



Facilitating Engagement of Low-Skilled Immigrant Adults in Adult Education

A Guidebook for Educational Institutions and Employers

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Introduction

The 3L Mindset project aims to shift the perspective of lower-skilled adult immigrants towards adult education. By addressing barriers on both institutional and individual fronts, we aim to facilitate up-skilling and enhance social inclusion. The main results of the project will be a comprehensive policy report and a practical booklet for schools and educators. Additionally, a dynamic teacher training program and a motivational YouTube channel will be created to propel lifelong learning.

Low-skilled immigrant adults represent an important part of our communities, bringing with them unique experiences, perspectives, and skills. However, language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to education can often hinder their full integration into society. This is where adult education plays a pivotal role.

The UNESCO Belém Framework for Action highlights the critical link between adult education and social inclusion, emphasising that education is a fundamental human right that should be accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstance. By providing tailored learning opportunities, we empower these individuals to not only enhance their professional skills but also to become active participants in the social, economic, and cultural life of their adopted country. Through education, we bridge divides, foster mutual understanding, and pave the way for a more inclusive society where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential.

This booklet serves as a crucial introductory resource, offering insights into the challenges low-skilled immigrants face in accessing adult education. While not a comprehensive training program, it provides initial guidance for educators, presenting valuable information, templates, and practical tips. It delves into fostering a growth mindset among adult learners, addressing barriers to entry, motivation strategies, program adaptation, and sharing inspiring success stories. The booklet, available in English, Spanish, German, and Slovenian, is a valuable asset accessible on the project's website, equipping educators with foundational knowledge to support the diverse needs of adult learners.

Note about term low-skilled person

In the booklet the term “low-skilled” is used describing adults with lower level of educational attainment. In this document an individual is considered as low skilled when the educational attainment is below the upper secondary educational level defined in ISCED (in accordance with EU term definition). Here it is important to note that adults with low skills are anything but “low skilled”, they can possess a various set of skills, from vocational to practical, language and interpersonal skills. The term “low-skilled” refers to formal educational attainment solely.

1. Migrants in Adult Education – Challenges & Barriers

Adult education plays a critical role in equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's rapidly evolving job market. However, low-skilled immigrants often encounter significant barriers when attempting to access adult education programs. This chapter explores these factors including language barriers, lack of recognized credentials, financial costs, and limited awareness of resources.



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1.1. Barriers to Low-Skilled Immigrants Entering Adult Education

One of the most significant obstacles facing low-skilled immigrants in accessing adult education is the language barrier. Many immigrants arrive in their host country with limited or no proficiency in the local language. This impedes their ability to effectively communicate, comprehend course materials, and engage in educational activities, leading to feelings of isolation and frustration. According to a study by [Schnepf](#) (2007), language proficiency is a crucial determinant of immigrants' participation in adult education programs. They found that immigrants with stronger language skills were more likely to enrol in and complete adult education courses, subsequently enhancing their employment opportunities and socioeconomic integration.

Another pertinent issue facing low-skilled immigrants is the lack of recognition of their foreign credentials. Many low-skilled immigrants possess educational qualifications and work experiences from their home countries, which may not be adequately recognised in their

new country of residence. Consequently, this can hinder their access to appropriate adult education programs that could enable them to upgrade their skills and find suitable employment. A report by the [Migration Policy Institute \(MPI\) in 2013](#) highlights that recognition of foreign credentials is a complex and varied process across different host countries, leading to significant obstacles for immigrants seeking educational opportunities. Governments and educational institutions must streamline credential evaluation procedures to facilitate the integration of low-skilled immigrants into adult education programs.

Additionally, financial barriers represent a substantial deterrent for low-skilled immigrants seeking to enter adult education. Many immigrants face economic challenges, which are exacerbated by the high cost of education and the need to support their families. This often leaves them with limited resources to invest in furthering their education. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019) underscores the importance of affordable and accessible education for immigrants, particularly those with low skills. Governments and institutions must consider implementing targeted financial assistance and scholarship programs to alleviate the burden of education costs for low-skilled immigrants.

Lastly, low-skilled immigrants may also encounter difficulties in accessing adult education due to limited awareness and information about available programs. Language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the host country's education system contribute to this issue. Consequently, immigrants may miss out on valuable opportunities for skill development and professional advancement. [Zarifis \(2021\)](#) highlights the importance of comprehensive outreach and information dissemination initiatives targeting low-skilled immigrant communities. By providing clear and culturally sensitive information, governments and education providers can enhance immigrants' understanding of available educational opportunities.

In conclusion, low-skilled immigrants face many barriers when attempting to access adult education programs. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that involves improving language proficiency, recognising foreign credentials, providing financial assistance, and enhancing information dissemination. Policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders must work collaboratively to create inclusive and supportive adult education systems that empower low-skilled immigrants to thrive in their new homes.

1.2. Challenges for Low-Skilled Immigrants Within Adult Education

As the previous section illustrates, low-skilled immigrants find it challenging to access adult education. However, even within adult education, low-skilled immigrants face a myriad of challenges that can affect their overall well-being and opportunities for educational advancement. These obstacles include language proficiency within courses, educational disparities, and discrimination.

Language proficiency is a fundamental challenge faced by low-skilled immigrants both within and outside of adult education. This language barrier not only impedes their ability to access adult education but also affects their performance within adult educational programs. A study by [Suárez-Orozco et al. \(2011\)](#) reveals that limited language skills hinder low-skilled immigrants' participation in training programs and skill development, perpetuating their disadvantaged position in the labour market.

Similarly, low-skilled immigrants often face disparities in educational backgrounds and credentials compared to native-born citizens. Within adult education, this could lead to low-

skilled immigrants being placed in courses that do not match their experience levels. [Siar \(2013\)](#) highlights that the lack of recognition for foreign credentials contributes to 'deskilling': a process by which high-skilled immigrants become relegated to low-skilled roles and positions. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive and transparent evaluation procedures that acknowledge the value of immigrants' prior education and work experiences.

Additionally, access to quality education and training is critical for low-skilled immigrants seeking to improve their employment prospects and socioeconomic status. However, limited resources and financial constraints often prevent them from enrolling in educational programs that could enhance their skills. [Peri and Sparber \(2009\)](#) indicate that targeted investment in adult education and training programs for low-skilled immigrants can significantly increase their productivity and earnings. Policymakers should prioritise the expansion of affordable and accessible adult education initiatives to foster the integration and advancement of low-skilled immigrants.

Lastly, discrimination and prejudice against low-skilled immigrants persist in various societies. Negative attitudes from the host community can create social isolation and hinder immigrants' efforts to find employment and participate fully in public life. A comprehensive review by [Szaflarski and Bauldry \(2019\)](#) highlights the detrimental effects of discrimination on immigrants' mental health, well-being, and social integration. Creating inclusive policies and promoting intercultural understanding are essential steps toward breaking down these barriers and fostering an inclusive society.

