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Digital Media – A Bridge to
Inclusion

Scientific Paper



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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1. Introduction

Teaching basic skills to low skilled adults is probably one of the most difficult educational assignments in the field of adult education. Addressing the needs of marginalised young adults demands considerable skill and dedication. It is widely accepted that second-chance education, if it is to be successful, should not in any way replicate the formal educational environment where initial engagement failed. Adult and community education programmes differ significantly from formal education and according to the Eurydice Report in 2014; adults are much more likely to participate in non-formal learning activities than in formal education and training. The take-up of non-formal education and training is nearly six times higher compared to formal education.

Most of the young adults are in the NEET group and they are one of the main target groups of this project. The term NEET is used to describe young people not in employment, education or training. The concept has been widely used as an indicator to inform youth-oriented policies on employability, education, training and also social inclusion in the 28 EU Member States since 2010. The age category covered by the term was 15 to 24 and was later broadened to include those aged 15 to 29. The concept is now centrally embedded in the policy discourse at EU level. Currently, 14.2% of the population aged 15 to 29 are NEETs.

One part of the NEETs group is called Early school leavers. Early school leaving refers to people aged 18 to 24 who leave education and training without attaining upper secondary qualification or equivalent. Between 2011 and 2016, the early school leaving rate fell in all partner countries except the Czech Republic. Although there has been progress in the last years, early school leaving remains a significant problem in many countries. They face significant difficulties in finding work and are more often unemployed and dependent on welfare benefits. There is also a cyclical element to early school-leaving with children of parents with low levels of educational achievement more likely to leave school early themselves without appropriate qualifications. In today's economy medium to high skilled employments increasingly account for the vast majority of emerging job opportunities.

1.1. The Scientific Paper

The scientific paper is considering the role of adult educators and the professional training provided to those who qualify to teach in this field. Specifically, the scientific paper is considering the robustness of current train-the-trainer models and whether these training programmes are fit for purpose. Adult educators are often the first line of defense where tackling social issues is concerned and adult education staff are often placed in the firing line without adequate training and support.

The key issue that the proposed scientific paper will address is the essential role that appropriate initial and in-service training for adult education staff plays in achieving quality learning outcomes especially when working with the most at risk or marginalised target groups where specific skill sets are essential. The scientific paper has explored the experiences of the project partners in 8 different countries and made recommendations for policy change based on that experiences. It will consider why a change of policy approach might be relevant and the cost benefits to be derived from the new model developed.



2. Summary of the Project

The DIME project is not primarily about digital media: it is a project about developing specific key competences; about responsibility, tolerance, respect and inclusion. It is a project that gives voice to young adults and in doing so will cultivate attitudes, raise awareness and understanding. The project focused on the personal development and inclusion of young marginalised adults for whom formal education has failed.

2.1. Implementation

DIME has worked with adult and community educators who are at the front-line of second-chance education and support their endeavours by providing essential in-service training to build their skills as educators.

DIME also provides a range of innovative embedded-learning and enquiry-based learning key competence resources that educators can use in their work with marginalized young adults. In-service training to support the continuous professional development of adult educators is essential if they are to develop new and innovative approaches to attract marginalised adults back to lifelong learning. Some of the core objectives of the DIME project have related to the design and implementation of a bespoke in-service training programme for adult and community educators that supports them to use digital media production and digital media platforms as robust, pertinent and highly attractive learning environments. Similarly, the project aimed to design and develop a comprehensive suite of digital media embedded learning and enquiry-based learning key competence resources for use with marginalised young adults in formal and non-formal settings that includes:

- ab initio instruction in video and audio production to develop their digital competence
- a range of media based, embedded-learning resources to build social and civic competence and cultural awareness and expression
- a range of enquiry-based learning resources essential for media production like research, planning and budgeting to address literacy, numeracy and critical thinking competences

Dime was also tasked with providing a series of virtual learning and collaborative environments that bring adult and community educators and young marginalised adults in 8 countries together to support exchange of best practice, stimulate collaborative endeavours and raise awareness of cultural diversity. Through these activities, the DIME partners were aware that it was imperative to provide appropriate supports for those with no or low-level educational attainment to enable them to bridge the skills gap and fulfil their potential.



