

Position Paper



Empowering Adult Educators for Social Inclusion Through Enhancing Transfer of Transversal Skills

Introduction

The societal inclusion of people with cognitive needs remains a pressing challenge in modern education and training systems. To enable independent living and active participation, educators must address the transferability of transversal skills (TVS), including problem-solving, memory, cognitive flexibility, self-regulation, and communication. The TETRA-S project recognizes that effective adult education requires a **growth mindset**, strategic use of digital and non-digital tools, and personalized methodologies that foster skill transfer to real-life scenarios.

As a result of the collaborative efforts of the project partners, the ¹**TETRA-S training course, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**, has been developed to support adult educators in their professional growth. This comprehensive and freely available online course provides practical tools, assessment activities, and webinars aimed at enhancing educator's competencies in fostering transversal skill development and ensuring successful social inclusion for people with cognitive needs. **Educational institutions** are encouraged to **integrate this MOOC** into their curricula and professional **development programs**, making it widely accessible for those who work with learners facing cognitive challenges.



project partners for TETRA-S project 2021-1-BE02-KA220-ADU-000026913

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This position paper advocates for the development of tailored educational practices to empower adults with cognitive disabilities. It emphasizes:

1. The role of **beliefs of the adult educator** in presuming competence and shaping learning outcomes.
2. The integration of **powerful learning environments (PLEs)** to enhance transversal skills.
3. The balanced use of **digital and non-digital tools** to maximize skill transfer.
4. The importance of **fostering social networks** to sustain long-term skill application.



The Role of Educator Beliefs in Presuming Competence

Presuming Competence Framework: The belief that all individuals, regardless of ability, can learn and succeed is foundational for adult educators. Research by Feuerstein and Biklen highlights the detrimental effects of deficit-based views, which limit expectations and hinder skill development.

Key Points:

- Educators adopting an **active modification approach** (Feuerstein, 2010) focus on enhancing learners' adaptive skills through tailored interventions.
- Educators who assume **fixed abilities** often fail to provide opportunities for complex skill acquisition, perpetuating low self-efficacy among learners.

Challenges:

- Resistance to digital tools due to limited technological self-efficacy.
- Social and organizational pressures that influence educators' beliefs.

Recommendations:

- Implement reflective self-assessment tools to help educators identify and overcome biases.
- Promote growth-oriented mindsets through professional development programs and peer collaboration.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Educators can enhance their understanding of presuming competence through **Module 1: Understanding Beliefs and Impact** in the TETRA-S MOOC. This module provides tools for self-assessment, training, and reflection on the influence of educator beliefs on learning outcomes.

Powerful Learning Environments for Transversal Skills Transfer

A Powerful Learning Environment (PLE) fosters the acquisition, transfer, and practical application of transversal skills by centering on learner needs. The TETRA-S model defines PLEs as:

1. **Learner-Centric:** Tailoring content to individual abilities and goals.
2. **Interactive and Structured:** Combining **active learning**, feedback, and contextualized real-life tasks.
3. **Safe and Supportive:** Ensuring emotional, physical, and interpersonal stability.

Application of the CLIA Model (De Corte et al., 2004):

The CLIA framework provides a structure for PLEs by integrating:

- **Competence:** Encouraging problem-solving, self-regulation, and volitional processes.
- **Learning:** Promoting active, cumulative, and goal-oriented knowledge construction.
- **Intervention:** Balancing guided instruction with self-directed activities.
- **Assessment:** Using formative assessments to monitor progress and refine strategies.

Case Studies:

1. **Improving Job and Life Skills:** Learners practiced communication and problem-solving through real-world role-playing scenarios, leading to enhanced workplace integration.
2. **Developing Communication Skills:** Small-group, multi-sensory activities improved self-expression and social engagement.

Recommendations:

- Incorporate **digital tools** (e.g., time management apps, virtual simulations) into PLEs to facilitate real-life skill transfer.
- Provide ongoing **feedback and reflection** opportunities to reinforce metacognitive skills.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Educators can explore strategies for creating effective PLE's in **Module 4: Creating a Dynamic Learning Environment**. This module offers practical training on how to design engaging, supportive, and structured learning spaces.

