InterAct

LEARNING PROGRAMME

Creating the Democratic Adult Education Class

10-DAY COURSE

50 learning hours | Course programme

Creating the Democratic Adult Education Class – 10-Day Course

Introduction and Description

This course provides an extensive, critically informed examination of the principles, theories and pedagogical practices that underpin democratic adult education in contemporary European and global contexts. It positions the democratic learning environment as both a pedagogical construct and a socio-political project that seeks to cultivate active, critically reflective citizens capable of engaging meaningfully with complex social realities. Rooted in the traditions of humanistic, constructivist and emancipatory adult education, the course foregrounds the interplay between theory, practice and ethical responsibility in the design of inclusive, dialogic learning spaces.

Participants engage deeply with foundational and modern theorists, exploring how ideas from Dewey, Freire, Habermas, Mezirow and Illeris converge with critical theory to inform democratic pedagogical approaches. A particular emphasis is placed on the work of Stephen Brookfield, whose conceptualisation of critical thinking, hegemonic assumptions and reflective practice provides a powerful framework for examining the hidden dimensions of adult learning. Through the systematic use of Brookfield's four lenses—the autobiographical, learners' perspectives, colleagues' experiences and theoretical literature—participants learn to interrogate their own practices and uncover the structural, cultural and ideological forces shaping educational experiences.

The course conceptualises democratic adult education not simply as a collection of methods, but as a transformative educational stance that challenges hierarchical relations, promotes deliberative dialogue and fosters shared decision-making. Participants analyse the role of power, voice, identity and representation in adult classrooms and experiment with pedagogical strategies that encourage equitable participation, collaborative inquiry and collective problem-solving. They also explore the tensions inherent in teaching for democracy within diverse and sometimes contested learning environments, developing strategies for facilitating controversial issues, supporting dissent and nurturing respectful, critical engagement.

Combining theoretical study with sustained practical exploration, the course guides participants in designing critical-democratic learning activities that cultivate agency, critical consciousness and civic responsibility. Digital tools and European collaboration platforms (eTwinning, School Education Gateway/ESEP, and cooperative online workspaces) are integrated to demonstrate how democratic learning can be extended beyond the physical classroom into transnational, intercultural communities of practice.

By the end of the programme, participants will possess not only a sophisticated theoretical understanding of democratic adult education, but also a repertoire of concrete strategies for enabling adult learners to become reflective, empowered and socially engaged contributors to democratic societies.

Methodology and Assessment

The course employs experiential, dialogic and participatory methodologies grounded in adult learning theory and critical pedagogy. Activities include structured discussions, case studies, collaborative problem-solving, reflective journaling and hands-on design workshops that model democratic learning processes. Brookfield's four lenses guide continuous reflection, while peer feedback protocols support collective meaning-making. Assessment is formative and developmental, focusing on engagement, reflective growth and the design of democratic learning activities. Participants conclude with a presentation of their outcomes, receiving constructive peer and trainer feedback to support transferability into their professional contexts.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will:

Knowledge & Understanding

- Critically analyse major adult education theories and situate democratic pedagogy within broader intellectual traditions.
- Demonstrate advanced understanding of critical theory and Brookfield's conceptualisations of critical thinking, assumptions, and reflective practice.
- Explain how power relations, ideology and discourse operate within adult learning environments and influence learner participation.

Application & Practice

- Design democratic learning processes that promote dialogue, co-creation, learner agency and critical awareness.
- Integrate Brookfield's four lenses into reflective teaching practice to improve pedagogical decision-making.

- Apply participatory and deliberative methods to support the development of critically reflective adult learners.

Skills & Professional Competence

- Facilitate democratic group processes, manage diverse perspectives and address controversial issues constructively.
- Collaborate with peers to design critical-democratic learning activities and cross-border digital projects.
- Use online platforms (eTwinning, ESEP, collaborative tools) to extend democratic learning and sustain communities of practice.

Preparation

After registration participants will receive a pre-course questionnaire which will be used by the trainer to learn about participants' teaching backgrounds and to assess their exact needs. Before the beginning of the course a basic reading list will be suggested to participants to prepare for the training. Participants will also be asked to prepare a presentation about themselves, their professional context and their culture. The presentation will be presented on the first day of the course to facilitate networking opportunities. Participants will receive information about the country they are going to visit in order to prepare them for their cultural experience.

Follow up

After the course participants will be asked to share what they have learned with the rest of the staff in their schools. Further books and articles to deepen the topic and contacts with some other practitioners all over Europe and in the world will be suggested by the trainer. The methods shared and explored and the bibliography given will allow the participants to complete and improve their educational path.

Certificate

Certificate complies with the guidelines of the Erasmus+ programme and includes the topic, number of didactic hours, dates and location of the course. We can list the record of learning outcomes on the Europass Mobility Document on request of participants. In case a participant requires a specific format of certificate we can accommodate that if requested at least one week before the start of the course. It is necessary to attend at least 80% of the hours in order to receive the certificate.

Accommodation

We do not directly offer accommodation and subsistence and participants are responsible for organizing it by themselves.

Paperwork

We also provide all the support with paperwork you might need for your Erasmus+ project documentation such as mobility agreement and registration letter.

