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TTOP  
Taking to the Top - Adult Educators on the  
Journey

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Recommendations for Implementation of the CF



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## Implementation – an introduction

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Implementation is defined as methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption, application, and sustainability of a training program or practice. They include ‘top down/bottom up,’ ‘push/pull,’ and ‘carrot/stick’ tactics, and typically involve ‘package’ approaches. They may also include methods for provider training and decision support; intervention-specific tool kits, checklists, and algorithms; formal practice protocols and guidelines. The complexity of implementation strategies can vary widely. For instance, some implementation efforts may involve a single component strategy, such as disseminating guidelines. These strategies have been referred to as discrete strategies in the literature, though they have also been called ‘implementation interventions,’ ‘actions,’ and ‘specified activities’. The study of implementation strategies should be approached in a similar fashion as evidence-based interventions (EBIs), for strategies are in fact a type of intervention.

The complexity of implementation strategies poses one of the greatest challenges to their clear description, operational definition, and measurement. Implementation strategies are inherently complex social interventions, as they address multifaceted and complicated processes within interpersonal, organizational, and community contexts. Implementation strategies must be capable of dealing with the contingencies of various adult education systems and sectors and practice settings, as well as the human capital challenge of staff training and support. A second step is to define the implementation strategy conceptually. This is distinct from the operationalization of the strategy. A conceptual definition gives a general sense of what the strategy may involve, and allows the reader to more fully discern whether or not the current usage is consistent with other uses of the term represented in the literature.

Implementation strategies must be described clearly in a manner that ensures that they are discussed at a common level of granularity, are rateable across multiple dimensions, and are readily comparable. In short, they must be defined operationally. This will make implementation strategies more comparable and evaluable, and ultimately make it easier for researchers and other implementation stakeholders to make decisions about which implementation strategies will be most appropriate for their purposes. It will also go a long way toward ensuring that strategies are enacted in the manner intended (*i.e.*, with reliability).

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## Implementation objectives for the TTOP-CF

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Once the TTOP created and piloted the CF, what is essentially needed is to find ways to implement it and effectively revise it in order to make it as user-friendly as possible. The high-level steps in organizing the TTOP-CF recommendations for implementation include the following wide-ranging activities:

- Communicate
- Engage AE staff and outside stakeholders
- Make structural adjustments to the CF
- Create ad-hoc strategic evaluations

Before TTOP partners start this process, and in order to evaluate how the CF can be implemented, they discussed the following issues/questions:

- How committed are the TTOP partners to implement the CF and move it forward?

- How do they plan to communicate the CF?
- Are there sufficient numbers of qualified adult educators and AE staff in partner countries who have a buy-in to drive the CF forward?
- How are the partners going to motivate these people?
- Have the partners identified internal processes that are key to driving the CF forward?
- Are they going to commit resources, and time to support the CF?
- What are the roadblocks to implementing and supporting the CF?
- How will they take available resources and achieve maximum results with them?

As it was discussed among the TTOP partners often overlooked there are the five key components necessary to support implementation: people, resources, structure, systems, and culture. All components must be in place in order to move from creating the plan to activating the plan. For TTOP-CF the components were further discussed and analysed as follows:

### **People**

The first stage of implementing the TTOP-CF is to make sure to have the right people on board. The right people include those adult educators with required competencies and skills that are needed to support the CF.

### **Resources**

TTOP partners need to have sufficient funds and enough time to support implementation. Often, true costs are underestimated or not identified. Additionally, involved stakeholders such as AE providers and adult educators must have enough time to implement what may be additional activities that they aren't currently proposed in the CF.

### **Structure**

Meetings between involved stakeholders and TTOP partners to review the progress of implementation should be scheduled, depending on the level of activity and time frame in the CF.

### **Systems**

It is important to build milestones that must be achieved within a specific time frame for the CF. A scorecard is one tool that could be used for progress tracking and milestones.

### **Culture**

TTOP partners need to support the creation of an environment that connects adult educators to the CF's mission and that makes them feel comfortable. To reinforce the importance of focusing on CF strategy and vision, success could be rewarded through creative positive and negative consequences for achieving or not achieving the CF objectives.

