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**KA210-ADU - Small-scale partnerships in adult education**

**Project title:** Fostering Inclusion, Diversity and Women's Empowerment through Creative Methods Based on Women's Sociological and Literary Writings

**Project acronym:** FINDWE

**Project code:** 2024-2-DE02-KA210-ADU-000279293

**Participating organisations:**

- Riza Performing Arts (Germany)
- ECHODRAMA Cultural Group (Greece)
- Association-Compagnie NOURA (France)

## Project Result - Digital Handbook

### INTRODUCTION



The dance-theatre methodology developed within this project is an interdisciplinary educational approach that combines embodied artistic practice with critical engagement inspired by sociological and literary texts written by women. It reveals art-based training methods that promote inclusion, diversity and women's empowerment. It is designed for adult education contexts and responds particularly to the needs of adults with fewer opportunities, especially women, by creating an

inclusive, participatory and transformative learning environment.

At the core of the methodology lies the understanding that learning is not solely an intellectual process, but also a physical and emotional experience. The body is approached as a site of knowledge, memory and expression. Through movement, participants are able to access forms of understanding that may not be immediately available through verbal or analytical means. This is particularly important for individuals who may face linguistic, educational or social barriers, as it allows for multiple entry points into the learning process.

The methodology integrates principles of feminist pedagogy, which emphasize the value of lived experience, the importance of shared authority between trainer and participants, and the need to critically reflect on existing power structures. Participants are not positioned as passive recipients of knowledge, but as active contributors whose experiences and perspectives shape the learning process. In this sense, the methodology fosters a co-creative environment in which knowledge is constructed collectively.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the FINDWE project are:

1. to enhance the ability of adult trainers in art and humanities to train adults, including adults with fewer opportunities, especially women, through art-based training methods that promote inclusion, diversity and women's empowerment,
2. to introduce a dance-theatre methodology into adult education that combines physical movement and critical reflection on women's sociological and literary writings which foster personal growth among women and promote inclusion, diversity and awareness of gender inequality,
3. to promote inclusion and diversity by creating an inclusive learning environment where participants with fewer opportunities are involved in all the stages of the project,
4. to enhance the access of open source art-based training tools to adult trainers and learners
5. to reinforce cooperation with partners from other countries and other fields of education and training,
6. to develop environmental consciousness by implementing the project activities with alternative greener ways.

## TARGET GROUP

The **direct** target group of this project includes:

- Adult trainers in art (dance, theatre, dance-theatre, dance therapy) and humanities (literature, philosophy, sociology), including adult trainers with fewer opportunities (economic obstacles, cultural obstacles, immigrant background), who are interested in incorporating art-based training methods inspired by sociological and literary texts written by women into their training methodologies,
- Artists in dance, theatre and dance-theatre,
- Adult women from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from marginalised communities, e.g. women from low socio-economic backgrounds, immigrants, women of colour, LGBTQ+ etc.
- Institutions that specialize in adult learning.

The **indirect** target group includes: cultural organisations, artistic organisations, humanistic organisations, organisations for adults with fewer opportunities, organisations and local communities advocating women's rights, gender equality and the inclusion of marginalised groups, research institutes or universities which contribute to the academic exploration of art-based

education and feminist pedagogy, as well as all adults, including non-artist adults, with fewer opportunities and adults with learning barriers.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The methodology is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together feminist pedagogy, embodied learning and an intersectional perspective. These approaches inform both the design and the implementation of the training activities, ensuring that the learning process is inclusive, participatory and critically engaged with issues of inequality and empowerment.

The first pillar of the framework is feminist pedagogy. This approach emphasizes the importance of shared authority between trainers and participants, moving away from hierarchical models of teaching towards a more collaborative learning environment. Knowledge is not treated as something transmitted from expert to learner, but rather as something co-created through dialogue and experience. Particular value is placed on lived experience as a legitimate and important source of knowledge, especially in the context of women's lives and perspectives, which have historically been marginalized. At the same time, feminist pedagogy encourages participants to develop a critical awareness of social and cultural power structures, enabling them to question and challenge inequalities related to gender and other social factors.

