apricot
for parents

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Project APRICOT:

Attentive parental education for wise being and co-being in changing times

Media literacy program and material for adult educators

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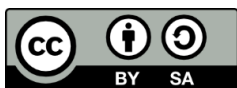
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Chapter 1: Introduction into the project

1. What is the APRICOT?

The present course along with its accompanying materials has been developed within the project entitled "**APRICOT:** Attentive parental education for wise being and co-being in changing times". The project derives from the experience of the consortium members – *Siuolaikiniu didaktiku centras* (Modern Didactics Centre), the lead partner from Lithuania, *Planeta Ciencias* from Spain, ItFeV – *the Institute of Technology-oriented Women's Education* from Germany and *Apricot Training Management* from UK. The experience covers development of materials for critical thinking and media literacy, courses for adult learners, and different kinds of other non-formal activities.

The **APRICOT** project supports teachers who want to assist parents and grandparents to mediate their children's digital literacy and safety when at home. We believe that being able to contribute to and support children in the development of their media literacy is now an essential duty of parents (and grandparents).

Research shows that programs aimed at improving parents' critical thinking and media literacy skills may be a very effective way of positively impacting children's responses to media exposure. Parents (and grandparents) with enhanced media literacy will be better able to monitor their children's behaviour, and model healthy behaviours with regards to their interaction with the media. They will be better able to support and educate them.

There is widespread agreement that media literacy is now a necessary and important skill. It is frequently referenced in educational policy documents. However, **a systematic approach for adult educators is needed** – one that allows them to consistently operationalise what it means to teach media literacy, to educate adult learners in a manner that encourages critical thought, and to develop an organisational culture which supports and promotes media literacy.

To meet this complex challenge, **APRICOT** seeks to promote media literacy as a broad and comprehensive concept, not one limited by technological understanding and skills, but as a concept that embraces all parts of it and serves to:

a. widen personal horizons;
b. strengthen professional competencies;
c. encourage and support intergenerational, intercultural dialogue;
d. empower critical actions and
e. contribute to the democratisation processes in each separate country and at overall EU level.

The partnership developed 3 intellectual outputs:

1. Training course and training materials for adult educators working with parents (and grandparents);
2. Methodology and materials for parents (and grandparents) to be used for work with children (and grandchildren) at home;
3. Collection of the „APRICOT" stories – narrative and digital testimonies of adult educators and parents (and grandparents) about attentive parental education for wise being and co-being in changing times.

For more information about the project and its outcomes please, visit our website at https://apricot4parents.org/.

2. Conceptual underpinnings of the project

Three concepts – media literacy, digital literacy and critical thinking are being brought together to serve the project objectives. The project partners use them not as separate concepts, but as intertwined complementary ones, that build a solid background for educating mindful and responsible personalities. However, each concept has its own definition.

The **APRICOT** project uses the definition of media literacy, proposed by European Political Strategy Centre and widely used by the EU Commission.

1.1 Media literacy (ML)

is the use of fundamental literacy skills for: a) identification, analysis and evaluation of information in different formats and sources; b) as well for use of digital means for different purposes; c) nurturing critical mind with purpose to question, challenge and evaluate meaning of any information in any forms and use it accordingly (*Media Literacy in the 21st Century, European Political Strategy Centre).*

The **APRICOT** project uses the definition of digital literacy media, proposed by UNESCO (2018)

1.2 Digital literacy (DL)

is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It includes competences that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy (A Global Framework of Reference on Digital Literacy Skills for Indicator 4.4.2., p. 6).

In the case of the **APRICOT** project, DL is part of the MD. The partnership just broadens use of DL – not only for professional purposes, but also for daily functioning and personal improvement.

The **APRICOT** uses the definition of critical thinking, agreed upon by experts in the field (Facione et all, 1990).

1.3   Critical thinking (CT)

CT is *purposeful, reflective judgement* which manifests itself in reasoned consideration of evidence, context, methods, standards and conceptualisation in *deciding what to believe or what to do (The Delphi report, 1990).* CT needs a person to be disposed to think critically and practice it as a set of coherent skills.