Low-skilled immigrants face a range of significant challenges within adult education, including limited language proficiency, educational disparities, restricted access to quality education, and discrimination. To address these challenges, policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders must work collaboratively to develop comprehensive solutions that promote language acquisition, recognise foreign credentials, expand access to education and training, and foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for all immigrants.

1.3. The Importance of Adult Education in Social Inclusion

Adult education plays a pivotal role in promoting social inclusion by empowering individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to participate fully in society. It catalyses personal growth, economic empowerment, and community engagement. This section explores the significance of adult education in fostering social inclusion and highlights the positive impact it has on individuals and communities.

Guidelines for Enhancing Social Inclusion through Adult Education:

Economic Empowerment: Adult education should focus on providing practical skills and training to individuals from marginalized backgrounds, thereby improving employability and adapting to changing job markets. Investing in education helps reduce income disparities and strengthens community economies.

Digital Literacy: Incorporate digital literacy training into adult education programs to bridge the digital divide. This is particularly vital for older adults and those with limited exposure to technology. Digital literacy enables better access to online resources and e-learning opportunities, fostering inclusivity in the digital era.

Civic Engagement: Adult education should nurture critical thinking and communication skills, fostering active citizenship. Empowered citizens participate more in community activities, advocate for social justice, and drive positive social change, enhancing social cohesion and inclusion.

Lifelong Learning: Encourage and promote the idea of continuous learning beyond formal education. Lifelong learning enables individuals to adapt to evolving landscapes and stay socially connected, irrespective of age or background. This concept is pivotal for combating social exclusion and ensuring societal participation for all.



© Image by Frepik

The importance of adult education in social inclusion cannot be overstated. Through economic empowerment, digital inclusion, civic engagement, and lifelong learning, adult education contributes to breaking down barriers and fostering a more inclusive society. Governments, policymakers, and stakeholders must prioritise investment in adult education initiatives that address the diverse needs of individuals and communities, promoting social integration and equity. By recognising the transformative potential of adult education, societies can build a more inclusive future that values the contributions of all its members.

2. Increasing Motivation

Studies of andragogy that have been carried out in recent years have challenged teaching and learning styles that mimic traditional school models. These approaches have now become obsolete.

Today we know that **adults learn differently than children** and learn best when learning is put into context (for example their workplace environment) and when it is practical and problem-oriented (Knowles, 1984). This approach that mimics the teaching and learning styles we know from school is especially problematic for adult migrants with low skills, as many of them have experienced failure in education and may find it difficult to return to a classroom setting.



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2.1 How to Motivate Low-Skilled Immigrants to Participate in Adult Education



There is some evidence that **adults with low-skills are less willing to participate in time-intensive training than high-skilled workers**, not least due to different preferences and personality traits of both groups (Fouarge, Schils and de Grip, 2013).

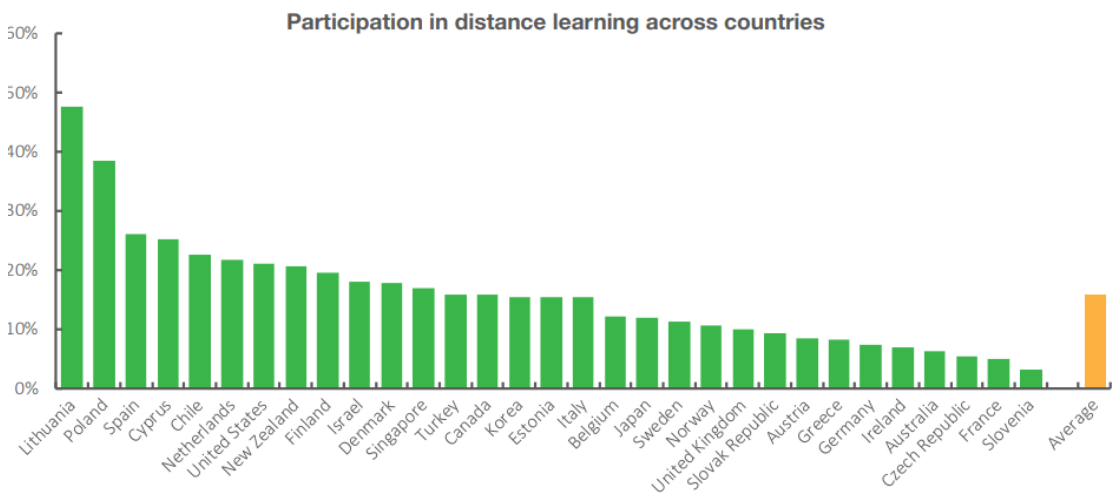
The OECD report “Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning” (2019) affirms that a solution to the problematic of taking lengthy courses can be to provide **modular training programmes** that enable adults to learn in their own time and shape their **own learning path**. In contrast to traditional learning programmes, which need to be completed in full to gain a qualification, modular provision divides a learning programme into self-contained modules. Each module has its own distinct learning outcomes, which are certified as credits or part-qualifications once completed. Learners can work towards a full qualification over time by successively adding modules to their learning portfolio.

On the other side, many adults with low literacy and numeracy levels still possess valuable skills such as driving different vehicles or customer care. Similarly, some adults may have low formal qualifications but have acquired equivalent **skills** through years of work experience.

The recognition and certification of these skills can have several benefits. For individuals, it **acknowledges** their **informal learning efforts**, **increases motivation**, and can serve as a stepping stone to further formal learning. Employers benefit from skill recognition by improving productivity and aligning employees' skillsets with job requirements. These positive effects also contribute to the **overall functioning of the labour market**.

However, for these benefits to be realised, it is crucial for employers and society to **value certificates obtained through skill recognition** and consider them on par with those obtained through formal education.

One way to make adult learning more flexible is distance learning, for example in the form of online self-learning. According to OECD PIAAC data, 16 % of low-skilled learners complete at least part of their training as distance learning. However, the situation differs vastly between countries. Close to every second learner with low skills takes part in distance learning in Lithuania, while this is the case for less than one in twenty learners in



Note: Average of OECD countries participating in PIAAC; job-related education and training only; % of learners.
 Source: PIAAC data (2012,2015).

