

***Promoting Interculturalism Through Non Formal Education.
An Evaluation Procedure.***

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Abstract

Interculturalism is an area that was officially recognised as a teaching subject in formal education in several countries all over the world just over the last decade. This research paper focuses on the results of evaluating a non-formal education process. The general objective was to promote intercultural and intergenerational dialogue through cooking within a group of native and migrant women belonging to different age groups (young and 50+). This innovative idea entitled Appetite for Learning Comes with Eating – ALCE project was funded by Lifelong learning programme in the framework of Grundtvig action (adult's education). In the pilot procedure (implemented in 5 EU countries) there were 84 young migrants and senior native woman attending. The pilot procedure included 6 learning modules. The modules included activities such as sharing about women's own traditions related to food, cooking and natural remedies, sharing recipes and creating fusion recipes using traditional ingredients from different countries, exchanging ideas on how to create an intercultural cookbook that promotes intangible heritage involving migrant communities. The evaluation procedure included pre and post phase in order to compare attitude changing's before and after the involvement of the target group in this non-formal education experience. The evaluation tools were structured questionnaires suitable and adapted to the needs of the target group. The results from the evaluation show that interculturalism can be promoted through structured activities integrated into non-formal learning pathways.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Intergenerational dialogue, migrant & native women, cooking, traditions, intangible heritage.

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Introduction

The movement and migration of people have created new circumstances and conditions where states are called upon to deal with it. Today's society is characterised by cultural diversity. The last decades have noticed a particular increase in multiculturalism. As a result, countries preserve the traditions of their people in the new condition and environment. Interculturalism can be understandable by people through cultural studies as these have been adjusted under the conditions of our century (Barker, 2008). Intercultural dialogue and exchange are tools to help people to develop a deeper understanding of cultural beliefs and practices different from their own, foster mutual understanding, foster interpersonal trust and cooperation (Barett, 2013). Adopting the main principals, as was described in the "Convention against Discrimination in Education" (UNESCO, 1960) full access to educational activities were given to migrants in all European Countries. Additionally in the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities" (1992) the United Nations recognise their role as a protector to the preservation of interculturalism and invites all members of the United Nations to adopt policies for protecting and promoting interculturalism.

The initiative also reflects a number of priorities as these were described under the Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon European Council, 2000). It was pointed out that intercultural dialogue may contribute to the achievement of the objectives of Lisbon Strategy. For example, the knowledge-based economy needs people who can adopt, revise, change and create opportunities of all possible sources of innovation (Lisbon European Council, 2000). According to the Lisbon Strategy, European countries will adopt policies in order to achieve and cover the need to build a "knowledge and learning society", a society that to be competitive in a global environment is characterised by constant and rapid changes.

Europe understanding the need for awareness appointed 2008 as the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue" (EYID). This was designated by the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union. It aimed to draw the attention of people in Europe to the importance of dialogue within diversity and between diverse cultures. The overall aim of the EYID was to raise the profile of intercultural dialogue, among all European countries, which is essential for creating respect for cultural diversity and encouraging active European citizenship (European Parliament, 2006).

On the other hand, ageing is one of the greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st century for European societies. It will affect all EU countries and most policy areas. By 2025 more than 20% of Europeans will be aged 65 or over (Ageing Policy, European Commission, 2014).

This paper present results of an educational pathway, designed for young migrant and native senior woman. The methodology structured for an active learning training course is based on the learning needs of both target groups and possibilities for peer learning that exploits resources of one target group to create benefits to the second target group and vice versa. Thus the needs and challenges identified were:

- Ageing population
- Cultural diversity

- Enduring discrimination against women particularly from groups at risk, senior and non-EU migrant young women
- Declining knowledge on culinary and curative traditions
- Recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning
- Need to increase quality in adult education.

The official curricula in formal education systems in many European countries and non – formal adult seminars, workshops, conference and learning activities etc, took place at national and European level in order for intercultural dialogue to be enhanced. Non formal learning activities were adopted by many European governments in order to sensitise young people and adults in multicultural issues. If we want to describe non formal education, we can say that it's any organised, systematic, educational activity delivered outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adults as well as children. Thus defined, non-formal education includes, for example, agricultural extension and farmer training programmes, adult literacy programmes, occupational skills training given outside the formal system, youth clubs with substantial educational purposes and various community programmes of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, and the like (Coombs & Ahmed 1974).