The **APRICOT** project sees close ***interrelations between ML and CT concepts***: ML without CT is just an empty notion. Critical mind gets a lot of food for critical thought from the media. ML combines the analysis of media messages with the creation of media content, and expands the concept of literacy to include reading and writing media. Application of CT skills and questions to assess both the content and creation of media serve as the foundation of ML.
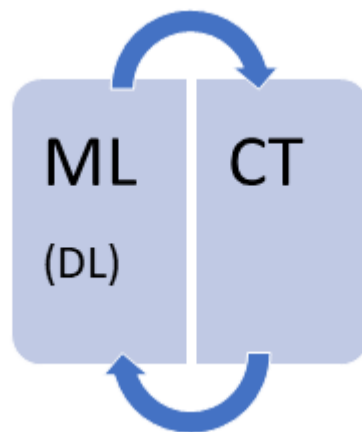
1.4   Critical digital literacy (CDL)

From Critical Thinking to Critical Digital Literacy. Introduction

Internet use is becoming more mobile, with more children going online via their smartphones/tablets and accessing the internet in locations other than in educational settings and the home. This connectivity is affecting our lives in many ways, with increasing take-up of communication services like WhatsApp, more use of streaming and on-demand services, more access to creative opportunities, and YouTube and social media increasingly being used as sources of news and information.

However, this connectivity can also bring downsides, most notably there is considerable international concern about the growth of hateful and manipulative information, 'Intentional Misinformation/ Disinformation' and 'Fake News' content.

Given these downsides, critical thinking skills are of particular interest. Adults and children alike need these skills to question and make judgements about their online environment. They are important skills as they enable us to keep ourselves and others safe, to

understand when we are being advertised to and how our data is being used, and to know when something could be biased, misleading or aiming to manipulate us. Research shows that many people struggle with at least some of these elements.

It is also important to remember that although the internet seems ubiquitous, the online experience is not the same for everyone. There are significant differences, by age and socio-economic group, in the numbers who are online at all, and in the extent to which those who are online, both adults and children, have the critical skills to understand and safely navigate their online world.

Critical Thinking and Critical Literacy in the Digital Information Age

In our fast-paced society, where much of the world's information is at our fingertips, we tend to make quick decisions all the time. Research on memory and the brain shows that when we make fast decisions those judgments are based on intuition, emotion, and 'gut feelings'. Psychologists call this "System One" thinking. Wherever we engage System One, we don't exert much control.

To guard against being manipulated and influenced by 'fake news' or Intentional Misinformation, we need to adopt a more critical mind. Simply slowing down and taking a more deliberate approach can make us much less susceptible to manipulation and misinformation. Using a more deliberate approach engages our critical mind, takes more time, and helps us better determine the credibility of the information being presented. The critical mind can be exercised and trained, and it can also act as a form of resistance to propaganda and other forms of intentional misinformation.

Given the seismic shifts in the digital media landscape, of which the proliferation of manipulative information is one part, corresponding shifts are also needed in our definition of critical literacy to enable it to be fit for purpose and to equip us with the skills we need to communicate and engage effectively.

The APRICOT methodology is based on the proposal that critical thinking skills and critical literacy can be recalibrated to help parents and grandparents navigate the digital world in which we live.

We need to include an understanding of the added value of the digital: participation, contribution, transparency and accountability, of course, but also disinformation and the interplay of manipulation and influence.

Many parents and grandparents lack the critical skills to make judgements about the accuracy of online information or identify when they are being advertised to and consequently are not able to adequately protect or advise the children in their care from manipulation or believing false information. Whilst most internet users understand that not all information they find online is truthful, very few check on its trustworthiness. Also,

although most people are aware of at least one of the ways in which information is collected about online users, very few are aware of all the ways or how it is used.