Implementation of the CF in the TTOP context essentially refers to the activities performed according to the suggested plan in order to achieve an overall goal. What this definition implies is that the TTOP approach that is largely reflected on the development of the CF, must also recommend a plan that refers to manageable tasks that partners, team members, AE providers and adult educators can perform to achieve these tasks. Based on this general appreciation, but also on partners' and participants' views in piloting and multiplier events on TTOP-CF, there are **three objectives** that essentially stand out:

**1.** To encourage discussion among TTOP partners and perspective participants/end-users about what 'supporting implementation of a curriculum framework' REALLY means.

2. To have partners consider the ways in which the TTOP curriculum framework can be supported during the implementation stage.
3. To create a constant communication loop (perhaps via a TTOP on-line forum) for all stakeholders involved in all TTOP partners countries.

### **Range of agencies and functions influenced by the TTOP-CF**

Recommended tasks and actions must focus on supporting the implementation of the framework across the adult education system, particularly those mentioned in Table 1. These would most likely be the responsibility of a specially appointed implementation oversight group from the TTOP partners, and could include:

#### ***The actor***

We define ‘actor’ as a stakeholder who actually delivers the CF. A wide range of stakeholders can fill this function, AE administrators, AE programme developers, AE consultants, personnel within an AE organization charged with being ‘implementers,’ providers/support staff, adult educators, and community stakeholders. Some actions such as communication could, arguably, be employed only by certain actors. Yet other actions, such as training, could be employed by actors with experience in the field. Whether certain types of stakeholders are more effective than others in delivering particular actions is an empirical question; however, there is some theoretical and empirical precedent for relying upon individuals who have more credibility with those whose behavior is expected to change.

#### ***The action***

Implementation of CF requires dynamic verb statements that indicate actions, steps or processes, and sequences of behavior. Ideally, these actions are behaviourally defined a priori to allow comparison with what was actually done during the implementation process. Good examples include strategies such as plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles and audit and feedback, wherein the very name indicates the actions involved and the definitions expand upon the actions to be taken.

#### ***Action target***

The complexity of implementation of the CF is also a function of where it is directed or the conceptual ‘targets’ it attempts to impact. For example, targets such as ‘ECTS’ target the policy context, while ‘learning outcomes’ targets front line providers by increasing knowledge and skill, and ‘assessment checklists’ target the clarity of the intervention as well as the providers’ understanding and ability to break down the intervention into more ‘doable’ steps.

#### ***Temporality***

The order or sequence of the CF suggested actions may be critical in some cases. For instance, to boost participants’ motivation to learn new materials in different languages may need to precede other common implementation strategies such as training and supervision.

### ***The implementation outcome affected***

A taxonomy of implementation outcomes may include factors such as acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration and sustainability. Certain activities may target one or more these implementation outcomes. For instance, using consensus meetings to decide which teaching method or which assessment model to implement may be designed to increase the acceptability of the CF from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Training or educational strategies typically target fidelity, while policy strategies likely enhance feasibility and acceptability.

### ***The justification***

Adult education staff should make efforts to provide justification or rationale for the activities and tasks that they use to implement a given intervention. The selection of implementation activities or tasks may be justified by prospective assessments that identify potential needs, barriers, or facilitators—sometimes termed ‘determinants of practice’. While these determinants of practice could be identified through formal assessment processes, they could also be identified using theory or conceptual models, research literature, or more informal approaches such as brainstorming.

Table 1 below illustrates the range of agencies and educational functions which will most likely be influenced in some way by the curriculum framework. This table also illustrates some inter-relationships between some of these areas, such as how syllabuses determine textbook content and standards, and how assessment policy and practice is both influenced by but can also influence syllabuses. What is important to note is that all areas will be influenced to some extent by the contents and requirements of the curriculum framework.