2.2. Learning Resources

As part of the project activities, the DIME In-Service Training Programme and Handbook (IO1) and the Key Competence Learning Resources and Tutor Handbook (O2) enabled the training of adult educators to deliver new resources in a combined learning and research-based learning environment. The In-Service Training Programme and Handbook is the first output of the ‘DIME – Digital Media - a Bridge to Inclusion’ project. The aim of this training programme was to support front-line adult and youth educators to develop the necessary digital media skills and competences to integrate available digital media techniques into their teaching practice. This implies that through this comprehensive in-service training programme, educators are trained to engage with new and innovative teaching methodologies, to work with digital resources and in online environments, to practice using available media such as smartphones and devices for digital media production and to use the suite of embedded and enquiry-based resources with their groups of learners to produce short films and creative projects.

2.3. Professional Development

Key target groups of the DIME project include adult and community educators for whom a bespoke in-service training programme was developed and the young marginalised adults they work with to develop their key competences. Young adults in many cases use smartphones very well, but often need to focus on how to be productive using smartphones and how to improve their skills.

The professional development programme developed by DIME includes modules that show adult and community educators how to use the full range of available and most common digital media platforms and key competency builders by increasing the use of embedded learning techniques. This professional development programme shows educators how to develop approaches to each of four different learning modes - visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic. It is very important to provide innovative learning opportunities to engage those who are on the margins of service provision, but adult and community educators need appropriate training to ensure that the quality of educational services is not compromised and that the learning outcomes are achieved. In addition, training at the workplace includes teaching ab initio in video and audio production and post-production using open source software. This part of the professional training was carried out at the Transnational Training Event held in Italy. Development of a learning package for key competencies based on built-in learning techniques and involved in the production of short films of young adults themselves. These learning resources address a wide range of competences, including digital competencies, literacy, computing, social and civic competences, and cultural awareness and expression. In addition to these

competencies, the filming process itself provides a fantastic opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, including teamwork, organisational skills, negotiation skills, etc. The emphasis is on putting fun in learning and recognising accomplishments. Many innovations in education derive from experimentation in the adult and community education sector.

Adult educators are very important for initial and professional training in achieving high-quality learning outcomes, especially when dealing with the most vulnerable or marginalised target groups in which these sets of skills are important.

2.4. Results

Expected results of the DIME project must be considered under a variety of headings. From a resource perspective a totally new in-service training resource complete with a handbook to support the continuous professional development of adult educators was provided.

A toolbox of key competence development resources was made available to front-line adult education staff to support their work with marginalised adults and a bespoke on-line learning environment was developed and populated with the innovative curriculum resources contained in the educator's toolbox. These resources are available on-line and made available to all interested parties without restriction in keeping with the open access requirements of the ERASMUS+ programme. From an action perspective each partner hosted a short film themed festival of learning in their local area with the specific task of engaging marginalised young adults. A final conference was held in Northern Ireland to present the resources developed and National Campaign events targeting education managers and policy makers were held in each partner country. There were also 2 transnational training events bringing adult educators and young marginalised adults together in collaborative learning environments. From a human perspective a minimum of 3 front-line adult educators from each partner country attended the Transnational Training Event held in Italy. During the project life-cycle a minimum of 20 marginalised young adults were engaged in the audio-visual training programme in each country completing modules of the new key competence resources developed. Building on their existing relationship with front-line adult educators and volunteers, project partners established a local research control group comprising up to six educators or adult education managers. This control group met throughout the project life-cycle in real or virtual environments to inform the development of the proposed new resources; to evaluate the resources developed; to test and validate the resources with their marginalised young adult target groups; to promote the local short film festivals of learning.

To conclude; 24 adult educators completed the in-service training programme at the transnational training event in Italy. A minimum of 20 marginalised young adults in each country

participated in the audio-visual production training to develop their key competences before the end of the project life-cycle. The result is a minimum of 160 marginalised young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds who have been distant from education and training being re-integrated into lifelong learning. DIME is a project about supporting the individual capacity of marginalised young adults to build key skills that they can take with them throughout their life. In order for any new service to be continuously appropriate it must be informed by a long-term perspective. In designing the proposed key competence resources consortium partners are focusing on the development of key transversal skills within the marginalised young adult population and it is our belief that developing these skill sets will remain important as key competences become increasingly important core skills for life, for work and for inclusion.



3. Methodology and results of the questionnaires

Scientific work has summed up the experience of project partners in 8 different countries and gives a recommendation to change policy based on that experience. It explains why policy changes could be relevant to the development of a new model.

