



FOOD INCLUDES

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FOOD INCLUDES: Reaching, Recruiting and Engaging Excluded Learners by Harnessing the Power of Food

Food Includes Consortium

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01

Introduction

01 | INTRODUCTION TO THE STARTER KIT

Welcome to our starter kit, **Food as a seeking pedagogy in Adult Education!** This kit is designed to provide adult educators with valuable tools and methods to reach Adult Learners, especially those who have been excluded from traditional educational offerings, through the engaging and universal theme of food.

The overall objective of the project is to foster greater inclusion and provide upskilling pathways in Adult Education by creating new, flexible learning opportunities centered around food. Food Includes aims to improve the ability of Adult Education centers to engage disadvantaged learners in learning and teaching opportunities so that they enhance their competences in the short term and can progress towards higher qualifications via the introduction of the FOOD Approach. This involves equipping teachers with knowledge and motivation, and then methodologies and resources that help them implement the approach.

1.1 Relevance and Importance

Today's growing social inequality can no longer be overstated. Identifying, exploring their origins, and addressing these disparities, which vary by context, have become a central mission of Adult Education (ICAE 2020, p.1). Adult Education has the potential to address increasing inequalities. Through enhancing wellbeing, social inclusion, self-confidence, employability and economic conditions, Adult Education can play a crucial role in building communities that reflect solidarity, social justice, social cohesion and offer equal opportunities to all their citizens. Achieving these outcomes depends on active participation (EAEA 2020, p.4.) Adult Education aims to provide equitable and inclusive learning opportunities and outcomes throughout a person's life. This encompasses Adult Learning in all its diverse and innovative forms, including work and everyday life, across formal, non-formal, and informal settings (ICAE 2020, p. 1).

To combat social inequalities, new development models and restructures are needed (ICAE 2020, p.15). Through Erasmus+ projects such as **SMILE, VINCE or HE4U2** new methodologies and frameworks are being developed and implemented to strengthen Adult Education. These initiatives e.g. focus on creating inclusive educational practices, enhancing accessibility, and supporting the integration of diverse learner groups within (higher) education institutions, ultimately contributing to greater social inclusion and equal opportunities for adult learners.

Adult Education plays a key role in challenging outdated attitudes and beliefs about education. It is vital for rethinking and redefining lifelong learning (LLL) in the 21st century, positioning it as a central component of a nation's educational framework (ICAE 2020, p.8). Training programs in Adult Education itself have been shown to enhance social inclusion by increasing activation, participation, and connection among participants (De Greef et al. 2012, p.357).

Our overall goal as a consortium of the FOOD Includes Project is to increase take-up and improve the inclusiveness and accessibility of Adult Education. Utilising food as a tool for engaging in community programmes is not new. However, what makes our approach special, is the ability of the project to use food as an outreaching tool in a systematic and scalable approach within Adult Education to actively improve accessibility, inclusion and competence development for hard-to-reach adults.

Food as an outreach pedagogical tool represents an innovative approach that promotes both, social inclusion and LLL skills. In recent years, the importance of food as a pedagogical tool in Adult Education (such as HE, VET providers, Adult Education Centres) has become increasingly important. The special role of food is manifested in its multifunctional role within society. In addition to its primary function of nourishment, food plays a crucial role as a cultural and social bond. The preparation of food enables to reflect and promote cultural identity, traditions, and social cohesion (Pettinger et al. 2019, p. 8, 11; Perry 2017 p. 192). Engaging with food enables the exchange of a wide variety of topics such as historical backgrounds (e.g. colonialism), understanding inequalities and cultural exchange (Bender D. & Haushofer L. 2023 p. 166f). The conscious choice and processing of food can also stimulate self-efficacy, critical thinking and create an awareness of sustainability. This includes aspects such as the origin of the ingredients or fair-trade practices (ibid; Murphy 2018 p. 8f.).

We at the Food Includes consortium are committed to creating learning and meeting spaces that function beyond fixed standards and standardised attributions. Particularly with regard to language skills, which often involuntarily serve as the main criterion for participation, we are committed to ensuring that people are recognised in their entirety. The focus lies on making other, often hidden skills and abilities visible - such as cooking, which often requires simple means and ingredients. It opens up a space in which talents that are not immediately recognisable can be expressed without linguistic or formal barriers.

Research question:

How can food programs be designed and implemented to effectively recruit and engage excluded learners in Adult Education, thereby enhancing their social inclusion and learning outcomes?

1.2 Objectives of the Starter Kit

As a result of using the Starter Kit, educators and stakeholders will:

- Become aware of/ enthusiastic about Food Includes as a pedagogical approach
- Better understand the opportunities presented by the Food Includes approach to engage disadvantaged adults in learning opportunities and enhance their competences in the short term so that they can progress towards higher qualifications
- Improve their ability to use the approach in different contexts
- Be more likely to engage with the project's further resources
- Become more motivated or increase their motivation

Target Groups:

Direct Target Groups	Indirect Target Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marginalised Adults• Adult Educators and Teachers (of HEIs, Adult Education and Continuing Education Centres, non-profit Organisations)• Heads of Adult Education Centres and Departments• Education Networks and Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers and Education Scientists• Educators from our own institutions• Adult and Continuing Education Centres across Europe• Civil Society and non-profit Organisations• Local and Regional Authorities• Media

02

**Exploring the concept
of food as a tool for
both education and
social integration**

02 | EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF FOOD AS A TOOL FOR BOTH EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INTERGRATION

2.1 Adult Education and Outreach Pedagogy as Synergies

2.1.1 The importance of accessibility and engagement in Adult Education

Our world evolves rapidly and has a major impact on the transformation of societies and the labour market. This requires constant adaptation and development on an individual and collective level.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demands an equitable and inclusive education to ensure access to education and LLL opportunities (UN General Assembly 2015, p.7):

“All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society.”

(UN General Assembly 2015, p.7)

The concept of LLL stands for limitless education, whose programmes should be targeted towards the respective life phases and needs of adults. Our complex and dynamic world requires flexible and needs-orientated learning environments in which individuals can further develop their knowledge and skills (UIL 2009, p.14). The UNESCO 5th GRALE Report from 2022 reports overall an increasing number of participation activities in education since 2018. **But despite this, the report highlights a crucial issue: There is a lack of focus on vulnerable populations and minorities. This includes e.g. migrants, older individuals, people with disabilities and indigenous people who continue to be frequently overlooked** (UIL 2022, p.3).

In recent years, education statistics have shown that Adult Education programmes do not sufficiently reach certain milieus and groups (Bremer 2017, p.17; translated from German). Access to education is essential for achieving all dimensions of development, especially social inclusion, environmental sustainability, economic equality and overall wellbeing (UIL 2022, p.75). There is limited data on why people do not participate or are not engaged in Adult Education programs. To address these disparities,

increased investment is needed to generate reliable data and foster a better understanding of this issue. Additionally, raising awareness at a regional, national and international level is crucial (UIL 2019, p. 14f.).

Accessibility and Engagement are two crucial components in the field of Adult Education:

ACCESSIBILITY

- Inclusive learning environments
- Flexible learning options: evening classes, module, online course, (school) holidays
- Support service: e.g. barrier-free
- Affordability: Costs are a barrier

ENGAGEMENT

- Relevance to Learners Life (Needs-orientated, based on interests)
- Active learning methods: open discussions, experiential learning, encourage participation, critical thinking and collaboration, feedback methods
- Culturally sensitive, intersectional
- Community building

2.1.2 Potential Barriers that influence participation in Adult Education Programmes

People who do not participate in adult learning programmes face various barriers that prevent them from participating in learning activities. In order to target and engage with these people in Adult Learning programmes and develop effective strategies, we need to understand who these learners are. This is a sample of the target group. As highlighted in the previous section there is not much data on their exact backgrounds.

The learner's experience and probability of achieving educational attainment are perceived to be shaped and comprehended within a framework encompassing various factors such as culture, socioeconomic status, community dynamics, social stratification, and educational policies (Flynn et al. 2011, p. 44).

Educational barriers:	Assumptions
Early School Leavers	Individuals who leave school often face significant obstacles to accessing further education. This group frequently lacks formal qualifications, which severely limits their prospects in further education (Mooney & O'Rourke 2017, p. 27, 39).
Low Qualifications¹	Individuals with low qualifications often struggle to participate in the labour market and access opportunities

¹ In this context “low-skilled” is very common but critical term in literature. OECD (2019) states that „(i)t is important to note, that many adults are anything but ‘low skilled’: they may have low literacy and numeracy levels, but at the same time possess a range of other valuable skills (...). Equally, adults may have low qualification levels, but may have gained skills though years of work-experience that are equivalent to those associated with formal qualifications.” (p.4)

	for career development (OECD 2019, p. 1).
Lack of Basic Literacy Skills	People who do not possess basic reading and writing skills are at a considerable disadvantage for accessing further educational and employment opportunities (Flynn et al. 2011 p. 43; Mooney & O'Rourke 2017, p. 39).
People with Learning Disabilities	Learning disabilities can significantly hinder the ability to learn and participate in educational programmes. This group often requires specialized support and adapted learning environments to succeed (EAEA 2023).
Negative Biographical (Learning) Influences	Negative experiences in education, failure, can have long-term effects on motivation and confidence in learning abilities (e.g. Bremer 2017, S.18; (Bamber & Tett, 2000; Belzer, 2004 cited by. Flynn et al. 2011 p. 50f.).
Cultural and Language Barriers:	
Members of Ethnic Minorities	Ethnic minorities may face discrimination and a lack of culturally responsive educational practices, which can hinder their educational progress and integration (Kirkby et al. 2023 p.2).
Non-Native Speakers:	Language barriers can make it difficult for non-native speakers to access and fully participate in educational programmes. However, it must be noted that migrants/refugees have multilingual skills which should be taken into account (Garcia et al, 2024, p. 1654).
Migrants and Refugees	Migrants and refugees may encounter cultural challenges through prejudice and discrimination from local community that can impede their educational attainment (Garcia et al. 2024, p. 1654).
Care/Family Responsibilities:	
Single mothers*/parents	(Single) Parents often struggle to balance educational pursuits with childcare/familiar responsibilities, limiting their ability to participate fully in educational programmes (e.g. Kersh et al. 2021 p. 10; Flynn et al. 2011 p. 49f.;55; Mooney & O'Rourke 2017, p. 26).
Individuals Who Must Care for Relatives/ Financial Responsibilities	Those who have caregiving responsibilities/Financial responsibilities for family members may find it difficult to commit time and energy to educational activities, thus restricting their opportunities for learning and development (Flynn et al. 2011 p. 47 and 49f.).
Social Barriers	
Social Isolation	Individuals who are socially isolated or lack a supportive network may find it challenging to engage in educational activities. This can include exclusion e.g. due age, social-space/milieu, cultural background /racism (Flynn et al. 2011 p. 52).
Stereotypes	Societal stereotypes about ethnic, gender can

