PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION – BASIC MODULES FOR TEACHER TRAINING – TRAIN

Module 3:
Project Work at Literacy Learning and Basic Adult Education

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1. Title / subject: Project Work at Literacy Learning and Basic Adult Education

The main subject of this module is project learning and how to create learning environment in every day life in literacy courses /basic adult education. The module exposes crucial elements of this construction and teacher's role in it. The main purpose of module is to stimulate and enable teachers for searching of new ways and creativeness in their work with literacy students. The advocators of this approach understand that "reflection" and "action upon reflection" is main road to become successful lifelong learners in modern knowledge based society.

2. Description of the target group

The course is directed to teachers, mentors, tutors, other experts or volunteers that might want to teach at literacy courses or basic adult education. The participants should already have experiences in the work with adults in one hand and they should be familiar with the common European conception of life long learning. They should be prepared to reflect their pedagogical work, attitudes towards literacy students, and understandings of crucial notions like: knowledge, competences, learning and teaching. They should be motivated to search for new opportunities for learning in every day life. They should be interested to research and reflect upon problems at local environment that are important for their students. They shall be prepared to argue for their students.

3. Aims and objectives

The aim of module is to enable teachers to support their students when they want to resolve every day problems that refers to literacy. The module helps teachers to reflect upon the concept of learning in every day life that is based on the theory of social constructivism, experienced learning and principles of learning by doing. The participants of the module shall experience the joy and effects of finding relevant learning problem that can be actively constructed by all the participants themselves and resolves in everyday context. In this way they become competent to select and construct learning in every day life. Project learning is a model for this in one hand and the means and models how students themselves can change their reality through learning on the other hand. In this sense project learning is also means for student's empowerment. The module includes brief reflection upon notions like teaching, learning, empowerment and relevant theories. The main stress is put on the techniques how to select relevant learning problems with the students themselves and create proper learning environment - i.e. how to transform life problem in learning problem or opportunity for learning. Teachers learn how to construct learning project and make action plan, include important others from the environment in learning process, search for ways by which literacy students can argue for themselves and for the ways teachers can support students during the learning process

4. Rationale

The modern conception and understanding of lifelong learning presumes that learning is crucial competence that human need to develop for her self-realisation and her progress in society. At the same time learning is also the social activity that is necessary for development in all fields of human and social life. We understand this in the way that life is learning – i.e. learning is part of every day life. Life and learning are not separated in the way e.g. there is time for learning and there is time for working and leaving. People shall be able to recognise their learning needs. Problems that one is not able to resolve at the moment are in the way opportunity for learning. It is important that people learn how to learn when they want to resolve their every day problems. In this way they should be able to manage the stress that accompany this kind of un-comfortable positions in one hand but on the other hand they need to develop strategies and competences for learning in every day life. In this way people become motivated for learning as self-directed learners in different learning environments. Modern education shall help people to learn that – this is probably one of the crucial task of common school and other form of education. Teachers in literacy courses and basic education have had great opportunity to help their students in this way. It seems that project learning that is constructed upon real students' problems might serve as a model for this. It helps students to experience the power of learning and enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge that are needed for this. We also know today that learning or educational process shall create opportunities that enable students to promote their knowledge and competence for different purposes in every day life. Project learning that is not locked in the classrooms but is happening in the relation and trough the cooperation with the environment shall have this kind of effect too. In this way we may say with Brookfield's words (Brookfield, S. (1990): Adult Learners, Adult Education and Community.