**Table 1. Range of agencies and educational functions which will be influenced by the TTOP-CF**

<b>Domain (what)</b>	<b>Strategy (how)</b>	<b>Implementation team (who)</b>
<b>Actor/s</b>	A key assumption here is that the curriculum framework is being implemented in the adult and community learning sector at institutional level. Consequently the actors will be drawn from the institutions: Managers, Lecturers and support staff, especially those with responsibility for staff development including CPD.	Staff Development Team or Staff Development Officer in the context of an adult and community learning provider.
<b>Action/s</b>	<p>Implementation is seen as a process involving different stages and not as an event. With regard to the curriculum framework, and the context in which it will be implemented, the following key actions can be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select the implementation team – likely to be the staff development team</li> <li>• Develop a communications plan to inform internal stakeholders about the framework and the proposed implementation plan</li> <li>• Align the curriculum framework with the needs of the institution to identify target groups for action</li> <li>• Review structures and function and identify the changes needed (policies, practices, partnerships etc.)</li> <li>• Set up new structures and functions needed</li> <li>• Identify training resources required (financial, human, materials, accommodation etc.)</li> <li>• Formulate a communication plan to inform stakeholders including those outside the implementing organisation</li> <li>• Set up systems for monitoring, reporting and obtaining feedback from participants and stakeholders</li> <li>• Select/recruit first cohort of adult educators</li> <li>• Deliver the curriculum framework in whole or in part as may be required</li> <li>• Obtain feedback from participants and stakeholders</li> <li>• Use feedback to improve implementation and effectiveness</li> </ul>	CPD staff, trainers of adult educators, adult educators.
<b>Target(s) of the Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers/lecturers in the in the adult and community learning sector.</li> <li>• The strategy will be implemented within an institutional context, so the target groups will be selected by the employing organisations based on needs arising out of organisations’ appraisal systems.</li> <li>• If the framework is being delivered by an external training provider and open to the general public, prospective participants will self-select.</li> </ul>	Adult educators, AE staff, policy making staff.
<b>Temporality</b>	This is about the strategic implementation of the curriculum curriculum framework at institutional level, and the actions listed above are in sequential order of execution.	Staff Development Team or Staff Development Officer in the context of an adult and community learning provider.
<b>Implementation outcome(s) affected</b>	The main implementation outcomes are appropriateness of the framework in meeting the needs of the institution and the training needs of adult educators, and adoption of the curriculum framework as a model for the professional development of adult educators, leading to improved outcomes for learners as the ultimate beneficiaries.	Staff Development Team or Staff Development Officer in the context of an adult and community learning provider.
<b>Justification</b>	The approach being advocated reflects the common approach to strategic policy implementation, where policy is implemented in stages. The actions listed earlier broadly reflect the Exploratory, Installation and Implementation stages.	Staff Development Team or Staff Development Officer in the context of an adult and community learning provider.

## **Recommendations on tasks and actions for implementation**

The TTOP-CF can be implemented across the non-formal adult education system. Because the CF may have implications for both policy (in education and perhaps other areas of government) and practice (including, for example, syllabus / standards review and revision, changes to teaching and assessment practice, review of public examinations and new requirements for textbooks), there would normally be demands made on the TTOP consortium to provide support for this implementation. During this stage, the extent to which the requirements of the framework are practical and achievable should be continuously monitored. The recommendations suggested by the TTOP consortium include the following:

### **1. Plans in place for each of the areas to implement the TTOP curriculum framework**

The implementation of the TTOP-CF is framed within the context of adult and community learning, and at institutional level, as the framework is more likely to be implemented by individual institutions, and not within the whole education system. Institutions of adult and community learning will already have existing infrastructures for staff development that will be used to implement the framework and falls within their remit of staff development and CPD. Staff development and CPD policies will already be in place, and a part of the implementation process will be to ensure that the curriculum framework aligns with the needs of the institution. Implementation of the curriculum framework depends on the training provider and the target group. In Estonia most of the adult educators act as adult educators on a part time basis. It means they have a full time professional job in addition to their adult educators' role. In Estonia there is no one definite institution whose task is training of adult educators. There are different providers and the adult educators' training market is free. The current CF can be used for training adult educators of formal and non-formal sector and will help along to raise the quality of teaching.