	discourage individuals from pursuing education (e.g. Radovic-Markovic et al. 2019, p. 356, Flynn et al. 2011, p. 50).
Family related barriers	
Family violence	The study by Flynn (2011) shows that family violence often took precedence over education and prevented those affected from attending school (p.48).
Lack of support from parents or partners	The significance of school attendance was not emphasised or supported by parents or partners who were either unable or unwilling to offer help (ibid. p. 49).
Further	
Technological Barriers/Digital Divide:	Some individuals may lack basic computer skills which limits their ability to benefit from digital education (Mooney & O'Rourke 2017, p. 39).
Physical/Mental Health Barriers	<p>People with physical or mental health issues may face significant challenges in accessing and participating in education (EAEA 2023; Radovic-Markovic et al. 2019, p. 356; Flynn et al. 2011, p. 49f.; Pennacchia et al. 2018, p.28).</p> <p>E.g. the experience of trauma and stress can have impact on adopting new information and the ability to learn (Garcia et al. 2024, p. 1653).</p>
Geographical Barriers	Individuals living in rural areas may have limited access to educational institutions and resources, making it difficult for them to participate in learning opportunities (Spivey 2016, w/o p.).
Financial Barriers	People with low financial resources face barriers in Adult Education, due to encompassing high course fees (Mooney & O'Rourke 2017, p.19,26).

Reliable data on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) participation is still difficult to obtain. This lack of information hinders efforts to enhance participation rates (UIL 2020, p.1). In the study of Flynn et al. (2011), participants outlined various factors that impacted their learning in adulthood. They all discussed the formative years of their lives and the events that unfolded within their family, educational institutions, and wider social environments. These frameworks played a significant role in shaping their current attitudes, situations, and anticipations (p. 54).

It is important to not judge non-participation as a "deficit". Self-exclusion from education often results from previous experiences. For some people, school may not have been a familiar environment in the past, so they did not feel like they belonged there. As a result, these experiences can influence attitudes towards Adult Education and deeply embed mistrust and scepticism (Bremer 2017, S. 18; translated from German). Based on their data, Flynn et al. (2011) have elaborated in their study that influences on educational achievements were frequently tied to factors outside people's control (p. 55).

2.1.3 Potential Barriers that influence participation in Adult Education Programmes

Adult Education providers² are crucial in attracting new learners, ensuring access, and involving them in Adult Education programmes (EAEA 2020, p.12). To effectively engage excluded learners, active outreach efforts are necessary (EAEA 2022, p. 2).

The majority of people experience a significant barrier and high level of inhibition when it comes to engaging with educational institutions (Bremer 2017, p.18; translated from German). Some might have difficulties identifying their learning needs and to access education opportunities (Windisch 2015 cited by OECD 2019, p.5). The concept of the outreach method is about finding the way "out" to the target group in order to create access to people's living environments and social spaces in the sense of social space orientation and to bridge possible barriers. This can be achieved, for example, through close cooperation with initiatives or associations that already have access to the target group as well as through mobile offerings and the inclusion of new learning locations (Bremer 2017, p. 17f.; translated from German). Bremer (2017) emphasises in particular that "spaces" should also be read mentally. This means acknowledging that, although a continuing education center may be geographically close to the target group, the location might be mentally alien or negatively connotated for them due to previous experiences with education. The concept requires more flexible programmes planning those breaks with previous procedures (Bremer 2017, p. 18f.; translated from German). A significant portion of adult learning still occurs in traditional classrooms, often replicating the teaching and learning methods familiar from school settings. This approach can be especially challenging for adults, who may have faced previous educational failures and find it challenging to reintegrate into a classroom setting (OECD 2019, p. 9). Flexible and more accessible learning programmes require better cooperation between non-formal and formal Adult Education (EAEA 2022).

Identifying needs and reaching excluded learners

The first step to reach marginalised people is to identify the learners' needs, the challenges they have to deal with, and the barriers that hinder their participation in educational processes. Creating a strategy that addresses their problems and offers appropriate solutions can be an effective way to engage them. Comprehensive outreach strategies must focus on reaching those who are the hardest to reach and most at risk of marginalization and social exclusion (EAEA 2020, p.12).

- 1. Community Needs Assessments:** It is vital that individuals who do not enroll in adult foundational education programmes, or who prematurely end their participation before achieving their goals, are encouraged to communicate their perspectives on education (Flynn et al. 2011, p. 47). This can be conducted through community needs assessments to identify groups that are underserved. This can involve surveys, focus groups, and interviews with community members and leaders to understand the barriers they face in accessing education.
- 2. Reaching people in their everyday environment (Outreach and Social Space-Oriented Approach):** e.g. The Programme "Kitchen on the Run" from the Initiative "Über den Tellerrand" (Germany) visits

² Continuing Education Centres, HEIs, VET providers

people in rural areas to connect with the community and offers participating programs (Über den Tellerrand 2022).

- 3. Partnerships with Community Organisations:** Collaborate with community organisations, social services, and non-profits that work with marginalised populations (e.g. OECD 2019, p. 6). These organizations often have direct access to and knowledge about excluded groups and can provide valuable insights and assistance in identifying learners who are most in need.
- 4. Feedback from Current Learners:** Engage current learners who may have overcome barriers to education and gather their feedback. They can provide first-hand information on the challenges faced by excluded learners and suggest ways to reach them effectively.
- 5. Mobile outreach Services** (OECD 2019, p.5)
- 6. Social Media**
- 7. Campaigns at festivals and on media:** Inform and generate interest through sharing success stories (UIL 2020, p. 23).

Although awareness-raising campaigns are widespread, their success is not well documented. By connecting with adults in their everyday environment and utilising existing relationships, they can be effectively linked to Adult Education (OECD 2019, p. 5f.).

What about finances?

In reality, the funding frameworks are generally not aligned with this particular type of work. The focus is usually on teaching and participant numbers; therefore, many aspects that are crucial for “outreach education work” are often overlooked. Building new networking systems, identifying trusted individuals or mediators, training and supporting them - all of these tasks require a lot of time and staff and are beyond the typical capacity and resources of further education institutions. At this point, a reassessment is essential, including the delineation of characteristics, features and standards that should serve as the basis for adequate funding of such CET³ initiatives and counseling, as well as the allocation of specific budgets for the development and testing of concepts and formats (Bremer 2017, p. 19; translated from German).

2.2 Food as a Pedagogical Tool in Adult Education to reach Excluded Learners

Adult learning differentiates from learning in childhood. Adults achieve optimal learning outcomes when education is contextualized, when it is practical and oriented towards solving problems (Knowles, 1984 cited by OECD 2019, p. 9).

2.2.1 Potential Barriers that influence participation in Adult Education Programmes

The Relevance of the Cultural and Anthropological Perspective on Food

“Food is more than just sustenance. Food is community.” (Ting 2024)

³ Continuing Education and Training

Through Food people can connect with each other and experience a sense of connection. It allows us to enhance broader understanding of the world and explore different cultures by discovering social structures, traditions and the history of different societies and cultures (University of British Columbia 2024).

Food holds significant relevance from both cultural and anthropological perspectives. It is not only a source of nutrition, but also a key element in building cultural identity and social bonding (Perry 2017, p.185; Montero & Gross 2023). Throughout history, the act of cooking and having a meal has united individuals, transforming the process of eating into a communal activity (Wolley & Lim 2022, p. 1). The ways people prepare the same dish can be very different and these variations can offer deep insights into an individual's or group's history and culture. By exploring these differences, we uncover the diverse experiences and influences that shape unique cooking styles. The stories and traditions embedded in our food reflect rich cultural narratives and personal histories, making each version uniquely meaningful and delicious (Ting 2024, w/o p.).

Food is a universal aspect of life; everyone consumes it and associates it with experiences that have cultural and personal meaning (Ting 2024, w/o p.). It also serves to define a communal identity through shared interests, ethnicity, religion, locality, and nationality. A mutual appreciation for specific cuisines, dishes, or types of food can unite people, fostering bonds and lifelong friendships (Perry 2017, p. 185). Thus, food can assume various roles, meanings, and functions based on the context and situation (Perry 2017, p. 185). Food and the act of eating have a broad impact on multiple facets of human existence, including e.g. well-being, emotional state, areas of interest, social connections, interpersonal bonds, cultural affiliations, and personal sense of self (Perry 2017, p.184).

Relating to food as a tool for Social Inclusion we must take into account the circumstances under which the food is prepared: how it is being prepared, for whom, and what kinds of relationships are being nurtured through the provision and sharing of this meal. Most importantly, we should assess whether our actions align with our intentions and values. This is because food transcends mere sustenance; it embodies community (Ting 2024 w/o p.).

Social Benefit through Food

Community building through multiple food activities including e.g. cooking, eating, growing vegetables/fruits or organising own food related activities is a dynamic way to bring people from various backgrounds together and strengthen social bonds (Saxena 2021, p. 4). Through collaborative exchange, they can acquire new skills and expand their areas of expertise (Murphy 2018, p.9; Gil et al. 2020, p.44).

Cooking together, for instance, provides opportunities for people to engage in meaningful conversations⁴ and exchange experiences (Saxena 2021, p. 12; Gil et al. 2020, p. 44ff.). It further serves as a means of communication that enables participants to exchange aspects of their identity, culture and history. **Shared meals** create a welcoming environment where everyone, regardless of their background, feels included and valued (Gil et al. 2020, p.44; Perry 2017, p. 194). The research conducted by Perry in 2017 indicates that food plays a significant role in cultivating relationships and connections, by means of communal dining and

⁴ At the Food Includes consortium, we also include non-verbal communication at this point. We are convinced that the joint interaction with food/preparation of meals does **not** need verbal language, but also works with body language.

festivities. This allows individuals and groups to gain deeper insights into each other's cultural backgrounds and values. The act of sharing meals showcases a sense of generosity, fostering a sense of unity and positive relations (Perry 2017, p. 194).

