RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This text consists of a number of recommendations on the behalf of the people in charge of designing ARTiT. The recommendations are addressed to those who would like to apply the method of this program named "Critical and Creative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience": to adult educators, educational organizations and educational policy agencies. The ideas presented in these recommendations derived from a) the systematic study of the ARTiT Evaluation Reports data, b) from a number of discussions that were held- either face-to-face, either through a dialogue forum on the internet- between the trainers who carried out the pilot implementation of the program, as well as from studying educational incidents recorded in the four participating countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS TRAINERS

A. The preparation phase
Much attention will be given in this text to this phase. It is the most important one, as this is when trainers must make decisions and plan the implementation of the method.

A1 Understanding the function of the method

Several adult educators, when they are informed of the ARTiT method, they have questions, as it is expected because of the innovative nature of the method, on a series of issues related to the requirements of its implementation, and to the benefits it could offer to participants. It is important that the trainers elaborate on these questions and find answers which will enable them to deeply understand the purposes of the method, as well as the presuppositions for its broad and functional implementation. In this chapter, we present elements and ideas that could help trainers at their reflective quest.

A1.1 Why use the method?

The evaluation of the ARTiT program has shown in a specific way that using the method has the following **advantages**:
- Stimulates the interest of trainees.
- Promotes active participation.
- Develops interaction among participants.
- Reinforces creative / critical thinking.
- Develops alongside other basic competences, such as 'learning to learn', social competences and cultural expression.
- Promotes clearer and deeper understanding of the examined issues.
- Promotes expression of feelings and development of imagination.
- Offers the possibility of examining issues in a fresh, alternative and original way.
- Reinforces familiarization of participants with works of art, especially those belonging to vulnerable social groups.
- Promotes the realization that using works of art is worth being a keystone element of education and our way of living.

It is important for the trainers to think which of those elements are deeply connected to their personal ideas and assumptions, in order to develop their own base of conceptions and values, on which they will set the foundations for the implementation of the method.

A.1.2 Characteristics of the trainers

The ARTiT evaluation has shown that trainers don't need to have special knowledge of art in order to be able to apply the method successfully. They do however need to have a positive attitude towards learning through art, as well as the will to be informed and self- educated on this approach.

A.1.3 Promoting the consent of participants

Before beginning to apply ARTiT, several trainers express their concern that the participants won't be positive towards the method, especially those who are not familiar with art. The pilot implementation showed that this concern is not based on actual facts. The vast majority of participants showed, even from the beginning of the program, great interest for the art-based method, while at the end 88% expressed their satisfaction from the experience. It is therefore useful for the trainers to know that the participants will be their allies during their attempt to apply the method, as long as this is done under the appropriate conditions, as during the pilot phase.

A.1.4 The ability of broader implementations

As it was shown from the pilot phase, the method can be applied to a wide range of organizations (such as vocational training organizations for the unemployed, Second Chance Schools, organizations against social exclusion, Universities, etc.). Additionally, the method could be an essential part of teaching a wide range of subjects, such as foreign languages, employment searching techniques, balancing professional and personal life, leadership issues, migration, training of trainers, gender relations, union education etc.

A2. Time management and restructure of lesson plan

The application of the method requires a considerable amount of time. A minimum of 4 hours is recommended in order to go through all six stages of the method. It is noted that the systematic exploration of the meaning of a work of art requires approximately one hour.
On the other hand, several trainers oppose highlight that it is difficult the find the time needed for short-term lessons, especially when they are under 20 hours.
Therefore, trainers must try to obtain the time necessary by expanding the duration of their lesson if possible. In any case, however, they will have to reflect creatively in order to restructure their lesson plan so they can embody the "Critical and Creative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience" method. For instance, they could think how to obtain the expected learning results by substituting the implementation of some educational techniques, e.g. a case study or simulation, with the art based method. In the beginning, trainers must invest some time for this preparation. Gradually they will be familiarized with the use of art and they will be capable of making their own readjustments easier. In any case, it is important to clarify that according to the ARTiT rationale, the aesthetic experience is especially important for learning, therefore the use of the method suggested should be one of the basic elements of

the educational process[1]. This means that educators need to develop the appropriate conditions in order to make good use of the method frequently and effectively.