The second pillar is embodied learning, which recognizes the body as a central element in the learning process. Within this methodology, participants engage physically through movement and dance-theatre practices as a way to explore emotions, relationships and social roles. This embodied approach allows participants to process complex ideas in non-verbal ways, making learning more accessible, particularly for those who may face linguistic or educational barriers. Through physical engagement, participants also build confidence, presence and a stronger connection to their own bodies, which is an essential component of empowerment.

The third pillar is intersectionality, which provides a framework for understanding how different forms of inequality intersect and influence individual experiences. The methodology acknowledges that gender does not operate in isolation, but is interconnected with other factors such as socio-economic status, migration background and level of education. By recognizing these overlapping dimensions, the approach ensures that the learning environment remains sensitive to the diverse realities of participants and promotes a more inclusive understanding of empowerment.

## **METHODOLOGY**



The implementation of the methodology is guided by a set of core principles that ensure its inclusivity, effectiveness and adaptability in different adult education contexts.

A primary principle is accessibility. All activities are designed to be adaptable to participants with different physical, cognitive and linguistic abilities. This includes the use of clear communication, flexible facilitation methods and the integration of non-verbal approaches that allow everyone to participate meaningfully, regardless of their background or skill level.

Closely linked to this is the principle of participation and co-creation. Participants are considered active contributors to the learning process rather than passive recipients. They are encouraged to share their experiences, ideas and creative input, becoming co-authors of the collective work. This participatory approach fosters a sense of ownership, engagement and empowerment.

Another key principle is the creation of safe and brave spaces. The methodology seeks to establish an environment in which participants feel secure enough to express themselves openly, while also being encouraged to step outside their comfort zones. Respect for personal boundaries is essential, and facilitators are responsible for maintaining a balance between openness and emotional safety.

### **Tutorial Video of the FINDWE dance-theatre methodology:**



[TUTORIAL VIDEO - METHODOLOGY](#)

## Step (1) – Selection of the Literary Work



### A. Theoretical background

In the initial phase of choosing a literary work, the trainer, in collaboration with the participants, embarks on the important task of choosing texts written by women, including literary, autobiographical and sociological works. These texts serve as catalysts for reflection and discussion on themes such as identity, gender roles, inequality, inclusion and empowerment. The selection of texts is guided by their accessibility, relevance to participants' lives, and potential to evoke emotional and imaginative responses.

The research and reading of the literature work can be collective or individual. With both ways it is possible to achieve a comprehensive overview of the material. Importantly, participants have the flexibility to read the material in their preferred language, with diligent care taken to ensure the accuracy and quality of translations when such adaptations are required. This commitment to linguistic fidelity ensures that the essence of the work is faithfully preserved during the reading process.

### B. Criteria for the selection of the literary work:

The selection of literary and sociological texts is a crucial component of the methodology, as these texts serve as the foundation for both critical reflection and embodied exploration. In order to ensure that the materials effectively support inclusion, engagement and empowerment, several key criteria guide the selection process.

- **Accessibility**

The chosen texts should be easy to understand, particularly for participants with fewer opportunities or limited educational backgrounds. This includes using language that is clear and approachable, as well as selecting texts that are short or can be easily presented in excerpts. Materials that are emotionally direct and evocative are especially valuable, as they facilitate both discussion and physical interpretation. In this context, short essays, poems and personal narratives are particularly



suitable, as they offer depth without overwhelming participants.

- **Relatability**

Participants should be able to recognize aspects of their own lives and experiences within the texts. This sense of connection is essential for fostering meaningful reflection and encouraging active participation. Texts that address themes such as everyday life, work and care responsibilities, discrimination, interpersonal relationships, and the dynamics of voice and silence tend to resonate strongly with diverse groups. When participants feel that a text “speaks” to them, they are more likely to engage deeply, both intellectually and physically, in the activities that follow.