By involving marginalised groups in the organisation of and participation in **Food Events**, these groups and their skills can be made visible. Such events create opportunities for interactions that can break down prejudices and overcome social barriers (Refugee Food Festival 2017, p. 10). Beyond fostering personal growth and skill enhancement, these events also promote autonomy, language skills, and entrepreneurial skills such as organisation, budgeting, and potentially, the future establishment of their own businesses (Gil et al. 2020, p. 56f.)

Planting and gardening activities contribute to community building by encouraging teamwork and a shared sense of purpose. Cultivating a community garden in a shared space, these activities promote sustainability and a collective responsibility for the environment. They can also provide a space for well-being, where participants can gain mental energy (Murphy 2018, p. 9).

Creating Recipe Books is another powerful way to build community. By creating and sharing recipes from different traditions and cultures, community members can celebrate their diversity and preserve their culinary heritage. This collaborative process not only fosters creativity but also deepens relationships among participants as they share personal stories behind their favorite dishes (Migrant Mama 2019).

Educational programmes can showcase these experiences by offering opportunities for reflection and sharing. However, it's crucial to note that education doesn't have to be confined to a classroom setting. Programming, particularly community-engaged initiatives, is most effective when we intentionally engage with people in their own environments (Ting 2024, w/o p.). Recognising and addressing the real-life experiences and diverse knowledge of community members opens up opportunities of developing activities with the community rather than on their behalf. This approach encourages active involvement from community members, groups, and organisations, fostering a sense of ownership. Additionally, it helps not only to pinpoint and emphasise the factors that encourage participation but also to jointly create strategies to overcome any potential barriers (Saxena 2021, p. 24).

Potential barriers to using Food as a tool for Social Integration

Using food as a tool for social integration can be highly effective, but it also comes with potential barriers that need to be addressed.

“Food can be a marker of identity and be both a unifying and dividing agent” (Perry 2017, p. 185)

Food Restrictions

- Although sharing meals can bring people together, it can also create divisions. Sometimes, individuals face discrimination because of their dietary restrictions (Woolley & Lim 2023, p. 5; Perry 2017, p. 185). This can lead them to conceal their food preferences, making joint meal decisions more difficult (Woolley & Lim 2023, p.5). These restrictions can stem from health reasons, as well as personal or cultural choices (Woolley et al. 2019, p. 3).

Religious and Cultural Events

- Certain cultural or religious festivals, holydays, or traditions may involve specific dietary preferences or customs that affect the types of food people can consume or the timing of meals. These events might require adjustments to meal planning and social activities to respect these practices and ensure that everyone can participate. Being aware of and accommodating these diverse traditions is essential for fostering inclusive and respectful social integration through food.

Negative Experiences

- Individuals with negative experiences related to food, e.g. due to past cultural insensitivity/racism (e.g. Perry 2017, p. 193), may find it challenging to engage in social situations centered around food. These past experiences can affect their comfort levels and willingness to participate in communal meals. To effectively use food as a means of social integration, it is essential to accommodate these varying needs/potential barriers. This requires thoughtful planning to ensure that all participants can enjoy the food and feel included.

Besides these factors, programmes aiming to reach a specific group like “Marginalised People” can enhance Othering-Processes

Even educational programmes for excluded learners intended to promote inclusion and equal opportunities, these programmes can promote unintended **Othering Processes** and reinforce existing inequalities. An intersectional approach can show how different forms of discrimination and power structures are intertwined.

“Othering is a process whereby individuals and groups are treated and marked as different and inferior from the dominant social group. Disenfranchised groups such as women, people of divergent ethnic backgrounds, working-class people, homosexuals, or migrants may all be othered and, in consequence, suffer discrimination.” (Griffin, G. 2017).

Kraff & Jernsand (2023) point out, that -for instance- Food Events are frequently linked to minority cultures, which can lead to the exoticisation of the participants and their traditions. This representation tends to present these cultures as symbols of multiculturalism and strengthens the idea that cultural diversity is mainly for the pleasure of the ethnic majority. The authors argue that, despite the positive intentions behind these events, they can unintentionally contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes and the marginalisation of the cultures they represent (p. 844).

Saxena et al. (2021) states in her report, that the interpretation of Diversity in Food Programmes differentiates by organisers. While some programs welcome everybody to reach different groups, others aim to bring people from different socio-cultural groups together to reach a specific group of marginalised people. If the programme does not clearly state what kind of diversity it is seeking, it may unintentionally exclude members of the community. Being conscious of diversity allows organisers to take into account people's specific motivations and barriers and address the particular needs of each community. This requires the involvement of participants (p. 21f.).

According to this, it should be noted that the programmes should also offer people a protected framework. Depending on the experiences and needs of the community, each project will have an individual character that can be open or closed. What should be considered, as Saxena et al. (2021) states, is that the kind of diversity is clearly communicated in order to avoid misunderstandings or othering processes.

Further Assumptions of Othering:

Deficit-oriented educational programmes:

- Deficit-oriented educational programmes may focus on what learners may lack or what they cannot do instead of focusing on their strengths and potential. This can lead to learners being seen as deficient and needy, which reinforces their stigmatisation.

Homogenisation of learners:

- Adult Education programmes may tend to view excluded learners as a homogenous group without considering the person as an individual with their own experiences and needs. This ignores the different realities and needs of learners and can lead to certain groups within excluded learners being overlooked or inadequately supported.

Power symmetries:

- Adult Education programmes for excluded learners may be developed by individuals/ institutions who do not have the same experiences and backgrounds as the target group. This may lead to paternalistic approaches in which the needs and circumstances of the learners are not sufficiently taken into account and the learners are forced into a passive role.
- There is no universal solution for encouraging participation in community food activities that works in every situation. Instead, it's necessary to have a holistic understanding of the factors that encourage or discourage participation, taking into account the unique characteristics of each community and location (Saxena et al. 2021, p. 4).

2.2.2 Exploring the Concept and Didactical Strategies of Food as a Tool for Experience-Based Learning and Upskilling

In recent years, the use of food as a pedagogical tool has gained significant attention in educational discourse, particularly in the context of experiential learning and skill development. The concept of experience-based learning, often referred to as "learning by doing," emphasises the importance of engaging students in hands-on activities that foster deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. Food, being a universal and multifaceted medium, offers a unique and effective avenue for such educational practices.

Research indicates that incorporating food-related activities into the curriculum can enhance learning outcomes across various subjects, including mathematics, science, and literacy. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches students' academic experience but also promotes essential life skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and cultural awareness. The didactic principles underlying this approach advocate for active participation, contextual learning, and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge.

However, implementing food-based pedagogy presents certain challenges. These include logistical issues, such as ensuring access to kitchen facilities and managing dietary restrictions, as well as the need for educators to possess specialised knowledge and skills. Despite these obstacles, the versatility of food as a teaching tool makes it suitable for diverse educational settings, from primary schools to university-community partnerships.

Furthermore, LLL and personal development are significantly enhanced through food education. Engaging in culinary activities fosters continuous skill development, adaptability, and personal growth, making it an invaluable component of both formal and informal education systems. This section delves into the various didactical strategies, principles, and challenges associated with using food as a pedagogical tool, highlighting its potential to contribute to inclusive and holistic education.

Experienced-Based Learning / Learning by Doing

- The principle of experienced-based learning, or "learning by doing," is rooted in the belief that active engagement in practical activities enhances knowledge retention and understanding. Dewey (1938) was a pioneer in this field, advocating for educational experiences that are rooted in real-life activities. Murphy (2019, p.625-645) provides contemporary examples of this principle through asylum seeker and refugee-led food initiatives in Ireland. Projects like Cooking for Freedom and the Sligo Global Kitchen not only offer participants hands-on experience in food preparation but also facilitate the development of entrepreneurial skills. These activities help participants to gain practical experience, which is crucial for labour integration and community building.
- Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, which includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation, can be applied to these food projects. Participants engage in concrete experiences through cooking, reflect on their experiences, conceptualise their learning in terms of social and cultural contexts, and experiment by trying new recipes or food-related ventures. This model underlines the importance of integrating experience with reflection and conceptual understanding.
- Moreover, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning suggests that learning occurs most effectively in contexts that are meaningful and relevant to the learner. The food projects described by Murphy (2019, p.625-645) exemplify situated learning, as participants engage in meaningful activities that are closely tied to their cultural backgrounds and daily lives, thereby fostering a deeper connection and commitment to learning.

Using Food to Teach Broader Skills: Maths, Science, and Literacy

- Food can be an engaging and practical medium for teaching a range of subjects, including mathematics, science, and literacy. The FoodMASTER Initiative, as described by Duffrin et al. (2010, p.79-84), used food as a tool to teach science to third-grade students in Appalachian Ohio. The initiative demonstrated that hands-on activities involving food could significantly enhance students' interest and understanding in scientific concepts. By incorporating food-related experiments, students were able to observe scientific principles in action, such as the chemical reactions involved in baking or the physical properties of different ingredients.
- Sepp and Höjjer (2016, p.1-8) also highlighted the interdisciplinary potential of food-based education in their study involving preschool children in Sweden. By integrating food into everyday activities, children not only learned about nutrition and sensory education but also developed language skills and mathematical understanding. For example, cooking activities required children to measure ingredients, follow sequences, and describe their sensory experiences, thereby reinforcing their

literacy and numeracy skills.

- Additionally, research by Byrd-Bredbenner et al. (2006, p.919-926) supports the idea that food-based activities can enhance literacy and numeracy skills. Their study found that cooking and food preparation activities could help children develop important mathematical skills, such as measuring, counting, and understanding proportions, as well as literacy skills through reading recipes and following instructions. This interdisciplinary approach to education ensures that learning is holistic and relevant to students' everyday lives.

