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From Discrimination to valuation of Diversity: a pedagogical model under the lens

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Formative challenges for an inclusive labor market

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Furio Bednarz, ECAP Foundation

The context and the project

Enhancing diversity and struggling against discrimination has been a main concern of European Union policies for the last 15 years. The legal framework became strengthened in 1999 with the Treaty of Amsterdam, whose Article 13 was specifically concerned with the fight against discrimination. In 2000, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, in its Article 21.1, identified a list of criteria for illegal discrimination. That same year, the Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29th implemented the principle of equal treatment among persons, without distinction of “race” or ethnic origin. The Council Directive 2000/78/ EC of 27 November 2000 then established a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. The legal measures against sexist discrimination were also reinforced with the Council and Parliament Directive 2002/73/CE of 23 September 2002. This common legal framework was then transferred to Member States’ legislation. Ambitious programs like EQUAL, developed during 2000-2008, allowed for the funding and implementation of tools, as well as experimentation and new practices on the issue of equal treatment.

Despite this common effort, and general regulations, problems related to gender and origin discrimination at the workplace, in the job market and carrier pathways, are still pending. Gender and origin discriminations are often interlaced, but sensibilities differ a lot from country to country, both considering EU member states and third countries strongly affected by migration phenomena, like Switzerland, whose attitude towards the definition of mandatory rules for combating discrimination are relatively low (as emerges, for instance, by the MIPEX Index surveys – www.mipex.eu).

After attempts based on strengthening legal frameworks, the attention seems now to be addressed more on active measures to overcome discrimination, promoting integration and equal opportunities: in the recent years (2007-2015) new challenges and objectives came to the fore - such as including main principles about diversity and equality of chances into the educational practices and learning in Europe and involving stakeholders on the ground such as the employers with the Charts of Diversity adopted in the past years.

The Di&Di project was implemented between 2013 and 2015 in the framework of the Lifelong learning programme (2007-2013). Its theoretical foundations are closely linked to a practical approach enhancing the mainstreaming of diversity as a potential asset. It gathered five European countries- France, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy and Switzerland- with different backgrounds both in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and in the non- discrimination approach even though sharing the same common legal references - implemented both by the European Union Agency for Fundamental rights (EU, 28 countries, Brussels) and Council of Europe (CoE, 47 countries, Strasbourg). The Di&Di project intended to show how far the diversity approach could be a challenging issue both for the learners/trainees and the trainers/teachers. It underlined the many obstacles (external/internal) still to be overcome on the labor market for the special public of graduate students and low qualified women, both sharing a migratory background. It aimed at implementing on the ground, with appropriate pedagogical tools and strategies, anti-discrimination policies, addressing both learners concretely facing discrimination and trainers, teachers and mentors working with migrants (Human Resources staff, advisers, etc.) in order to have a concrete impact on diversity management. Actually Di&Di promoted diversity as an asset - identifying and valuing diverse skills and competences, needed by the EU labor markets. It focused on empowerment of the people through the exchange between learners and trainers/mentors, in order to let the people be more aware and capable of recognizing hurdles and resources, setting up effective strategies to make diversity an asset.

¹ This article refers to a specific experience developed in the framework of Di&Di project; more information in <http://di-di.eu/>

A pedagogical approach to value diversity

In this perspective, a pedagogical approach needs to be focused on tools and strategies to support the valuation of diversity. Struggling against discrimination is to be understood in the access to the labour market by offering appropriate learning/teaching strategies. The educative and formative approach is a main issue to equip learners/trainees with relevant tools and strategies to allow them to value their specific profile in a more and more demanding professional environment and so to be able to overcome situations of discrimination. A general/pedagogical framework was designed the first year taking into account the handbook on European non-discrimination law, paying constant attention to the 5 national contexts. Both education & integration policies have been taken into account, but also the institutional context (profiles of stakeholders in charge of implementing the education & integration policies) and the local/professional context, involving professionals who are asked to support individually or collectively migrants in their educative/formative path. A training programme aiming at fostering the mutual exchange between graduate migrants and low qualified female migrants has been designed during the first phase (2014), together with a mentoring for trainers/teachers & professionals working with them; in the second year (2015) training and mentoring sessions were delivered in the different countries, adapting targets and contents to the different realities. In order to reinforce the diversity principle, different profiles of trainees were associated to the training sessions. It has been a main challenge of the experimentation. The pedagogical approach also combined the knowledge of discriminations (mainly legal issues) together with a pedagogical support to overcome these difficulties to enhance the diversity approach. This is a 3 step approach: after reminding of the general framework to struggle against discrimination, being able to identify the main obstacles faced by migrants in the EU countries in terms of educational practice and learning in order to overcome them and facilitate the access to the EU labour markets. The questions raised were and still are: how far can we enhance the diversity approach in vocational education and training? Is diversity really taken into account in educational practices and learning in the EU ? What could be relevant educational strategies to enhance to reach the goal- such as empowerment process or any other inclusive or cooperative educational strategy?