- **Diversity**

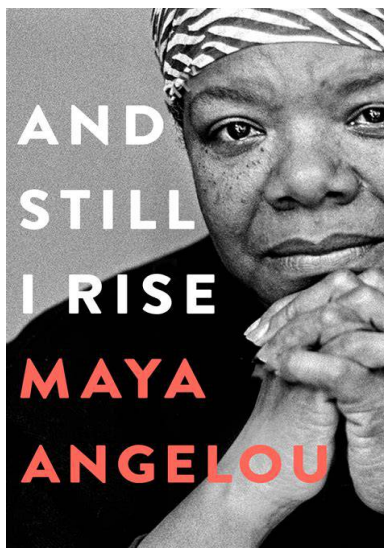
Diversity of voices represented in the selected materials. The methodology seeks to avoid presenting a single, homogeneous narrative of womanhood, and instead embraces a plurality of perspectives. This includes incorporating texts written by women from different cultural backgrounds, as well as those reflecting working-class experiences, migrant realities, and LGBTQ+ perspectives. By including a wide range of voices, the methodology not only reflects the complexity of women’s lived experiences but also promotes a more inclusive and intersectional understanding of empowerment. This diversity encourages participants to encounter both similarities and differences, fostering empathy, dialogue and critical awareness.

These criteria ensure that the selected texts are not only accessible and engaging, but also inclusive and transformative, supporting the overall objectives of the methodology.

## **CASE STUDY – Literature work**

For our case study we chose the poem „**And Still I Rise**“, written by **Maya Angelou**.

This poem was chosen due to its accessible language, strong rhythm and powerful themes of resilience, dignity and empowerment. Its repetitive structure and vivid imagery made it particularly suitable for translation into movement.



„*And Still I Rise*“ meets all the key criteria of the FINDWE methodology: it is accessible, emotionally engaging, widely relatable and highly adaptable to movement.

Moreover, the poem embodies the core values and objectives of the FINDWE dance-theatre methodology: empowerment, inclusion, resilience and the reclaiming of voice.

At a thematic level, the poem addresses experiences of oppression, marginalization and inequality —issues that are central to the lived realities of many adults with fewer opportunities, especially women. At the same time, it powerfully affirms dignity, self-worth and the ability to rise above structural and personal challenges. This duality makes it highly relevant for a methodology that seeks not only to raise awareness of inequality, but also to foster personal growth and empowerment.

From a pedagogical perspective, the poem aligns closely with the principles of feminist pedagogy that underpin the FINDWE project. It validates lived experience and centers a voice that resists silencing, which encourages participants to reflect on their own experiences and to see them as valuable sources of knowledge. In this way, the poem supports the creation of a learning environment where participants feel seen, heard and legitimized.

The poem is also particularly suitable for the FINDWE dance-theatre approach because of its strong rhythmic structure and repetition. The recurring phrase “I rise” provides a clear and accessible inspiration for movement exploration. Participants can easily translate this refrain into physical expression, using the body to embody concepts such as resistance, strength and transformation.

In terms of inclusion, the poem’s language is relatively accessible and emotionally direct, making it appropriate for participants with diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds. This is essential for ensuring that the methodology remains open and engaging for adults with fewer opportunities.

The relevance of the poem also extends to the project’s objective of promoting diversity. Although rooted in a specific historical and cultural context, the themes of „*And Still I Rise*“ resonate across different forms of inequality, including those related to gender, class and migration. This enables participants to interpret the text through their own perspectives, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding within the group.

## STEP (2) - Selection of key words and main ideas

After choosing the literature work, the participants are encouraged to engage in individual or group readings and discussions, identifying key words, phrases and images that promote feministic structures and empowerment and can apply as visual and emotional inspiration for artistic expression through physical movement.