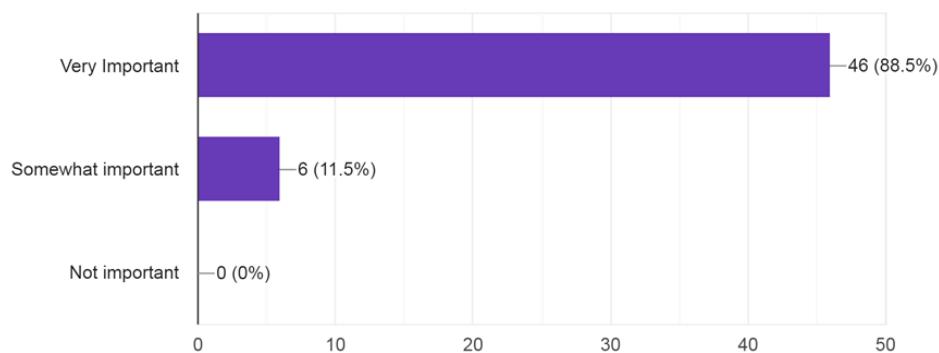
Within the research, collection of relevant information and analysis, goal of The Scientific paper was on the best way to cover all the essential facts and segments, shortcomings or virtues that we encounter during the project process, especially through the educational process. It is also important to state and describe all the results which have been achieved and which could not be achieved for certain reasons or problems during the educational process. Based on the above, we came to conclusions in the Scientific paper whose analysis how to improve the project outputs in the future. Research methodology of The Scientific paper is based on the questionnaires we sent to all Erasmus + DIME project partners which they then fulfilled, and it served for further analysis of our project, assessment of the success of the project results.

The results of the questionnaires are very important for evaluating project success and they are the best benchmark for what has been achieved during the project lifetime and what can be brought to a higher level in the education process of digital media. So, the purpose of The Scientific paper is how to increase the quality of the education process, thereby improving the level of knowledge and skills of the participants in the education of digital media.

3.1. Questions from the questionnaire with charts

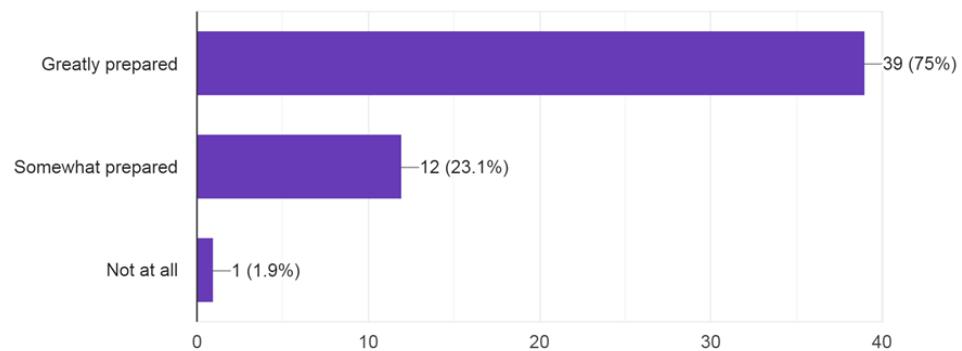
Q1. As an adult educator how important is initial and in-service training in achieving quality learning outcomes esp...here specific skill sets are essential?

52 responses



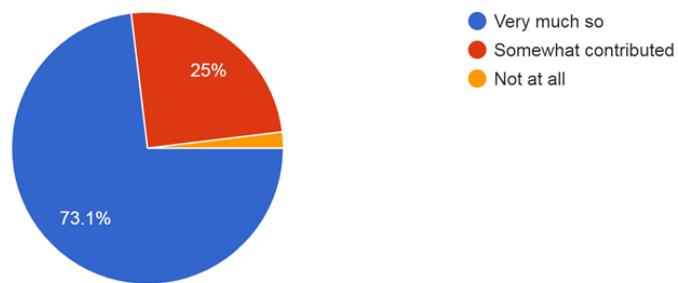
Q2. How far has the DIME In Service Training Programme and Handbook (I01) prepared adult educators to del...d enquiry-based learning environment?