Implementing the learning model

Drawing on aims and concepts of the DI&DI training path (see IRIV Conseil, Dr. B.Halba, *Di&Di- enhancing diversity and struggling against discrimination training programme –May 2014*), ECAP designed a learning process partially restructuring the original proposal, trying to improve didactical planning and sequences. The aim was to better set up the methodological framework and a coherent learning path, in order to implement the learning contents defined from a general point of view by the above mentioned documents. The proposal focuses on specific conditions in which the model should and could be implemented (transferred into practice, and piloted) in Switzerland, looking at the same time for making the model sustainable and effective also in the other partner countries, according to local contexts.

Some fundamental questions underpinned ECAP's proposal:

- which kind of learners do we imagine to involve in the learning path? How and to which extent could we reach at the same time *intermediate* and *final* beneficiaries (low and high qualified persons, sharing a migration background)
- which kind of needs and expectations, both explicit and hidden, should we try to give an answer, in order to respect key principles of proximity, participation and holistic approach in training design?
- what are the expected learning outcomes of our training path, described according to a competence based approach?

ECAP's training plan presupposes the adoption of precise choices, both considering methodology and tools:

- the composition of "classes" (learners' groups) have to respect some basic principles, related to effectiveness of learning in a context of diversity, valuing however in a flexible way the exchange

and peer learning between low and high qualified persons, belonging to different genders but sharing a migration background whose origins can be also diverse; flexibility means for instance considering a different mix of learners, even respecting the principles of diversity (i.e. in Switzerland we would address recruitment looking for women with a good education and prominent experiences in their country of origin, married in Switzerland, actually not integrated in the local job market, combining them with not qualified persons, both male or female, both youngsters of the second generation or first generation migrants);

- intermediate and final beneficiaries can be simultaneously reached building action-learning groups in which both participants and trainers / mentors / coaches have something important to learn, through exchanges, cooperative exercises, experiential didactics;
- needs and expectations, both explicit and hidden, should be analyzed and taken into account during the animation and recruitment phase in order to personalize learning and learning agreements, but we can imagine that to reach proximity, participation and holistic approach we must consider that an overarching aim is for sure related to the completion of a successful integration and empowerment path in the hosting country, coping in a more effective way with explicit and implicit discriminations faced in daily life and at the workplace; in other terms we should focus not on academic contents, but on a learning “promise” based on accompaniment, perceived as concretely useful to improving employability and marketability of competences and skills;
- the learning outcomes of the training path, described according to a competence based approach, should enable the learners reach the above clarified general aims, and must be detailed taking into consideration different contexts (in terms of threats and opportunities) and the specific experience of participants.

Training path and learning outcomes under the lens

In the DI&DI training path aims are indirectly defined as “priorities” to be tackled:

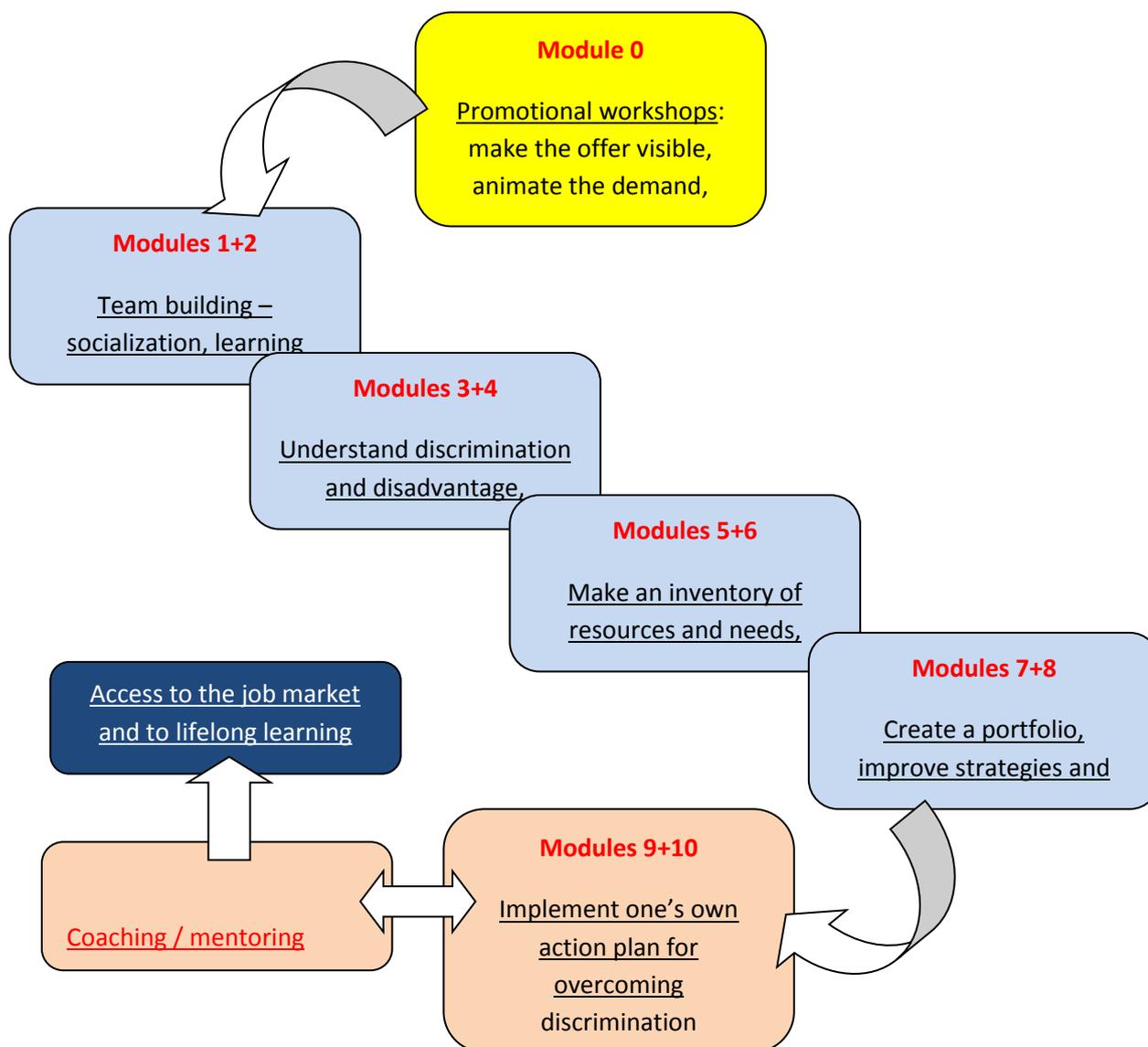
- *A better knowledge of Vocational and Education training (VET) through the rules to be followed/codes to be known on the EU labour markets*
- *A focus on a specific informal and non formal learning : skills & competences acquired through a migratory background*
- *A better understanding of barriers to the access of labour market & situations of discriminations*

In terms of learning outcomes, at the end of the training path the learners should be able to:

- recognize the nature and the origin of phenomena and factors penalizing migrants and particularly migrant women in the local job market
- develop an effective strategy, to cope with the “real” problems they are dealing with (in which discrimination factors are normally interlinked with other obstacles and variables)
- make an inventory of their experiences, detecting related competences and skills, evaluating their marketability
- define a SMART Action Plan to implement their empowerment processes
- develop and value their “Portfolio”, and implement a concrete marketing strategy, in order to improve their professional opportunities, to find and/or change a job, and to access lifelong learning opportunities.

These learning outcomes imply of course the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as described in the original training plan, related to founded information about the local job market, the VET landscapes, the legal frameworks related to rights and equality, as well as the ability of using tools for analyzing, documenting, making visible and spend on the market competences gained in informal, non formal and formal settings, particularly considering the migratory experience.

The following detailed “learning path” – inspired by comprehensive methodological choices (experiential and reflective learning, problem based learning as a setting...) – aims at articulating the modular structure in a coherent and logical pathway.



More in details, ECAP’s proposal articulates learning units (Modules) into 5 sequential “blocks”, describing units in objectives, learning outcomes and contents, giving some hints on methodologies and didactical settings (see Annex).