Didactic Principles

- The effective use of food as a pedagogical tool relies on several didactic principles, including active participation, contextual learning, and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. Parker and Koeppel (2020, p1-16) discuss the importance of structuring school food programmes around multiple intersecting domains such as health, nutrition, food access, sustainability, and socio-cultural aspects. This comprehensive approach ensures that food education is not only about the act of cooking but also about understanding the broader implications of food in society.
- Freire's (1970) concept of critical pedagogy, which emphasises the importance of dialogue and critical thinking in education, can be applied to food-based learning. By engaging students in discussions about food production, sustainability, and cultural practices, educators can foster critical thinking and empower students to make informed decisions about their food choices. This aligns with the findings of Murphy (2019, p.625-645), who noted that food initiatives led by asylum seekers and refugees often involve discussions about cultural identity, social justice, and community building.
- Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which highlights the role of social interaction in learning, supports the use of food as a didactic tool. Collaborative cooking activities encourage interaction, communication, and the sharing of knowledge, thereby enhancing the learning experience. The communal nature of food preparation and consumption provides a natural context for social learning and reinforces the idea that knowledge is constructed through social engagement.

Didactic Challenges

- While food-based learning programmes offer numerous benefits, they also present certain challenges. Murphy (2019 p.625-645) notes that logistical issues, such as ensuring access to kitchen facilities and managing dietary restrictions, can be significant barriers. Additionally, educators may need specialised knowledge and skills to effectively implement food-based activities, which can require additional training and resources.
- Duffrin et al. (2010, p.79-84) acknowledges similar challenges in their study, noting that the successful implementation of the FoodMASTER Initiative required substantial planning and coordination. Ensuring that all students have equal access to food-related activities and addressing potential food allergies or dietary preferences are critical considerations. Furthermore, there may be cultural sensitivities around food that need to be navigated carefully to ensure inclusivity and respect for diverse backgrounds.
- Despite these challenges, the successful implementation of food-based programmes in various contexts, as highlighted by Sepp and Höijer (2016, p.1-8) and Parker and Koeppel (2020, p1-16), suggests that these obstacles can be overcome with careful planning and support. Future research could explore strategies for addressing these challenges, such as developing adaptable curricula that can be tailored to different educational settings and providing professional development for educators.

Suitable for Different Fields of Education and Training

- Food-based pedagogy is highly adaptable and can be applied across various educational fields and training programmes. The versatility of food as a teaching tool is evident in its application in primary education, Adult Education, Vocational training and Higher Education. The FoodMASTER Initiative's success in using food to teach science to primary school students demonstrates its potential in early childhood and primary education (Duffrin et al., 2010, p.79-84). Similarly, Sepp and Höijer (2016, p.1-8) highlight the effectiveness of food-based learning in preschool settings, where it can support the development of foundational skills in a fun and engaging manner.
- In Adult Education, food initiatives can provide valuable opportunities for skill development and community integration. Murphy (2019, p.625-645) and White (2021, p.465-480) illustrate how food projects can support asylum seekers and refugees in developing language skills, gaining practical experience, and building social networks. These programmes not only enhance participants' employability but also foster a sense of belonging and community cohesion.
- Moreover, food-based learning can be integrated into vocational training programmes to equip individuals with practical skills relevant to the food industry. Culinary schools, hospitality training programmes, and agricultural education can all benefit from incorporating food-based pedagogical approaches. By providing hands-on experience and real-world applications, these programmes can enhance the employability and career readiness of participants.

University-Community Partnerships in Food Education

- University-community partnerships play a crucial role in advancing food education by leveraging the resources and expertise of academic institutions to support community-based initiatives. Murphy (2019, p.625-645) describes how collaborative efforts, such as the Clonakilty community garden and the Refugee Food Festival, create meaningful opportunities for labour integration and community building. These partnerships not only provide practical support for food projects but also facilitate knowledge exchange and mutual learning between universities and communities.
- Parker and Koeppel (2020, p.1-16) highlight the potential of university-community partnerships to enhance school food programmes. By involving university researchers, educators, and students in the design and implementation of food education initiatives, schools can benefit from evidence-based practices and innovative approaches. These collaborations can also provide valuable opportunities for university students to engage in community service and applied research, thereby enriching their educational experience.
- Moreover, university-community partnerships can play a key role in addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable food systems. By working together, universities and communities can develop and implement initiatives that improve food access, promote healthy eating, and support local food production. These efforts can contribute to broader societal goals such as public health, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

Lifelong Learning (LLL) and Personal Development through Food

- Food-based learning extends beyond formal education and contributes significantly to lifelong learning and personal development. Murphy (2019, p.625-645) emphasises the role of food initiatives in fostering continuous skill development and personal growth among asylum seekers and refugees. These programmes provide opportunities for participants to acquire new skills, build confidence, and develop a sense of agency, which are essential components of LLL.
- The hands-on, experiential nature of food-related activities supports the development of practical skills and a positive attitude towards LLL. Duffrin et al. (2010, p.79-84) found that the FoodMASTER Initiative's hands-on activities not only enhanced students' understanding of scientific concepts but

also increased their interest in learning. This positive engagement with learning can foster a lifelong curiosity and a willingness to explore new subjects and skills.

- Moreover, food-based learning can support personal development by promoting self-awareness, cultural understanding, and social responsibility. Engaging in food-related activities encourages individuals to reflect on their own food choices, appreciate diverse culinary traditions, and consider the social and environmental impacts of food production and consumption. These reflections can contribute to a broader understanding of one's role in society and the importance of making informed and responsible decisions.

2.2.3 Current Trends and Developments

Innovative Methods and Approaches in Outreach Education

Innovative methods in outreach education have evolved to engage diverse populations and address contemporary challenges effectively. This section highlights the latest trends, focusing on food as a pedagogical tool, digital mediums, and community-based initiatives.

Integration of Food as a Pedagogical Tool

Food-based education is increasingly recognised for its ability to teach various subjects and skills through practical, engaging methods:

FoodMASTER Initiative (Duffrin et al., 2010, p.79-84)	Used food to teach science and maths to third-grade students, significantly increasing interest and understanding
Preschool Education in Sweden (Sepp & Höijer, 2016, p.1-8)	Integrated food activities to develop sensory language and interdisciplinary skills in young children
Asylum Seeker and Refugee Initiatives (Murphy, 2019, p.625-645)	Fostered empathy, solidarity, and practical skills through food projects like Cooking for Freedom and Sligo Global Kitchen
Farm to School Programmes	Connects schools with local farms to provide fresh, locally grown produce in school cafeterias, integrating lessons on agriculture, nutrition, and sustainability into the curriculum
Edible Schoolyard Project	Founded by Alice Waters, this initiative uses gardens and kitchens to teach students about food, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture through hands-on experiences

Digital Mediums in Outreach Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools in education, revealing both opportunities and challenges:

Community-Based Online Learning (Spring, Barton, & Bentley, 2022, p.212-230)	Utilised digital platforms for community engagement projects, enabling real-world application of knowledge even remotely
Multilingual Nutrition Education Videos (Mead et al., 2023, p.23-37)	Addressed language barriers and improved healthy eating behaviours among refugees in Australia
Khan Academy (Khan, 2012)	Offers free online courses on a wide range of subjects, using videos and interactive exercises to facilitate self-paced learning
Coursera and edX (Dillahunt et al., 2014, p.265-274)	Provide massive open online courses (MOOCs) from top universities, making high-quality education accessible to a global audience

Community-Based Initiatives

Community-based initiatives make education more accessible and relevant, leveraging local contexts and needs:

Food Literacy Conceptual Model (Hernandez et al., 2021, p.333-341)	Provides a comprehensive framework for teaching food literacy, adaptable to various educational contexts
Integrated Food Pedagogies (Parker & Koeppel, 2020, p.451-460)	Focus on health, nutrition, food access, sustainability, and socio-cultural aspects in school food programmes, promoting holistic understanding of food systems
Community Gardens (Guitart et al., 2012, p.364-373)	Serve as educational spaces where community members can learn about agriculture, nutrition, and sustainability, fostering social cohesion and environmental stewardship
Urban Agriculture Initiatives (Pearson et al., 2010, p.7-19)	Promote local food production and food security in urban areas, providing educational opportunities in gardening, nutrition, and entrepreneurship

Challenges and Opportunities

While these methods offer significant benefits, they also present challenges:

Digital Infrastructure and Competencies (Zotti, 2022, p.79-89)	The shift to online learning exposed disparities in digital readiness, necessitating increased investment in digital education
Cultural Sensitivity (Mead et al, 2023, p.23-37)	Developing inclusive educational materials is crucial. For example, addressing language diversity was essential in the success of nutrition education for refugees
Sustainability and Funding (Guitart et al., 2012, p.364-373)	Ensuring the long-term sustainability and securing funding for community-based and digital initiatives remain ongoing challenges

2.2.4 Critical Review from Sociological, Education, and Food Sector Perspectives

Considerations for Programme Design

Designing food-based educational programmes requires careful consideration of various sociological, pedagogical, and organisational factors to ensure they are effective and inclusive. **One primary consideration is to avoid reinforcing stereotypes and existing social inequalities.** Programmes must integrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of participants to ensure cultural sensitivity and relevance. Mead et al. (2023, p.23-37) found that using multilingual materials improved engagement and relevance for diverse groups, demonstrating the importance of addressing language barriers in educational settings. Furthermore, **an inclusive curriculum that respects and celebrates all cultural contributions is essential to prevent perpetuating existing social inequalities.** This approach validates the diverse food traditions and practices of all participants, promoting a sense of belonging and respect.

From a pedagogical perspective, active learning strategies such as hands-on activities and experiential learning have proven to be highly effective. Such methods engage students more deeply, making learning more relevant and memorable. **Integrating interdisciplinary teaching, which combines subjects like science, maths, and social studies into food education, provides a holistic learning experience.** This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches academic learning but also helps students understand the broader implications of food in society, including issues of sustainability, health, and cultural practices.

Organisational challenges also need to be addressed to ensure the success of food-based programmes. Adequate infrastructure, such as kitchens and gardens, is essential, and securing funding to maintain these resources is a common challenge. **Schools and community programmes often struggle to secure consistent support, which is critical for the sustainability of these initiatives.** Furthermore, **teachers require specialised training to effectively deliver food-based education.** This includes understanding nutritional science, cultural food practices, and pedagogical strategies. **Continuous professional development, including workshops, certifications, and collaborative projects with nutritionists and community leaders, is crucial.** Engaging local chefs, farmers, and food experts can also enhance the

educational experience by bringing practical expertise and real-world perspectives into the classroom.