52 responses



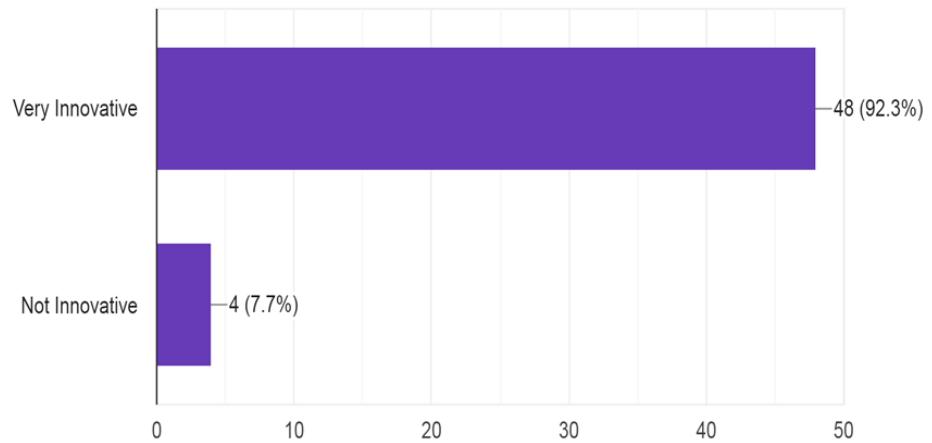
Q3. How far do you think I01 contributed to continuous professional development for adult educators?

52 responses

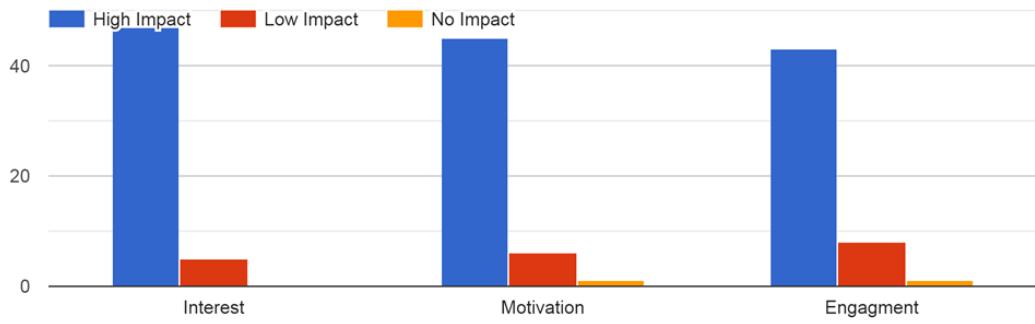


Q4. As an adult educator, how innovative are the DIME IO2 Embedded-learning and Enquiry-Based Learning Key Competence Resources?

52 responses

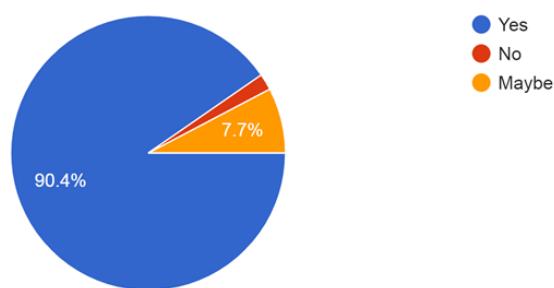


Q5. Please rate the impact of the IO2 Resources during the implementation on young adults':



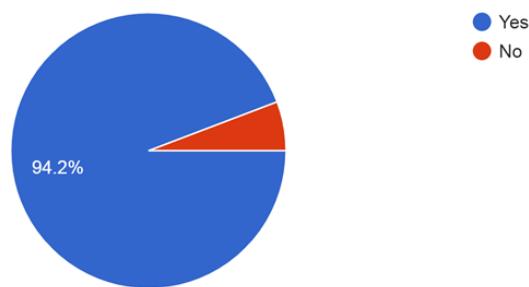
Q6. Overall do you think the new key competence approach in a media production environment (IO2) has attracting adults back into lifelong learning?

52 responses

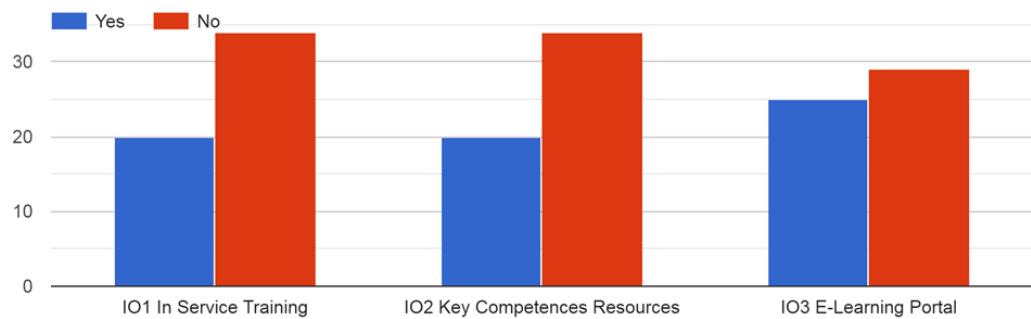


Q7. As an adult educator do you think having access to the full range of resources on an e-learning portal (IO3...)r work with marginalised young adults?