2.2 Main Reasons for Engaging in Adult Education

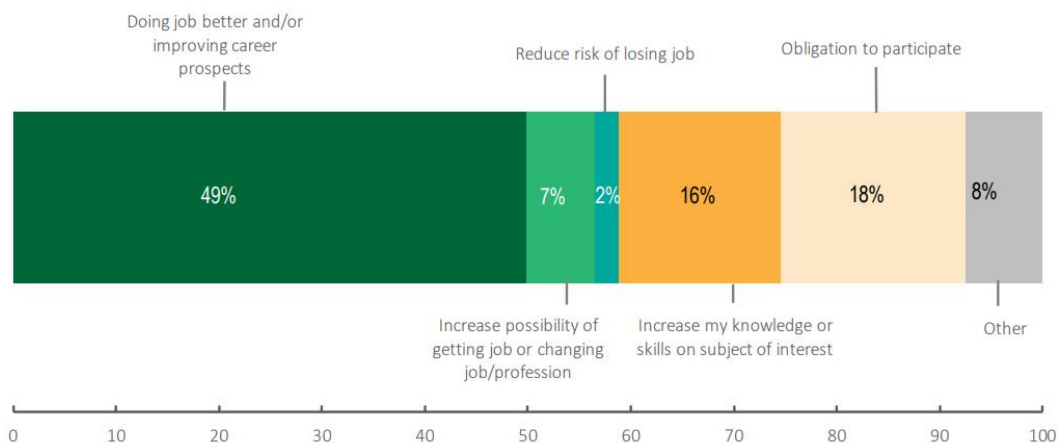
Most **low-skilled immigrant adults** take part in learning to **advance their career** (see chart below). However, learning opportunities do not always equip them with the skills needed for the labour market.

According to AES data, only two in three adults think that participation in training helped them achieve positive employment outcomes, such as performing better in their current job, being promoted, getting a (new) job or a higher salary.

Further, two in five adults who take part in training, participate in health and safety training only, according to the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS). While knowledge on health and safety is an important requirement to reduce the likelihood of work accidents, it is part of compulsory training and does not necessarily help people to prepare for the future of work.

Now more than ever, it is necessary to find the means and methods for adults with low skills to find the usefulness and relevance of lifelong learning.

Reasons for participation in job-related training



Note: Average of OECD countries participating in PIAAC; non-formal job-related education and training only.
Source: PIAAC data (2012,2015).

2.3 Examples of Effective Motivational Approaches

The OECD report “Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning” provides three examples of good practices that take into consideration the way adults learn.

1. SKILLS PLUS WORK

Embedding basic skill training in the workplace is the approach of the Norwegian programme **Skills Plus Work**. Since 2006, the programme has supported more than 30 000 adults in acquiring reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills. Private and public enterprises can apply for grants for the training of their employees. Training must combine **work and basic skill training** (and ideally other job-related training) and aim to strengthen workers’ motivation to learn. Guidance for the design of programmes is provided in the form of profiles of basic job-related skills for different professions, learning materials and national standards for basic skills for adults. For adults who are not in employment, a similar programme led by the voluntary sector exists.

2. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Blended learning is key to **the General Assembly’s** approach to education. General Assembly is a primarily US-based private education provider, which provides **training in today’s most in-demand skills**, such as coding, data design or digital marketing. While their courses typically target adults with high skills, their approach to blended learning is likely to be relevant for low-skilled adults as well. At the General Assembly, **learners can learn a certain skill in different ways**, including online self-learning, expert-instructed learning in a classroom and small group learning. Key to the approach is that even though the best results can be achieved when individuals take part in the full blended model, each learning mode is stand-alone, i.e. individuals can decide to learn using their preferred mode only.

3. EVIDEO TRANSFER

Story-based learning lies at the core of the German project **eVideoTransfer**. Since 2012, the project offers digital learning opportunities for people with low basic skills and limited time to take-part in classroom learning. This project develops **industry-specific training**, which combines learning content on basic skills and professional knowledge. All training is web-based and takes the learner through an engaging storyline, which is conveyed through videos. Users must have a basic level of digital literacy, although a learning module about how to use mouse and keyboard was developed to reach a wider target group. EVideoTransfer is implemented by the education provider Arbeit und Leben – DGB/VHS Berlin-Brandenburg and funded by the Germany Ministry of Education.

Other good **examples of different approaches** to modularising adult learning are the case of **Switzerland** and **Denmark**.

- Switzerland is one of the front-runners when it comes to offering modular training opportunities. In the mid-1990s, the **modularization of different programmes was piloted**, with the view to collect practical experience and explore the potential for upscaling this approach throughout the system. Some of these pilots were evaluated, but modularisation was fast progressing even in the absence of much evaluation evidence (Wettstein, 2005). Today, modular programmes are available throughout the adult learning sector. Adults can take part in individual modules or combine different modules to form a full training programme.

- Similarly, Denmark has a long tradition of offering modular programmes. In Denmark, the modularization of adult learning offers an exceptional amount of flexibility for learners. In fact, **learners are able to combine modules from different types of adult learning provision to**

obtain a formal qualification. This includes provision as diverse as active labour market programmes, basic education programmes, higher education, vocational education and even non-formal liberal education programmes. This flexible approach allows high shares of adults to obtain qualifications through adult learning (Desjardins, 2017).

Finally, the OECD report offers some key insights from existing practice for all sectors involved in the training of low-skilled immigrant adults:

- ▶ Consider **how adults learn** when designing learning opportunities. Opportunities should be practical, problem-oriented and closely linked to the (work) context of the learner.
- ▶ **Offer blended learning opportunities**, which give learners the option to choose a way of learning that works best for them.
- ▶ Ensure that the **learning mode is appropriate for the target group**, make learning enjoyable (e.g. through gamification), and provide additional support where needed (e.g. for online learning).
- ▶ Structure each adult learning programme to consist of a number of **self-contained learning modules**.
- ▶ Provide adults with **micro-credentials** for successfully completing individual modules and allow them to combine these to achieve a full qualification.
- ▶ Give adults the opportunity to **choose modules** from different types of provision to **create their individual learning path**.

3. Bridging the Gap

3.1 Adapting Learning Programs for Low-Skilled Immigrants

Adapting learning programmes for low-skilled immigrants plays a central role in bridging gaps and promoting greater equity within societies. As countries around the world become more diverse, **addressing the specific needs of low-skilled immigrants becomes increasingly important for successful integration**. These tailored education initiatives not only help immigrants acquire basic skills, but also help balance the competitive playing field and promote social justice (cf. Kersh et al., 2021).

However, in order to lay the foundations for inclusive societies, we need to focus on current challenges in order to tackle problematic structures at their roots. In this regard, a recent report in Spain by Accem (2020) identified the main challenges faced by low-skilled migrants and ranked them in terms of relevance. In order to build a bridge to practice, alternative **courses of action** are offered in order **to break down problematic structures** step by step.

1. Lack of awareness of the need to acquire and validate socio-labour skills

One option would be to run targeted awareness-raising campaigns highlighting the tangible benefits of acquiring social and vocational skills or showcasing success stories of people who have improved their employability through education.

2. Lack of literacy and language learning resources

In this regard, the development of comprehensive language and literacy programmes tailored to different learning levels can be helpful. In addition, the provision of easily accessible resources such as online modules, interactive apps and community-based workshops facilitates lifelong learning.