There is consensus, therefore, that any model of critical literacy/thinking skills for the digital age should include an awareness of the various types of 'disinformation' and the methods and motivations behind the production of fake news and other forms of intentional misinformation, eg. the relationship between advertising revenue and fake news. *This is increasingly referred to as Critical Digital Literacy.*

…and so on to Critical Digital Literacy

Digital learning and digital literacies are now a standard part of 21st-century education.

Digital literacy can be defined as: "The ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and create information using digital technology" ie. it is the ability to understand and use digital technologies effectively for everyday tasks. In education this extends to all aspects of teaching and learning, and the usage extends into citizenship, pastoral care and e-safety.

Critical Digital Literacy, on the other hand, aims to empower users to consume content critically, as a prerequisite for online engagement, by identifying issues of bias, prejudice, misrepresentation and, indeed, trustworthiness. Critical digital literacy should also be about understanding the position of digital media technologies in society. **Critical Digital Literacy embeds Critical Thinking Skills into Digital Literacy.**

Critical Digital Literacy incorporates users' interpretations of digital media's potentials and limitations: it isn't just about understanding Internet-related economic issues, but about critically reflecting on the extent to which these issues have repercussions for society – and us as individuals. Critical literacy, traditionally, carries a political connotation – as it is about critical reflection, political involvement and social action – which discussions about digital literacy often lack.

Fact-checking skills are crucial to assessing content reliability, but will only be truly effective when they are accompanied by an awareness of how online content can be disseminated and diversified through different channels is a precondition for the ability to compare and evaluate multiple sources.

There is, therefore, a need for greater critical digital literacy education for all adults - not just children! Inasmuch as it should be approached as a lifelong set of abilities and predispositions, Critical Digital Literacy should be pedagogically promoted in tandem with all civic education. It is necessary for providing context and ensuring that the veracity of content is more easily ascertained.

Teaching Critical Digital Literacy skills implies educating users (in our case parents and grandparents) to appreciate what opportunities and risks digital media entail, including

focusing on their democratising potentials and political constraints, so that in turn they can advise and protect the children in their care..

It follows that Adult Educators need to develop their own Critical Digital Literacy Skills in order to effectively support learners in developing these skills.

1.5   Parenting education (PE)

PE is defined as purposeful support for parents to be more effective in caring for children. There are many forms of support – counselling, training, guidance, mentoring, education, etc.

Parenting education in the **APRICOT** project has an extended audience. It includes the education of grandparents as well.

The **APRICOT** project seeks to support parents and grandparents in helping children to understand and interpret media content, to become safe, critical and mindful media users, able to meet adequate challenges coming from and with the media.

3. Methical framework

Methical framework of the project is based on a ***critical enquiry**-based teaching-learning **approach** (CEA).* It serves to establish meaning, investingating both immediate environment and the wider world, connecting prior knowledge with the newly experienced, and coming to evidence based, reasoned conclusions.

Framework for teaching adults and adults' learning

This is built on CEA and consists of 3 stages:

- evocation of prior knowledge and personal experience;
- realization of meaning or comprehension of new knowledge;
- reflection

Profile of target group

The targeted groups of the project are:

- educators/ teachers/ trainers of adults. We call them adult educators (AE) in this document;
- parents and grandparents.

Project's beneficiaries are:

- children;

4. Course description

The course APRICOT Train the Trainer (project's Intellectual Output 1 (IO1)) is based on Critical Thinking, Inquiry Based methodologies. It is targeting educators/ teachers/ trainers in non-formal adult education institutions or in organisations of both – formal and non-formal education. Our audience will find here a description of a full training course as well as guidance on how to deliver it to different groups of learners.

This course can be used by adult educators (AE), working with different groups of adult learners who are also parents and grandparents. AE will help learners to become mediators for their children in dealing with contemporary issues found in the media and outside world. Parental mediation is "any strategy parents use to control, supervise, or interpret [media] content" for children and adolescents (Warren 2001, 212). We indicate type of mediation (co-viewing, restrictive mediation, active mediation) in this and other materials.