52 responses

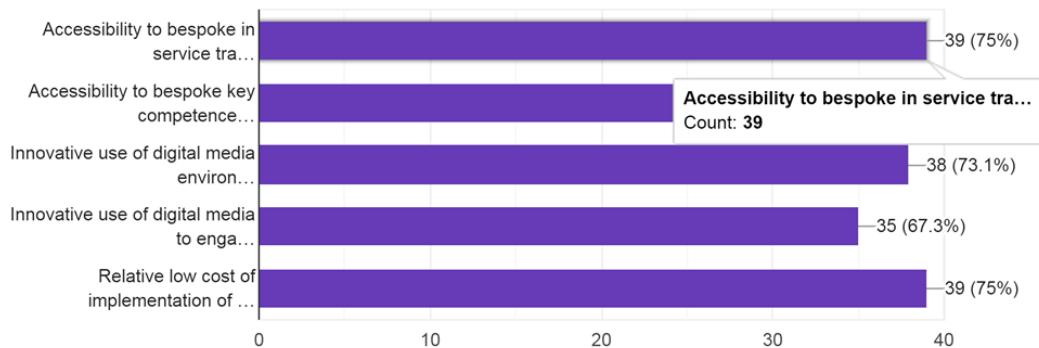


Q8. Please indicate whether any changes are needed to the Intellectual Outputs produced by the DIME project:

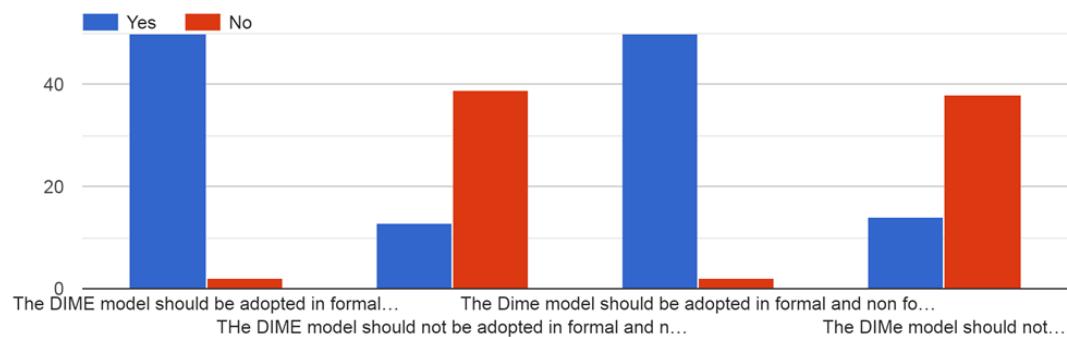


Q9. As an adult educator, what do you think the benefits of the DIME model over current train the trainer models are? Please select all that apply:

52 responses



Q.10 Finally which of the following recommendations do you agree with on the basis of partners' experience of the DIME model?



3.2. Results analysis

In this part of Scientific paper, we have analysed all the results of the questionnaire and turned all of the answers into statistics.

On the question how important is initial and in-service training as an adult educator in achieving quality learning outcomes, most respondents (88,5%) agree that this is a very important part of the educational process, and only 11,5% of respondents think it is not of the crucial meaning, but it is somewhat important part in the educational process.

Second question was how far the DIME has In Service Training Programme and Handbook (IO1) prepared adult educators to deliver the new resources in a blended learning and enquiry-based

learning environment. After the analysis we have relatively satisfactory result - 75% of respondents think that DIME in Service Training Programme and Handbook (IO1) were greatly prepared.

The third question was about how much IO1 contributed to continuous professional development for adult educators. Answers were also relatively satisfactory with 73,1% highly satisfied respondents.

Most of the respondents (92,3%) think that DIME IO2 Embedded-learning and Enquiry-based Learning Key Competence Resources is very innovative. Just 7,7% think negative.

Young adults were very interested and motivated in O2 Resources during the implementation and their engagement was on a very high level. More than 90% of the respondents think the new key competence approach in a media production environment (IO2) has attracted or will attract marginalised young adults back into lifelong learning. Just less than 10% of the respondents is not sure about that.