3. Difficulties in accessing formal training for adults

Flexible scheduling options for adult training programmes could be established, including evening classes, weekend workshops, and online courses to accommodate the various commitments of low-skilled migrants.

4. Teachers with little or no training in interculturality in the classroom

To progressively soften this problematic structure, providing further training opportunities for educators to improve their intercultural competence can be helpful in creating an inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment.

5. Lack of digital skills

Digitalisation determines our everyday life, which is why the integration of digital literacy courses in adult education is inevitable. Dealing with computers, smartphones and the internet is a core issue for both education and employability.

6. Lack of grants and scholarships for training

To make education more accessible and affordable, working with government agencies and private organisations to establish scholarship and grant programmes specifically for low-skilled migrants is a key issue.

7. Xenophobic and racist behaviour in the classroom

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Xenophobia and racism are fundamental problem structures through which migrants experience multiple restrictions on a daily basis, which is why the implementation of a strict anti-discrimination policy in educational institutions and the implementation of diversity and awareness training for learners and educators are essential to promote an inclusive learning atmosphere.

8. School absenteeism

The causes of absenteeism should be addressed through individual support for learners who may be facing problems such as transport issues, family commitments or conflicts at work.

9. Difficulty in reconciling

Establishing counselling and mentoring programmes can help learners balance their educational efforts with other life commitments by providing advice on time management and prioritisation.

By comprehensively addressing these issues, adult education institutions can create an inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates the integration of low-skilled migrants into lifelong learning opportunities.

3.2 Beyond Barriers: Designing and promoting accessible and attractive adult education programmes

In today's diverse and rapidly evolving society, **engaging low-skilled migrants in lifelong learning is not only a goal but a necessity**. Adult education programmes play a central role in this process, serving as a bridge to provide people with important skills and knowledge. However, to truly ensure the inclusion of low-skilled migrants, these programmes must not only be available, but also adapted to be both, **accessible and attractive**. This adaptation is crucial to breaking down barriers and overcoming challenges that migrants often face. By making adult education programmes accessible and attractive, we can create an environment where every individual, regardless of their skill level or background, can actively engage in lifelong learning and contribute to their personal growth and the wider community (cf. Mooney, et al., 2017).

In the previous sub-chapter, some possibilities have already been shown to break down initial barriers and to make services accessible. However, attention should still be paid to the point of attractiveness, as this point draws people into the educational settings, offers them motivation and ultimately keeps them in the courses, as they perceive empowerment and participation.

Among other things, lifelong learning offers the following advantages (cf. Mienert, et al., 2011):



In order to motivate people for lifelong learning, these advantages must be transparently communicated to the outside world. Therefore, it must be made clear in the **advertising** of offers that the **participants do not learn for others but for themselves** and can benefit from multiple factors as a result.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING AMONGST MIGRANTS

When promoting lifelong learning to migrants, it is important to highlight the key aspects that make the offer attractive and useful to the target group. The following points should be highlighted to effectively target this group (cf. Andreev, 2023):

- ▶ **Personal development:** The focus of the lifelong learning programme is on the personal development of the learners.
- ▶ **Multiple benefits:** Clearly communicate how participants can benefit on a personal level in different areas. Highlight how the programme improves language skills, increases employability and promotes a deeper understanding of the host culture and society.
- ▶ **Affordability:** If the programme is offered for free or at a low cost, highlight this. Financial accessibility is an important aspect for migrants and knowing that the offer is affordable can greatly increase its attractiveness.
- ▶ **Flexible learning formats:** It is important to highlight whether the course includes significant self-study components or adopts a blended learning approach. This flexibility takes into account the time constraints that migrants often face due to work or family commitments and makes it easier for them to participate.
- ▶ **Clear framework conditions:** Provide clear information on logistical aspects. This includes course times, training locations, the proportion of online learning and the availability of childcare. Addressing these practical concerns ensures that migrants can plan their participation effectively.

- ▶ **Cultural sensitivity:** Acknowledge and accommodate cultural diversity within the migrant community. Adapt the course content and approach to the different backgrounds of the participants to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.
- ▶ **Recognition and integration:** Highlight any opportunities for official recognition of acquired skills or qualifications that can contribute significantly to the integration of migrants into the host country's workforce and society.
- ▶ **Success stories:** Tell success stories of migrants who have benefited from the programme. Real-life examples can inspire potential participants and show tangible results (Hint: Some of these real-life examples can be found on the 3L Mindset website <https://www.3lmindset.com/>).

If you take these factors into account and communicate them effectively in your promotional activities, lifelong learning programmes can become a compelling proposition for migrants that promotes their personal development, integration and overall well-being.

The effective promotion of education requires a multi-layered approach to reach the target group **through different channels**, such as the following. In order to additionally ensure greater dissemination of the offers, it is helpful to provide information in **easily understandable language** and possibly in **several languages**: (cf. Anzenberger, et al., 2016):



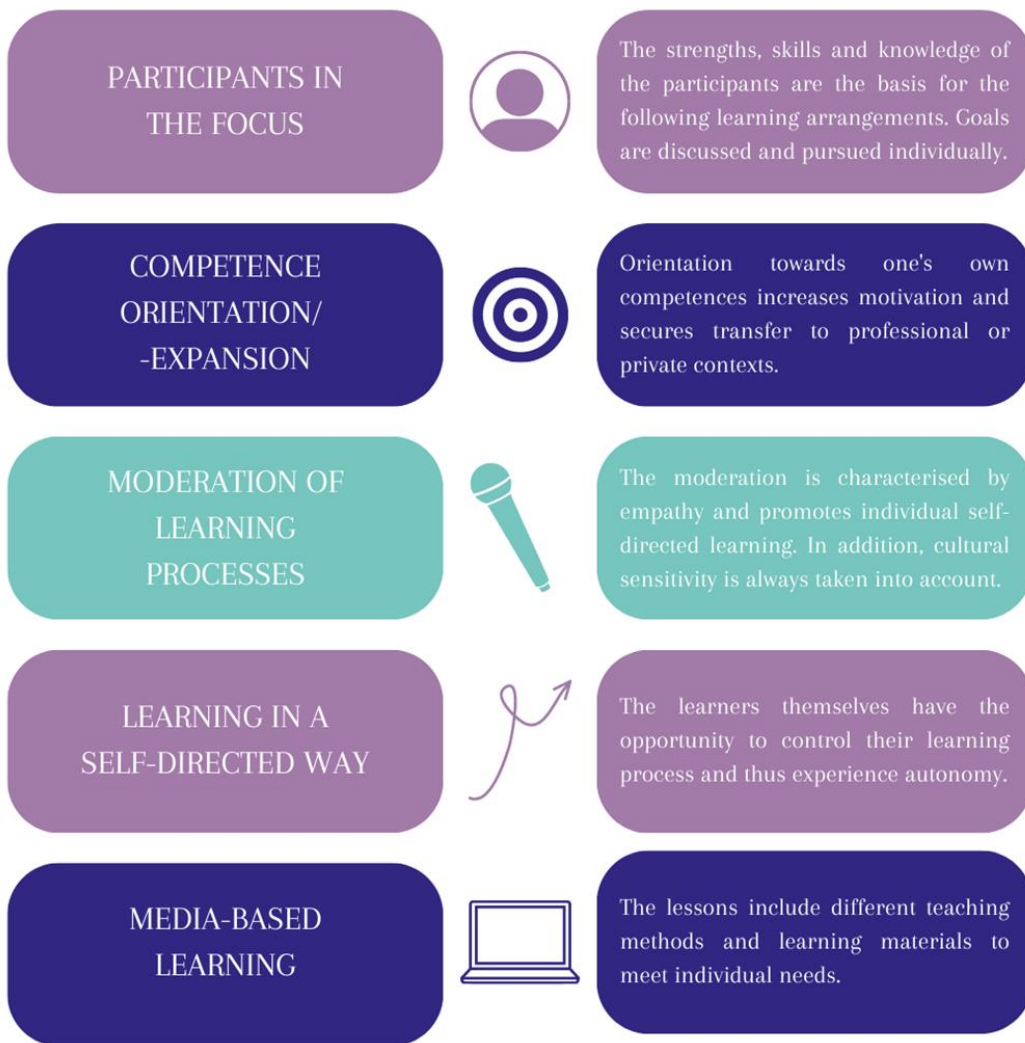
Remember that it is important to consider the needs and cultural preferences of the people you want to target. By