Final remarks

The experience realized implementing the Di&Di Model in the different countries, and the specific implementation of the model in Switzerland, made evident how contexts make a great difference: the sustainability of the Di & Di approach largely depends on legal entitlements, job market conditions, sensibilities of stakeholders and actors and last but not least heterogeneity of target groups of potential beneficiaries. Stronger legal frameworks hamper the diffusion of major discriminatory behaviors, even if in most of the cases recruitment and career policies are questionable, but difficult to be persecuted, a part

from more evident case of racist discrimination. Sensitivity for equal rights and above all the conviction that diversity provide richness – at policy level and in HRM strategies – facilitate the engagement of stakeholders, providing new insights and perspectives, and creating a positive environment for valuing cultural differences. An open job market, in which the demand for workforce is high and differentiated, help learners spend their resources, giving sense to empowerment processes, otherwise engendering frustrations and reproducing the feeling of being discriminated.

Apart from “hard” factors paving the road to wider opportunities, also soft elements – like educational and formative opportunities – play an important role, if some conditions are respected. A pedagogy based on exchange and mentoring draws on the commitment of a wide range of learners, capable to interact, activate peer learning processes, experience the power of “diversity” as a group. Migrants who realized a positive integration and professionalization pathway can play in an ideal way the role of mentors, providing sustainable role models for new comers and relatively disadvantaged migrants. This reality could be put in relationships with qualifications owned by the migrants, but not always. It depends on contexts and situations, because low qualified people can sometimes better activate stimuli and creative problem solving energies than qualified ones. Peer learning and mentoring can be useful even to more qualified persons looking for integration and career opportunities.

Moreover, the Di&Di approach implies the availability of competent trainers, coaches and mentors, capable to orient and guide the empowerment process, providing formative hints, moderating the discussion, activating reflection on experiences of subjective and objectives discrimination, facilitating the grassroots development of positive strategies. These trainers should know the legal frameworks in which they are moving and the conditions of job markets, in order to help learners get acquainted with the situation, be aware of what is discrimination, and what is not, cope with constraints hampering their progression at social and professional levels. They are expected in any case to play a fundamental role in the process, a non-directive but very supportive one!

Finally, in order to spread pedagogical approaches designed and tested by Di&Di among a wider audience – in all EU countries and not only amongst the Di&Di partners - it is important to share with practitioners coming from various backgrounds and countries the Di &Di approach, considering its methodological value. Not a readymade recipe, not a “one size fits all” idea, but a model to be contextualized and declined according to the different frameworks of application, making diversity the most powerful resource to be spent against discrimination.

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(I acknowledge the strong contribution to this article of the common research developed during the Di&Di Project with Dr Bénédicte Halba, Iriv Conseil, Paris)

Annex – the Di&Di training path – Implementation of the Model in Switzerland

Module 0 – PROMOTIONAL WORKSHOP

Introduction - Overview on the main content of the Di&Di training

Objectives

Make the training (learning) programme known and transparent, animate the demand

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to make an aware choice, comparing the training offer with their needs and expectations, considering problems and opportunities emerging in the context

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- The Di&Di Model, between European dimension and local challenges;
- features and learning outcomes of the path,
- main references, tools and practices

Learning setting

Workshop: inputs, questions and answers (mainly top-down), collection of biographical data

BLOCK 1 TEAM BUILDING AND LEARNING AGREEMENTS

Module 1 –

Objectives

Socialize the group, create the conditions for peer learning and exchange

Analyse needs, expectations and social/cultural representations of the learners, with respect to discrimination; detect hurdles, blockages and stereotypes

⇒ General idea: avoiding any stigmatisation (including self stigmatisation by migrants themselves) and insisting on the competence approach (LLP)

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to self-evaluate their attitudes towards discrimination, identifying the nature of obstacles and factors penalizing their integration path

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Learning through exchange and cooperation,
- valuing diversity,
- accept new perspectives and transformation;
- narrating our personal stories

Learning setting

Active didactics, team building, biographical approach

Module 2 –

Objectives

Improve conditions for peer learning and exchange

Identify individual profiles (who am I, with reference to categories defined by the Model?), focus on needs, expectations and social/cultural representations of the learners, identify challenges and exchange possibilities (what can I learn from the others, which kind of contribution can I bring?)