The Piloting procedure

Having the above in mind a project idea was born and was applied for funding under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP 2007-2013) and more specific in the framework of the Grundtvig multilateral action managed by EACEA. One of the main provisions of LLP 2007-2013 was *“to reinforce the contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfilment”* (European Parliament and Council, 2006). “ALCE – Appetite for learning comes with eating” is a 24 month project starting from 01/11/2012. The partnership consists of five partners from five European countries: Italy, UK, Austria, France and Lithuania. The overall scope is the use of cooking to promote interculturalism, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue. The ALCE project aims are mostly to:

- Facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable social groups suffering from multiple discrimination.
- Improve the acquisition, recognition and validation of key competencies acquired through non-formal learning processes.
- Develop and consolidate innovative Lifelong Learning practices based on the intercultural and intergenerational transfer of fundamental non-tangible knowledge through active non-formal learning processes.
- Strengthen inclusive notions of European identity and citizenship through non-formal learning.
- Improve European wellbeing and health through a better knowledge of culinary traditions and natural curative methods.

On the other hand the main objectives of the ALCE project are to:

- Facilitate key competences acquisition of direct target groups (migrant and senior women) through training course, learning mobility, active training during the preparation & the implementation of the cultural roadmap of events, development of

products (“Our European culinary traditions and natural curative methods”) and dissemination actions thus promoting their inclusion

- Transmit an inclusive European identity and bring learning closer to learners by implementing a European roadmap of cultural knowledge transmission events (open to the public) focusing on food and natural curative traditions remedies
- Increase awareness in decision makers about the importance and relevance of recognition and validation of key competences acquired through non-formal learning processes and propose strategies for validation in dissemination actions and products (pedagogical manual).

The main idea was to involve migrants and senior native women from different countries. The ALCE partnership seeks to increase social inclusion of senior and migrant women through key competences acquisition (literacy, civic, entrepreneurial) and thus their wellbeing and re/integration into society and labour market and European communities valorising the role of senior and migrant women to their learning. Also, to increase awareness of food traditions and natural curative methods and to disseminate a book that includes traditional recipes from different countries (ALCE, 2012). To achieve the above aims and objectives, 6 modules were designed (Table 1).

Active Learning Training Course (ALTC) Implemented in Innsbruck (Austria), Paris (France), Palermo (Italy), Kaunas (Lithuania), Liverpool (United Kingdom)	
Module 1 1 session	Community Mapping and Intercultural Learning
Activities	Introduction of the participants from different cultures, <i>Team-building games based on valorising the differences within the group,</i> <i>Making a map of our reality.</i>
Module 2 2 sessions	Learning on culinary traditions & natural curative methods
Activities	Kitchen tools , <i>Sharing stories about kitchen tools related to traditions and personal memories.</i> Culinary traditions and natural curative methods, <i>Cooking and presenting recipes and natural curative methods.</i>
Module 3 1 session	Knowledge transmission
Activities	Spreading and sharing our knowledge, <i>Creating new multicultural recipes-fusion recipes.</i>
Module 4 2 sessions	Ideation of the Book
Activities	Recipe book, <i>Designing and making the recipe book about Culinary traditions and natural curative methods</i>
Learning Mobility 1	European Active Learning training course (Innsbruck, Austria)
Modules 5 and 6 2 sessions	How to create a cultural event
Activities	<i>Organising and promoting cultural events;</i> <i>Creating a cultural event in Palermo about culinary traditions and natural</i>

	<i>curative methods opened to the local community; Preparation of participants who are taking part in Learning mobility 2.</i>
Learning Mobility 2	Roadmap of cultural events (3 women from each group are going to another country of the Consortium)
Module 6 2 sessions	Evaluation of Modules and local event
Activities	Exchanging experiences from Learning Mobility 2 with the group using photos and presentations. Evaluation of all learning Modules using non-formal education activities.
Learning Mobility 3	Final seminar (Kaunas, Lithuania) Two participant from each national group will take part in the final seminar.

Table 1. Scheme of Learning Modules and Learning Mobilities

The modules took place in each partner country from April 2013 until January 2014.

Photo 1 represents the cooking sessions during the Cultural event and Learning Mobility in Kaunas Lithuania. Italian group participated in the organisation of the event supporting the group from Lithuania.

Photo 2 represents cooking session in Kaunas Lithuania, during Module 2 of Active Learning Training Course in Lithuania.