combining these strategies, you can maximize the reach and impact of your promotional efforts.

3.3 Considerations for Educational Institutions and Employers in Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Creating inclusive learning environments for migrants requires a holistic approach that takes into account different aspects to ensure their successful integration and engagement. The "learn forever" basic principle summarises these as follows and thus offers an initial overview of inclusive education (cf. Loucky-Reisner, et al., 2014):





By **fostering an environment that embraces diversity, respects different backgrounds and responds to individual learning needs**, inclusive education creates a space where migrants can truly thrive. This approach recognises the particular challenges that migrants may face and addresses them with tailored support and resources. Inclusive education not only improves migrants' access to learning opportunities, but also empowers them to fully engage, contribute and excel in their lifelong learning journey. It fosters a sense of belonging, boosts self-confidence and equips migrants with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully integrate into their new community and pursue fulfilling careers (cf. CONEDU, 2017).

Since needs can be as diverse as people and their cultures themselves, there are multiple facets in inclusive education that need to be addressed. Below you will find some **initial inputs** (cf. CONEDU, 2017):

- ▶ **Culturally relevant curriculum:** Develop learning materials and curricula that incorporate different cultural perspectives, experiences and examples so that the content is comprehensible and engaging.
- ▶ **Language support:** Offer language support programmes, such as language courses or language exchange groups, to help migrants improve their language skills and communicate effectively in the learning environment.

- ▶ **Flexible learning pathways:** Offer tailor-made learning pathways that take into account migrants' different educational backgrounds and learning needs and allow them to progress at their own pace.
- ▶ **Peer mentoring:** Match migrants with local students or mentors who can provide guidance, support and insights into the education system and local culture.
- ▶ **Multilingual resources:** Create learning materials, guides and resources in multiple languages to target migrants who may not speak the local language.
- ▶ **Counselling and support services:** Establish counselling services that address the emotional and social needs of migrants and provide assistance with academic and personal challenges.
- ▶ **Feedback mechanisms:** Establish feedback channels through which the learners can share their experiences and suggestions for improving the learning environment to ensure that their voices are heard.
- ▶ **Technological accessibility:** Ensure that online learning platforms are user-friendly and accessible and provide technical support to learners who are less familiar with digital tools.

With these practical approaches, educational institutions can create an inclusive environment that empowers participants to embrace lifelong learning with confidence, fostering personal growth, integration and success in their new community.

4. Success Stories

4.1 Impact of Adult Education on Integration and Lifelong Learning Benefits

The transformative power of adult education is most evident in the impact it has on the lives of low-skilled immigrants. Through carefully designed programs and dedicated educators, partners have witnessed numerous success stories that underscore the profound difference education can make.

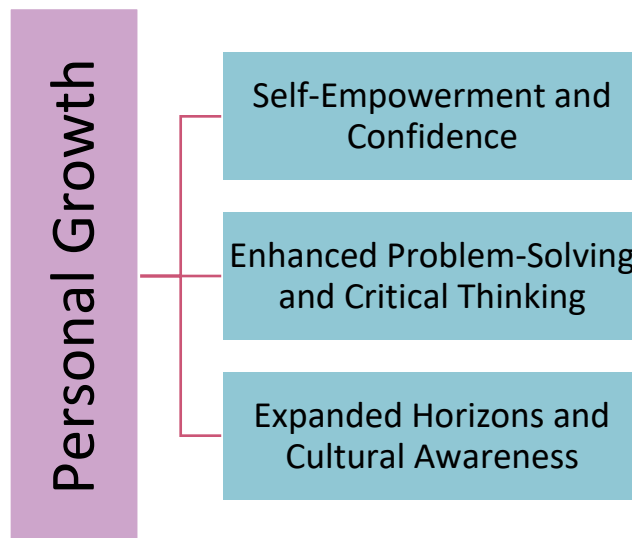
The impact is evident in the following areas:

- ▶ Adult education provides low-skilled immigrants with the tools they need to break free from cycles of limited employment opportunities. By acquiring new skills and knowledge, individuals gain access to higher-paying jobs, thus improving their economic stability and reducing their reliance on social assistance programs.
- ▶ Language proficiency is a cornerstone of successful integration. Through focused language instruction, adult learners not only gain the ability to communicate effectively but also develop a sense of belonging within their new communities. This newfound confidence leads to increased social participation and a deeper connection to local culture.
- ▶ Education empowers individuals to actively participate in the civic life of their communities. With a greater understanding of local policies, rights, and responsibilities, adult learners are better equipped to engage in civic activities, from voting in local elections to volunteering for community initiatives.
- ▶ Access to education also positively impacts health outcomes. Educated individuals are more likely to make informed decisions about their health, leading to healthier lifestyles and reduced healthcare costs. Additionally, education fosters a sense of agency and empowerment, which can have a positive impact on mental health and overall well-being.
- ▶ The benefits of adult education extend beyond the individual learner. Parents who engage in learning become positive role models for their children, emphasizing the value of education and creating a supportive learning environment at home. This, in turn, sets the stage for a cycle of lifelong learning within families.

