

Citizens' Curriculum Case Study: English for Action

About the Citizens' Curriculum

The Citizens' Curriculum is an innovative and flexible model for language, literacy and numeracy provision which places the needs of learners and communities at its core. Its aim is to develop new ways of offering learning which engages and motivates adults in all kinds of contexts to improve their English, maths and other 'life skills', resulting in better progression, outcomes and aspirations - into and at work, in learning and in personal, family and community life. The underpinning principles of the Citizens' Curriculum are:

- A holistic approach to provision for adult learners interpreted through the local context
- Learner involvement in determining the curriculum to meet their needs and interests
- An interlinked combination of literacy, numeracy, ESOL, financial, health, digital and civic capabilities

Background

English for Action (EFA) built on the success of an earlier pilot and delivered two new programmes in 2016. The first piloted the Citizens' Curriculum with a participatory ESOL class focussed on financial capability. This programme adopted the learner-led approach to design and delivery promoted by the Citizens' Curriculum and embedded numeracy, digital, civic and language capabilities into the overarching theme of financial capability. For their second programme, an EFA tutor worked with a group in Southwark who had concerns about the reductions in ESOL funding and access to ESOL provision. They decided to run an event about the importance of ESOL, the organising and delivery of which developed learners' literacy, language, numeracy, digital, financial and civic capabilities.

Citizens' Curriculum Principle	Locally-led learning, responding to the needs of the local community, economy or specific cohorts of learners	Learner involvement in determining the curriculum	An interlinked combination of capabilities
<p>How it worked</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in Greater London with a high demand for English language learning and where learners with English as an additional language often feel excluded from civic life. • Pilot aimed to develop learners' language skills and support them to take action in their local community, based on local concerns. • Location of lessons was sensitive to cultural barriers of learners. Classes based in local venues such as schools which learners could easily access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-led pedagogy using participatory ESOL approaches involved learners in design and delivery of courses. • Tutors adopted active listening approaches to address the interests and needs of learners and built these into the course. • Tutors carried out short end of session evaluations to identify most valuable aspects of the lesson and how learners would like to build on these. Enabled learners to take ownership of their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and literacy – developed through group discussions, speaking to external contacts and doing presentations • Civic – learners organised and promoted an event, learned about funding streams and the parliamentary process, and contacted their local MP. • Digital – developed through a class blog which the tutor would update and learners would comment on. • Financial – learners developed financial planning skills through organising an event. In the course with the financial capability theme, learners' developed a critical understanding of key financial terms, products and issues.

Impact

EFA worked with a group of learners who were concerned about reductions in ESOL funding and access to provision. Learners wanted to organise an event to demonstrate the importance of ESOL learning. The learners led every aspect of the event planning process, from deciding the focus and location, to booking the venue and speakers and giving inputs and presentations at the event itself. This all required learners to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills, as well as their financial, digital and civic capabilities. For example, learners wrote to their local MP to invite him to the event and did a Q&A session with him on stage, managed a small budget for the venue and refreshments, and also promoted the event on social media.

As a result of participating in the project, learners felt far more confident to engage with their local community. The improvement in their English skills has enabled learners to go out in their community and interact with people, enabling them to go to the shop, visit their GP and speak to their children's teachers independently. One learner is now hoping to run her own arts and crafts project in a local school and is developing an application to National Lottery Awards for All Fund to support this, while others had started volunteering with other organisations and charities.

"It is a big difference for me. Before, I can't speak with people, I can't understand how - what will we say, but now I can understand a little bit and speak a little bit, and the life has changed." (Learner)

Critical Success Factors – Tips for Implementing the Citizens' Curriculum

- Adopting a participatory pedagogy ensures active involvement of learners' in determining the course content and making sure that it is relevant
- The Citizens' Curriculum capabilities can be used as overarching themes, from which learners can identify specific areas of interest
- Basing the learning around completion of a specific task (such as organising an event) helps to create natural opportunities to develop capabilities across the Citizens' Curriculum framework