Open University Press. Milton Keynes) that learners learn **in** the environment (e.g. local community), **about** the environment, **for** the environment. When we use "in the environment" we use to think that educators shall recognize the learning needs of learners and that environment (with the particular problems, structure and the ways people do things, experts and professionals…) is kind of the laboratory where students can learn what they need for their life. They learn "about and for" the environment when they recognise the problems of the environment and tend to change what is missing or does not work. They can learn this by e.g. learning for citizenship. If they need e.g. new bus station they may learn in literacy courses what democratic ways might be used to expose the problem, argue for their needs, what are the institutions and the people in the environment that are competent and able to help to resolve the problem and how all those can be expressed in oral and written mode (e.g. basic literacy skills). In this way people learn how to become active citizens that learn all the time through life. Reflection upon experiences is the main competence of learning that enable people to become life-long active learners. Learning through project (e.g. We need bus station) help teachers to create learning environment where relevant problems and relevant competences, knowledge, skills and attitudes might be exposed and learned not only in the context of literacy classroom, but in the cooperation with important others in the environment – e.g. experts, people from municipality and similar. Literacy learning become relevant and life full for learners themselves. On the other hand teachers become more reflected practitioners, i.e. moderator and counsellors not so much classical transmitters of knowledge that teach alongside prescribed curriculum contents. In this way they need to develop relevant competences and attitudes that are allow them to teach in this way.

5. Description of Content

Content:
- Background theory and philosophy of learning and teaching
  Descriptors: social constructivism; experiential learning; learning by doing, hierarchy of needs, problem solving, Dewy, Vigotsky, Bruner, Luria, Kolb, Gardner, Maslow.
- Understanding Literacy Students – main problems of literacy students
  Descriptors: literacy as social practice, language and literacy in social context, learning obstacles, Barton, Padmore, Street, Freire, Cross.
- Principles and aims of project learning
  Main principles of learning in projects: problem oriented, aim oriented, interdisciplinary, concreteness, action oriented, consideration of students needs and interests, participated learning, contextual learning.
- Select learning problems
  Learning group reflect upon their teaching practices and learning problems of their students. They need to select several of them that are most important according to their opinion.
- Create project
  Through technique of creative thinking (e.g. brain storming or buzz group) discussion and debate students are stimulated to generate an idea for learning project.
- The differences between project and learning project
  When the idea of project is established and main tasks and priorities in projects are defined, students are encouraged to define the learning opportunities within project. They summarise the learning outcomes that might be achieved in the learning by realising the particular project tasks. Outcomes might be derived from the curriculum of literacy or any other basic education of adult education.
- Action plan for group's learning project
  They determine concrete learning activities, learning outcomes, predict formative and summative evaluation and place them in time.
- Monitoring and evaluating in learning project
  Descriptors: Evaluation in education, assessment and evaluation, formative, summative assessment and evaluation, monitoring process in learning.
- Position of individual student and group's learning project
  Individual learning plan within common leaning project, dynamic of individual and group learning
- The role of teacher in project learning
  Teacher as a counsellor, moderator, facilitator, competences teachers need to do project learning, relation among students and literacy teachers or teachers in basic adult education.

6. Methodological and didactic aspects

Learning methodologies and didactical approach

- Building up learning project
- Presentation of good practice – successful learning project
- Counselling and guiding when preparing learning project
- Presentation and evaluation of learning project in the group
- Presentation, lecturing

Main methodologies: discussions, debates, group and pair working, presentations, lecturing – explanations.

7. Key learning points and recommendations

The program of module consists of five main stages that usually immerge in every group's project of learning too. **First stage** is when people come together to learn or to do something together. At the very beginning they usually are not the group yet and thus need some rope to know each other better, to pose themselves in the group and to discus the things they can do together. At this stage it is very important the leader of workshop (teacher) crate the atmosphere where people can talk and open themselves to the group. It depends on the group what ice-breakers are most appropriate. At the piloting group of Module 3 we use short introduction of participants (name, teaching area and most important problems that one participate at the field of literacy or basic adult education in one's own teaching practice. In next step we asked them what do they expected from the module 3). This activity was very good accepted and latter on in evaluation process participants told us that this was very good starting point to think about what shall be done differently in adults teaching and what they may expect from module 3[1]. It was very good starting points for creating project idea.