A3. Getting familiarized with the method

It is obvious that before deciding to use the method, trainers should consider its rationale and they way it is applied. It is advised that they carefully study the texts *ARTiT Methodology* and *ARTiT Evaluation Report,* as well as the archive of art works of the program. For an analytical approach of the theoretical foundation of the educational role of art, we suggest the articles by Dewey[2], Greene[3], Perkins[4] and Kokkos[5]. In addition, the experiences recorded by the ARTiT team could be a valuable source. Thus, trainers who intend to apply the method could contact some of their colleagues who implemented the program during the pilot phase –especially those who teach subjects relative to their own- as well as the members of the Scientific Committee of the program.

Trainers do not need to have specific knowledge on the works of art they intend to incorporate in their teaching. In the framework of our method, every group attempts to make its own meanings from the works of art, therefore this exploration does not have to be based on specific knowledge of the artwork and the artist, requiring only basic information is quite adequate which will be discussed during the 5th stage of the method and can be found easily, e.g. through the Internet.

On the other hand, as it has been explained in the text *ARTiT Methodology* (p. 9) it would be useful for trainers to be able to explain the role that some elements of an artwork could have (e.g. the music, the editing or the scenery of a film) for the reinforcement of creative / critical thinking of the recipient. We suggest that trainers use the relevant references and bibliographical sources existing in ARTiT and any other source they find useful and motivating to get involved in a self-education process concerning these elements. Additionally, we would suggest they discuss these elements in class, as long as they feel comfortable doing so and to the extent they notice that this conversation interests the participants.

A4 Forming critical questions

The main goal of the ARTiT method is the development of creative / critical thinking of participants on the subject they are studying through the elaboration of works of art, the meanings of which are related to different aspects/ sub-topics of the topic at hand. Critical questions related to the sub-topic and the corresponding works of art are posed in order to interconnect them during the 5th stage of the method. Therefore there is a triple connection between the sub-topics, the critical questions on those topics and the works of art that are related to the sub-topics and the critical questions. For this reason it is necessary that trainers should show great care when forming the critical questions they will be using as a trigger of the learning process. It is also important to make sure that the methodological approach is clear to the participants, to form a Table where the connections of critical questions and

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[1] Dewey has mentioned concerning this issue: "No mental activity is completed if not elaborated through the aesthetic experience.. " (in *Art as Experience* (1934 [1980]), USA, The Penguin Group, p. 40).
[2] Dewey, J., ibid., note 1.
[3] Greene, M. (2000) *Releasing the Imagination.* San Francisco: Jossey Boss.
[4] Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent Eye.* Harvard Graduate School of Education.
[5] Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Towards Comprehensive Methods. *Journal of Transformative Education (SAGE),* 8,153-177

works of art to each sub-topic are noted. There are many such Tables in the program material.

A5 Choosing the works of art

The criteria for choosing the works of art is the degree to which they can contribute to the function of interconnection as explained in the previous paragraph. We don't choose art works based on their importance, only based on their potential to trigger creative / critical thinking. On the other hand however, as stated by many scholars (e.g. Dewey[6], Freire[7], Greene[8], Marcuse[9]) that art works of high quality are usually those that are more appropriate to be used for this reason, because of the large number of meanings they contain and the various interpretations they can foment. The pilot implementation showed that the vast majority of learners enjoyed the elaboration of art works which had been chosen according to the aforementioned criteria and intensively developed creative / critical reflection on several subjects.

This way, trainers who wish to apply the method should seek artworks that correspond to the criteria above (see support sources in unit A7 of the present text).

Prior to the implementation, in order for trainers to feel more comfortable, they could discuss some of those works with a focus group of future learners, so they can ascertain that the artworks chosen are of interest and related to the learners' needs. Finally, we note that participants of the pilot phase showed that they mostly prefer working with fine arts and films to other forms of art (see Evaluation Report, unit 4).

A6 Preparing (self) evaluation

The procedure of evaluating and self-evaluating the way the method is applied is strongly recommended, as it may offer valuable information to the trainers. You should choose the evaluation objects, axons and indicators. You can develop your own ARTiT evaluation "tools" for gathering information (questionnaires, interview axons, systematic observation axons etc.). You can also make use of the ARTiT evaluation tools. If you are intending to assess the progress in the development of your students' ability for creative / critical thinking from the beginning of the lessons to the end, we suggest you use the "Critical / Creative Assessment Scale" that was developed in the ARTiT framework (see the program evaluation report). Also the trainers self observation tool for everyday action may come in very useful (see in ARTiT Evaluation Report, in the third questionnaire for trainers in the Annex).