The Balanced Use of Digital and Non-Digital Tools

The integration of digital and non-digital tools is critical for fostering transversal skills. However, digital tools alone often fail to ensure long-term skill generalization. A **hybrid approach** maximizes engagement, accessibility, and skill transfer.

Non-Digital Tools:

- **Person-Centered Planning:** Tailored Individual Support Plans.
- **Visual Aids and Role-Playing:** Social scripts, task schedules, and role-play enhance learning.
- **Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA):** Reinforces desired behaviours through systematic intervention.

Digital Tools:

- **Assistive Technology:** Speech-generating devices (e.g., Proloquo2Go).
- **Virtual Simulations:** Tools like Oculus VR foster problem-solving in realistic contexts.
- **Mobile Apps:** Task management tools (e.g., Trello) and communication aids.

Challenges:

- Limited educator confidence in using digital tools.
- Resistance due to concerns over effectiveness or access.

Recommendations:

- Provide **technology training** for educators to improve confidence and readiness.
- Integrate digital tools within **human-centered interventions** to bridge learning outcomes with real-life tasks.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Educators can build confidence and skills in utilizing digital tools through **Module 2: Digital Beliefs of Adult Educators**. This module addresses challenges, highlights benefits, and provides hands-on training for integrating technology into educational practices.



Strengthening Social Networks for Sustained Skill Transfer

Social networks play a pivotal role in enabling individuals with cognitive disabilities to apply learned skills in everyday life. Social support mitigates social pressure, fosters self-confidence, and enhances decision-making capabilities.

Key Concepts:

- **Social Network Influence:** Friends, family, and community members impact learning outcomes and transferability.
- **Social Pressure:** Educators must help learners **self-regulate** external influences.

Strategies for Educators:

- Facilitate **peer support groups** to reinforce skill generalization.
- Engage family and community members in the learning process.
- Use **self-assessment tools** to help learners identify and regulate negative social influences.

Recommendations:

- Develop training programs that include social network involvement to **sustain skills beyond the educational setting**.
- Encourage **collaborative learning environments** to build social competence.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Educators can explore practical strategies for involving social networks in **Module 5: Supporting Client Skills for Successful Social Inclusion**. This module offers tools and activities to help educators support learners in building strong, supportive relationships.



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Conclusion and Recommendations

The TETRA-S project highlights that the successful social inclusion of adults with cognitive needs depends on educator beliefs, powerful learning environments, and the strategic use of tools and social networks. To foster the transfer of transversal skills:

1. Educator Beliefs:

- Promote growth-oriented mindsets and the presumption of competence.
- Integrate reflective tools to challenge and transform limiting beliefs.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Start with **Module 1: Understanding Beliefs and Impact** to examine and reshape educator beliefs.

2. Digital and Non-Digital Tools:

- Combine assistive technologies, mobile applications, and role-playing methods for effective learning outcomes.
- Address educator reluctance through targeted technology training.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Build skills through **Module 2: Digital Beliefs of Adult Educators**.

3. Transfer of transversal skills

- Gain new strategies to teach transversal skills like communication and problem-solving in ways that connect directly to real-life scenarios.
- Learn to use a personalized approach to ensure that people with cognitive needs can effectively apply transfer skills to both personal and professional contexts.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Acquire new methodologies through **Module 3: Transfer of transversal skills** to facilitate the transfer of transversal skills into individuals' everyday lives.

4. Powerful Learning Environments:

- Adopt the CLIA model to balance competence-building, interventions, and assessments.
- Provide structured, interactive learning experiences tailored to individual needs.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Explore **Module 4: Creating a Dynamic Learning Environment** for hands-on strategies.

5. Social Network Integration:

- Strengthen social support systems to sustain skill transfer and reduce social pressure.

Connection to TETRA-S MOOC: Use **Module 5: Supporting Client Skills for Successful Social Inclusion** to develop collaborative strategies.