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## Educational Senior Network

### Best Practices and Educational Innovation for Seniors

<b>Author/s</b>	Permanent University of the University of Alicante – Education Department (Alicante Town Council)
<b>Title</b>	APAE Programme: 'Support to the prevention of school absenteeism'
<b>Keywords</b>	Support of older adults to prevent school absenteeism amongst youngsters
<b>Context – location and impact</b>	<p>The University of Alicante hosts the 'Incubator of Values,' an initiative of over-50 students enrolled in the <i>Diploma Senior</i> of the Permanent University, and interested in lifelong learning and personal development, who have long been involved in EU projects. They wished to dedicate part of their time to help other seniors and share both their accumulated and their newly-acquired knowledge with other seniors in these times of economic crisis and lack of values, which have resulted in many citizens needing the support of these UPUA volunteers. Based on this approach, a wide variety of initiatives have been set in motion since 2012, including volunteering actions to promote active and healthy ageing, technological volunteering, cultural volunteering (collaborative conversation-based language; study of literature and poetry groups; theatre groups); and social-research-oriented volunteering (Observatory of Seniors and Mass Media). Along the same lines, a new initiative APAE Programme: 'Support to the prevention of school absenteeism' arose in 2015.</p> <p>The Alicante Town Council and the University of Alicante are interested in collaborating in a series of activities that can benefit not only these two entities but also every citizen of Alicante, it all within the same interests of educational development, intergenerational solidarity, social cohesion, volunteering and lifelong learning.</p> <p>We all know about the importance that Education has for human beings; on the one hand, as a process of maturity and individual self-improvement which has as its aim to achieve personal autonomy and a position within society and, on the other hand, as a social evolution process. Societies are the reflection of the educational level reached by its population.</p> <p>Education becomes essential for the fight against social exclusion as well as achieve economic and social progress. Hence why we must strive to ensure that every individual who belongs to a society will receive at least some basic education, as this can help to improve the situation as far as social development is concerned.</p> <p>Efforts have long been made from the Education Department of the Alicante Town Council in the fight against absenteeism, school dropout and being out of school, within the city of Alicante town and different quarters and districts, and amongst the citizens who are residents and registered in Alicante.</p> <p>The Permanent University of the University of Alicante provides training to over-50s with the aims of favouring personal development and promoting active citizenship as a way to improve quality of life and healthy ageing. It additionally seeks: to stimulate older adults who are no longer professionally active to reorient their lives with a view to making them feel more useful at a family, community and country level, thus strengthening their collective participation and social integration rates; to promote, recognise and enrich the experiences acquired by the older adult throughout his life; to encourage people who have accumulated personal and/or professional experiences to reflect on their activity within a theoretical-practical framework, which will allow them to play a more prominent role in the development of society.</p>
<b>Start date</b>	October 2015
<b>Institution</b>	Permanent University of the University of Alicante – Education Department (Alicante Town Council)

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	Town Council)
<b>Addressees</b>	<p>a) Older adults: Students enrolled in the UPUA who offer as volunteers to give school support sessions (lectures-tutorials-mentoring).</p> <p>b) School children and teenagers who receive help from the APAE Programme: 6-to-16-year-old students from every quarter/district in the city of Alicante, lacking in resources and at risk of social exclusion and school absenteeism, who are referred from the educational centres to the Local Departments of Social Action and Education.</p>
<b>Thematic area</b>	Education, Social Action, Intergenerationality, Volunteering, Active Ageing.
<b>Justification</b>	<p>A considerable number of students attend school in the compulsory education stages (+150) comprised between the ages of 6 to 16 who, due to socioeconomic and cultural reasons, become involved in school absenteeism processes. That entails a high risk of social exclusion and not achieving the learning goals corresponding to these compulsory stages which are so necessary for their future.</p> <p>The competent municipal departments have verified that their families do not have the resources needed to help them overcome this situation.</p> <p>A significant proportion of Permanent University students follow lifelong training programmes and many of them are retired teachers who are willing to collaborate on a voluntary, altruistic basis in actions revolving around training and socio-educational projection.</p> <p>It is important to optimise these possibilities of cooperation between different social and age groups for the purpose of promoting a cohesive, intergenerational and inclusive society.</p> <p>To encourage active ageing.</p> <p>To ensure the existence of an informed young generation that can complete basic education and schooling goals and levels.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To offer extracurricular support to those compulsory education students who need it and whose families do not have enough purchasing power to give them the resources necessary to offset such lacks, so that they can achieve their academic goals.</p> <p>To prevent the scholar absenteeism.</p> <p>To promote intergenerational solidarity.</p> <p>To encourage active ageing.</p> <p>To promote an inclusive society by means of education and intergenerational practices.</p>
<b>Experience</b>	<p>This programme has been developed during the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Altogether, an average of 80-100 scholars per year are being included in this programme and a group of 15 to 20 older adult volunteers has collaborated in it. School children and youngsters are attended to during two 90-to-120-minute-long extracurricular evening sessions held in municipal and community centres.</p> <p>The coordination, programming and organization of this programme falls upon the School Absenteeism Department of the Alicante Town Council and upon the Permanent University.</p> <p>Advertising is made at educational centres and possible beneficiaries are detected through the social workers who develop their professional activity at schools. As for UPUA, informative sessions are held therein. A mailing is performed along with an</p>



