LEARNING PROGRAMME

Creating the Democratic Adult Education Class

5-DAY COURSE

25 learning hours | Course programme

Creating the Democratic Adult Education Class – 5-Day Course

Introduction and Description

This intensive 5-day programme offers a rigorous and conceptually rich exploration of democratic adult education, situating it within broader traditions of critical pedagogy, emancipatory adult learning and reflective professional practice. The course begins by establishing a participatory learning community and introduces participants to the philosophical, sociopolitical and pedagogical orientations that shape adult education today. Using both classical and contemporary frameworks, educators examine how different approaches conceptualise knowledge, identity, autonomy and agency, and how these understandings inform the creation of ethical and democratic learning spaces.

A central component of the course is the study of Stephen Brookfield's seminal contributions to adult education, particularly his theorisation of critical thinking as a process of interrogating assumptions, recognising hegemonic influences and fostering informed, reflective judgment. Participants engage in structured analyses of Brookfield's four lenses of critical reflection—autobiographical experience, learners' perspectives, colleagues' interpretations and scholarly literature—using these tools to uncover the often-invisible dynamics that shape teaching practice. Through this process, the course highlights the complex interplay between educator identity, institutional structures and learner diversity, emphasising the necessity of reflective scepticism and dialogic openness in democratic education.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the course provides opportunities to design and trial pedagogical practices that intentionally cultivate democratic capacities such as deliberative dialogue, collaborative inquiry, critical awareness and responsible participation. Participants learn to facilitate learning processes that validate diverse experiences, encourage the articulation of multiple perspectives and support learners in becoming active contributors to democratic life. Attention is also given to the challenges of teaching in pluralistic contexts, such as navigating conflicting viewpoints, supporting marginalised voices and addressing power imbalances within the classroom.

Throughout the programme, experiential activities, guided reflection and peer-supported inquiry promote deep engagement with democratic pedagogical principles. The course concludes with the development and presentation of teaching artefacts or activity designs that demonstrate participants' evolving understanding of democratic adult education and their capacity to translate theory into practice. By synthesising conceptual insight with applied methodology, the course equips educators with a nuanced, critically informed and

ethically grounded approach to fostering democratic learning environments in adult education settings.

Methodology and Assessment

The course uses experiential, dialogic and reflective methodologies aligned with democratic adult education principles. Participants engage in collaborative discussions, case analyses, structured reflective exercises and practical design workshops that model participatory learning. Brookfield's four lenses guide ongoing critical reflection, while peer feedback supports shared meaning-making and professional growth. Assessment is formative and developmental, focusing on participants' engagement with theoretical concepts, reflective depth and the creation of democratic learning activities. The course concludes with participant presentations, peer dialogue and a reflective evaluation that supports transfer of learning into professional practice.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will:

Knowledge & Understanding

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of major approaches to adult education and their relevance to democratic pedagogical practice.
- Explain Brookfield's theoretical contributions to adult learning, including critical thinking, assumptions and the four lenses of reflective practice.
- Analyse the role of power, voice and participation in shaping adult learning environments.

Application & Practice

- Apply Brookfield's frameworks to examine and improve their own teaching practice.
- Design democratic teaching activities that promote dialogue, reflective inquiry and learner agency.

- Facilitate discussions that support critical thinking and respectful engagement with diverse perspectives.

Skills & Professional Competence

- Use participatory methods to cultivate democratic habits of mind in adult learners.
- Provide and receive structured peer feedback to refine democratic teaching practices.
- Reflect on professional identity and articulate commitments for continued growth as a democratic educator.

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: 400 €

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 (25 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	OVERVIEW OF APPROACHES TO ADULT EDUCATION
09.00 - 09.45	Survey of foundational theories
09.45 - 10.30	The role of autonomy, experience and dialogue in adult learning frameworks
10.30 - 11.15	How different approaches conceptualise power, participation and learner agency
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Examining adult education examples through theoretical lenses
12.15 - 13.00	Identifying which theoretical approaches align with democratic teaching values
Day 3	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	Analysing assumptions and their impact on democratic learning environments
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 4	PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC & CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE

	CITIZENS
09.00 - 09.45	Participatory pedagogies
09.45 - 10.30	Classroom strategies that support critical consciousness
10.30 - 11.15	Facilitating discussion on controversial issues
11.15 - 11.30	Break
11.30 - 12.15	Designing short democratic activities
12.15 - 13.00	Peer feedback and refinement of designed activities
Day 5	INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT, PRESENTATIONS & CLOSING
09.00 - 09.45	Action plan for implementation of democratic activities
09.45 - 10.30	Preparing the final presentations and individual support
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.