Fee: 800 €

Cancelation policy

We have a flexible cancellation policy in force at the moment and you can cancel your registration up to 30 days before the course and receive a full refund. In case you don't cancel the registration more than 30 days before you will not receive any refunds, but you will be able to choose to attend any other confirmed course session later (within 6 months) without any additional costs. In case you are not able to travel, your school can send someone else to take instead of you and you can change the details of the participant any time before the start of the course at no additional cost.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME (50 didactic hours - 5*45min per day) Monday to Friday

Day 1	INTRODUCTION, COMMUNITY-BUILDING & COURSE ORIENTATION
09.00 - 09.45	Warm-ups, Ice Breakers & Introductions
09.45 - 10.30	Course Overview and Learning Agreement
10.30 - 11.15	Co-creation of ground rules; negotiating democratic norms for respectful dialogue
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Exploration of prior experiences with adult education and democratic practices
12.15 - 13.00	Introduction to reflective journals
Day 2	FOUNDATIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION: TRADITIONS & THEORISTS
09.00 - 09.45	Overview of major classical and contemporary approaches
09.45 - 10.30	Comparative analysis of epistemological assumptions; links to democratic practice
10.30 - 11.15	Case studies: adult education settings across Europe; classroom implications
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Mapping personal teaching experience to the theoretical frameworks
12.15 - 13.00	Opportunities and tensions in applying adult education theories in real contexts
Day 3	CRITICAL THEORY & ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ADULT EDUCATION
09.00 - 09.45	Introduction to critical theory traditions
09.45 - 10.30	The role of power, ideology, discourse, and agency in educational processes
10.30 - 11.15	Critical theory as a foundation for democratic, emancipatory pedagogy
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Identifying structural and cultural constraints in adult learning environments
12.15 - 13.00	Designing learning spaces that challenge inequities and promote critical awareness
Day 4	BROOKFIELD'S FOUNDATIONAL WORK: CRITICAL THINKING & ADULT

	LEARNING
09.00 - 09.45	Brookfield's conception of critical thinking
09.45 - 10.30	The four lenses of critical reflection
10.30 - 11.15	Toolkit for facilitating critical dialogue and democratic decision-making
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Analysing sample teaching scenarios through the four lenses
12.15 - 13.00	Feedback and collective synthesis of Brookfield's implications for educators
Day 5	KEY NOTIONS & CONCEPTS IN BROOKFIELD'S WORK
09.00 - 09.45	Hegemonic assumptions, reflective scepticism, power in education
09.45 - 10.30	Teaching strategies that uncover learner assumptions and promote agency
10.30 - 11.15	Designing dialogues that cultivate democratic habits of mind
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Redesigning traditional instructional moments using Brookfield's principles
12.15 - 13.00	Identifying personal changes in understanding of democratic teaching
Day 6	PRACTICES FOR CREATING DEMOCRATIC & CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE CITIZENS
09.00 - 09.45	Participatory pedagogies
09.45 - 10.30	Facilitating classroom decision-making processes
10.30 - 11.15	Teaching controversial issues democratically
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Case examples of democratic classrooms
12.15 - 13.00	Designing a democratic learning sequence for a chosen topic
Day 7	SHARING EXPERIENCES & COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT
09.00 - 09.45	Structured sharing of participants' professional challenges and successes

09.45 - 10.30	Methods for storytelling and narrative exchange in adult classes
10.30 - 11.15	Peer-supported problem solving
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Designing mechanisms for ongoing collaboration beyond the course
12.15 - 13.00	Personal commitments to democratic practice
Day 8	DESIGNING CRITICAL-DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM
09.00 - 09.45	Frameworks for planning democratic learning activities
09.45 - 10.30	Designing tasks that cultivate critical thinking, participation, and empowerment
10.30 - 11.15	Integrating authentic problems and community-based learning
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Peer review of designed activities using Brookfield's lenses
12.15 - 13.00	Refinement and preparation for implementation
Day 9	ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS, EPALE
09.00 - 09.45	Introduction to online collaboration platforms for adult learners
09.45 - 10.30	Using EPALE an ESEP to support democratic learning communities
10.30 - 11.15	Designing cross-border projects to foster intercultural democratic competences 1
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Designing cross-border projects to foster intercultural democratic competences 2
12.15 - 13.00	Setting up shared digital workspaces for democratic dialogue
Day 10	INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT, PRESENTATIONS & CLOSING
09.00 - 09.45	Preparing the final presentations and individual support (part 1)
09.45 - 10.30	Preparing the final presentations and individual support (part 2)
10.30 - 11.15	Final presentations and feedback
11.15 - 11.30	Break

11.30 - 12.15	Evaluation & Reflection
12.15 - 13.00	Validation of learning outcomes and certification

*This is only a tentative timetable. The exact hours or the course might differ and will be announced for each session 2 weeks before the start. However, there will always be a total of 5 didactic hours per day and all will be in line with the Erasmus+ quality standards. The trainer might slightly modify the content in response to the needs of the group.

**Cultural and social programmes will be organized in addition to the academic programme. The exact cultural and social programme depends on the location, season, weather, etc.