The trainer encourages each participant to come to a final decision and extract up five (5) words or up to two (2) phrases from the literature work. These specific words / phrases will be from now on the core inspiration for the creation of the artistic expression.

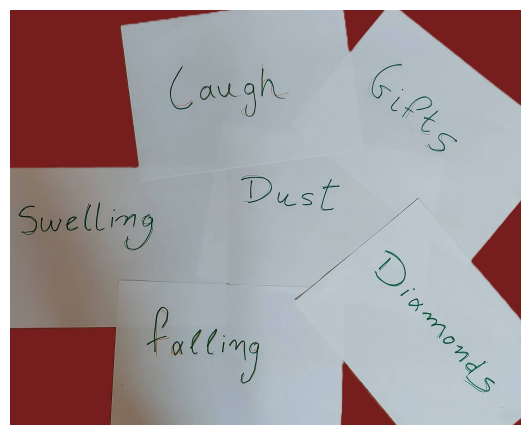
Phrases and words chosen from our case study based on the poem „*And still I rise*“:

### Phrases:

- „*You may write me down in history*“
- „*Diggin’ in my own backyard*“
- „*Up from a past that’s rooted in pain*“
- „*You may trod me in the very dirt*“
- „*But still, like dust, I’ll rise.*“

### Words:

- „*rising*“, „*swelling*“, „*diamonds*“, „*falling*“, „*weakened*“, „*pumping*“, „*dust*“, „*gifts*“, „*laugh*“



## STEP (3) - Exploring the kinetic vocabulary



Participants engage with the texts by translating the chosen key words, images and ideas into movement. This process allows abstract concepts to be experienced physically, fostering a deeper and more personal understanding. Movement exercises range from individual improvisation to duet encounters and finally group compositions, enabling participants to explore both personal expression and collective creation. The use of space, rhythm, gesture and interaction becomes a means of articulating experiences that may be difficult to express verbally.

Aim of this step is to externalize and embody the internal emotional states provoked by patriarchal structures and social injustices.

### STAGES:

#### 3.1 - Individual Movement improvisation

Each participant develops a personal movement vocabulary inspired by specific words or phrases from the poem. The focus is on autonomy, internal voice and embodied storytelling.

Tasks include:

- Repeating a single gesture that symbolizes the chosen words (ex. “falling“, „rising“)
- Exploring contrasts (weight/lightness, contraction/expansion)
- Working with rhythm derived from spoken text

#### 3.2 - Duet Encounters: Witnessing and Mirroring

Participants pair up to share and observe each other’s movement material. This stage introduces intersubjectivity while maintaining individual integrity :

- Mirroring exercises emphasize empathy and recognition
- Call-and-response structures reflect dialogue and relational identity

## Step (4) - Group Composition

The trainer divides the group of participants in smaller groups of 4 persons each. In this way, the participants have the chance to create a safe space with their group and interact directly with each one of the members. The aim of this step is to build, as a group, a shared reference base for the

creative process. The challenge of this step is to align individual ideas into a unified concept. Very important skills that are required in this step include active listening, patience and clear communication.



**4.1 :** In this phase of the suggested methodology, each group is given the time for:

- Brainstorming and clarifying theoretical, pedagogical and artistic directions.
- Discussions to interpret the theme and ensure shared understanding.
- Expression of perspectives, expectations and interpretations of the task.
- Sharing of the words / phrases each participant has chosen.
- Showing the movements created by the individual improvisation of Step 3.1.

**4.2 :** The participants begin weaving their individual phrases and movements into a shared sequence:

- Identifying common themes (e.g., resistance, pride, struggle)
- Layering movements simultaneously or sequentially
- Negotiating space, timing and presence.
- Use of proximity and distance to reflect power dynamics

In this phase, the improvisation becomes a living, shifting embodiment of feminist solidarity.

**4.3 :** The trainer invites each group to focus on the emotional prompts derived from the words and phrases they have chosen (e.g., passages that evoke anger, fear, awe, optimism, power, relief).



