Tracking and monitoring the progress of adult learners

TaMPADA
Pilot Testing Report

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Project information

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1. Introduction to the report

With the **TaMPADA Evidence collection toolkit for training providers to evaluate lifelong and lifewide progress of disadvantaged adult learners – the Toolkit (01)**, in paper and in digital format (O3), we promised to address the need for adult learning providers to improve the quality and effectiveness of their provision for disadvantaged learners/groups.

The paper version outlines a robust and standardised tracking and monitoring system for providers to use to improve the effectiveness of their provision for disadvantaged learners. It tracks the lifelong and lifewide progress of disadvantaged groups as a result of their learning. It offers adult education providers the context of, the methodology for, the TaMPADA tool, and the framework of steps to follow for the TaMPADA process. The tracking and monitoring are done by the means of the TaMPADA Outcomes Index – strands, indicators, descriptors, forms to illustrate the process (developed into the online tool/app) and a worked example to illustrate the process in action. The project output derived out of the paper version of Evidence collection toolkit is a digital version of the tool named **Digital Lifelong & Lifewide progress Assessment Tool (the digital Tool)**.

The benefits of the TaMPADA tracking and monitoring toolkit the TaMPADA partnership aims to provide, are the following:

- enabling learning providers to understand their learners' journeys and progress through adult education while considering both lifelong and lifewide learning achievements;

- supporting adult learning providers to plan learning programmes more efficiently;

- enabling learning providers to evidence the progress of their learners;

- enabling the learners to better understand, celebrate and evidence their progress.

One of the purposes of **O4 TaMPADA Survey report & policy recommendation** was to test the tracking and monitoring toolkit for its functionality, usefulness and data production, storage, compilation, comparison and benchmarking processes to validate whether the Toolkit meets the criteria and provides all the benefits planned in the initial stages of the project.

In order to do so the partners have developed **validation criteria and methodology** described in Chapter 2.

This report collects results and findings of the piloting process summarising the feedback from adult education teachers and learners. As it was already presumed in the O4 -T1 Validation Methodology, anti-COVID 19 measures strongly influenced the process of

collecting. It took longer than anticipated and the group of respondents was not as diverse as planned. However, we believe that the data collected reflects well on the functionality and usefulness of the tool.

2. Methodology

All partners were involved in the validation process with slightly different roles and tasks since not all partners have direct contact with (disadvantaged) learners.

As target groups that participated in the testing, adult education staff and learners were identified. The plan was also to include the stakeholders - representatives of all organisations, institutions, societies, government bodies that are identified as relevant contributors to the inter-institutional synergies in O2 Operational framework for inter-institutional synergies and manual for evaluating lifelong and life wide progress of disadvantaged learners.

AZM-LU tested the process and the digital Tool with 4 representative of AZM-LU staff (mentors to NEETs, mentors to migrant women) and 6 learners (NEETs). Externally, 3 representatives of adult educations staff participated in the on-line presentation of the project and demonstration of how to use the Digital tool and were later asked to participate in interviews.

FU conducted interview with representatives of 6 adult education providers staff and interview with 6 learners within FU. From September 2020 to January 2021, they conducted additional interviews with externals AEP staff (10 representatives) and learners (3 representatives).

DACES engaged 4 DACES tutors in the testing process and each tutor had used the Tool with 5+ learners (20 learners in total): The process took place in the final months of 2020 and initial months of 2021.

PROMEA conducted two on-line interviews in February. Prior to the interviews both interviewees had the opportunity to test the TaMPADA digital tool and both were familiar with the project as recipients of TaMPADA direct e-mail campaigns.

The evaluation process involved 2 steps. Step 1 involved only partner staff and learners with the purpose of assessing the validation criteria and methodology to make final amendments to them prior to Step 2 which involved other adult education providers and their staff as well as learners.

Both steps included familiarisation with the Digital Tool, use of the Digital Tool on examples of actual learners, adult education staff discussion on the subject and filling in

any of the templates provided by O4-T1 Validation Methodology. All templates are annexed to this report (Annexes A to E).