Despite the benefits, **food-based programmes face several challenges and critical positions. One significant risk is the potential reinforcement of social inequalities.** Ensuring equitable access and cultural appropriateness is crucial to avoid excluding low-income or marginalised groups. Missteps in these areas can lead to the alienation of participants and reinforce existing social divides. For instance, Murphy (2019, p.325-345) emphasises the importance of designing culturally appropriate and sensitive programmes to prevent alienation of participants, particularly in diverse communities such as those involving asylum seekers and refugees.

Pedagogical challenges include **developing a curriculum that balances educational goals with practical food skills, which requires collaboration across disciplines and continuous adaptation.** Additionally, measuring the impact of food-based education on student outcomes is complex and requires innovative assessment methods. Traditional assessment tools may not capture the full range of skills and knowledge gained through hands-on, experiential learning. **Innovative assessment methods, such as portfolios, project-based assessments, and reflective journals, can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning.**

Organisational and logistical issues such as resource allocation and sustainability are constant challenges. Ensuring sufficient resources, including funding, facilities, and materials, is critical. The long-term sustainability of these initiatives depends on continuous funding, community support, and policy backing. **Engaging stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, and non-profit organisations, can provide the necessary support and resources to sustain these programmes over time.**

Furthermore, **there is a need for more comprehensive training programmes for educators to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective food-based education. Leveraging community resources and expertise can enhance programme delivery but requires effective coordination and partnership.** For example, involving community leaders and local experts in the planning and implementation of food education programmes can provide valuable insights and resources, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programmes.

Food-based educational programmes hold significant promise for enhancing learning and promoting inclusivity. However, they must be carefully designed to address sociological, pedagogical, and organisational challenges. By incorporating cultural sensitivity, active learning strategies, and robust organisational support, these programmes can effectively bridge educational gaps and foster lifelong learning. **Integrating these approaches into outreach education can create inclusive and dynamic learning environments that support diverse populations.**

03

**Pedagogical Approach:
Future directions of the
Food Includes approach
for educational
outreach and
community building**

3.1 Principles and Objectives

Food as a seeking pedagogy leverages the universal nature of food to engage and educate learners from diverse backgrounds, particularly those who are marginalised or hard to reach. This approach is rooted in experiential learning theory, which emphasises learning through direct experience and reflection, thus fostering deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. By integrating food-related activities into educational frameworks, this pedagogy aims to create inclusive, dynamic learning environments that not only convey academic knowledge but also cultivate essential life skills.

Food-based pedagogy utilises the preparation, sharing, and consumption of food as educational tools. These activities can teach a wide range of subjects, including science (through the chemistry of cooking), mathematics (through measurements and proportions), history (through the exploration of food origins and cultural significance), and social studies (through the study of food systems and sustainability). The tangible, sensory nature of food makes these lessons more engaging and memorable, helping to bridge the gap between abstract concepts and practical application.

Moreover, food serves as a powerful medium for cultural exchange and social bonding. In diverse educational settings, food-related activities can promote intercultural understanding and respect by allowing learners to share their culinary traditions and stories. This fosters a sense of community and belonging, which is particularly important for marginalised groups such as migrants and refugees. Research by Murphy (2019, p.325-345) highlights how food initiatives led by asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland have successfully built empathy and solidarity while providing valuable integration and labour opportunities.

The pedagogical framework of food as a seeking pedagogy also supports the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners are encouraged to explore the broader implications of food production and consumption, including issues of sustainability, ethics, and health. For instance, discussions on food waste can lead to broader conversations about environmental responsibility, while learning about nutritional values can foster healthier lifestyle choices. This holistic approach not only enriches academic learning but also equips learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and contribute to a complex, interconnected world.

Furthermore, food-based pedagogy addresses multiple dimensions of learning, catering to different learning styles and needs. Visual learners benefit from the colourful presentation of dishes and recipe illustrations, auditory learners from the discussions and instructions, and kinesthetic learners from the hands-on experience of cooking and tasting. This adaptability makes food an effective and inclusive educational tool, capable of engaging a wide spectrum of learners.

3.1.1 Objectives

The Food Includes project aims to harness the power of food to create inclusive and effective educational environments. The objectives of this project are to provide educators with innovative tools and methodologies, develop comprehensive resources, enhance learner engagement, and promote sustainability within educational practices.

A primary objective is to empower adult educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to utilise food as a medium for inclusive pedagogy. This involves training educators in both the theoretical foundations and practical applications of food-based learning. Research by Murphy (2019, p.325-345) underscores the importance of culturally sensitive educational practices that avoid reinforcing stereotypes and social inequalities. By equipping educators with these insights, the project aims to foster an environment where all learners feel valued and included.

Another crucial objective is the creation and dissemination of Open Educational Resources (OERs) tailored to diverse educational settings. These resources will cover various aspects of food-based learning, including the organisation of food festivals and the establishment of food cooperatives. As highlighted by Hernandez et al. (2021, p.333-341), effective educational materials must be adaptable and inclusive to address the diverse needs of learners. The development of these resources ensures that educators have access to high-quality, adaptable tools that can be integrated into their teaching practices.

The project seeks to engage disadvantaged learners across multiple countries in food-related educational activities. This objective is rooted in the belief that experiential learning, such as that provided through food-based activities, can significantly enhance learner engagement and improve educational outcomes. Research by Sepp and Höijer (2016, p.1-8) has demonstrated that integrating food into educational activities can foster a positive learning environment and support interdisciplinary learning, making education more relevant and engaging for learners.

Ensuring the long-term use and evolution of the Food Includes approach is a key objective. This involves disseminating project results and fostering collaboration among HEIs, Adult and Continuing Education Centres, Education Networks, EU-wide Education Networks to promote the sustainability and scalability of food-based educational practices. As Guitart et al. (2012, p. 364-373) note, the sustainability of educational initiatives is often dependent on continuous support and resource allocation. By promoting sustainable practices, the project aims to ensure that the benefits of food-based pedagogy are enduring and far-reaching.

3.1.2 Added Value at a European Level

The Food Includes project offers significant added value at the European level, addressing multiple EU priorities. By fostering transnational collaboration, the project accelerates the integration of refugees and marginalised individuals into education systems, aligning with the EU's emphasis on inclusion. Additionally, the project embodies European values of intercultural education and inclusion through practical, food-based activities, facilitating a shift from theoretical understanding to actionable teaching practices.

Moreover, the project contributes to the European Skills Agenda by providing evidence-based research and practical resources that can be utilised across various educational contexts. This supports a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and competence-based Adult Education, enhancing the overall quality and accessibility of educational opportunities in Europe.

Target Group

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the target groups of the Food Includes project are carefully selected to maximise impact and inclusivity:

Direct Target Groups	Indirect Target Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marginalised Adults• Adult Educators and Teachers (of HEIs, Adult Education and Continuing Education Centres, non-profit Organisations)• Heads of Adult Education Centres and Departments• Education Networks and Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers and Education Scientists• Educators from our own institutions• Adult and Continuing Education Centers across Europe• Civil Society (Non-profit Organisations)• Local and Regional Authorities• Media

The Food Includes project aims to create a ripple effect, enhancing the capacity of educators, improving learning experiences for marginalised adults, and contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive European educational landscape.

3.2 Implementation Strategy

3.2.1 Implementation Strategy for the Food Includes Project

The Food Includes Project aims to enhance inclusivity in Adult Education by integrating food-based pedagogy. This strategy outlines the step-by-step progression of the project, beginning with the development of foundational knowledge through a starter kit, followed by the creation of Open Educational Resources (OERs) for educators, and culminating in the implementation and evaluation phases. Each stage is designed to ensure educational soundness and effectiveness in achieving the project's objectives.

Stage 1: Development of the Starter Kit

Objective: To create a comprehensive starter kit that serves as the foundational knowledge base for the Food Includes Project.

Activities:

1. **Literature Review:** Conduct an extensive review of existing research on food-based pedagogy, inclusion in education, and related fields to inform the starter kit content. This will include analysing academic articles, case studies, and reports to gather a broad understanding of effective practices and theoretical underpinnings.
2. **Content Development:** Develop the starter kit materials, including theoretical foundations, practical applications, case studies, and best practices. This will include contributions from experts in education, sociology, and the food sector. Key elements will be:
 - **Theoretical Foundations:** Summarise the core theories and principles underpinning food-based pedagogy. Highlight that "food is a language in its own" – a universal teacher that

transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, fostering community and inclusivity.

- **Practical Applications:** Provide practical guidance on how to implement food-based activities in educational settings, emphasising cost-effective methods and the use of simple, accessible ingredients and tools. This will highlight that food-based activities need not be expensive and can be implemented with minimal resources.
- **Case Studies:** Include detailed case studies highlighting successful implementations of food-based pedagogy from various contexts. For example, the Cooking for Freedom initiative and the Sligo Global Kitchen from Murphy (2019), which illustrate how food projects can foster community and integration.
- **Best Practices:** Outline best practices derived from the literature review and case studies to guide educators.
- **Digital Tools:** Identify and integrate digital tools that support food-based learning, such as interactive recipe apps, virtual cooking classes, and online collaboration platforms. Tools like Padlet for collaborative idea sharing, Zoom for virtual workshops, and educational apps such as Kahoot! for interactive quizzes can be included to enhance engagement.

3. **Pilot Testing:** Test the starter kit with a small group of educators to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments. This pilot phase will involve:

- **Feedback Collection:** Use surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather comprehensive feedback from educators regarding the usability, relevance, and effectiveness of the starter kit.
- **Revisions:** Based on the feedback, make necessary adjustments to improve the content and delivery of the starter kit. This iterative process ensures that the materials are practical, user-friendly, and effective in diverse educational settings.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive, well-researched starter kit that provides educators with the foundational knowledge needed to implement food-based pedagogy effectively.
- Improved understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of using food as an educational tool.

Stage 2: Creation of Open Educational Resources (OERs)

Objective: To develop a range of Open Educational Resources based on the foundational knowledge provided in the starter kit, tailored for use by educators.

Activities:

1. **Identify Key Topics:** Based on the starter kit, identify key topics and areas where OERs can provide the most value. This could include themes such as nutrition education, cultural food practices, food sustainability, and the integration of food into various subjects like science, maths, and social studies.
2. **Resource Development:** Create a variety of OERs to support educators in delivering food-based learning. These resources will include:
 - **Lesson Plans:** Detailed plans for incorporating food-related activities into the curriculum, including objectives, materials needed, step-by-step instructions, and assessment criteria. These plans will be designed to be flexible and adaptable to different educational contexts, emphasising that food-based activities can be implemented with minimal resources.