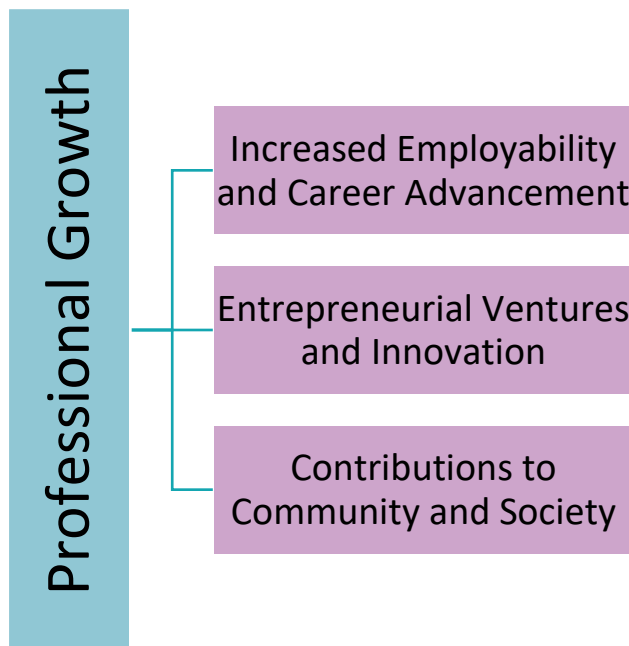
4.2 Personal and Professional Growth Through Adult Education

Adult education is not merely a means to acquire knowledge; it's a catalyst for personal and professional transformation. Individuals who engage in lifelong learning through adult education programs experience a profound journey of growth, both in their personal lives and within their careers.

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- ▶ **Self-Empowerment and Confidence:** Adult education empowers individuals to take control of their learning journey. As they acquire new skills and knowledge, their confidence soars, enabling them to navigate challenges and opportunities with a newfound sense of self-assuredness.
- ▶ **Enhanced Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** Through active participation in adult education, learners develop sharper critical thinking abilities. They learn to analyze situations, consider multiple perspectives, and make informed decisions—a skillset that extends far beyond the classroom.
- ▶ **Expanded Horizons and Cultural Awareness:** Engaging with diverse learning materials and interacting with peers from different backgrounds fosters a deeper understanding of various cultures and perspectives. This cultural competence becomes an invaluable asset in our globalized world.



- ▶ **Increased Employability and Career Advancement:** Adult education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's rapidly evolving job market. Employers value employees who demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning, often leading to greater opportunities for career advancement.
- ▶ **Entrepreneurial Ventures and Innovation:** Many successful entrepreneurs credit adult education as a driving force behind their ability to innovate and create new ventures. The ability to adapt, learn, and apply knowledge is a cornerstone of entrepreneurial success.
- ▶ **Contributions to Community and Society:** Individuals who experience personal and professional growth through adult education often become active contributors to their communities. They share their knowledge, skills, and experiences, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

4.3 Real-Life Stories Demonstrating the Impact of Adult Education on Immigrants

bit *schulungcenter*
member of **bit** group



"I wrote more than a hundred applications after leaving school in Austria. Nobody accepted me. I wanted to work, so I did a temporary job in a supermarket. Surprisingly, one day someone called me and asked me if I wanted to do an apprenticeship through a foundation together with a company. I was very happy that someone offered me the opportunity and I accepted. I now work with so many different people, all of whom have a great education and have studied, and I am treated by them with respect and on an equal footing. That impresses me a lot."

► About the programme

The programme I attended is partly funded by a foundation. It is a kind of abbreviated training, but there are courses similar to those at a vocational school. These courses can be chosen freely by the person, but they are related to the job. There is also a mentor from the foundation, and I have to give monthly reports and describe what I have learned in the company. However, I can also choose the individual courses I am allowed to attend, so that they help me with my integration or further career.



“As a migrant, you come here and feel like the first few negative information you receive from people might discourage you from doing something actually good. The thing is most times, we don’t get opportunities to talk for people to see who we really are and what we are bringing to the table. Not only did I have lots of learning during this program, but I also made a family and a community, because I didn’t have family here. So I think more of these programs should be put out there for people who are stuck on how to progress within their communities.”

► **About the programmes**

“I did my healthcare qualification in 2013 and am now working in the area. I have three children who are 13, four and one whom I need to support. After what I went through, I don’t want to do anything against the law. I want to pay my taxes and be a useful member of society.

My life is so different now. I am far, far better... I am happy now. I am working, I am being a good citizen. I want to stay here and bring up my children here.”



“When I arrived from my country, I realized my real need for training if I wanted to get a quality job that was not related to bars or harvesting. I had to take advantage of my knowledge in the area of languages. In Morocco I had studied French and English at school and I had always been attracted to the world of tourism. In Malaga there were many opportunities in this sector. For this reason, I did a training course through the Andalusian employment service as a tourist information technician and then I came to this academy to train in languages (I wanted to get some certification in English because in Spain it is very important to demonstrate knowledge throughout diplomas). The course was very interesting as it provided me with all the tools to face the needs of the labour market.”

► **About the programmes**

As I said, the tourist information technician course was a 480 hour course offered by the Andalusian Employment Service (SAE). The course was from Monday to Friday from 9am to 2pm and was structured in training modules, from customer service techniques to quality in customer service, telephone assistance and tourist geography.

The course was completely free of charge, and it was easy to access because there was a quota for immigrants and vulnerable groups. The teachers in general were very professional and motivating and even when we finished the course, they sent us information about courses and scholarships, so I recommend this kind of courses. Not only for the contents themselves but also for the people you meet and the networking possibilities. After the course I did a personalised insertion itinerary (*itinerario personalizado de inserción*) with an employment counsellor from the SAE and fortunately I found an internship contract in which I was not paid much but it helped me to put my knowledge into practice.

This happened 5 years ago, I have been progressing and now I work as a receptionist in a hotel, although I want to continue my training.



“During my internship in Spain, I had the privilege of attending two courses that truly enriched my experience and expanded my professional horizons. These courses, taught by the Chamber of Commerce of Madrid, one in marketing and the other in project management, provided me with valuable insights into the business world. What made this experience truly special was the opportunity to apply what I learned in the classroom directly to my internship role in a local company. The integration of theory with practice enriched my understanding of these concepts and allowed me to be a more effective resource for the organization. In summary, my internship in Spain provided not only a culturally enriching experience but also the chance to acquire crucial skills through these two courses. My understanding of marketing and project management deepened significantly. I am grateful to my team and the course instructors for their constant support and guidance during this unique journey.”