A7 Sources of support

The educational organizations where the trainers work, should support them in order to practice the method as smoothly as possible (for a more analytic view, see chapter "Recommendations for educational organizations" of the present text).

During the preparation phase, support for the trainers can be found in the texts and the material developed in the ARTiT framework. We also suggest they contact other trainers and organizations who participated in the pilot implementation, as well as with the members of the Scientific Committee of the program. The ARTiT forum will continue to function and communicate fresh, good practices, methodological material and lesson plans.

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[6] ibid, note 2.
[7] Freire, P. (1977). The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Athens Rappas
[8] ibid, note 3.
[9] Marcuse, H. (1978). *The aesthetic dimension*. Boston: Beacon Press

Even more, trainers can find support in forming the critical questions on the addressed issues from specialists. In order to find works of art, they can consult individuals with experience in the field (artists, literature teachers, trainers who have studied art etc.), sources from the internet, specialized books, music or film archives, libraries, art galleries etc.

B. The implementation phase

Trainers wishing to apply the method should follow the ethics of adult education and act with agility, adapting their initial lesson plan to the special characteristics and the needs of the learners, as well as the group dynamics that will emerge. However, we could suggest some guidelines deriving from the experience of the pilot implementation:

- It is useful for the trainers to inform the trainees in the beginning of the process on the function of the method. They should explain that the elaboration of artworks is not the main goal of the process or does it disorient them from the aims of the lesson, and it is definitely not a "waste of time". It is a means –as for instance a case study or a group exercise – for the creative / critical approach of the issue addressed. They should also explain some of the advantages of the method. And most importantly, to help them correlate the method to the expected learning outcomes. In other words, the method should be part of the learning contract as one of its essential elements.

- During the 4th stage of the method, we suggest that trainers involve their learners as much as possible in the procedure of choosing artworks. Usually, the trainers would present some artworks from the archive of the program that were related to the subject and asked the participants to choose those which they preferred to work with. That way there was a correlation between each artwork chosen and the mental and emotional world of the participants. As a result, they considered the piece of art as "their own" and were actively involved in the process of extracting its meaning.

- During the pilot phase it was also noted that in some cases the triggers for thinking and expressing emotions in some artworks fascinated the participants. As a result, discussions were held that although were rich in content, they sometimes diverged from the subject and the learning goals. However this did not occur in groups where the trainers emphasized on the elaboration of critical questions, which worked as a link between the works of art and the subject at hand. Therefore we suggest that trainers be cautious during the 5th stage of the method, so after completing the elaboration of the meaning of the artwork, the resulting ideas will be connected to the subject through critical questions. Of course, this doesn't mean that the trainer should discourage the elaboration of side issues of interest to the participants. If there is adequate time, the trainer should give "space" to this process as well.

- Also, during the 5th stage, it was considered to be preferable that a small number of artworks were examined in a holistic way, giving enough time to make the procedure meaningful and comfortable, rather than approaching more works of art in a fragmental and time pressuring way.

- During the training of trainers seminar an activity took place causing especially positive comments from the participants: an educational visit to an Art Gallery, where participants after forming critical questions on certain subjects, seeked and chose works of art on the spot that could be connected to those questions. Afterwards, they returned to the main classroom, they found the works of art they had chosen on the internet, they showed them at a larger scale though Power Point and used them in the learning process. [For details, see the stages of this activity in the ARTiT material, "…"]
- During the elaboration of an artwork it is important for trainers to connect the meanings drawn to the personal experiences of the participants. When this was emphasized during the pilot phase, the interest of the trainees was increased, while at the same time any hesitations towards the method were instantly overcome.

C. After the application

As in any adult education program, the reflection and (self) evaluation process is important at the end of the application. If this is done systematically, it is quite possible that every future application will be richer than the previous one.

It is especially useful for trainers using the method to share their experiences between them. It would also be great if the trainers moved on to self- education procedures, going deeper for instance in the function of the aesthetic experience in adult education, in the ways to develop cultural awareness, in the role of the elaboration of the elements of an artwork for a better understanding of its meanings.

Also, trainers who are especially interested could inform their colleagues of the method through workshops, peer groups, networking and communicating through the internet. They could report their ideas and educational initiatives with articles in journals, the internet, newsletters, conferences and workshops.