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	<p>online survey to register, and the groups are assigned after an informative session.</p> <p>Both social workers and the School Absenteeism Department, together with UPUA, will subsequently carry out a follow-up during the academic year and draw up a final evaluation report about the best practice.</p> <p>This is a complex experience because of the actual characteristics of the school children and youngsters involved and that continuous fight against absenteeism – which is unfortunately so common amongst them. The work groups are heterogeneous and the conditions of the municipal centres where the APAE Programme is implemented (always close to these students' place of residence) are very uneven too.</p>
<b>Results</b>	<p>During the academic year 2015-2016, the programme took place in Town Council facilities located in five different quarters belonging to the city of Alicante. The total number of primary- and secondary-education students to whom help was given amounted to 92, with a waiting list of another 32 minors who could not be included.</p> <p>The programme turns out to be enriching for both groups of participants; on the one hand, these minors can benefit from the knowledge and point of view of a mature teacher with a calmer life perspective, less stress and a richer transmission of values. In turn, the teaching staff also benefits from providing their experience, an activity which enhances their social role, allowing them to feel that they play an active and fruitful role in society.</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- The benefit in terms of the academic improvements that it has meant for the students involved. Using the scores from the first and last evaluation –who were on the whole quite positive, according to the students' parents– as a reference point to develop an objective criterion. The families have transmitted a high degree of satisfaction, feeling that their children are properly attended to both academically and in terms of personal treatment, and they wish to continue with the support programme during the next academic year.</li> <li>2- Personal maturity level of the teaching staff. The type of volunteers that took part were usually pre-retired or retired individuals with a more relaxed approach to life, with a lower degree of stress in their personal life, which positively influences both learning, value transmission and the kind of relationship established between teachers and students.</li> <li>3- Teachers are volunteers. This means that the people involved in the activity feel that they undertake it motivated by a variety of personal and social interests, which has resulted in a teaching staff highly committed to the success of the best practice.</li> <li>4- The teaching staff's training and qualification level was optimum for the classes taught, most of them being teachers/lecturers and graduates.</li> <li>5- On the part of the Social Action Department, the social educators who worked at the centres where the programme took place also described the resource as highly necessary, since there are many minors who need extra help when it comes to academic matters.</li> </ol> <p>These educators referred more students than we could actually deal with to the programme in some city quarters, which clearly suggests the need to continue implementing the programme and looking for more volunteers as well as community centres where we can act.</p>
<b>Future</b>	<p>The APAE Programme is bound to grow in the future, and the challenge lies in trying</p>

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<b>perspectives</b>	<p>to increase the number of volunteers involved in this programme, as this will make it possible to reduce the number of students included in each support group and classes-tutorials. Another of the challenges is to keep a steady and large group of volunteers who can carry out substitution tasks in the event of absences due to personal circumstances or sick leaves.</p> <p>On the part of the participating institutions, they are trying to improve the conditions needed in terms of infrastructure and teaching means (reading and writing materials, bibliography and internet access) as well as the coordination level required to make this best practice easier and more convenient.</p>
<b>Remarkable facts</b>	<p>This is a programme and a best practice which has a high social impact and is always and in all circumstances offered free of charge and on a non-profit basis.</p> <p>It promotes intergenerational relationships and active ageing.</p> <p>Thanks to the APAE activity performed during the academic course 2015-2016, it was detected that the older adults who volunteered to meet the needs of minors insist on the need for greater attention and mutual support (Training Programme for Volunteering, Mutual Support Programme for Volunteering). Therefore, and seeking to strengthen and improve the bond that volunteers have created with the APAE Programme, the Permanent University of the University of Alicante and the School Absenteeism Department of the Alicante Town Council will try to drive an integral programme that can contribute to improve their mutual cooperation. Attention will thus additionally be paid to the essential need that human beings have to supply and exchange information, to provide emotional support, to improve the quality of the services delivered, to organise activities meant to improve social relationships between those human beings and, finally, to help in solving problems associated with the operation of the programme, so that this best practice can ultimately be improved.</p>
<b>Bibliographic references</b>	<p>Protocol for action in educational centres. School Absenteeism Programme  <a href="http://www.alicante.es/sites/default/files/documentos/documentos/absentismo-escolar/ab-protocolo-actuacion-centros.pdf">http://www.alicante.es/sites/default/files/documentos/documentos/absentismo-escolar/ab-protocolo-actuacion-centros.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.alicante.es/es/noticias/educacion-impulsa-programa-intergeneracional-dar-clases-refuerzo-100-menores">http://www.alicante.es/es/noticias/educacion-impulsa-programa-intergeneracional-dar-clases-refuerzo-100-menores</a></p> <p>Betancor, A. <i>Integrando lo intergeneracional a la perspectiva del envejecimiento</i>. From: <a href="http://www.Academia.edu/download/30357386/arquivo_1_id-83.Pdf">http://www.Academia.edu/download/30357386/arquivo_1_id-83.Pdf</a></p> <p>Thoits, P. A., &amp; Hewitt, L. N. (2001). Volunteer work and well-being. <i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>, 42(2), 115-31. Retrieved from <a href="http://search.proquest.com/docview/201663945?accountid=17192">http://search.proquest.com/docview/201663945?accountid=17192</a></p>
<b>Contact Details</b>	
<b>Web page</b>	<a href="http://www.universidadpermanente.com/iniciativas/es/apae">http://www.universidadpermanente.com/iniciativas/es/apae</a>
<b>E-mail address</b>	<a href="mailto:universidad.permanente@ua.es">universidad.permanente@ua.es</a>
<b>Postal address</b>	Universidad de Alicante Carretera de San Vicente s/n - Aulario III
<b>Telephone No.</b>	965909793 – 965145979
<b>Fax No.</b>	965909812
<b>Contact person</b>	Concepción Bru Ronda