



Guide for policy makers regarding volunteers in migrant language education

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Policy making regarding volunteers in migrant language education

To meet the demand for migrant language education there is a need for greater numbers of trained educators. Volunteers are more and more important in meeting this demand in cooperation with professional educators. Volunteers should be trained to play a number of different roles within the language learning process in which they can add great value. Coordination of volunteer activities, aligning them with the work of professional teachers can create coherent, stimulating and effective language learning pathways for adult migrants.

How can volunteers add value to language learning for adult migrants?

We know that learners need to be exposed to the language for them to learn it. In addition to learning in the classroom, learners also need the opportunity to use the language in diverse contexts. They need to interact with others to achieve communicative goals and fluency in the new language. Through engagement in social activities, volunteers can help create an environment in which migrants are required to use the host language, supporting them in increasing their understanding and ability to communicate.

Collaboration between professional teachers and volunteers, and between the organisations they work with is crucial. However, the relationship between the two groups is often difficult, with a lack of clarity in the definition of their roles leading to mistrust on both sides and the creation of barriers to collaboration.

To improve the quality and effectiveness of migrant language education policy makers can:

- *Stimulate and facilitate the cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal learning providers.*
- *Support that providers match volunteers to specific roles in the migrant language learning process.*
- *Stimulate and facilitate the development of systematic volunteer training.*
- *Stimulate and facilitate the coordination of volunteer activity.*

The VIME Toolkit provides guidelines for volunteer roles, volunteer training and coordination.

1. Stimulate and facilitate cooperation and coordination between the formal, non-formal and informal domains

Collaboration and coordination of language education provision should take place between institutions responsible for formal learning and those working in the non-formal sector in order to avoid overlap, and to ensure that the work of the volunteers adds value to the language learning of adult migrants.

2. Support that providers match volunteers to specific roles in the migrant language learning process.

To match volunteers to specific roles it's necessary to have clear descriptions of the roles. The VIME Toolkit describes four distinct roles.

- **Language Assistants** work inside the classroom, directed by the professional teacher, providing extra help for individuals or small groups.
- The **Language Coach** differs from the language assistant in that he or she has no direct connection to the classroom, working instead in the learner's home or a public space or a community venue to support individuals or small groups. A Language Coach is able to organise language learning activities on his/her own, but has a professional teacher/coordinator s/he can reach for support.
- The focus of the **Language Buddy / Befriender** is social support. They act as a reference point, for example helping the adult migrant to understand official letters and complete forms, or explaining processes that they need to go through as part of their new daily life.
- The **Language Champion** works actively to engage adult migrants in language learning activities and to encourage them to improve their language by using opportunities in their local areas. This involves Outreach work, but may also involve campaigning and lobbying.

These roles have their place in the distinct **domains** in which adult migrant learning takes place.



Joined-up pathways that use activity in more than one domain of language learning maximise the opportunities and support for adult migrants to learn the language of the host community.

3. Systematic training of volunteers

The VIME project has developed a set of training modules for each role a volunteer can take, including a practitioner guide and a framework describing the model in detail. To learn more about the VIME project and to download resources please visit www.languagevolunteers.com in the context of growing demand and restricted budgets.

4. Stimulate and facilitate the coordination of volunteer activity

Coordination is needed in terms of pedagogy, ensuring that the volunteer is trained, and subsequently supported, in selecting appropriate materials and approaches for particular individuals or groups, as well as on a logistical level, dealing with practical matters of timetabling, resourcing and matching of learners to volunteers.

Good practises

Every partner in the project describes 2 or 3 good practises, relevant in the own national context

The VIME Toolkit contains:

- Model for roles of volunteers in migrant language learning
- Selection tools for volunteers and learners
- Training modules for volunteers
- Leaflet for professional teachers
- Guide for Policy makers

The VIME Toolkit can be found at: www.languagevolunteers.com

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