### **2. Level of resources (both financial and human) available to implement the TTOP curriculum framework**

In many European countries Adult Education Acts refer to the quality of adult educators' operation. These can be considered as a human resources available. In the context of adult and community learning, there will be staff development team responsible for staff development including CPD and would oversee the implementation of the framework. However, not all institutions of adult education, especially the small providers are unlikely to have the capacity or resources to implement the framework. In these situations adult education providers may decide to commission the delivery from external trainers or form some sort of partnership such as a consortium to oversee the implementation on behalf of its members. With regard to financial resources, there would be budgets for staff development including CPD, some of which can be used to deliver the framework, if it was deemed appropriate and they wanted to adopt it for continuing professional development purposes. Financial resources could also include:

- Self-financing
- Financing on a project basis
- Targeted supports

### ***3. Structures (such as committees, working groups and authorized individuals) that would be most effective to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation of the TTOP curriculum framework***

Information on the CF will be passed to all the adult education stakeholders, incl. Ministries (adult & vocational education departments), National Adult Education Council, Adult gymnasiums, vocational training schools, providers of adult education, relevant adult education NGO-s/ umbrella organisations etc.

There are also structures that could be used to deliver the framework effectively. Within the context described earlier, professional bodies representing teachers and lecturers and teachers, awarding bodies and providers of adult education could form a very effective partnership in delivering the framework.

Within this arrangement, the professional body would be responsible overseeing the implementation of the framework, which may also include direct delivery as well as commissioning. The awarding bodies could recognise the learning that could include accreditation, if appropriate. The educational institutions would obviously provide the learners in this arrangement.

Another effective way of implementing the framework would be for training organisations to independently further develop and offer training in the whole framework or modules to the general public to which adult educators can sign up.

### ***4. Methods and tools can be used to support implementation of the TTOP curriculum framework***

The prerequisite of implementing the CF is a broad-based dissemination work performed at different events ( seminars, conferences, workshops) as well as the use of electronic and social media channels, webpages.

In addition, a number of tools and methods can be used to support implementation of the curriculum framework including:

- Networking - networking platforms such as EPALE
- Diagnostic tools
- Issues Trees
- Focus Groups
- Open Educational Resources
- Accrediting/Awarding bodies

### **Support actions to implementation**

While each of the above recommendation areas should develop its own plan, it is often advisable for the group responsible for overseeing the implementation request a copy of these plans and consolidate them into a comprehensive, system-wide implementation strategy and plan. These plans should be practical and achievable, costed and funded, and have realistic timelines.

It may also be helpful for the group to develop a series of brief, practical documents which describe the possible influence of the curriculum framework on individual areas or stakeholder groups, and which describe potential responses to the framework's requirements.

- **Brochures or posters**

Brochures and posters are excellent media for summarizing the main features of the curriculum framework to specific audiences. For example,

- A poster outlining the key messages for adult educators as students could be distributed for display;
- A brochure describing the changes to how adult educators as students might be expected to learn and describing/illustrating new learning dynamics might be distributed to participants; and
- A brochure outlining how the framework will result in a more competent, work-ready adult educators (as this is a priority of the framework) could be distributed to participants.

- **Conferences and other in-service training programs**

- **Seminars and forums**

Information seminars and forums could be targeted to such groups as:

- subject panels;
- syllabi writers; and
- trainers.

- **Meetings of implementation working groups**

It is possible that a range of agencies and ministries whose work is influenced by the framework will benefit from on-going support throughout the implementation period.

Particular attention may need to be given during this stage to assessment policy and practice, including to the national examinations system. Curriculum frameworks often impose very challenging requirements on assessment policy, and can require teachers to make significant changes, both conceptual and practical, to how they conduct assessments in the classroom.

Similarly, the underlying philosophy and principles of the framework must be reflected in the examination system. Non- or only partial alignment of the curriculum with assessment practice can cause significant confusion among teachers and students. Achieving this alignment should be a very high priority for this implementation stage.

Last but not least, the main outcome of these recommendations should be a **full implementation of the curriculum framework**. It is likely that full implementation, particularly the necessary revisions of thematic modules and syllabuses or standards will take several years. It is important that this process be supported in a sustained way.