Linking Citizenship and Employability

Analytical Review of Practices and Initial Conclusions

By Laurent Labrot, Sciences Po Grenoble & Association EDIAS
with an introduction by G. Pirker, E. Rapetti, N. Zimmermann

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Democracy and
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in Europe

BLUE LINES

1. Introduction

By Georg Pirker, Elisa Rapetti, Nils-Eyk Zimmermann
Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE network)

This publication is published in the frame of the LICEAL project. **LI**nking **C**itizenship and **E**mployability perspectives in **A**dult **L**earning strategies and practices aims to develop learners' capacity, adequately supported by educators, to self-assess and undertake learning and personal development projects contributing to social inclusion and employability. The project explored, collected and analysed practices which promote the development of adult learners' competences both relating the social-civic dimension and to employability. With the analytical review we conducted a primary exploration to understand in a qualitative way the experiences that promote overcoming the traditional separation between citizenship and employability training. The aim is to stimulate a reflection combining the two fields and to provide concrete, structuring elements drawn from exemplary projects carried out by professionals in Europe in recent years. The 15 case studies/practices presented in this publication give concrete example of approaches, models and activities guided by this intent.

The text integrates the work of the partnership on the basis of the analysis developed by Laurent Labrot (Association EDIAS) and a consecutive validation phase which consulted several stakeholders in order to verify the relevance of the findings we came out with the selected practices. The analysis explores the practices in terms of target audience and pedagogical methods. Moreover, it focuses on the cluster of competences included in the different practices and why they are relevant in today's societies (democracies).

1.1 Linking citizenship-employability in adult learning

Securing a decent life in times of challenging economical, ecological, social and political transformations that affect large fields in our European societies is an ever demanding task. For people inside and outside the labor market, on its peripheries (with growing numbers of people in irregular labor), for skilled workers and those in need of upskilling, for people who enter the labor market and whose competences yet need to be reflected in validation and acquisition systems. And also for the validation and recognition systems which themselves are in need of being adjusted to changing societal realities.

Coping with demanding and fast changing labor markets and work requirements, the adapting of, and reasoning about, transferability of competences from one field into another context (in example social to professional) gains more importance. In the same way this has consequences for individuals on the micro-level as learners, on a meso-level for the transforming labor environment (i.e., recognition and validation systems and approaches, acknowledgement of prior learning). Furthermore, this applies also to the macro-level taking into account the embeddedness of people and learning within the overall societal, economic and political conditions affected by and affecting these transformations.

The transformations challenge all, but they are increasingly stronger for people with access difficulties (like low-skilled), for people facing qualification gaps, people who are in need to re-steering due to the transition of their working fields, or people who face for various reasons barriers in entering the labor markets at all (e.g. no papers, working permission, etc.).

In particular, a large development is job polarisation, the decrease of middle-skilled jobs resulting from a higher demand for high-skilled and low-skilled jobs. The OECD predicts, that 14% of jobs are at high risk of automation and that 32% of jobs could be radically transformed (Nedelkoska & Quintini, 2018). Structural barriers prevent persons from leaving behind "involuntary part-time employment" in the lower ranks of the service sector (Peugny 2019) or settings of "irregular labor" (e.g. fictitious freelancing, platform work).

As a consequence, fewer and fewer can count on the post-war labor integration model – internal advancement in a company – or on leaving behind the irregular labor without broader external support. If entry to the labor market is one challenge, the other is to have a perspective to become employed according to the own abilities and potentials and in accordance with accessing and enjoying on full scale social and labor rights.

Here, education has the important task of mitigating problems that are in manifold way structural in nature. A modern approach to this is to train people not only along the (in the marginal area also only marginal) professional requirements, but to enable learners to see, develop and use the breadth of their competences. However, successful application of education and training means to apply these competences under the conditions described above.

Education should, on the one hand, help learners to become aware of the concrete barriers and hurdles and their causes and also who in (and how) civil society, state, and economy addresses these. On the other hand, learning should empower people for taking a step to eliminating hurdles – individual ones the same as those that only can be changed politically.

From an educational perspective, we speak about **combinations of individual learning, democracy-related learning and support for social engagement/civil society inclusion.** This finding leads to the demand that vocational training, with its widespread thinking in clearly defined pathways, must be accompanied by a **pedagogical openness** to the resources and needs of learners; especially to the competences and skills they have acquired or can develop in various social contexts outside of work. Thus, the view on competences changes from professional to transversal, from hierarchical to intermingling and adapting.