AE are expected to use this material for work with disadvantaged groups of parents and grandparents. By "disadvantaged" we mean those adults who have poor social skills or educational background, are low skilled and/or have low levels of confidence in their own capacity to support children. Disadvantaged also refers to people whose rights from material to cultural basic needs are not guaranteed. Other important triggers of social disadvantage can be physical and psychological limitations, gender and certain phases of life (childhood or old age).

Parenting education may be conducted in a variety of settings: adult education centres, adult schools, local communities, etc.

Structure of the course: Themes and subthemes

AE will find here a full course description and clear presentation of themes and subthemes, proposed training tips, adaptation recommendations for special target groups, as well as assessment tools.

Table 1. Structure of the Course

THEMES	PARTS/ SUB-THEMES	SCOPE
Theme 1:	**Introduction into the theme** Conceptual background	2 hours

THEMES	PARTS/ SUB-THEMES	SCOPE
Introduction into the course SDC, LT	**Main principles working with the target group:** Teaching disadvantaged people Motivation of the target group Prerequisites and general conditions of the training The Trainer The Training Acceptance and group atmosphere	
	Getting familiar with methodical framework for teaching & learning: Short theoretical introduction Part I. Presentation of Model Activity Part II. Analysis of the Process Part III. Planning for Implementation Possible adaptations References Annex 1	2 hours
Theme 2: **Moral Dilemmas in the Contemporary World** SDC, LT Definitions / Intros Part I. Presentation of the Model Activity Part II. Analysis of the Process Part III. Planning for Implementation Possible adaptations References	**Introduction into the theme: Being human in controversial, conflicting, critical situations** Personal characteristics of fair-minded person Courage to overcome bias Ability to say "yes" & "no" Egocentrism and its consequences	1,5 hours
	Sub-theme 1. Fair personal decisions: Self-awareness & self-reflectivity Self-correctness	1,5 hour / each sub-module
	Sub-theme 2. Fair interpersonal decisions: Ability to listen & hear Willingness & readiness to help Care for other in personal & professional settings	1,5 hour / each sub-module
	Sub-theme 3. Fair social decisions: Responsible & critical decisions Individuality & sociality Personal freedom & social responsibility	1,5 hour / each sub-module

THEMES	PARTS/ SUB-THEMES	SCOPE
Theme 3: **Informed decisions** Planeta Ciencias, ES Definitions / Intros Part I. Presentation of the Model Activity Part II. Analysis of the Process Part III. Planning for Implementation Possible adaptations References	**Introduction into the theme:** Overview What is it about Structure	
	Sub-theme 1. Consuming decisions: Health impact and environmental impact Understanding labels from products Official inspection bodies Lack of information Previous assumptions and prejudices Confirmation bias	1,5 hour
	Sub-theme 2. Reliable sources of information: Quality as a standard for information References Primary and secondary sources Official organisations Scientific community Missing information Cherry picking	3 hours
	Sub-theme 3. The use of electronic devices and screens	1,5 hour
Theme 4: **Misinformation & disinformation** APRICOT, UK Definitions / Intros Part I. Presentation of the Model Activity Part II. Analysis of the Process Part III. Planning for Implementation Possible adaptations References	**Introduction into the theme:** *Fake News!: Why should we care?* The phenomenon of Fake News Impact on society	0.5 hours
	Sub-theme 1. Fake News, Misinformation and Disinformation – Types and Tactics: Types, definitions and intentions How disinformation is created and spread Annex 2: Fake News, Misinformation and Disinformation	2.5 hours
	Sub-theme 2. Fake News – **How to spot it!** Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) Applying CDL skills to identify, interpret and challenge Misinformation & Disinformation	2 hours