In any case, we believe that getting involved in the ARTiT method is a process that may be creative and rewarding, not only for the learners but for the adult educators themselves and their organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1.Understanding the function of the method

The organization managers who could be interested in applying ARTiT are recommended to keep in mind, what was mentioned before as recommendations towards the trainers concerning the procedure of understanding the function of the method (see chapter A1 of recommendations towards trainers). It is proposed to take into account:
- The **advantages** of the application of the method. [A practical consequence would be for organizations to consider the method as a basic element of their pedagogic action

and proceed to several actions in order for their trainers and trainees to understand its meaning (e.g. to be informed of ARTiTs' good practices and the evaluation results)]. Trainers should also be encouraged to use the method.

- The qualifications the trainers should have. [A practical consequence would be the choice of the appropriate trainers for the use of the method].
- The possibility of applying the method to a wide variety of subjects. [A practical consequence would be for organizations to encourage all their trainers, regardless of their teaching subject, to apply the method. For instance, the Hellenic Open University has already included the method in its curricula concerning teaching foreign languages, Greek and European civilization, Education, Adult Education, and Theology].

2. Time management and restructure of lesson plan

It is suggested that educational organizations give the possibility to their trainers to develop their lesson plans in a flexible way, so there is sufficient time for a smooth implementation of the method. This way, the advantages of the method will emerge fully, especially in terms of motivating the participants and developing their ability for creative / critical thinking.

3. Familiarizing trainers with the method

In order for organizations to help trainers familiarize with the method, they could develop internet sites for that reason, organize seminars or workshops for training trainers, reinforce communication between trainers and their colleagues or / and organizations who have applied the method or /and with the ARTiT Scientific Committee, encourage trainers to study the ARTiT material and more articles regarding the use of art in education (see references of units A3 and A5 of the recommendations towards trainers). They could also inform trainers of the sources where artworks are to be found and plan educational visits to cultural institutions. Regarding the development of the critical questions, the organizations could cooperate with other social and educational organizations and create an archive which of course would be constantly enriched and adjusted to the needs of the learners and the modus operandi of each organization.

4. The evaluation procedure

It is important for educational organizations to frequently and systematically evaluate the process of the methods' application (formative and summative evaluation, internal and external). It is also suggested that organizations encourage their trainers and offer them the know how to self-evaluate their work.

5. Support during the application

During the application phase of the method, organizations could support their trainers through experience exchanging forums (in the internet or/and in thinking groups), through peer groups and by consulting the data from the formative evaluation.

6. Dissemination of results

The role of the educational organizations applying the method could be exceptionally important as far as disseminating results and good practices towards trainers of their countries and the European Union in general. Several means could be used for this reason, such as the internet, brochures, forums, educational visits, seminars, conferences etc.

7. Sources of support

Organizations interested in applying the method could seek support from the ARTiT Scientific Committee, texts and program material, from other agencies who have applied the method and from relevant references (see unit 3 above).

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL POLICY AGENCIES

1. Understanding the function of the method

Educational policy agencies are recommended to consider the benefits of using the method, as were presented in unit A1. If they are convinced of the advantages of applying the method at a wide range, they should make sure that educational organizations, trainer and trainees are informed of the method by all means, in order to understand its significance and be encouraged to apply it.

2 Forming conditions for effective implementation

Educational policy agencies could contribute to the expanded and effective implementation of the method in their countries as well as the European Union in the following ways:
- Incorporating the method in their educational strategy plan, as an essential part of it.
- Including the capability of applying the method to the standard qualifications of adult educators.
- Assisting educational organizations and trainers to get familiarized with the method. This can occur by: a) organizing conferences, b) organizing training seminars or workshops for trainers, c) activating websites, d) networking between educational organizations, cultural and social agencies, e) creating archives containing of critical questions on several issues for each educational subject, as well as proposals for connecting the elaboration of specific works of art to those questions, f) encouraging trainers (and providing them with appropriate sources) for self education concerning the use of the method, g) disseminating good practices, as well as the results of the methods' application.
- Activating evaluation processes of the method implementation
- Encouraging trainers and offering them the 'know how' in order to self-evaluate their work concerning the application of the method.

Sources of Support

Educational policy agencies interested in applying the method could find support from the ARTiT Scientific Committee, the texts and material of the project, as well as from relevant references (see unit A3 of Recommendations towards trainers).