Next stage is searching **for project idea.** In this stage we exposed the needs and interests of concrete student group in basic adult education. In piloting group e.g. teachers find that all of their students are interested in hockey that is important symbol of their town and "culturally" ties up all of students in basic adult education. The identification with the local hockey club that is very successful in the league of Slovenia represents the base for common –group identity. The question what learning we may base upon hockey rise several interesting ideas. Finally we decide to pose an exhibition about the development of hockey in their town and its implications on economical, cultural and societal development of region. We set exhibition in the local museum at the time of Life Long Learning Week that runs on every year in Slovenia. Close cooperation with he museum shall be exposed and also with other institution and people in the environment (local media, sportsmen (former contemporary), municipality and local Folk High School that provide elementary school for adult. In next step we make **action plan for project**: the group define the main tasks and sources and estimate the time that is needed for realization. At the appendix 2, there is the sample of tasks that may run out within hockey exhibition). In forth step we pose the question "**what students in basic education can learn** when they try to realise the project tasks (see example in appendix2)". We come out from the nature of task and confront them with the learning standards of the elementary school of the teaching fields of participants (math, Slovenian language, philosophy, sociology and literacy course) in one hand and estimated learning needs of students on the other hand. Pilot groups find this part as much demanded and intellectually very difficult. It is very important to limit the number of standards we include in the project learning. Teachers from pilot group finds themselves as lost in the space for a while, because they need to transfer academically posed learning standards in the context of every day life. Especially math teacher finds out that some parts of school curriculum are difficult to be transformed because it is rarely occur the needs to be used at every day life.

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[1] The main statements of piloting group relate to the main problems in basic adult education concerns learners (low motivation for learning, social excluding, bad learning habits, cultural differences and cultural "indetermination" (question of mother tongue i.e. a lot of people are second or third generation that came from republics of former Yugoslavia e.g. from Bosnia and Herzegovina and) weak social network, irregular attendance at school classes)), educational system of Slovenia (For adult's elementary school piloting group stress : the program don't respect needs and characteristics of learners, learning contents are not significant for life of adult students, teaching and learning at school are to traditional (lecturing as a prevailing teaching method), school culture is differ in regarding to subculture of learners) and some of social environment: e.g. parents do not care for child learning, spoiled children, education is not valued, to be educated is not what would environment considered as an important.

The last stage – Presentation and evaluation of learning project has been discussed in the dynamic of several axes e.g. individual and group learning; parts and the whole learning project; formative and summative assessment; evaluation of group learning and evaluation of group dynamic. We predicted the project documentation: log of the learning project per particular learning group and individual log of every student. We were a little bit short of time, so we didn't design the project documentation in detail. But some of the cues may be taken from the web pages that are presented at the references as essential. Through the whole process we discuss and reflect upon the role of the teacher within project learning. The teachers in pilot group stress that role of the teacher differ fully of the traditional teacher i.e. transmitter of knowledge. At one hand they find it much more demanded (counselling, facilitating, work with individual), but on the other hand much more challenging.

There is one more thing that we wish to stress in our discussion how to provide the Module 3. The concrete learning project (case stuy) that was presented at the workshop was extremely important. The case study helps teachers to imagine how to approach and how new approach transforms the role and tasks of the teachers. The moderator who presented the case is very experienced and was able to answer the questions that teachers pose concerning the role and the tasks of teacher. She helps them too when they were preparing their own project. The importance of case studies was exposed also in evaluation.

8. Results

1) Handbook on Module 3

2) Learning outcomes :

On successful compilation of this module participants shall be able to:

- To plan, organise and moderate learning process around students' every day literacy problems by transforming them into learning problems of concrete (learning) project.
- To summarize the competences they need as teachers to identify and reflect upon students learning needs.
- To summarize and become aware of competences they need as teachers to construct learning project and to organize proper learning environment.
- To construct the learning environment where students may reflect upon their learning and thus learn to learn in the way of life long learning context.
- To select the most appropriate learning/teaching methods and study material.
- To monitor and to evaluate learning project.
- To use learning project as a method in basic adult education and literacy learning.

9. References

Essentials (On: what, why, how, the role of the teacher)
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http://college.hmco.com/education/pbl/background.html
http://www.bie.org/files/BIE_PBLplanningform.pdf
http://www.bie.org/index.php/site/PBL/pbl_handbook_downloads/
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Recommended:

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