► About the programmes

The course was taught by the Chamber of Commerce of Madrid. As upon described, there were two courses, one in marketing and the other one in project management. Both were taught online and had first the theory and then the practical part, which corresponded to the internship that she was doing in the company. The theoretical part included the theory and then an assessment part at the end of each module. The marketing course was eye-opening. I delved into strategies for branding, market research, advertising, and social media management, gaining a better understanding of how businesses establish and maintain a global presence. The expertise of the instructors made the learning experience even more rewarding. The second course, on project management, equipped me with the tools and methodology needed to plan, execute, and control projects effectively. Through practical exercises and case studies, I developed essential skills such as time management, effective communication, risk identification and mitigation, and team coordination.

The duration of the courses was 6 months each. The first one started in November 2021, and the second one in May 2022. The enrolment was a working agreement between the company and the Chamber of Commerce. As it was online, you had 6 months to complete each course, and you studied all the topics, did the evaluation at the end of each course module and to finish the course you had to do an assignment with the help of your mentor. You uploaded it to the Learning Platform, and it was evaluated. He did these two courses because they were related to the position he held in the company, which was that of Project Manager for European projects in the company *Acción Laboral*.



"I left my home country with a heavy heart, but I am very happy in Slovenia now. It hasn't always been easy. When I came to Slovenia and started working, I was already aware that I needed to know the Slovenian language. I joined a short language learning programme and later a multi-hour programme, where I met many new people, joined different workshops, got to know the environment and the city. Integration was very important to me, and over time I became more and more confident, and today I have a regular job, am happily married and expecting a baby. If someone asked me if I would change anything, I would definitely say no, because I am grateful for all the help, but most of all to everyone at LUV who supported me and saw in me what I could do. "

Naida Halilović Jusić

► About the programmes

Naida attended various programmes between 2018-2020. The Slovenian language learning programme called ZIP combines Slovenian language learning with a programme of familiarisation with Slovenian history, culture, and the constitutional order of the Republic of Slovenia. It is delivered in 60, 120 or 180 hours. The Slovenian language learning programme also integrates life and work topics that strengthen the integration of immigrants into Slovenian society.

In addition, she attended Basic competence programme with focus on language acquisition, *Getting to know Velenje* workshops and Administrative and legal advice programme.

"When Naida and I first met, she was very reserved and quiet. Over time, I realized that she was very talented and motivated to learn a new language, so I advised her to join other workshops, where she made visible progress. After the programme, I invited her several times to join me at Slovenian institute for Adult Education and present her story. She became more confident and later passed the B1 level exam in Slovenian." Barbara Majhen, the teacher

5. Changing the Mindset

5.1 What is a mindset?

Every individual has a mindset. This can be defined as a belief or perception that an individual has about themselves or about life in general.

The mindset that a person has, determines what they believe, how they think and how they act. The mindset is very important because it determines how a person approaches life and moves around the world. It has a direct impact on themselves and the people that surround them, both for the present as well as the future.

Mindsets can take a person towards their goal, or it can refrain them from doing so. Certain mindsets could even be hurtful to the person and those around them.

Although every person has a “main” mindset, it is likely that they also have minor mindsets that are related.

Different mindsets

There are different types of mindsets that a person can have. Many of them have been explored and researched in the past and it is likely that others will develop and arise in the future.

Some of the most common and commented upon mindsets are:

- ▶ Growth Mindset
- ▶ Fixed Mindset
- ▶ Creative Mindset
- ▶ Positive Mindset
- ▶ Productive Mindset

In general, a mindset includes a continuum, which goes from a particular mindset to the complete opposite. Examples of these continuums could be growth vs fixed mindsets or positive vs negative mindsets.

A person with a certain mindset, can be on any part of that continuum. This means that two different people with a similar mindset do not have to have the same intensity or level of that mindset. To set an example: one person could be 85% on the growth mindset, whereas the other could be at a full 100%.



5.2 The importance of a growth mindset

The term Growth Mindset has been explored, researched and heavily promoted by Dr Carol Dweck from Stanford University. It is probably also one of the most studied types of mindsets, as it has been linked to success in a variety of life domains (Yeager et al., 2019).

A growth mindset is the tendency for people to believe that their abilities can be developed through hard work. With a growth mindset, you try harder, you want to learn new strategies, and you seek out feedback when you are stuck (Dweck, 2015). It could be said that everyone is born with a growth mindset. Babies want to learn how to crawl, stand up, talk and walk, and do so through very hard work.

Mindsets can change over time. When a child and teenager have a growth mindset, they will most likely show eagerness to learn, to discover new things and to work hard at school and in life. This will lead to higher academic success later in life. These same people will, as adults, be able to have better responses to any problems or setbacks that occur in life and will not give up easily.

Growth Mindset Examples

A growth mindset can have a positive impact on how you approach learning, difficulties, and personal development. It promotes resilience, adaptability, and a strong drive towards growing one's own abilities.

Researchers believe that achieving a growth mindset is a gradual process that can be taught through various strategies such as neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to change and adapt), promoting the power of adding the word 'yet' to one's vocabulary when faced with challenges, providing constructive feedback, encouraging people to view challenges as learning opportunities.

Common examples of a growth mindset are:

- ▶ **Learning a new language:** Julia wants to learn German and she is aware of the challenges that learning a new language might bring. After the first month of her German course, she fails her first exam. Instead of believing that she is not good enough, she sees this experience as a sign that she needs to improve and keep studying. She is persistent and acknowledges the importance of consistency and celebrating small victories along the way.
- ▶ **Recovering from a setback:** Andrés lost his job. Instead of focusing on the negative aspect of being fired, he remains resilient. He takes some time to reflect on what went wrong and identify the aspects that he could improve. He continues working on his skills and he is looking forward to new opportunities.
- ▶ **Changing a habit:** Helen has recently decided she would like to adopt a healthier lifestyle. She is a smoker; she tends to eat fast food and does not enjoy regular exercise. Her growth mindset helps her understand that change is possible with effort and persistence. Even though she has not been taking care of her lifestyle before, she is now ready for personal development, and she focuses on progress even when it's slow.

Fixed vs Growth Mindset

A fixed mindset is the opposite of a growth mindset. People with a fixed mindset tend to believe that abilities and talents are inherent traits and that cannot be gained, they usually avoid challenges and view setbacks as a lack of ability. They tend to be more sensitive to criticism because they perceive it as a judgement rather than an opportunity to improve.

According to Carol Dweck, fixed and growth mindsets lead us to adopt different guidelines which change our lifestyles. Developing a growth mindset can lead to increased motivation, success, and a more positive outlook on life. It fosters a desire for learning, resilience in the face of challenges, and a positive attitude towards personal development.

5.3 Shaping mindsets

Although individuals with a fixed mindset may be hesitant to accept this notion, Dweck suggests that people have the capacity to transform their mindsets.

Embrace your journey: focus on the valuable experiences you encounter along the way.

Promote the power of 'YET': When facing challenges or difficulties, remind yourself that you haven't mastered a particular skill 'yet'.

Focus on constructive feedback and ways to constantly improve specific aspects or performance.

Encourage risk-taking and challenges.