The Validation Methodology also provided for collecting information from the information events organised for stakeholders, which haven't been carried out up to this point in time, also due to the strenuous working conditions as a consequence of anti-COVID 19 measures.

3. Pilot testing results

3.1. AZM-LU

Technical issues

No specific technical issues were identified in the process. There were some complications with the registration process due to the Tool being hosted by the private server. This issue was addressed and solved by placing it on suitable public domain.

Also, the consistency with naming different educational programmes is necessary to enable the comparison of results and areas of improvement between learners and relevant educational programmes.

Content

An issue related to content was that learner and teacher/mentor should use the tool together because learners need support to evaluate their current status realistically. Evaluation requires deep introspective, reflection and self-knowledge.

Benefits of using the tool in a national context

Adult education staff directly involved in working with learners reported the following benefits in regular usage of the Tool:

- The Tool can represent a digitalisation of a process usually performed on paper.

- It supports the learning provider in determining a target group for educational programmes.

- When going through the process together with learners, they are able to see and visualise the topic, it provides them quick access to information, learners gain more trust in the process since the digital support provides additional weight to the activity.

- Final certificate motivates learners to perform better.

- The Tool allows us to follow results for individuals as well as groups and compare most and least successful areas of progress.

- When a mentor fills in the questionnaire together with the learner it allows him/her to get to know the learner better.

- It motivates learners to self-reflect and allows continuous monitoring of learners.

- It helps the learning provider focus on areas where additional attention is needed, design an inclusive curriculum, and support the provider in creating learning programmes and session content according to the learners' self-assessment results and the identified aims of the programme, based on the Outcomes Indicators

- The tool is very useful, visually friendly and simple as well as concrete to use.

- The contents of the programme can be adjusted according to learners' needs and learning aims identified through the use of the TaMPADA Tool.

- Support in the process of directing learners into activities that would help them achieve progress in their areas for development.

- Useful for recognition of learners' progress in informal educational programmes targeting disadvantaged target groups.

- Clear and concrete demonstration of the impact of the learning: for each individual learner's progress; and progress of each learning group. This enables the learning provider to identify the impact and success of the learning programmes.

Learners' feedback

Learners mentioned the issue of trusting their mentors/teachers and feeling safe in the learning environment to be able to conduct an honest self-evaluation.

They found the Tool easy to use and recognised additional benefits of using it: "It was very useful because it motivated me to think about myself and reach some conclusion I wouldn't otherwise. When reading the outcomes in the Tool I realised that there are some areas where I made some progress without realising this is also considered a skill."

Another learner would use the certificate received after finalising the course as a supporting document during job search.

3.2. FU

Technical issues

According to most of the correspondents, the platform technical characteristics and visual appearance was satisfactory. The tool was easy to navigate, user-friendly, modern, and understandable.

There was some confusion due to registration process on the private server which was addressed by the creators of the platform.

Some disadvantaged learners need help with filling in the tool and select a relevant educational programme so that the results were collected in relevant graphs and statistics.

Most of the teachers and students (90%) however did not experience any technical difficulties.

Content

Most of the participants were satisfied with the content of the tool, they mentioned that it is useful and promising for the AEP's development.

Some suggestions included shortening the selection of topics and contents to make the whole process shorter and use fewer resources. Additionally, a lot of topics to choose from can make the process of selecting a proper descriptor too confusing.

Extra resources in the form of staff would be needed to assure the sustainability of using the Tool.

It is advisable that the teacher and learner go through the evaluation process together to avoid possible biases.

Some topics can be too sensitive or personal for students and they need confidentiality assurance.

Benefits of using the Tool in a national context

100% of respondents answered that the tool is relevant to the local and national adult education context.

The benefits mentioned were the following:

- In Sweden disadvantaged learners, especially youth, have personal assistant or mentor. This person can be relevant for implementing the tool and presenting it for learners;

- The Tool enables a more personal and individual approach to evaluation of a class which is a common procedure;

- The questionnaire blends easily with the local context;

- The tool can be used not only in educational organisations but by the municipalities, regional offices or national bodies for education, such as authorities who constantly monitor the education quality.