"In fact, the word 'path' has come to overshadow the skills that have often been at the heart of pedagogical thinking in recent years. The key to the structure and even success of any project of this type is to have a well-defined pathway that will enable us to gradually take charge of these disadvantaged groups, while also dealing with their often differing potential. These are realities that are often overlooked in evaluations, which focus solely on traditional teaching methods and success rates, to the detriment of the conviviality and holistic, humanist content created" (Labrot, p. 17).

If citizenship competence is the ability to actively and successfully participate in social, political and cultural life and the enjoyment of democratic and fundamental rights, this entails the ability to participate in and shape the public sphere, to contribute and be heard. Along the way, one acquires skills in solving problems, dealing with others, seeing oneself as capable of taking initiative, or creating and using social structures for one's own goals. Certainly such ability supports people also in the labor context and also has a positive effect on the personal/social spheres. Conversely, skills acquired in a professional context will benefit navigating other contexts (Labrot).

Competence acquisition: everything up to the learners?

The LICEAL case studies compiled in the second part of this publication's analytical review identified a coherence between the acquisition of entrepreneurial/employability competences and civic/social competences – which surprisingly have similar levels of importance and are overlapping. The analytical review concludes that not so much the single step in a specific field of competence acquisition is decisive for success, but the decision about the path to go and, how learning is accompanied. Here Adult Learning plays a crucial role.

The OECD's transformative competencies 2030 (OECD, NA) identify three fields where competence development becomes crucial for successful navigating transformations:

_ Creating new value,
_ Reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and
_ Taking responsibility.

In order to explore and operate these competence fields, there is thorough guidance and accompany needed. How to come from such a very broad and universal description of competence dimensions to something which could help education to operationalise transversal competences? **Competence frameworks** aim to function as "an orienteering tool on the lifelong learning journey, where each learner will take an individual path" (Bacigalupo, 2022). They identify transversal fields of competence, cluster them systematically and break them down to different levels, so educators can work with them. In example the Reference Framework Competences for a Democratic Culture (RFCDC) of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2016) or the DigComp framework for digital competence of the EU.

Different approaches and competence models always look at transversal competences differently and also reflect them in varying degrees of detail. Therefore, models are required that enable users to compare these different frameworks in order to be able to draw from them the best impulses for their own purposes. One such model is that of Cedefop and ESCO with the aim to create a "structured and consistent terminology on transversal skills and competences" (Hart et al., 2021).

Analysing competence frames through the Cedefop/ESCO model enables us to understand what transversal competences are, which transversal competences are interrelating and how they build on each other, or how other competences contribute to a transversal relevance of learning.

 It can also be used to explore which of the transversal competences are particularly addressed in individual competence frameworks or curricula (and which are given lower priority).
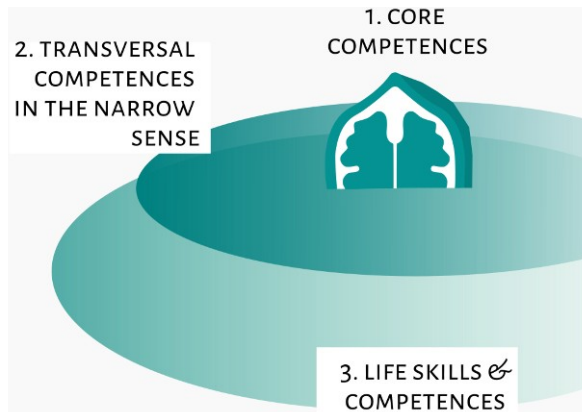
Core Competences: The minimum basis for individual learning and interacting with others. The necessary foundation for more transversal skills and competences: Mastering languages, working with numbers and measures, working with digital devices & applications.

Transversal Competences in the Narrow Sense: Competences used and developed universally and constantly in different contexts and social roles: Thinking; Self-Management and Learning-to-Learn; Social and Communication; Physical and Manual.

Broader Life Skills and Competences: Competence concepts that address transversal competences in particular and focus on a specific social implementation context. Life skills and competences reflect changing societies and will to some extent be more dynamic and subject to change than the previous categories:

_ Entrepreneurial and financial skills and competences
_ Health-related skills and competences
_ Cultural skills and competences
_ Civic skills and competences
_ General knowledge
_ Environmental skills and competences
_ Digital competence beyond basic skills   Hart et al., 2021

Building the bridge between such or similar meta-conceptions to concrete educational practice – is where Adult learning and VET, but also (career) guidance and counselling, planning and mentoring come in. They aim to accompany and support people to identify and spot opportunities, adapt and transfer existing capacities in changing conditions, to develop self-esteem, but also to gain experience of self-efficacy and trust. Interventions and educational practices often apply mainly to the micro- and meso-levels, which are confirmed in the competence clusters being in particular relevant for education at the intersection between citizenship and employment.