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to read, narrate and understand their life stories and the ones of the others, in order to gain new insights; they are confident with peer and cooperative learning methods and settings; they are able to set up a learning plan for the course, and fix the learning agreement

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Focus on personal stories of discrimination and success,
- compare individual stories with historical patterns of discrimination and fight for rights in the different EU countries,
- identify some general legal frameworks for combatting discrimination

Learning setting

Active didactics and team building exercises, biographical approach, exchange in sub-groups, moderation

BLOCK 2 – UNDERSTAND DISCRIMINATION, ELABORATE A STRATEGY

Module 3 –

Objectives

Analyse variables penalizing job carriers and hampering integration, in order to identify which kind of factors are related to discrimination or have other origins; set up a concrete strategy for coping with discrimination

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to analyse a situation in which discrimination comes to the fore, generally in a multidimensional set of variables hampering a successful carrier and integration pathway; they develop problem setting capabilities

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Inventory of case studies,
- elaboration of the case studies according to a PBL perspective

Learning setting

Peer learning in groups, case studies (PBL) facilitated by a mentor / coach

Module 4 –

Objectives

Define a strategy, and concrete actions, to cope with variables related to discrimination, penalizing job carriers and hampering integration; set up a concrete action plan for coping with discrimination, according to existing legal frameworks and institutional networks

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to build up an action plan to deal with situations in which discrimination comes to the fore; they develop problem solving capabilities

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Further elaboration of the case studies according to a PBL perspective (see attached grid)

Learning setting

Peer learning in groups, case studies (PBL) facilitated by a mentor / coach

BLOCK 3 – MAKE AN INVENTORY OF OUR OWN RESOURCES, DEFINE AN ACTION PLAN

Module 5 –

Objectives

Make an inventory of experiences particularly focusing on migration, detect related competences, learn to estimate the value of these resources, also gaining new insights through the exchange with their colleagues

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to “read” their migratory experience, elaborating a profile of their competences and skills detecting them by their life and work experiences; they are able to compare these resources with the requirements of the job market and professional profiles / roles

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Analysis and formalisation of competences and skills,
- collection of evidences,
- reading, understanding and using as a reference point information concerning workplaces, job descriptions and professional profiles

Learning setting

Peer learning in small groups or couples, individual work facilitated by didactical scaffolds (grids, forms...) and by a mentor / coach

Module 6 –

Objectives

Define an action plan for marketing competences and skills, including the ones deriving by migratory trajectories, in the job market

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to design an action plan finalised at making their profile visible and marketable

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Action planning, according to a SMART perspective

Learning setting

Peer learning in small groups or couples, individual work facilitated by didactical scaffolds (grids, forms...) and by a mentor / coach

BLOCK 4 – CREATE A PORTFOLIO, IMPROVE STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Module 7 –

Objectives

Understand and actually use methods and tools for making visible and valuing resources deriving from diversity and migration background

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to build up a personal dossier or Portfolio for valuing, according to local requirements, their migratory experience, provide evidence of their competences and skills gained in education, life and work experiences, both in the country of origin and in the hosting country

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Examples of methods and tools (EU level, local levels) - introduction and practical use:
 - Portfolio Migrapass (since 2012),
 - Training "Mediateur interculturel" (since 2009),
 - Other examples : Allinhe for migrants (2011-2014),
 - Any other initiatives used/implemented in EU and in each country (i.e. Switzerland: Portfolio Risorsa, World Wide Women learning path, Orienta learning material...)

Learning setting

Individual and cooperative work facilitated by didactical scaffolds (see existing tools, such as Migrapass) and by a mentor / coach

Module 8 –

Objectives

Make a realistic analysis of our own Portfolio, define a strategy for improving it, collecting information and entering lifelong learning processes

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to self-evaluate their Portfolio, in comparison with requirements stated by qualifications or job profiles (in job applications, for instance); they are able to identify sources of discrimination but also gaps in competences and skills to be covered by additional training and/or experience (see action planning)

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- SWOT Analysis techniques,
- sources of information available in each country,
- selection criteria and use of information

Learning setting

Individual and cooperative work facilitated by didactical scaffolds and by a mentor / coach

BLOCK 5 – IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN

Module 9 –

Objectives

Understand and actually use additional learning opportunities and other means to overcome problems hampering integration and carrier

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to achieve information and guidance in order to fight against discrimination, and at the same time improve their employability, through new work experiences and/or participating to lifelong learning

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Legal frameworks, in the field of equality of rights and opportunities;
- institutions active in the field;
- VET and CVET landscapes and training offers;
- guidance opportunities

Learning setting

Inputs, exercises (PBL) in smaller groups (access to information and web sources, tools for guidance)

Module 10 – (+ coaching)

Objectives

Build up effective job applications: achieve the right information, read information, prepare a job application drawing on our Portfolio and on information achieved, improve our capability of managing job interviews and qualification speeches

Learning outcomes

Participants are able to prepare and manage job applications and carrier pathways, building up a dossier and managing interviews

Contents (to be implemented in a didactical plan)

- Dossier for a job application,
- methods and tools
- individual and collective coaching

Learning setting

Inputs, exercises in smaller groups (PBL), role playing
Personalized accompaniment