Highlighting the benefits and cost-effectiveness of simple food activities can encourage broader adoption.

- **Instructional Videos:** Short, engaging videos demonstrating food-related activities, cooking techniques, and cultural food practices. These videos will serve as visual aids to enhance understanding and provide a practical example for educators and learners.
 - **Interactive Activities:** Develop interactive, hands-on activities that engage learners in food-based learning. This could include virtual cooking classes, interactive quizzes, and collaborative projects such as creating a community garden or organising a food festival. Highlight the simplicity of some activities, such as cooking with basic ingredients, which do not require expensive equipment.
 - **Assessment Tools:** Provide tools to assess the effectiveness of food-based learning activities. This will include rubrics, reflection prompts, and project-based assessments that allow educators to evaluate both the process and outcomes of learning.
3. **Integration of Digital Tools:** Ensure the OERs incorporate digital tools that facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences. This includes platforms for virtual collaboration, digital storytelling tools, and apps for interactive learning.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive suite of high-quality, adaptable educational resources that educators can use to implement food-based learning activities.
- Enhanced capacity of educators to deliver inclusive and engaging educational experiences.
- Increased learner engagement and improved educational outcomes through interactive and practical learning activities.

Stage 3: Implementation Phase

Objective: To implement the developed resources in various educational settings and to monitor and support their usage.

Activities:

1. **Training and Workshops:** Organise training sessions and workshops for educators to introduce them to the starter kit and OERs, demonstrating how to use them effectively in their teaching practice. Emphasise the accessibility and cost-effectiveness of the approach, showing that food-based activities can be implemented with minimal resources.
2. **Resource Distribution:** Distribute the starter kit and OERs to participating educational institutions, community groups, and other stakeholders. Highlight the simplicity and practicality of the resources, encouraging broad adoption even in resource-constrained settings.
3. **Support and Mentorship:** Provide ongoing support and mentorship to educators as they integrate the resources into their teaching. Establish a community of practice where educators can share experiences, challenges, and successes. Encourage the use of community resources, such as renting kitchens in schools or restaurants, to ensure a decent standard of infrastructure.

Outcomes:

- Successful integration of food-based pedagogy in a variety of educational settings.
- Enhanced educator confidence and competence in using the developed resources.

Stage 4: Evaluation and Reflection

Objective: To critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Food Includes approach in increasing the take-up and inclusiveness of Adult Education.

Activities:

1. **Data Collection:** Collect quantitative and qualitative data on the implementation process, including educator feedback, learner engagement, and educational outcomes.
2. **Analysis and Reporting:** Analyse the collected data to assess the impact of the project on inclusivity and educational outcomes. Prepare detailed reports highlighting key findings, challenges, and recommendations.
3. **Dissemination:** Share the evaluation findings with stakeholders, of Adult Education Centres, Higher Education Institutions, VET institutions, civil society organisations, and local authorities. Use the insights gained to refine the resources and approaches for future iterations.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive evaluation of the Food Includes project, providing evidence of its impact on inclusivity in Adult Education.
- Insights and recommendations for improving the integration of food-based pedagogy in educational practice.

3.2.2 Implementation Strategy for the Food Includes Project

The Food Includes project aims to reach various target groups through its inclusive approach. The project's activities and resources are designed to engage marginalised adults, including ethnic minorities, migrants, and refugees, as well as adult educators and community leaders.

Why Food is Good for Them:

- **Universal Language:** Food is a universal language that can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, making it an effective tool for engaging diverse populations.
- **Community Building:** Food-based activities foster a sense of community and belonging, which is particularly beneficial for marginalised groups who may feel isolated.
- **Practical Skills:** Learning through food involves practical, hands-on activities that develop essential life skills, such as cooking, nutrition, and sustainability.

3.2.3 Why we are taking this approach?

Food-based pedagogy is a powerful tool for creating inclusive and engaging educational environments. Food is a universal experience, making it an ideal medium to bring together diverse groups. When learners share their food traditions, it fosters pride in their cultural identity and ensures that everyone, including marginalised groups like migrants and refugees, feels included.

This approach also makes learning more engaging. The multisensory experience of food—its sight, smell, taste, and touch—helps to make abstract concepts tangible and memorable. Activities like measuring ingredients for a recipe not only enhance understanding but also encourage teamwork and communication, which are particularly beneficial for those who may have had negative experiences with traditional education. Food-based pedagogy supports holistic development by integrating cognitive, social, and emotional learning. It deepens understanding of subjects like science and maths, while also fostering empathy, cultural awareness, and emotional resilience through communal food activities.

Additionally, this approach teaches practical skills such as cooking, nutrition, and food safety, which are essential for personal well-being and can enhance employability. For instance, a refugee learning to cook local dishes might gain employment in a restaurant, aiding in their community integration. Beyond employability, the approach should also foster inclusion in the education system, promote lifelong learning, and support personal development.

Food also has a unique ability to foster community and social integration. Food-related activities create opportunities for cultural exchange and community building, which is especially important for those who face social isolation, such as migrants and refugees.

Finally, food-based pedagogy is cost-effective and accessible. It requires minimal resources, making it an affordable option for institutions with limited budgets. By utilising community resources like school kitchens or local restaurants, we can further enhance the learning experience while keeping costs low, ensuring that quality education is available to all learners, regardless of their economic background.

3.3 Expected Outcomes and Impact on Sustainability/Climate Friendly Attitudes

The Food Includes Project aims not only to enhance educational inclusivity but also to foster sustainable practices and climate-friendly attitudes among participants. By integrating food-based pedagogy into Adult Education, the project promotes a deeper understanding of the environmental impact of food choices and encourages sustainable behaviours. This section outlines the expected outcomes of the project and its impact on fostering sustainability and climate-friendly attitudes.

Expected Outcomes	Details
Increased Awareness of Sustainable Food Practices	<p>Sustainable Agriculture: Understanding sustainable farming practices like organic farming and permaculture (Reganold & Wachter, 2016, p.1522).</p> <p>Local and Seasonal Foods: Promoting local and seasonal produce to reduce carbon footprints (Weber & Matthews, 2008, p.3508-3513).</p> <p>Food Waste Reduction: Teaching strategies to minimize food waste (Gustavsson et al., 2011, p.1-38).</p>
Adoption of Climate-Friendly Diets	<p>Plant-Based Diets: Encouraging plant-based diets with lower environmental impact. (Tilman & Clark, 2014, p.518-522).</p> <p>Sustainable Seafood: Promoting sustainably</p>

	<p>sourced seafood (Jacquet et al., 2010, p.45-56).</p> <p>Reduced Meat Consumption: Highlighting benefits of reducing meat consumption (Stehfest et al., 2009, p.83-102).</p>
Enhanced Community Engagement and Social Cohesion	<p>Foster Social Interaction: Encouraging collaboration through community gardens and food festivals (Kingsley & Townsend, 2006, p.525-537).</p> <p>Promote Local Economies: Supporting local farmers and reducing food distribution impact (Marsden et al., 2000, p.424-438).</p>
Improved Personal and Community Health	<p>Nutritional Education: Providing knowledge about balanced diets (Lobstein et al., 2015, p.2510-2520).</p> <p>Access to Fresh Produce: Increasing access to fresh, locally grown produce (Sage, 2012).</p>
Impact on Sustainability and Climate-Friendly Attitudes	<p>Long-Term Behavioral Change: Instilling lasting sustainability practices (Schultz, 2014, p.107-117).</p> <p>Educational Ripple Effect: Creating a multiplier effect through educated educators. (Wals et al., 2014, p.583-584).</p> <p>Policy Influence and Advocacy: Influencing local and regional policies (Sterling, 2010, p.17-33).</p> <p>Resource Efficiency and Waste Reduction: Teaching efficient resource use and waste reduction (Postel, 2000, p.941; Lundie & Peters, 2005, p.275-286).</p> <p>Enhanced Environmental Stewardship: Fostering environmental responsibility among participants (Pretty, 2008, p.941-948).</p>

04

Collection of Good Practices of Food Programmes in Adult Education

4.1 Methodological and Empirical Base

The methodological framework for this section integrates both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of food-based programmes in Adult Education and their role in promoting social inclusion. We will employ a multi-case study design, which allows for a comparative analysis across a variety of educational settings and contexts, capturing the complexity and diversity of these programmes. This approach enables us to identify common patterns as well as distinctive features, providing rich insights into how food is used as a pedagogical tool.

4.1.1 Qualitative Approach

The qualitative component of this study was driven by **semi-structured interviews** and consultations with a broad array of stakeholders, including adult educators, social inclusion experts, and participants involved in food-based educational programmes. This method allowed us to explore the lived experiences, reflections, and insights of individuals with direct involvement in these programmes. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also enabled us to capture the nuances of how these programmes operate and the challenges and successes they encounter in different contexts.

Stakeholders were selected based on their expertise and involvement in Adult Education or social inclusion initiatives. Key participants included:

- **Experts in adult learning and education sciences**, many of whom contributed to the design and development of food-based educational programmes. These individuals, drawn from a range of nationalities and public sector institutions at the European, national, and regional levels, provided essential input on how food could complement traditional adult education methods. Their contributions were invaluable in grounding the study in solid academic theory while also ensuring practical relevance to the pedagogical aims of adult education.
- **Social Inclusion specialists**, who offered real-world insights into how food programmes can serve as effective tools for reaching marginalised or socially excluded groups. These experts provided input on the ways in which food could act as a bridge, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering community cohesion and helping participants develop practical skills that promote both personal and social empowerment.

Interviews focused on:

- The effectiveness of using food as a pedagogical tool to teach life skills and promote social inclusion
- The role of food-based programmes in fostering community cohesion and addressing the needs of marginalised individuals
- The integration of food-related activities with traditional Adult Education methods to enhance learners' engagement and outcomes

We also reviewed programme documentation and conducted participation observation, where possible, to contextualise the findings from interviews. Observational data provided additional insights into the learning environment, group dynamics and informal learning that occurred through food preparation and communal activities.