Photo 1. Learning mobility – Italian group visiting the group in Lithuania during Roadmap of cultural events

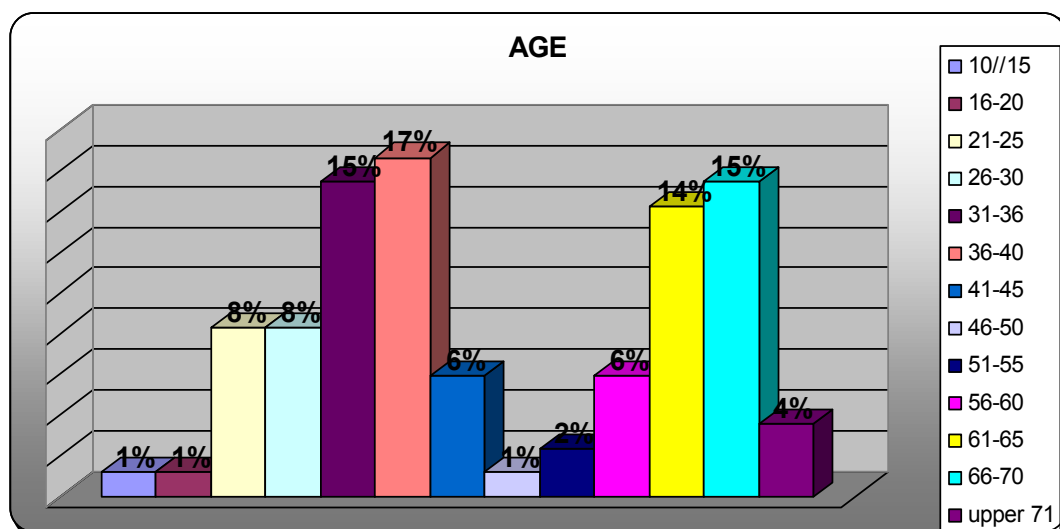


Photo 2. Cooking workshop in Kaunas, Lithuania

Participant Profiles

In the piloting 100 migrants and senior native women participated. In the evaluation procedure 84 learners feedbacks has been analysed. The Migrant women were from several countries. From Colombia, Palestine, Bangladesh, Russia, Ukraine etc. The partnership succeeded involving women from different countries but also with different ages. The common characteristics of all participants were:

- Seeking educational and work opportunities
- At risk and/or victims of social exclusion and discrimination the youngest woman was 12 and the oldest 77 years old. The majority of the participants belong to the age 36-40, 31-35 and 66-70. On graphic 1 we can see the percentage of each category and the ages of the involved persons.
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Graphic 1

Additionally we asked the participants if they had participated in a similar activity. From the involved woman, 68 had not previously participated, 16 women have had a previous similar experience. 6 of the positive replies mention that their previous experience was in a seminar/workshop/conference about cooking. 4 participants pointed out that they are a professional cooker/chef dealing with the traditional cooking of their country (for example chef in a restaurant in UK cooking traditional Latin American dishes) and 6 that they have worked in a restaurant.

Evaluation Method

The overall aim of the evaluation was to analyse if interculturalism and intercultural dialogue was promoted. Specific objectives of this evaluation were to check the impact among the target group from the piloting procedure and if the participants had improved their personal skills and key competences.

In order to check the impact on the target group a specific evaluation tool was used. Pre and post structured questionnaires were given to the participants (migrants and senior native women). The questionnaires were divided into 4 parts.

The first part was about personal details (Age, country of residence and other demographic information).

The second part referred to personal skills related to reading, writing and communication in their mother language and in a foreign language, ICT skills, cooking abilities and collaboration with others. The participants scored themselves using the Likert scale (Poor = 1, fair = 2, good = 3, very good = 4, excellent = 5).

The third part consisted of 9 questions referred to personal attitudes. Likert scale was proposed once more in order the participants to score their attitudes (Likert, 1932) and more specific they used a scale of 1-5 (Not at all = 1, a little = 2, enough = 3, very = 4, very much = 5).

The final part included an open question asking about potential problems they believe that will face during their participation in the modules and the same question was included in the post questionnaire in order for the participants to feel free and write the problems they faced during the piloting procedure.

The pre questionnaires were given to the participants before the beginning of the modules and during the first information meeting. On the other hand, when all participants completed the piloting procedure the post questionnaire was given. The questions were exactly the same for the pre and post evaluation tools. Also the scoring method was the same in order for the researcher to be able to export the results by comparing the values in the pre and post questionnaires.