The practices examined as part of the LICEAL project's analytical review in chapter 2 roughly confirm the systematics of the ESCO/Cedefop model, where they can be well integrated. They also provide information on the extent to which transversal dimensions are included in modern educational concepts.

The need for a more systemic view: linkage to citizenship education

It is of course good for people to acquire skills to enter the labor market and improve their employment status or get a decent work, but is not only the individual acquisition of skills that leads to these desirable consequences. Systemic conditions, norms, the economic, social and political dynamics on the macro level shape the conditions for success and failure. Specifically, failure is systemic and collective in political systems that have seen (and allowed) the erosion of the welfare state and of the rights of people and workers. Thus, citizenship education linked with labor education should gain more importance supporting the reflection and analysis of societal developments affecting labor, labor poltics and existing power conditions.

Casting such a systemic view is important to develop and share also with those who work in training with adults, also because they themselves are probably in precarious working conditions. It is important for them to develop this awareness in their relationship with the learners they work with and train.

The LICEAL project places itself exactly within the range of supporting employability of Adult Learners via individual competence development. It promotes learning that includes a systemic view on the civic sphere, on economic/societal and political conditions which frame democratic inter-action and the negotiation of power. Such an approach leads beyond the individual citizen and touches these determinative socio-political conditions. Citizenship Education and Democracy Learning thus builds conceptually and in practice – a transversal connection to the single fields where labor market empowerment, employment-related learning, entrepreneurial competences

are facilitated, making a connection between the individual readiness for accessing a job, and the labor market/economy macro policies affecting the overall setting of the theatre, which are in Europe defined with social partners, social, workers and participation rights.

transversal dimension
with future relevance for adult learning,
VET and citizenship education
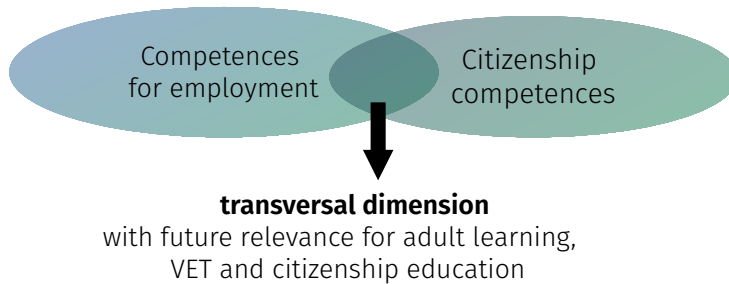
This publication can be understood as an exploration of intersecting items of citizenship-related competences and competences relevant for employment in order to contribute to the further development of adult learning, VET and citizenship education as key fields of lifelong learning. With this publication we comprise the different aspects of the partnership within LICEAL we have focussed on:

_ Exploratory field research on practices in Europe and beyond
_ Ideas on learners' competence development
_ Guidelines for educators
_ A Competence Explorer which exemplary demonstrates to educators how the can systematically take up, address, and apply transversal competences.

While DARE network developed the LICEAL Competence Explorer, in a similar manner the European Training Foundation created the card game Scaffold which we also recommend as a complementary tool.

1.2 In a nutshell: analytical review of adult learning practices connecting citizenship & employability

Citizenship dimension
Having a look at the citizenship dimension of the project we can roughly categorise the practices screened into two categories. There are as a first category practices which pursue a specific policy change agenda – in example concrete social empowerment, the emancipatory support of the individual, the access to equal rights – by working with dedicated target groups. These aims

are often also driving the educational institution, organisation, provider responsible for the activities. Often these groups belong to marginalised, vulnerable or in any dimension disadvantaged spheres of our societies, often facing intersectional and perpetuating positions of vulnerabilities. The employment aspect of the practices is pursued among others towards achieving a bigger societal goal. These practices support the target groups in claiming their rights as citizens. The activities have a clear, content-wise connection to deal with citizenship and rights issues, explicitly by putting focus on law aspects. They set democracy and human rights on the agenda and involve, meet and exchanging with elected representatives of public institutions (or ultimately supporting people to involve themselves into politics or apply for an elected office).

The second category emphasizes on the social capital gaining – through community work, local solidarity, care and engagement/ volunteering projects. The citizenship aspect is targeted rather implicitly, for example in targeting on basic sills and literacy development, conducting intercultural community activities, connecting to green or social economy and entrepreneurships.

Employability dimension

The employability dimension of the practices analysed also follows common characteristics, mainly in the immersive and piloting nature of activities.