THEMES	PARTS/ SUB-THEMES	SCOPE
	Annex 3: Tacking Disinformation through Critical Digital Literacy	
	Sub-Theme 3. Fact Checking and anti-misinformation actions Tools for detecting and reporting disinformation	1 hour
Theme 5: Safety & Privacy ItF Institute, DE Definitions / Intros Part I. Presentation of the Model Activity Part II. Analysis of the Process Part III. Planning for Implementation Possible adaptations References	**Introduction into the theme: Understanding and protecting security and privacy** Definitions of security and privacy Technical possibilities of data protection Critical handling of private data Possibilities to protect yourself on the net	0,5 hour
	Sub-theme 1. Technical possibilities: Overview of current antivirus programs Tasks of antivirus-program Security settings Annex 4: Technical possibilities	1,5 hours
	Sub-theme 2. Serious surfing behavior: Recognize reputable websites Recognizing and avoiding dangers Annex 5: Serious surfing	1,5 hours
	Sub-theme 3. Secure use of social networks Protection in social networks Protecting own data, protecting emails Personal attacks and cyberbullying Annex 6: Secure use of social networks	2,5 hours

The course is built around:

- Train the trainer program: information and activities for 5 themes, 12 sub-themes;
- Training material: 6 annexes and 5 presentations.

AE can decide to deliver the full course or only some parts depending on contextual specifics.

The total number of hours – 40 (28 contact hours +12 hours of individual work, including self-evaluation).

The methodology for training delivery

All themes will be presented in following order:

Part I. Presentation of Model Activity

1. General introductory activities to be decided by course presenters
2. Introduction to a session/theme, describing what will occur during it
3. Experiencing a guided lesson/activity
4. Reflection on a guided lesson/activity

Part II. Analysis of the Process

1. Recalling all steps of a model activity/lesson
2. Analysis of a model activity/lesson from learner's perspective
3. Analysis of a model activity/lesson from teacher's perspective
4. Discussions

Part III. Planning for Implementation

1. Discussions about how & to whom this lesson/activity can be applied at local contexts
2. Development of a draft plan for implementation

Description of competencies to be improved

The course is aimed at the development of AE working with diverse groups of parents / grandparents.

The course will enable them to:

● develop open, collaborative, collegial relations between adult educators from project partner countries;
● expand understanding of parental education, critical thinking, media literacy (including the context for CT);
● increase capacity to think critically, engage in critical reflection;
● use practical methods of teaching based on theoretically sound ideas, methodologically consistent framework
● take responsibility for work with parents by becoming their counsellors & supports;
● become confident implementing the programme in educational settings;
● prepare course participants to deliver courses to other colleagues.

At the end of the course participants will:

● be aware of main principles of work with parental audience;
● better understand concepts of ML & CT;
● be ready to use methodical framework for teaching & learning; apply relevant strategies & methods;

- be able to plan their own teaching – to review and adapt adult education programmes / courses;
- be ready to teach colleagues in a local environment.
- be able to cite and explain the various types of Misinformation and Disinformation
- explain how Misinformation and Disinformation is created and spread in the digital environment and the various intentions behind it.

Table 2. Competences to be developed during the course

Competence	Description
Communication & cooperation	Open, collaborative, collegial relations between adult educators from project partner countries.
Increased knowledge	Understanding / awareness of main concepts, themes, issues.
Increased personal abilities	Practising CT skills, engaging in critical reflection.
Developed / extended professional abilities	To use practical methods of teaching based on theoretically sound ideas, methodologically consistent framework. To prepare course participants to deliver courses to other colleagues.
Increased professional self-confidence	Readiness for work with target groups; readiness to become their counsellors & supporters. Confident professionals, ready to implement courses in various educational settings.

Those are generalized competences for the whole course. Each theme has its own list of competences to be developed, improved, enlarged.

Evaluation and Assessment

The course also has its Evaluation and Assessment Forms to be filled in BEFORE and AFTER training of adult educators.

- Pre-training Evaluation and Assessment Form: https://forms.gle/3av7Nh6fK5NHHEiZA
- Post-training Evaluation and Assessment Form: https://forms.gle/9pwSW3qzRXUqgWr28