Set growth-oriented goals.

Invest in personal development.

Foster a supportive environment where it is safe to make mistakes, ask for help and ask questions.

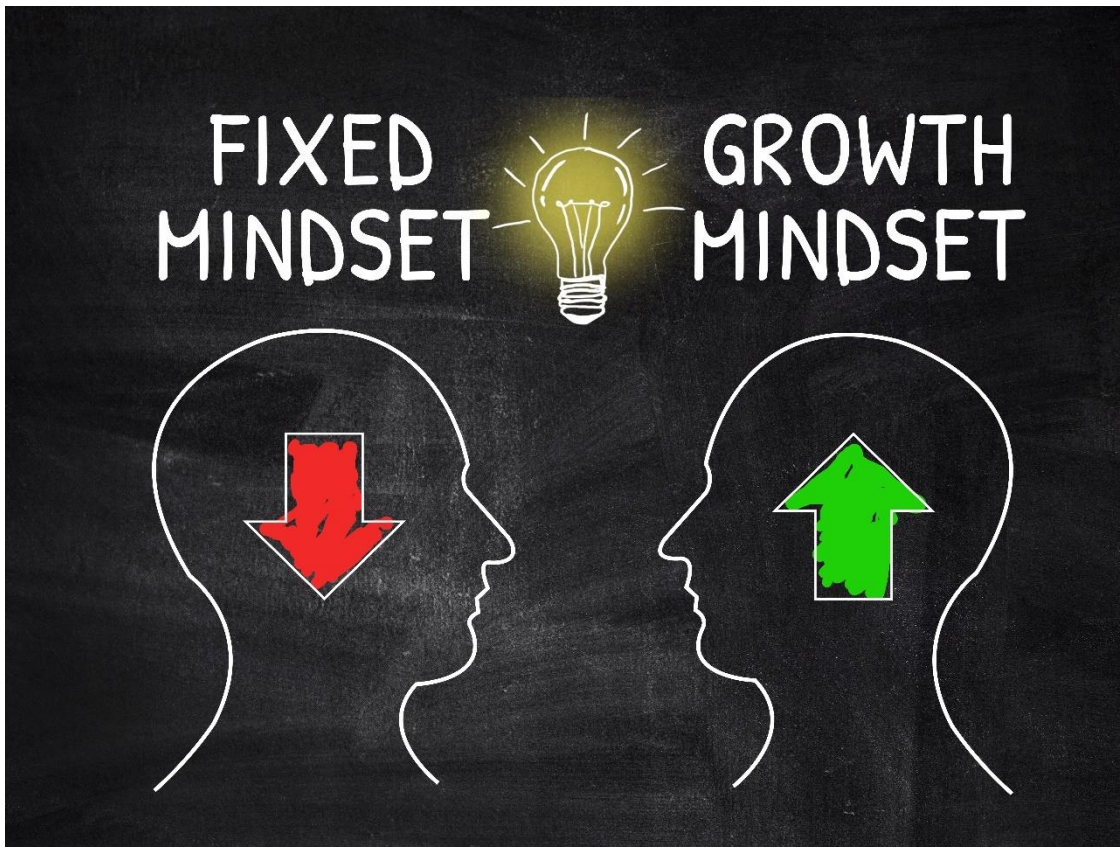
Setting expectations and challenging goals.

The idea of the growth mindset is that teachers set high expectations and goals for all students. It is therefore important that the tasks are sufficiently difficult or challenging for them while maintaining high standards for all. The goal is precisely for the teachers to find a way to reach the "low-ability" students. They must give equal time and attention to all students, regardless of their initial skills.

The "you can do anything" mentality is not sufficient. Teachers need to teach students how to reach high standards. They must take responsibility and not pass it on to the student. The teachers need to help them gain the skills and find the resources to make progress toward their goals. Otherwise, if they just motivate the students without any extra help, this can lead to the opposite effect: feeling like a failure.

It is necessary to monitor the progress of reaching goals and to encourage students' effort. Praising effort is not just about simply encouraging it but must lead to achievement. If the goals are not being reached, the teachers need to help the students to evaluate their strategies and choose new ones.

To achieve the goals effectively, it is important that they are as specific as possible. They need to be precise in terms of content and timeframe. The clearer the plan for reaching the goals, the easier it will be to monitor and change it if necessary.



Growth Mindset for giving instructions.

Teachers need to pay attention to several aspects of their speech when teaching. They need to pay attention to the way they give instructions, how they respond to successes and how they respond to failures. Even small words can completely change the meaning of what is said.

The impact of language starts with praise and responding to mistakes. To foster a growth mindset, it is essential to praise effort and hard work, not natural abilities. So, instead of saying "How clever you are", it is better to say, "You put a lot of effort into the task, and you succeeded".

Mistakes should be responded to positively, as an opportunity to learn. It is important for teachers to make students as aware of this as possible.

INSTEAD OF (FIXED MINDSET)	TRY (GROWTH MINDSET)
"sometimes it is better just to give up"	"If one strategy doesn't work, try another"
"this math problem is too hard for you"	"this math problem may take some time and effort"
"be careful, you made a lot of mistakes"	"you can use mistakes to help you learn better"
"you are so smart"	"I can see you work really hard on this"

Conclusions

This comprehensive booklet addresses the multifaceted challenges encountered by low-skilled immigrants in accessing adult education. It emphasizes the critical role of collaborative efforts among educational institutions, employers, and the wider community in overcoming these obstacles. By recognizing and addressing the unique barriers faced by these individuals, we pave the way for a more inclusive and prosperous future. The booklet advocates for educational institutions, employers, and the public to actively support the engagement of low-skilled immigrants in adult education, while also urging continued efforts in promoting lifelong learning and social inclusion for the betterment of society. The booklet also included examples of success stories provided by partners in the project demonstrating impact of education and various programmes on integration of migrants.

Educational institutions, as well as employers, are urged to take a proactive role in supporting the engagement of low-skilled immigrants in adult education. This involves the implementation of tailored programs, flexible learning options, and the creation of inclusive environments that cater to diverse needs and backgrounds. Moreover, the wider public is encouraged to advocate for policies that promote accessibility and equity in adult education, recognizing its transformative potential.

The importance of promoting lifelong learning and social inclusion is underscored as a critical imperative for all stakeholders. Policymakers, educators, employers, and communities must persist in their efforts to dismantle barriers and provide equal opportunities for individuals of all skill levels and backgrounds. Through sustained commitment, we can construct a more inclusive society where every member can contribute meaningfully.

In conclusion, the transformative power of adult education is evident not only in skill acquisition but also in the profound impact it has on personal and professional growth. It equips low-skilled immigrants with essential skills, empowers them to lead fulfilling lives, contribute to their communities, and bridge societal divides. By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by these individuals, we can foster a more inclusive and better future for all.

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