What do we mean by that? The employment dimensions of the projects analysed connect self-efficacy and taking initiative/responsibility in small steps. They make a connection between the participants and the potential employment institutions while having the educational provider/authority as intermediary in the position of a broker. One could characterise this triangular relation of AE provider–learner/client–employer as learning field of an immersive nature, which is common to all projects analysed, and foundational to the success of learners. As distinctive feature in the employment dimension there can be described there is one group of projects having a close connection to basic literacy and to the acquisition of a (first) formal degree, while a second group of projects emphasizes strictly on the personal, relational competence development and supports mainly entrepreneurship and (social, economic) initiative of people via the learning and reflection processes.

Intermingling dimensions

A common feature of all practices screened is the intermingling of citizenship and employability dimensions. Common to all projects and describing the characteristics of the projects as standards are to mix both the dimension of citizenship and employability, in terms of methods, targets, and topics. Elements of particular interest are

_ mixing formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities
_ addressing both employment and non-employment adult learning practices and the willingness to promote volunteering
_ promoting the development of different sets of competences: technical, entrepreneurial and soft/transversal, or citizenship competences
_ involving groups of people with different backgrounds and characteristics and connecting them to further communities
_ including individual learning reflecting and coaching processes as a constant and characteristic feature.

Empowering practices with an intersectional lens

Among the practices, it has been possible to identify some enablers which create a frame for the promotion of the empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, to overcome stigmatization and welfarism. This inter-sectional perspective (UN Women, 2021) applies to at least three dimensions:

_ **Intersecting identities:** considering how diverse identities interact to create unique social effects that vary according to time and space. Identities are not singular ad distinct, nor are they additive. Thus, the consideration of the questions related to the intersection of identities of people we engage with (as educators, as people, etc.) is of crucial importance for enabling processes.
_ **Relational power:** being aware of and challenge relational power in practise. Answering and unveiling the power dynamics in the educational process: who holds power and in what circumstances? Who makes decisions? And how are they accountable?
_ **Transformative, rights-based dimension:** to promote human rights and address inequalities by transforming social structures and changing the way resources and relationship are produced and allocated.

All these dimensions are guiding the practices identified in one or more ways. They apply to the educator/learner relation, to the social/cultural situation of the learners and the educators, but also opening a field of frank and mutual learning and exchange on the interpersonal level towards the subject of gaining competences.

1.3 Provisional conclusions: think & act across boxes

Interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches
It seems important to understand that developing social/transversal competences and sense of citizenship are interrelated. Thus, interdisciplinary and specifically intersectional approaches that create awareness on vulnerabilities and enable for tackling them, should be mainstreamed.

An intersectional lense enables to draw further conclusions on the bigger picture of the political context where citizenship and employment education takes place. It is astonishing in how far target groups (different vulnerabilities, access difficulties, marginalised groups, women) and also the topical approaches the projects work on (greening, sustainability) coincide to the categories of items and people being mostly affected by the global phenomenon of restricted civic spaces. As the CIVICUS monitors repeatedly point out in its trend analysis, it is over the years people from LGBTQI+ groups, women and environmental issues who bear globally the biggest burdens of civic repression (CIVICUS 2023). Such the practices intermingling employability and citizenship competence development also might be understood as a hidden treasure of knowledge how to direct learning for civil and democratic resilience as such. It would be of utmost importance to politically understand the issue not only from a perspective on education focussing genuinely on deficits upskilling but also aim at the importance of stabilizing democracy.

Diversity, inclusion and peer learning
Diversity, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, enhances learning and improves the experience during peer support and reflection. Reflection and peer-support become crucial for gaining trust and empowerment. It remains of crucial importance to reflect on the role of the educators as people accompanying long term development processes.

Digital, green and sustainability
Digital, green and sustainability are the three sectors and areas of competence development which seem crucial for both employability and citizenship competence development. Regardless of the level of qualification people bring, they are trained first and foremost in these fields, thus being placed at the core of societal transformation processes. Vice versa with the group of people and practices facing for multiple reasons difficulties in entering employment and labor, there exists a pool of high expertise to work on the development of competence areas highly relevant for the EU future. Thus, EU and member states should use the experiences gained for further

development the European Education area – which means across all areas of education and training.

Holistic approach to adult education
A holistic learning approach with digital skills and a blend of formal and non-formal learning is utmost useful and key for people/citizens to improve their inclusion into the labor markets. Specifically, the cross-sectoral application of mixing formal and non-formal learning concepts and environments/spaces seems key for the successful application of competence acquisitions. Again the EU has with its Erasmus+ Program an instrument to create scaling and lasting impact across all sectors.

The importance of volunteering
Volunteering is a highly valuable way to acquire employability and citizenship competencies through concrete practical application. The immersive character of practices that apply learning/qualification with volunteering/social activism/community engaging shows the high potential of transversal oriented competence learning. With existing EU programs such as ESK in the youth/young adults field, the EU has a powerful instrument to support and create effects.

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