4.1.2 Quantitative Approach

The quantitative data for this study was gathered through extensive **desk research**. We analysed secondary data from a variety of institutional and governmental sources, programme evaluations, and academic literature. This approach allowed us to gather and synthesise a large body of data related to participant outcomes, programme effectiveness, and the broader social impact of food-based education initiatives.

Our desk research focused on analysing measurable outcomes related to:

- **Skills acquisition**, specifically examining how food programmes helped participants develop both food-related skills (e.g., cooking, nutrition, food hygiene) and broader life skills (e.g., budgeting, communication, teamwork). The data we reviewed from programme reports showed strong evidence of skill development in these areas, with many programmes offering pathways into employment, particularly in the hospitality and catering industries.
- **Engagement and participation** rates, using data from institutional reports to examine participant retention and satisfaction levels. Many programmes have been successful in maintaining high levels of engagement, particularly due to the practical, hands-on nature of food-based activities, which tend to attract learners who may be disengaged from more traditional forms of education. The immersive and collaborative aspects of these programmes often contribute to their effectiveness in retaining learners over time.
- **Social outcomes** were also a key area of focus, particularly the extent to which food-based programmes promoted social inclusion. Through desk research, we reviewed quantitative data on how these programmes reduced social isolation, built community networks, and fostered intercultural dialogue among participants from diverse backgrounds. The data consistently showed that food-based education serves as a powerful vehicle for social interaction, often acting as a bridge between different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups.

This desk research provided a comprehensive and essential quantitative foundation for understanding how food-based educational programmes operate and achieve their objectives across a variety of social, cultural, and institutional contexts. By systematically reviewing data from diverse sources, this research not only highlighted key operational mechanisms—such as participant demographics, programme delivery methods, and funding opportunities—but also offered robust, evidence-based insights into the wider social and educational impacts of these initiatives. These impacts included fostering community engagement, enhancing practical skills development, reducing social isolation, and contributing to learners' personal and professional growth. Furthermore, this evidence enabled us to make comparisons across different case studies, revealing how specific elements of food pedagogy can be adapted to meet the unique needs of diverse learner populations, thereby reinforcing the broader role of food-based education in promoting social inclusion and lifelong learning.

4.1.3 The Collection of Good Practices

The identification and documentation of **Good Practices** was a critical component of the research. Through consultations, interviews, and desk research, we collected and analysed cases where food-based educational programmes have been particularly effective in promoting social inclusion and competence development. These programmes were chosen based on several key criteria, including their innovative use of food as a pedagogical tool, their focus on fostering community engagement, and their demonstrated impact on participants' social and practical skills.

Each case study was selected for its potential to serve as a model for other educational initiatives. In

documenting these Good Practices, we paid close attention to:

- The **pedagogical approaches** employed, particularly how food was integrated into the learning process to teach both practical skills (such as food preparation and nutrition) and life skills (such as communication, teamwork, and financial management). The case studies highlighted the value of experiential learning, where participants could apply their knowledge in real-life contexts, leading to more meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.
- The **social impact** of each programme, focusing on how food-based education fosters social cohesion, reduces feelings of isolation, and promotes intercultural exchange. Many programmes used food not only as a tool for learning but also as a medium for bringing people together, helping to build strong, inclusive communities where participants felt supported and empowered.
- The **sustainability and scalability** of these practices, assessing the potential for these programmes to be adapted and replicated in other contexts. This aspect of the research was particularly important for developing the Starter Kit, as it will allow educators and institutions across Europe to draw on proven methods and practices when designing their own food-based education initiatives.

4.1.4 The Collection of Good Practices

A critical strength of this research lies in its triangulation of data from multiple sources. By combining qualitative insights from interviews and observations with quantitative findings from desk research, we were able to cross-validate our results, ensuring that our conclusions are both reliable and robust.

For the **qualitative data**, we employed **thematic analysis** to identify key themes and patterns across the case studies. The interviews and observations were coded and analysed to highlight recurring issues related to programme design, participant engagement, and the social benefits of food-based education. This analysis revealed important insights into the challenges faced by these programmes, such as securing funding and maintaining participant engagement, as well as the strategies used to overcome these obstacles.

The **quantitative data** from desk research was analysed using **descriptive statistics**, which provided a clear picture of the outcomes associated with these programmes. By summarising trends in skills acquisition, social inclusion, and participant retention, we were able to provide a detailed understanding of the effectiveness of food-based education in achieving both educational and social goals.

4.1.5 Empirical Base

The empirical foundation of this research is deeply interdisciplinary, drawing from a range of academic fields, including food education, adult learning theories, experiential learning, and community education, each contributing unique perspectives on how food can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool. By integrating these fields, the study seeks to explore the multifaceted role of food-based educational programmes in promoting social inclusion, skill development, and community cohesion.

Food Education

In the realm of food education, this study builds on a substantial body of research concerning **food literacy**,

nutrition education, and the broader socio-cultural significance of food in fostering individual and collective wellbeing. Scholars such as Vidgen and Gallegos (2014, p.59) define *food literacy* as the interrelated knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to plan, manage, select, prepare, and eat foods that meet personal and sociocultural needs. Food literacy is thus not only about practical competencies in food preparation but also involves critical understanding of food systems and their social, environmental, and health-related implications (Cullen et al., 2015, p.140).

Moreover, nutrition education programmes, such as those studied by Contento (2007), highlight the link between food education and public health, particularly in empowering individuals from marginalised or low-income communities to make informed dietary choices that can significantly improve their health outcomes. This body of work underscores that food education transcends the mere teaching of skills; it is fundamentally about fostering a sense of empowerment and agency among learners (Caraher & Coveney, 2004, p.591). By providing learners with the knowledge and tools to make decisions about their own nutrition and food-related practices, these programmes can help individuals take control of their own wellbeing, which is particularly important for those who may lack access to conventional education or who have experienced social exclusion.

Adult Learning Theories

The study is theoretically grounded in the principles of **andragogy**, as articulated by Malcolm Knowles (1980), who posited that adult learners are fundamentally different from younger students in their need for self-direction and their desire to apply learning to real-life contexts. Knowles argued that adults bring a wealth of life experiences to the learning process, which should be leveraged to facilitate more meaningful and relevant educational experiences. Food-based education, with its inherently practical nature, aligns with this theoretical framework by offering learners the opportunity to engage in **self-directed, experiential learning** that is directly applicable to their daily lives.

Food programmes enable participants to learn in a hands-on environment where they can apply their existing knowledge while acquiring new skills. This type of learning can be particularly beneficial in Adult Education settings, where participants often seek education that is practical, immediate, and applicable to their personal or professional contexts (Merriam, 2001). As Jarvis (2004) has suggested, adult learning is often motivated by the need to solve problems or navigate life transitions, making food programmes an ideal context for fostering **problem-solving skills** and facilitating personal development through learning-by-doing.

Furthermore, the concept of **transformative learning**, first introduced by Mezirow (1991), plays a crucial role in this study. Transformative learning refers to the process by which individuals critically examine their assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews, potentially leading to a shift in their perspectives and behaviour. Food-based educational programmes, particularly those targeting socially excluded individuals, often lead to profound personal transformations by providing participants with new skills, knowledge, and a sense of agency that can reshape how they view themselves and their place within society. Mezirow's theory suggests that such shifts are more likely to occur in contexts that encourage reflection and critical discourse, both of which are central to many food programmes that emphasise not only cooking or gardening skills but also discussions around food security, sustainability, and cultural identity.

Experiential Learning

The concept of **experiential learning**, most prominently developed by David Kolb (1984, p.38), is integral to the study's empirical framework. Kolb's model emphasises the importance of learning through direct

experience, wherein learners progress through a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Food-based education provides an ideal setting for this type of learning, as it requires participants to engage in practical, hands-on activities such as cooking, growing food, or planning meals, which are followed by reflective discussions that connect these experiences to broader educational goals.

Kolb's theory highlights how **active experimentation**—where learners apply what they have learned to new situations—can lead to deeper understanding and skill mastery. For instance, in food programmes, participants might experiment with new recipes, adapt their cooking techniques based on feedback, or apply nutrition knowledge in personal meal planning. This cycle of action and reflection is not only vital for skill acquisition but also for fostering critical thinking and adaptability, qualities that are essential for adult learners who must navigate complex social and economic environments (Kolb & Fry, 1975, p.89). Additionally, as Seaman (2008, p.3-18) notes, experiential learning in group settings, such as cooking together, can foster social learning, where participants learn from one another's experiences, thereby enhancing both individual and collective learning outcomes.

Community Education and Social Inclusion

Finally, the study draws heavily from research in **community education** and **social inclusion**, fields that emphasise the role of education in addressing societal inequalities and fostering a sense of belonging. Food programmes, particularly those targeted at socially excluded groups, can serve as powerful vehicles for **intercultural dialogue** and **community-building**, as they create spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to share, learn, and connect over a common activity (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010, p.209-224).

Food, as a universal human need, can act as a **social leveller**, breaking down barriers between people of different social, economic, or cultural backgrounds. This aligns with Freire's (1970) theory of **critical pedagogy**, which advocates for education that is grounded in the lived experiences of learners and oriented towards social justice. By linking educational activities to real-life social needs, food-based programmes can create opportunities for participants to build social capital, develop networks, and engage in **active citizenship** (Putnam, 2000).

Moreover, **social inclusion** research has demonstrated the value of programmes that offer not only practical skills but also emotional and social support. Such programmes often act as a bridge, connecting socially isolated individuals to broader community resources and support networks. In this way, food programmes can play a dual role—simultaneously providing valuable education and fostering **social cohesion** (Burns et al., 2004, p. 30-45). Through communal activities like cooking and eating, participants often form meaningful relationships, which can reduce feelings of isolation and marginalisation, particularly for individuals who may be excluded from other forms of social participation.

By synthesising insights from various academic disciplines, this research demonstrates how food-based education can be effectively leveraged to promote both individual skill development and social inclusion. The combination of practical, hands-on learning with critical reflection and community engagement creates a holistic and impactful approach to adult education. These programmes not only equip participants with essential life skills but also foster a sense of belonging and empowerment, bridging personal growth with broader societal needs.

4.2 Overview of Case Studies

Our collection of case studies provides a rich and diverse look at how food-based education programmes have been implemented across Europe, with the primary focus on fostering social inclusion, enhancing employability and promoting community cohesion. These initiatives were developed in response to a growing recognition of the barriers faced by marginalised groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, in accessing educational and employment opportunities.

