



Lifelong Learning Interest Group Values Education and Lifelong Learning 19.05.2022

The meeting was opened by Gina Ebner, Secretary General of the European Association for the Education of Adults, who reflected on the topic of Values education and lifelong learning, and opened a question as to whether values can be taught or learned?

The first speaker was Csaba Borboly from SEDEC, at the Committee of the Regions. He discussed the important of regions roles in promoting values in all areas of education but particularly in adult education, highlighting that there are many areas of Europe where traditional practice and traditions remain that are unknown but also not valued anymore, however many of these practices are in line with European values and that we should integrate these traditions into our understand and learning trajectories while developing and teaching/learning values. In addition, he highlighted the rural and other marginalised areas of Europe where adults do not have access to training and education, and opportunities to really become who they can be and that we should think about how we can provide more for people in these areas.

The second speaker was Robin Sclafani from CEJI. Robin highlighted a number of international instruments where we can really see that values are of importance but highlighted in particular a 2018 European Council Resolution on antisemitism. She highlighted some of the science behind automated responses that don't include our values, located in the newer part of our brains and spoke about how in the trainings that CEJI undertakes takes time to form relationships and bonds with partners so that they can begin to understand any bias they have and open that space of vulnerability and safety so that people can begin to share their experiences and self-reflect for deep change. In addition, she spoke of social capital theory and how we could and should be using it to understand baseline measures of how we are doing in promoting values, particularly of inclusion, that we speak of promoting.

The third speaker was Clara Centeno from DJ Justice at the European Commission – who has been undertaking research on teacher professional development and how to train for diversity and inclusion. The key messages out of her presentation fit well with the other speaker, showing that in terms of Professional Development, teachers need experience of democracy rather than teaching about democracy and also that school heads will need more support and time to build cultures of welcoming and inclusion – which is a deep work. Clara also highlighted that one key area that needs to be addressed is the peer learning aspect and how programs can be adapted, contextualized, and replicated in different areas.

Our last speaker was Dr. Peter Mayo from University of Malta who contextualized all the findings into the current neo-liberal and corporation driven world we live in, tying in elements of our relationship with nature and environmental sustainability. He pointed to several in-depth works on values, inclusion and the education of adults but simultaneously pointed to



the fact that research is not the issue at hand, rather the implementation of that research and policy change is what has not changed over these last few decades.

Questions were asked and our Executive Director, Mialy Dermish, asked about the word values and its importance in our political rhetoric today. This, with the knowledge that we now have neuroscientific knowledge which shows us that exclusionary experiences can actually stop us from engaging our neo-frontal cortexes and areas of our brains that demand more deliberation and that they also can encourage us to stick to more 'in group' values and thoughts. Perhaps placing action and experience above the holding or values. The speakers all agreed that, as with all of their presentations, the ideas that values are taught rather than learned, transmitted or experienced is critical to understanding how to get out of our current situation of not having shared values in societies but also discussed how we use this word value and how a 'value' can easily be mis-interpreted if we don't define and have clarity about what it is.

All in all, a rich discussion and a good way forward as evidenced by the decision to move into the topic of experience versus teaching for a future interest group meeting.

We want to thank Lifelong Learning Platform, and, especially, European Association for the Education of Adults for the organisation of this meeting and for giving us the opportunity to interact with interesting stakeholders.