Findings and discussion

The participants scored themselves before the beginning of the procedure in the frame of the ALCE project, about their ability to read, write and communicate in their mother language but also in foreign language, in ICT skills (using PC, Internet communication, etc.), in cooking abilities and finally collaboration with others.

According to their replies reading, writing and communication in a mother language is something that the participants felt very confident as 63% of the group scored themselves with a 5. On the other hand, reading, writing and communicating in a foreign language was extremely low as 12% scored with a 5 and 4, 25% with 3, 30% with 2 and 21% with 1. Low skills seemed to have the majority of the participants in ICT skills and more specific using a PC, internet communication, social media etc. Only 6% gave a 5 mark, 31% gave 4, 37% grade 3, 17% gave 2 and 10% gave 1. Cooking abilities are average a strong point as the majority scores with 3 (37%), 4 (26%) and 5 (24%). A good level is their ability in collaborating with other as 40% scored with 4 and 42% scored with 5. The results of the pre questionnaires for the entire group appear in Table 2.

Pre Questionnaire results	Poor = 1, fair = 2, good = 3, very good = 4, excellent = 5				
Personal skills	1	2	3	4	5
Reading, writing and communication in mother language	2%	2%	11%	21%	63%
Reading, writing and communication in foreign languages	21%	30%	25%	12%	12%
ICT skills (using PC, Internet communication etc)	10%	17%	37%	31%	6%
Cooking abilities	4%	10%	37%	26%	24%
Collaborating with others	1%	1%	15%	40%	42%

Table 2

At the end of the piloting the same questionnaire was given. Comparing the post questionnaires we notice that the percentage of participants having personal skills for reading, writing and communicating in a mother language was increased as 76% scored with 5. Even their skills in communication in foreign languages were improved in an important level as 34% scores 3 and 22% scores 4. On the other hand 27% believe that they improved their ICT skills when in the same pre questions only 6% scored with 5. Cooking abilities was enhanced with their participation in the modules as now 34% scored 5, 31% scored 4, 27% scored 3, only 7% scored 2 and no one scored 1. An important factor is the fact that 64% gave 5 grade in the post question collaborating with others, 24% scored 4, 12% scored 3 and no one gave 2 or 1. The results of the post questionnaires for the entire group appear in table 3.

Post Questionnaire results	Poor = 1, fair = 2, good = 3, very good = 4, excellent = 5				
Personal skills	1	2	3	4	5
Reading, writing and communication in mother language	0%	3%	4%	16%	76%

Reading, writing and communication in foreign languages	12%	21%	34%	22%	10%
ICT skills (using PC, Internet communication etc.)	3%	16%	30%	24%	27%
Cooking abilities	0%	7%	27%	31%	34%
Collaborating with others	0%	0%	12%	24%	64%

Table 3

Additionally, the majority express the positive feeling in participating in cooking activities as 61% scored 5 in this question in the pre questionnaire as we can see in table 4.

Pre Questionnaire results	Not at all = 1, a little = 2, enough = 3, very = 4, very much = 5				
Personal attitudes	1	2	3	4	5
Do you like participating in activities relative with cooking and preparing remedies?	1%	2%	12%	24%	61%
Do you think that you need special skills in order to participate in an activity relative cooking and preparing remedies?	12%	19%	26%	20%	23%
Do you think that trough ALCE you will have the chance to inform other people for your culture and your cultural heritage?	0%	2%	19%	25%	54%
In which level do you enjoy being involved in activities collaborating with people from other countries and cultures?	0%	0%	7%	29%	64%
In which level you enjoy to collaborate with people from different generations?	0%	0%	5%	29%	67%
Do you think that participating in activities like ALCE you will improve your skills and competences?	0%	0%	21%	30%	49%
At what level do you think you will learn new things?	0%	1%	18%	31%	50%
You believe that through ALCE your professional qualifications will be improved?	1%	13%	29%	20%	37%
Do you feel that your participation in ALCE will help you to improve your position in labour market?	17%	15%	23%	20%	25%

Table 4

After the end of the piloting the positive answers scored with 5 marks reached 88%. The results for the post questionnaire are present in table 5. In these tables we can also see that before the beginning of the piloting the average of the participants believed that they will need to have some special skills in order to participate in an activity relating to cooking. These percentages changed after the completion of the procedure.