- It supports further development of AEPs and enables them to follow the efficiency of their programmes in long term ;

- Using the tool learners would see that AEP is interested in their progress, which in turn will increase their level of trust and engagement into the learning process. This can improve learning results;

- It helps teachers better understand their students;

- AEPs can receive relevant and vast data on how specific courses affect learners at big scale in different personal aspects (health, employment, social, etc). Some courses can improve the situation, while others may not achieve the desired results. In that case learners of courses which show improvement of specific areas and analyse what are their best practices, and eventually share their best practices with other educators. On a larger scale, it will help AEP to improve the well-being and potential of their disadvantaged learners;

- Also, the results of the evaluations can help the learners themselves show the progress in such areas as wellbeing, health, employment, social etc. Once a learner can see their progress he or she can continue with this or if the learner sees that they are not progressing, he or she can pay attention to specific area and think about ways of improving it or consult with mentor/teacher.

Learners' feedback

Although some learners felt that adult education providers are the ones benefiting most from the functionality of the Tool or that some of the questions or descriptors are too intimate, most enjoyed the evaluation process and the design of the Tool.

Some learners mentioned that the results of the Tool can be used with conversations with such specialists as study mentors, personal assistants, psychologists, coaches or doctors.

3.3. DACES

Technical issues

The correspondents spoke about difficulties with registering/logging in to test site and the software requirement to complete all fields before allowing progression which could cause some ambiguity or delay.

Content

Participants of pilot testing thought of it being well considered and relevant. They also reported of it being useful for the selected questions to be asked are duplicated across all learners from the same cohort.

Benefits of using the Tool in a national context

AEP staff reported of the following benefits:

- It is recommended to be used for any courses where the capture of soft outcomes is important to track progression for learners, funding bodies and OFSTED. This is really useful to be able to evidence wider outcomes and benefits of learning to justify provision to partners and funders. It will help us to identify gaps in provision and what learners' aims are from courses to also inform teaching.

- The tool can identify issues which may hold learners back (e.g. lack of confidence and not feeling confident to make new friends)

- Relevant for a wide range of course but particular community learning and first step courses

- The tool can be used to support improved confidence and other soft skills for employment or course progression

- It could support course development to ensure soft skills are being considered by recording of benefits/effects of AE on soft skills

- It allows tutors to have a much better understanding of their learners

- An understanding of the impact that AE has on developing the soft skills of learners and how beneficial it is to the local community and future prospects

Learners' feedback

Older learners reported the preference with the paper-based form but still appreciated the possibility to input data directly.

Sometimes they felt clearer instructions are necessary and needed the teacher's support.

They also felt that capturing soft outcomes identifies the true value of the courses. Clearly identified progression gave them confidence.

3.4. PROMEA

Benefits of using the Tool in a national context

Interviewees report of possibility to use the TaMPADA tool for comparability of how realistic learners are with their evaluation. Also, when learners document their areas in need of improvements this becomes more tangible and easier to improve. The digital tool can support the planning process in organizations providing adult education by making the identification of aspects to focus on easier.

Stakeholders commented in favour on positive impact and high relevance of soft skills on education and employment. They suggested to add the following soft skills:

- teamwork ability,
- problem solving ability,
- action planning ability,
- taking initiative,
- empathy - emotional intelligence and
- self-esteem.

They also see a possibility of influence on policy modification in the field of AE of employment for disadvantaged learners. This is evidenced by the following points:

- TaMPADA outputs and overall framework are addressed and targeted directly to adult disadvantaged learners taking into serious consideration their characteristics and needs.

- TaMPADA outputs and overall framework are based upon the pillars of a) employment, b) citizenship and c) personal/character development.

4. Conclusion

Despite some comments on the length of the process of evaluating disadvantaged adult learners according to TaMPADA framework, AEP staff, learners and stakeholders agree on the benefits of the TaMPADA Tool.

It supports learners in improving their soft skills and providing evidence of their improvements. Adult education providers can use the Tool to monitor the overall effectiveness of their educational programmes and modify them if necessary to provide a better service to learners and positively impact the whole community.

The comparability of results at different levels and ranges which is thoroughly documented may serve as evidence on which educational policies may be changed or adjusted.