The participants in these programmes represent a wide range of demographic profiles, encompassing different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. In many cases, the participants are vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and the elderly, who have been displaced due to conflict, as in the case of Ukrainian refugees engaged in the **Career Plus** programme in Poland. Others include migrant women from various regions who participate in projects like **3 Kitchens**, which targets those struggling with unemployment and economic insecurity in the European Union.

These participants often face significant challenges when adapting to their new environments. Common barriers include language difficulties, limited recognition of prior skills, high unemployment rates, and isolation from local communities. For instance, many women in the **3 Kitchens project** have found themselves deskilled upon migration, unable to secure employment despite retaining valuable competencies in areas such as cooking. Similarly, in the **Comfrey Project** in the UK, refugees and asylum seekers grapple with trauma, social isolation, and cultural dislocation. This project uses therapeutic gardening as a means to build community, improve mental well-being, and develop practical skills.

Across all case studies, the programmes are designed to integrate food as a central tool for education and social interaction. In rural and urban settings alike, food-based activities such as horticulture, communal cooking, and nutrition workshops serve as entry points for participants to engage with their new communities and acquire transferable skills. Programmes like the **Altza Baratza** vegetable garden in Spain focus on sustainable food production while promoting environmental stewardship and social inclusion. Others, like the **FOOD-AWARE** project, aim to educate participants about responsible food consumption, emphasising environmental sustainability alongside social learning.

Participants' backgrounds, while diverse, share common threads of adversity, including economic hardship, displacement, and a lack of access to formal education. The case studies highlight the role that food can play not only in teaching practical life skills—such as cooking, gardening, or entrepreneurship—but also in promoting intercultural dialogue, reducing social isolation, and fostering a sense of belonging. These programmes offer participants a pathway toward economic independence, enhanced self-esteem, and social integration, all while respecting and celebrating their cultural heritage. The combination of therapeutic, practical, and communal activities helps participants build resilience and adaptability in their new environments. In many cases, these programmes also create opportunities for participants to develop leadership roles, such as mentoring others, managing small projects, or pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. For example, participants in the **Career Plus** programme in Poland have moved on to start their own businesses after learning key skills in culinary arts and group collaboration.

Through food-based pedagogy, these programmes break down barriers between marginalised individuals and their host communities, enabling learners to not only survive but thrive in their new environments. This combination of practical skill-building and social inclusion makes food an effective and transformative medium for Adult Education.

4.3 Findings of the Case Studies

Key Finding	Description
1. Food as a Vehicle for Social Inclusion	Food-related activities, such as communal gardening, cooking classes, and shared meals, proved to be powerful tools for fostering social inclusion. By engaging in these activities, participants from different cultural and social backgrounds were able to interact, share experiences, and build meaningful relationships. This helped reduce social isolation, particularly among refugees and asylum seekers who often feel disconnected from their new communities. The collaborative nature of food activities promoted intercultural dialogue, trust-building, and mutual support, helping to create inclusive environments where participants felt valued and accepted.
2. Skill Development and Empowerment	Beyond teaching basic culinary or gardening skills, the programmes equipped participants with a wide range of practical, transferable skills that increased their employability and personal development. These skills included teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving abilities, all of which are essential in both professional and social settings. Many participants, particularly migrant women and refugees, were able to take on leadership roles within the programmes, mentoring others or managing specific tasks. This not only reinforced their new skills but also boosted their confidence and sense of autonomy, empowering them to pursue further opportunities in the workforce or in entrepreneurial ventures.
3. Mental Health and Well-being Benefits	Food-based education provided significant mental health benefits, particularly for participants who had experienced trauma, social isolation, or stress. Activities such as gardening, cooking, and communal eating fostered a sense of calm, focus, and purpose. Gardening, in particular, was found to be therapeutic, helping participants manage stress and anxiety while providing them with a sense of accomplishment as they nurtured and harvested plants. The social interactions that occurred during shared meals or group projects also contributed to participants' emotional well-being, helping them feel more connected and supported by their peers. These activities often led to improved mental health

	outcomes, including reduced feelings of depression and enhanced emotional resilience.
4. Practical Pathways to Employment	Many of the food-based programmes provided participants with direct pathways to employment by offering training in marketable skills such as culinary arts, food production, and horticulture. For many refugees and migrants, these programmes served as a stepping stone into the labour market, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, catering, and food services. Participants who had previously struggled with unemployment or underemployment gained the skills and confidence necessary to secure jobs, start small businesses, or pursue further education. The hands-on, practical training offered by these programmes helped bridge the gap between their existing skills and the demands of the local job market, making them more competitive candidates for employment.
5. Challenges and Areas for Improvement	Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified across the case studies. A common issue was the financial sustainability of the programmes, many of which relied heavily on external funding, donations, and grants to continue operating. Without stable funding, the long-term viability of these programmes was uncertain. Additionally, some participants faced barriers to accessing training due to costs or logistical issues, such as transportation or language barriers. Another challenge was the varying level of institutional support for immigrants and refugees in different countries. While some programmes benefited from strong community and governmental backing, others struggled to secure the necessary resources and support to reach a wider audience. Ensuring stable funding and greater institutional involvement were highlighted as areas that need improvement for the continued success and scalability of these initiatives.
6. Long-term Community Impact	The food-based education programmes demonstrated lasting positive effects on both individuals and communities. In many cases, the skills, knowledge, and relationships developed through these initiatives extended beyond the formal programmes. Participants continued to engage in food production, gardening, and communal cooking, contributing to the sustainability of local food systems and strengthening community bonds. These activities fostered ongoing social cohesion, as

participants remained involved in their communities, sharing what they had learned and continuing to collaborate on food-related projects. The case studies also showed that food education had the potential to contribute to environmental sustainability by promoting practices such as local food production, waste reduction, and responsible consumption. Over time, these initiatives helped create more resilient communities that were better equipped to address both social and environmental challenges.

05

Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

Food as a pedagogical tool offers a unique and innovative approach to Adult Education, leveraging the universal and essential nature of food to engage learners, promote social integration, and enhance various educational outcomes. The concept of food as pedagogy rests on the understanding that food is more than just sustenance; it is deeply intertwined with culture, identity, and community. By integrating food into education, instructors can create hands-on, experiential learning environments that are both practical and accessible, especially for adult learners who may have faced barriers in traditional education systems.

5.1.1 Food as a Pedagogical Tool

The idea of using food in education is built upon experiential learning theories, particularly the notion of "learning by doing." This approach is highly suitable for Adult Education, where learners often prefer practical, real-world applications of knowledge. Food-related activities such as cooking, gardening, and food preparation offer numerous opportunities for experiential learning. These activities allow learners to engage in tasks that require problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking—skills that are essential both in personal life and the workforce.

From a pedagogical perspective, food provides an interdisciplinary platform where various subjects can be taught. Science lessons can explore the chemistry of cooking, history lessons can delve into the origins of certain dishes, and mathematics can be taught through measuring ingredients. This contextual learning helps adult learners connect abstract academic concepts to their everyday experiences, making education more meaningful and relevant. The sensory and interactive nature of food also helps in engaging learners, particularly those who may have had negative experiences with formal education in the past. By making learning enjoyable and tangible, food serves as a bridge to more formal educational content.

Furthermore, food-based education fosters social and emotional learning by promoting collaboration and communication. When learners cook or share meals together, they build relationships and strengthen social bonds. This aspect of food as pedagogy is particularly important for marginalised groups, such as migrants or refugees, who may face social isolation or cultural barriers. Food allows individuals to share their cultural heritage and personal stories in a non-threatening and welcoming environment, promoting intercultural understanding and social cohesion.

Food-based pedagogy also aligns well with Adult Education goals, such as upskilling and fostering LLL. Engaging in food-related tasks can enhance practical skills, such as budgeting, nutrition, and food safety, all of which are crucial for everyday life and employability. For marginalised adults, in particular, these skills can provide valuable pathways into the labour market, especially in industries such as hospitality, catering, and agriculture. Thus, food as a pedagogical tool not only meets educational objectives but also supports broader social and economic inclusion.

5.1.2 The Food Includes Project

Building on these pedagogical foundations, the "Food Includes" project specifically utilises food as a pedagogical tool to reach excluded learners and promote their inclusion in Adult Education. The project is designed to engage marginalised populations, such as refugees, migrants, and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, who have historically been underserved by traditional education systems. By incorporating food-based learning activities, the project creates accessible and engaging educational

environments that help learners acquire both practical and social skills.

The "Food Includes" project aims to harness the multifaceted nature of food to achieve several key goals. First, it uses food to promote LLL and skill development. Through hands-on activities such as cooking classes, community gardening, and food festivals, participants are given the opportunity to learn in practical, meaningful ways. These activities not only teach essential life skills—such as cooking, food safety, and nutrition—but also foster critical thinking and problem-solving. For instance, learners might engage in activities that involve planning meals on a budget, understanding nutritional values, or managing food waste, all of which have real-world applications.

Second, the project emphasises food's role in social inclusion. Food naturally brings people together, making it an ideal medium for fostering social bonds and building community cohesion. The project creates spaces where marginalised learners can share their cultural backgrounds, break down social barriers, and build networks of support. Activities such as communal cooking and sharing meals enable participants to develop their language skills, exchange cultural knowledge, and feel a sense of belonging. For many participants, these social interactions are crucial for building confidence and breaking out of social isolation.

The "Food Includes" project also addresses the employability of its participants by linking food-based learning to vocational opportunities. Many of the skills learned through food-related activities—such as cooking, food hygiene, and event organisation—are directly transferable to the labour market, particularly in industries like hospitality and catering. The project encourages entrepreneurial thinking by having participants plan and execute food events, such as local food festivals, which help develop their organisational, budgeting, and project management skills. This not only enhances employability but also gives learners practical experience in leadership and teamwork.

Moreover, the project is mindful of the potential barriers that learners may face, including financial constraints, language difficulties, and logistical issues such as transportation or access to resources. To address these challenges, the "Food Includes" project designs its activities to be flexible and accessible, ensuring that even learners with limited resources can participate fully. For instance, the project promotes the use of simple, low-cost ingredients and local produce in its cooking activities, making the learning experience affordable and replicable in learners' daily lives.

06

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6.1 Reference List

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