WIDENING PARTICIPATION TO LEARNING



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CONTENS

Introduction

Indications about methodology and pedagogical philosophy for transformation: shaping a dialogical alternative

Innovative initiatives: certification of prior experience and the information society for all.

Conclusions.



Innovative focuses for the promotion, management and administration of adult education and new trends in full participation for learning: practical applications and proposals.

1-Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to provide proposals to the volunteers and teachers who work in Adult Education, in order to support a change in perspective towards *dialogic processes* that contribute to overcoming factors of chronic exclusion that are conventionally present in what we call the *scholastic model*, which is in opposition to the *social model* that we propose. We have already referred to the "theoretical" differences between both models. The proposal of the *social and dialogical model* that we maintain, has a "practical" material and tangible reference in the experience at the Adult School at La Verneda-San Martí, where the sustained effort maintained during years, to apply the communicative methodology has generated innovative practices with excellent results in educational, social and personal promotion of adult participants. These efforts are framed in a dialogic perspective and from a communicative pedagogical philosophy that integrates a theoretical framework from which our proposals are born. Simultaneously, they are closely connected to experiences that have demonstrated its effectiveness in overcoming the inadequate, insufficient or sterile practices, that we inherit and are perpetuated by the *scholastic model*. They are those practices in Adult Education that continue to consider individuals as objects with deficits or handicaps, rather than subjects of their personal transformation and of their surroundings.

2-Indications about methodology and pedagogical philosophy for transformation: shaping a dialogical alternative.

Addressing Adult Education from the dialogic perspective implies a triple transformation in which the methodological, didactic and epistemological levels are interwoven. This means, in the first place, that teachers adopt a role of guide, which prioritises the needs of the participants over the interests of the "specialists". The teachers who adopt a unidirectional role of *administrator of knowledge* and who use positions of power over the validity of the arguments they present. On the other hand, the dialogic perspective results in the *de-bureaucratisation of learning*, that is therefore radically democratised by being re-appropriated by the subject participants: the adults.

We part from the premise that there is no innovation without the aspiration for transformation. This is one of the fundamental points of dialogic learning that represents an alternative to other models that do not address the problem in a sufficiently decided way. A form of Adult Education that is merely palliative, that does not trust people's abilities, does not guarantee equality of opportunities as a condition for the development of abilities, it only offers half solutions. The dialogic experience that we propose in CREA, on the contrary, call on people as subjects of transformation through intersubjective dialogue. According to Freire, dialogue is fundamental for



epistemological construction. Educational organisation and management from a dialogical perspective distances itself from a positivist instrumental rationality and moves towards an educational space that becomes a context that is open to participants exercising their epistemological curiosity without any restrictions. A pillar of pedagogical philosophy that we maintain from CREA is that dialogue confers adult participants with confidence in that they can live up to high expectations in their educational process. Adopting the dialogic perspective, curtails what Freire called *the banking system of education*, that is adaptative and authoritarian; it is displaced in order to be replaced by a *critical and transformative educational perspective*.

In this process, it is essential to integrate the voices of the participants, who stop being passive objects, receptors of instruction and become active subjects of transformation. Therefore, the dialogic perspective in Adult Education aims to provide answers to the needs and demands of the information society, like moving deeper into the "dialogic turn" of our society. In this sense, our proposals stress the importance of providing instruments for the development of skills for the selection and processing of information, the general planning of contents that make it possible to face the constant changes that characterise the information society, as well as the recognition of communicative skills that people have acquired throughout their lives. As we will see, these and other aspects stand out in the examples of APEL and the management of the OMNIA Points are provided, or in the impact it has on adults being able to materialise their high educational expectations.

One of the main concerns of dialogic learning is to be an effective instrument for creating optimal situations for intersubjective dialogue in conditions of equality, that are both ways of overcoming inequalities. Without this consideration, Adult Education will not fill the narrow margins of reproductive education, that renounces outright the promotion of high expectations. An essential aspect of the dialogic model of learning that we propose resides, taking Freire's idea, in the fact that it's feasible to *change difficulties into possibilities*, and that it is not simply about letting go of standardised knowledge in the interest of providing "an equalivalency" to adults, without contemplating intersubjective dialogue. It is through dialogic learning, therefore, that people can develop all of their possibilities and communicative abilities in a holistic way, interconnecting learning and experience, the instrumental dimension of knowledge and the *lifeworld*.

The pillar of the dialogic model is made up of 7 basic principles, that have already been mentioned, but to which it is worth returning, given that the dialogic methodology of the "day to day" is directly fed by them, and they constitute an applicable model that we present in a schematic model:



Principles of dialogic learning

Egalitarian dialogue	Seeking agreement between participants with regard to the validity of arguments and not from positions of power: in egalitarian dialogue both teachers and students learn through providing arguments and critical reflections, a dynamic that neutralises the teacher turning to exercising a corporate principle of authority, which is a generator of abuses against adult participants. Horizontal participation is reinforced without devaluing the contributions and reflections of adults.
Cultural intelligence	We all have cultural intelligence. Communicative skills developed by people in multiple spheres of the <i>life world</i> can be transferred to the field of training in Adult Schools that are open to the experience of the people. Adult Education should not be a process of "re-education", but it should consider and integrate their communicative experience. In this sense, the APEL policies of accreditation of prior experience is useful in that they allow people to not renounce, or "split" their lives by establishing a before and an after with regard to access to studies: life experience (skills acquired through work, in relation with other people, in other spheres) is re-evaluated as knowledge.
Transformation	Personal transformation and that of the surroundings is a consequence of the participatory process: personal achievements made by adult participants are also reflected socially, for example, in relation to the family. The experience with the Adult School at La Verneda-San Martí shows that the changes and achievements initiated <i>bring</i> other new ones, changing the participants' perspective of themselves, but also that of the people of in their surroundings, witnesses of how exclusion constructed on the basis of <i>deficits</i> (lack of Secondary degree, illiteracy, inexperience with the new information technologies) can be overcome.
The instrumental dimension	The instrumental dimension of dialogic learning recognises how something is feasible and possible to learn through dialogue, linking the dialogic method to the attainment of noticeable results. It is based on the assurance that people, when factors of inequalities are suppressed, can unfold possibilities. It is an erroneous belief that dialogic learning is an educational experiment that is well intentioned that rejects instrumental knowledge. The dialogic perspective opposes the <i>technocratic colonisation of instrumental learning</i> . This is characterised by the operation of corporate interests along with the interests of the majority. Useful learning is that which capacitates and makes possible new training opportunities, allowing us to change with the times, without mechanically adapting to them.



Meaning Creation	Meaning that we give to our lives is amplified with the acquisition of new skills and abilities gained through intersubjective dialogue: through relating to each other we learn about ourselves. Meaning arises when we learn to decolonise our daily life from external impositions and expand our autonomy.
Solidarity	The break with exclusionary barriers generates a dynamic of solidarity and co-operation between people: the community of people who learn becomes a space of solidarity.
Equality of differences	Diversity without disregarding the equality of people and different collectives (race, gender or age are at times factors of discrimination that the dialogic experience in Adult Education dissolves through egalitarian treatment, but without resorting to a homogenising reductionism).

In summary, dialogic learning promotes the use of dialogue in all social relations. For this reason, it is a tool of transformation that transcends the pedagogical, addressing society itself. The social extension of this perspective supposes not losing sight of the interests, motivations and aspirations of adults, in the face of the *scholastic model* that advocates for a closed curriculum, with little relation to society. Dialogic learning aspires, once again, to present a viable alternative to that model, which is still present in many of the experiences in Adult Education. To respond to this goal they have fostered experiences that have demonstrated that they work and provide results because they do not only respond to the structural demands that people must adapt to, but also the demands desired by the social actors. The turnout of the participants and the fact that they organise the activities in which they are involved, beyond being mere users of the service, is a factor that significantly activates the feeling that participants themselves have ownership of the activity in which they participate. The innovation that is built through participation has, in this sense, greater guarantees of reaching its objectives.

3- Innovative initiatives: certification of prior experience and the information society for all.

The relevance of APEL policies in Adult Education was stressed earlier. In effect, to facilitate the active participation of people through the recognition of their prior experience does not mean “classification” that predetermines or limits the expectations of adult participants, but assuring that participants positively evaluate their learning experiences, and accredit them in terms of the modular system. Therefore, this means overcoming barriers and recognising that we learn from what we have lived through and done, outside of formal studies. It does not mean making adult participants feel like they are “starting from scratch”, which would signify ignoring and devaluing their abilities. On the contrary, the experiences of adult participants are considered to be a valient legacy instead of dismissed as irrelevant. Participants are treated on equal terms, without underestimating their forms of knowledge acquired outside of academic contexts (work, domestic, associations, etc.). The result is that the expectations of the



participants are reinforced through the application of dialogue and the APEL policies, even though in the case of the Adult School at La Verneda-San Martí, they lack official recognition, and functionally serve to orient and situate participants to the appropriate level in their studies or in the modules that are at their reach.

On the other hand, the training in skills with the new technologies and the tools of the information society also tend to overcome situations of exclusion that exist in our society. In this particular case, it has to do with extending participation in the information society to those who traditionally have remained on the margins from accessing it. In this sense, the running of the Omnia Point at the Adult School at La Verneda-San Martí has proven to be a very useful experience for the participants of the Adult School, always from a democratic, horizontal and cooperative form of organisation. The increased number of users of this community service illustrates its important function as an element for motivating the neighborhood. The fact that this experience is positive encourages the maintenance and extension of this service, run from a perspective that is democratic, open and prioritises the needs of those with the least opportunities to have access to the new technologies - clearly demonstrating its social utility. In effect, the ability for selecting and processing information is the best cognitive instrument for develop in today's society. Putting these technical resources at the reach of the participants in a relational framework based on dialogue and reflection has fostered, without a doubt, the development of new abilities with which people who have participated in learning have incorporated themselves in the information society.

4-Conclusions.

Therefore, the deepening of democratic experiences has 3 levels: methodological, didactic and epistemological. Each one of these levels is permeable to dialogic learning, and thus different experiences guarantee it. We consider that the initiatives mentioned constitute an example of how concrete proposals expand the field of innovations in terms of Adult Education. Contributing to the promotion of egalitarian practices that overcome old barriers (like prejudices in the academic world towards accreditation of prior experience) and encouraging the creation of spaces that foster the optimisation of training opportunities that the information society offers (through the Omnia Points run in a horizontal fashion) represent examples that both innovation and radicalization of educational practices go hand in hand. Both proposals are situated, therefore, in a dialogic framework and in a social model of Adult Education, which promote abilities that are mutually developed through intersubjective cooperation. This aspect is fundamental insofar as learning from intersubjective communication acts as a method for catalysing and propelling new and contagious transformations. To satisfy the expectations that these innovative initiatives have generated requires expanding the projects as well as providing it with a *dialogic form of functioning*, from an organisation that is completely democratic that guarantees the active involvement of its participants.