Based on the piloting results, the following recommendations for stakeholders and other interested parties were extracted. These are further elaborated in the TaMPADA Policy Recommendations (O4):

1.   Recognition of lifelong and lifewide (non-formal and informal) learning achievements of adults is beneficial to adult education providers and learners.

2.   Learners should be consistently encouraged to self-reflect and self-evaluate during the learning process to internalise the value of their progress and improvement, and motivate them to progress further.

3.   The use of the Tool can have a positive influence on learners and their trust in AEPs as an additional proof that their progress is of great importance to AEPs.

4.   Adult education providers have been using an individualised approach to better understand and meet the needs of individual learners. The TaMPADA toolkit can provide a much-needed support of the process.

5.   Not only institutions directly involved with providing adult education but also government bodies related to education or employment may find the TaMPADA approach useful when making long-term educational guidelines or launching corresponding initiatives.

6.   Psychologists, doctors, mentors, or personal assistants may also find the TaMPADA toolkit useful to support their work with disadvantaged adults.

7. TaMPADA is very beneficial as a tool to enable curriculum planning to better meet the needs of disadvantaged learners, and to measure and evaluate the impact of the learning. This enables identification of the courses that have the most impact on developing learners' soft skills (so they can be repeated, learned from as good practice, and shared with other teachers and organisations).

8. TaMPADA can and should be used universally across the AEP's learning provision, to standardise, benchmark and compare the impact of each learning programme/provider. This can then be used as evidence for funding/inspections etc.

5. Pilot testing templates

5.1. Annex A: Questionnaire for AEP staff (digital Tool)

A) Have you experienced any technical issues while using the digital Tool?

    a. No

    b. Yes, I experienced the following issues:

B) Have you found the Tool easy to use?

    a. Yes

    b. No, it was difficult because:

C) Have you found the instructions for using the Tool sufficient?

    a. Yes

    b. No, I need additional clarification for:

D) Does the Tool provide useful support to your work with tracking and monitoring learners' progress?

    a. Yes

    b. No, because:

E) Do the TaMPADA Outcome Indices sufficiently cover the progress points that you follow for you learners?

    a. Yes

    b. No, I would like to add:

F) Would you be able to plan better or modify educational programmes for adult learners based on evidence collected by the Tool?

    a) Yes in the following way:

    b) No, because:

G) Are the assessment steps relevant for your adult education context?

    a. Yes

    b. No, because:

H) Please, give us three examples of where and how your organisation could benefit using this Tool:

5.2. Annex B: Discussion points for informal AEP staff focus groups after pilot testing and after filling in the questionnaire 5.1.

- What were your first thoughts or impressions of the Tool and its usefulness?

- How are the steps of the process related to the local/national context of your work?

- Are there any parts of the tracking and monitoring process that you feel less clear on?

- Please describe any barriers while using the Tool content or procedure wise?

- Please describe any added value of the Tool that we haven't mentioned so far?

- Please share any additional thoughts or ideas?

5.3. Annex C: Questions for learners

- How did you feel when taking part in this process?

- Were you able to easily find descriptors that represent how you feel for each question?

- How useful did your find taking part in this process? Which bits were most or least useful?

- Describe situations when you might use or share your Tampada certificate (e.g. job interview, with a new learning provider, with your careers coach)

- Please provide any other thoughts or comments

5.4. Annex D: Stakeholders' discussion points

- What will be the benefit to your organisation of tracking and monitoring the soft skills of disadvantaged learners.

- What new insights into the needs of disadvantaged learners can the Tampada tool give you?

- How can you apply these insights to your area of work? (e.g. equality and diversity, narrowing the achievement gap, quality improvement, identifying the courses that make the most progress in the selected areas)

- How could the Tampada tool influence organisational policy and future planning?

5.5. Annex E: Templates for collecting information from pilot testing, informal focus groups and information events

5.5.1 AEP staff

Suggestions for improvement regarding technical issues
Suggestions for improvement regarding the content
Issues regarding the relatability to the national context
Examples of situations in AE that could benefit from the Tool

5.5.2 Learners

Thoughts, ideas, suggestions relevant for any kind of modification of the Tool
Examples of situations relevant for the use of the Tool