About informing others about each participant's culture and cultural heritage the percent was approximately the same in the pre and post activities. The whole procedure was in general a pleasant time for the participants as they liked to collaborate with people from other countries and cultures. We draw this conclusion as 64% scored 5 in this question in the frame of the pre questionnaire and 85% in the post questionnaire. Similarly, the fact to collaborate with people from different generations as in the pre questionnaire 67% scored 5 and in the post questionnaire 85% scores 5.

Through the ALCE project, the participants had the chance to improve their skills and abilities as we can conclude according to the results based in their personal opinions. More specific in the pre action 21% scored 3, 30% scored 4 and 49% scored 5. After the end 60% scored 5. The improvement was translated as learning new things through this procedure. In the pre questionnaire 1% scores 2 about thinking that will know new things, 18% scored 3, 31% scored 4 and 50% scored 5. The post questionnaires increased and change their attitudes with more positive answers' as 9% scored 3, 37% scored 4 and 54% scored 5. The average was kept almost the same in the questions about if their professional qualification was improved. Also the score of 5 grade was increased 14% in the question if ALCE helped them to improve their position in the labour market.

Post Questionnaire results	Not at all = 1, a little = 2, enough = 3, very = 4, very much = 5				
Personal attitudes	1	2	3	4	5
Did you like your participation in ALCE relative cooking and preparing remedies?	0%	1%	0%	10%	88%
You needed special skills to join ALCE?	25%	16%	18%	18%	22%
Did you have the change through ALCE to inform other people for your culture and your cultural heritage?	0%	6%	13%	30%	51%
In which level did you enjoy being involved in activities collaborating with people from other countries and cultures?	0%	0%	1%	13%	85%
In which level you enjoyed collaboration with people from different generations?	0%	0%	1%	13%	85%
Your participation in ALCE improved skills and abilities?	0%	4%	7%	28%	60%
At what level do you think you learned new things?	0%	0%	9%	37%	54%
You believe that through ALCE your professional qualifications were improved?	1%	9%	13%	36%	40%
Do you feel that your participation in ALCE helped you to improve your position in labour market?	16%	12%	12%	21%	39%

Table 5

The pre and post evaluation procedure were completed with an open question. The question was referring to potential problems that they believe they would face during the piloting (in the frame of pre activity) and what were the real problems faced (in

the frame of post activity). In the pre activity the main problems was focus on social obligations such as maternity and marital reasons, lack of time and working obligations. Languages and the way of communication was another problem that concerned many from the target group. At the post activity it was mentioned that the entire procedure was very pleasant and fruitful and the support was substantial. Having this in mind, the participants managed to find the time for participating even when sometimes their schedule was very tight. Lack of time was a problem that still remained. The positive thing is that difficulties related to the languages and communication was solved as they improved their language and communication skills.

General Conclusions

An important challenge was faced in the frame of the piloting of the ALCE project. To promote intercultural and intergenerational dialogue through the exchange of traditions related to intangible heritage, such as cooking and natural remedies within a group of native and migrant women belonging to different age groups (18-40 and 50+). From the results of the evaluation procedure, we can describe and summarise the following conclusions:

- A structured non-formal educational pathway that uses the exchange of intangible heritage elements such as cooking and natural remedies can contribute to increase personal skills and key competences.
- By organising a team with participants from different countries and from different generations intercultural and intergenerational dialogue can be promoted.
- Educational activities that include cooking with the aim to enhance the exchange of traditions and cultures can be the means of promoting intercultural dialogue.
- Through non-formal education activities that use cooking as the mean to include all, participants can improve their skills on a personal and social level such as communication in mother tongue and foreign languages, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and cultural awareness.
- New knowledge, skills and competences can grow through such non-formal learning procedures.
- Activities that foster intercultural and intergenerational dialogue can contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable social groups suffering from multiple discrimination.
- In order for the participants to be able to inform other people from other cultures about their traditions and cultures, activities based on cooking can be organised.
- Intercultural dialogue through the exchange of recipes and traditional cooking can be a pleasant and enjoyable experience.
- Activities that foster active participation and actively involve learners in a learning pathway that enables them to develop transversal skills in a non-formal learning environment can contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable social groups suffering from multiple discrimination.
- In some cases, participants can become more competitive in the labour market as a result of participating in such activities.

Cooking and natural curative remedies can be a main factor behind the understanding of diversity, multiculturalism and interculturalism and at the same time it can promote intercultural and intergenerational dialogue.

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