**4.4 :** The participants are now encouraged to develop with their group a kinesthetic response through movement improvisation that translates these feelings into movement. In this step, there is still the space for multiple movement possibilities for one word or phrase. The choice on one specific movement for each word/phrase will follow at a next step.

TEXT → EMOTION → MOVEMENTS

The aim of this stage of the suggested methodology is to create a non-verbal storytelling through body language, tension, tempo and space. To help the groups improvise with their bodies, the trainer asks the following questions so the participants have the chance to first express themselves vocally:

What image comes in your mind by reading this sentence? How does it feel? How does your body react on this feeling? Are there verbs in this sentence that show body movement and if yes, how

does this movement look like? How does your body move when you think this image or when you hear the specific words?



Example of our case study from the poem „And still I rise“ :

TEXT → EMOTION → MOVEMENTS

„*You may write me down in history*“ → anger/ suppression /fragility → tension in the body, movements that make the body look smaller and smaller.

„*But still, like dust, I'll rise*“ → optimism / relief / power → Release of tension, body is growing in all directions like a dust in the wind.

## STEP (5) - Choreographic Development

- Each group is now invited to remember the movements that were created through the above mentioned improvisation exercises and questions and chose 8-10 movements.
- After choosing the movements, each group decides on the order of the movement by experimenting on the various possibilities. The order can follow the exact order of the words/phrases as written in the original chosen text, or it can even vary from the original written order, allowing the space for further interpretations and rhythms.
- After choosing the order of the movement, each group now explores the possibilities of connecting each movement to the next one. In this way, each group will create small choreographies.
- In this final step, the group decides on the sound or music that they want to move on. The trainer encourages the group to experiment on various sound possibilities (female vocals, rhythmical sounds, music that expresses the participants at an emotional level).





### **Optional: Integration of Voice and Text**

Participants are given the option to reintroduce spoken word in their movement sequences: whispering, chanting, or declaring lines from the literature text / poem, as well as combining voice with movement to reclaim narrative space (live spoken word or as a voice-over). This option supports the connection between body and voice in feminist performances.

### **STEP (6) – Final Sharing / Presentation**

The group is invited to show the created choreographies to the rest of the participants, in a form of an internal or open presentation. This phase not only allows participants to reveal their creative interpretations but also fosters a collaborative and interpretative process within the group. It encourages participants to immerse themselves in the art of expression with empathy and productive communication and create a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere for artistic exploration.

### **STEP (7) - Reflection**

This is a very important phase of the methodology and should always be given the space and time needed. It encourages participants to dive into the profound meaning behind the sentences of the literature work and the movements they have created, fostering a deeper understanding of their individual connections to the chosen words and themes. It creates a space for participants to share their unique insights, connect with the chosen words on a profound level, and foster a rich mosaic of interpretations that enriches the overall exploration of the literary work's social and feministic concepts.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding and reflection of the embodied experience, the trainer invites the participants to first write down each one individually their own thoughts and reflections and then share them with the whole group.



## CONCLUSION

The FINDWE methodology demonstrates that combining dance-theatre with women's sociological and literary texts creates a powerful, inclusive learning experience. It enables adult learners—especially women with fewer opportunities—to explore identity, challenge inequalities and develop agency.

At the same time, it equips adult trainers with innovative, accessible and transferable tools that promote inclusion, diversity and empowerment across educational contexts.

## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES:

Based on the suggested dance-theatre methodology, adult trainers can develop the following outcomes:

- **Performance:** Creation of stage work embodying non-patriarchal structures and women's empowerment.
- **Workshops:** Developing curriculum for adult trainers, artists, educators and women from around the world.
- **Public engagement and community work:** Audience and public interactions that include open discussion circles, reflective writing and movement improvisations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Integrate art-based methods into mainstream adult education
- Expand digital access to training tools

- Strengthen international collaboration
- Continue focusing on inclusive and sustainable practices

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