

ELINET Symposium

Lifelong education of adults facing new cultural and linguistic challenges

Chairpersons: Aydin Durgunoğlu and Tiziana Mascia
Introduction and discussion: Daphne Greenberg

Across the world, many adults face cultural and linguistic challenges as they are trying to adapt to changing contexts in their lives. Some are refugees adapting to their host countries. Some are adults with interrupted education facing the demands of new social and workplace conditions. The four presentations in this symposium will describe innovative approaches that address the lifelong education needs of adults who are facing changes in their lives and that enable them to participate more fully in their communities.

Presentation 1: Adults going back to the workplace and learning new skills: Findings from research

J. Alamprese, Abt Associates, USA

Increasingly, adults' success in the workplace requires their development of new skills for a new economy. This presentation examines the results from studies of interventions that were designed to increase low-skilled adults' attainment of secondary education credentials and to aid their transition to post-secondary vocational education. The interventions included accelerated courses in adult basic skills education, and a texting intervention to encourage adult learners' educational participation. The interventions were tested through experimental studies conducted in community colleges in the state of Oregon in the United States. In the presentation, I will discuss findings concerning adults' development of numeracy skills, their attainment of a secondary credentials, and their enrolment in postsecondary education.

Presentation 2: We and the others: The migrants who leave their country. Literacy projects to address cultural diversity and inclusion

F. Cristiano, Centre for Books and Reading, Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities; Tiziana Mascia, Free University of Bozen - Bolzano, Italy

In recent years, the phenomenon of migrants leaving their countries in search of a better future has assumed frightening proportions. There are those who would like to welcome them all, those who ask for serious regulation and those who would like to close the borders. However, in such contexts literacy projects can foster better access to information and encourage the involvement of people who are traditionally excluded from the fruits of cultural production.

The presentation focuses on the process of selection for and the findings of the literacy projects promoted by the Italian Centre for Books and Reading including: a) "Libraries and Inclusion", which aims to transform libraries in cultural centres in order to overcome many forms of discrimination, and to offer services and opportunities for participation, exchange and dialogue between different groups, migrants and other minorities; and b) "Scriviamoci" in which young adults from more than 100 Italian schools were asked to write an essay on the subject of migration with the aim of promoting inclusion and raising awareness of other cultures.

Presentation 3: Empowering young women not in education or employment

M. Canturk, D. Asik, A. Sahinkaya, A. Durgunoğlu, Eca Oztan, AÇEV, Turkey

Among young women aged 15-35 in Turkey, almost half are not in education or in employment. Their schooling is interrupted and they are facing cultural challenges that prevent them from participating more fully in the decision processes in their homes, communities and society. This presentation describes an intervention that is aimed at developing the knowledge and the capabilities of these young women. The results are described using the multifaceted framework of empowerment, analysing the enhanced knowledge, awareness, self efficacy and active participation of the women who have completed the program.

Presentation 4: Developing the language and literacy skills of Syrian refugee women in Turkey

Aydin Durgunoğlu, University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

Turkey now hosts almost 3.5 million Syrian refugees who are fleeing from war. The first study examined the profiles and needs of Syrian young women. They had limited education in

their home countries, had children at a young age and expressed their primary need as learning to speak, read and write Turkish. The formal education system could not accommodate the needs of this group. In addition, they were not allowed to go too far from their homes and neighbourhood. To address these challenges, a small pilot study was set up in which a group of Syrian women met in the house of a neighbour to use an online Turkish literacy program (www.acevdeokuyaz.org). This presentation will describe the intervention, its results, and the implications for refugees in general.