Most of the adult educators (94,2%) think having access to the full range of resources on an e-learning portal (IO3) is beneficial or will be beneficial in the work with marginalised young adults.

On the question whether any changes are needed to the Intellectual Outputs produced by the DIME projects, results are very tight and it's obviously that not everyone was satisfied with the Intellectual Outputs provided by the project. Most of adult educators agreed about the benefits of the DIME model over current train the trainer models;

- Accessibility to bespoke in service training for adult educators, both, in the formal and non-formal settings – 75% of adult educators agreed
- Accessibility to bespoke key competence learning resources to engage marginalised young adults – 75% of adult educators agreed
- Innovative use of digital media environment for leaning for adult educators – 73,1% of adult educators agreed
- Innovative use of digital media to engage marginalised young adults – 67,3% of adult educators agreed
- Relative low cost of implementation of the DIME model with adult educators and young adults – 75% of adult educators agreed

Most of the adult educators think the DIME model should be adopted in formal and non-formal settings to support greater integration of marginalised young adults in lifelong learning and to address the continuous development of adult educator professionals. Only a minority of adult educators disagree with this statement.

4. Conclusion

During the implementation of DIME education, the needs of marginalized young adults required considerable skills and dedication.

In-service training to support the continuous professional development of adult educators was essential to the development of new and innovative approaches to attracting marginalized young adults to lifelong learning, and DIME project has largely succeeded in its mission. DIME represented a unique learning environment that are accessible and friendly for new learning opportunities for marginalised groups such as young adults.

Although the project was exceptionally successful and useful, there are few segments that can be improved. The analysis of The Scientific paper has demonstrated that in order to ensure quality of educational process of young adults the training programmes should be focused on an appropriate balance between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and application of practical skills. In this sense, training programmes should enable young adults to respond to the realities at different levels, by adopting creative, innovative pedagogic methods.

5. Recommendations

Teaching basic skills to low skilled adults is one of the most cost-effective ways to get a higher level of education and there is a relevance for the continuous professional development of adult educators. Addressing the needs of marginalized young adults demands dedication, substantial teaching skills, knowledge of digital media and considerable motivation skills.

One of the main goals of the DIME project is to work with adult educators and support their endeavours by providing essential in-service training to build their skills as educators. In-service training is essential to support the continuous professional development of adult educators if they are to develop new and innovative approaches to attract marginalised adults to learn and improve the general level of knowledge about digital media, responsibility and inclusion. In-service training is a crucial element to support the development of quality work of young adults. One of the long-term goals of the DIME project is to support the capacity of young adults to respond to new challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies and digital media. Young adults need to have digital skills or attitudes to fully benefit from the opportunities created by digital technologies for their own training and for delivering quality to his work. This include upgrading existing practices in young adults training, with the use of new solutions of digitalised services and online tools which allow other forms of instruction and education. As we said earlier in the results analysis, most of the adult educators thinks that DIME IO2 Embedded-learning and Enquiry-based Learning Key Competence Resources is very innovative. Innovation is very important for young adults and DIME provides a host of innovative resource-based research and study-based learning resources that educators can use in their work with marginalized young people. Young adults were very interested and motivated in O2 Resources during the implementation and most of the project partners think the new key competence approach in a media production environment (IO2) will attract marginalised young adults back into lifelong learning. After the completed questionnaire analysis performed by all the partners on the project, we can point out that the project has satisfied in most of its parts. If we look at the results of the questionnaire, we can see that a smaller number of respondents think that DIME In-Service Training Programme and Handbook (IO1) were just somewhat prepared so there is room for slightly improvement in this area. Also, a smaller number of respondents believe that IO1 should be slightly improved in order to contribute to the continuous professional development of adult educators and some of them think there is better innovative use of digital media to engage marginalised young adults. Just few adult educators involved in the project think that many changes are needed to the Intellectual Outputs produced by DIME project, most of them are very satisfied with the progress of the project so far. The recognition of the skills and knowledge that young adults have gained through DIME educational process will be linked to specific benefits or to improved motivations and engagement of young adults.

To help get young adults competencies recognised, there needs to be recognition and validation of the learning and achievement that takes place through engagement in non-formal and informal learning environments.

The DIME project is not just about digital media, it is about developing specific key competences which includes responsibility, tolerance, respect, inclusion and motivation for new challenges. It is a project that gives voice to young adults, raise awareness and understanding.



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Project Number: 2017-1-UK01-KA204-036515

