

Module 3

Sample of Literacy Learning Project

Obtaining social housing



Applying for a social housing
The Ljubljana Municipalities Housing Fund
Non-profit housing organisation Ltd
Issues a public invitation for applications

Prepared by: Natalija Žalec

June 2008

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

0 How this sample of learning project can be used?

This sample of learning project might happen everywhere where people search for better housing conditions. Of course the social framework of learning would be different and thus the content of particular learning texts. But the stress is not put on the content of learning project, but most on the way how we – as teachers may plan learning for our students. First of all we need to respect student's needs and thus we need to hear what students try to tell us about their life, interest, values. Teacher need to relate students' needs with the aim, objectives and outcomes of the learning program where she teaches. The next important competence is to be willing and able to research the subject that her learners are interested to study. Respecting the needs and values of her student and after formative assessment of student's knowledge and skills, teacher may start to plan learning project together with her students. Teacher's role is especially important when students need to define what has to be learned, how to learn and at the end – i.e. how successful and significant was learning for student.

In the sample that is presenting here I describe what is going on in the project. I predict concrete learning outcomes that are related to literacy courses that are running out in Slovenia. I predict concrete learning activities that are evident from the learning sheets that are in appendix of this description. Those activities might be different, but all in all they try to be sample of the idea how learning in literacy course or in basic education might be tailored to concrete learning project of concrete learning group in concrete social context.

1 Background of the learning project

The project idea has been born during the break of one of literacy classes when I was talking with the group of students that attended the literacy course. They were mainly the women from Roma village age between sixteen and thirty. Most of them have been married and got children. Most of them did complete less than 8 years of compulsory school. There was only one young woman of sixteen who tend to prolonged schooling in vocational school for waitresses. Their literacy was low, but all of them can write and read. All of them were unemployed or received social grant.

I came to visit their group as a supervisor of literacy courses and thus I didn't know exactly what their living conditions are and how they live in general. So during the break, when we smoke together, we talk about every day life and about the life expenses. I can't remember how they switched to the housing problem, but it was enough for me to realize that this is their main life problem. They told me about the conditions they live in and about their needs, wishes and hoping. Their village hadn't got electricity in that time, neither water supply (they use wells). All of their houses didn't have all the legal certificates and building licenses and thus were considered as a "black buildings". They were afraid to loose their home in one hand, but on the other hand they were not happy to live in kind of ghetto. Especially the youngest women express their wishes to live in neighborhood together with non-Roma people. They search for better life and thus they decided to attend the literacy course.

When I was thinking about those people I could confirm again to myself that literacy courses shall help people in managing their every day life. Learning in literacy courses shall be close

to their life problems. I ask myself how literacy teacher could help their students in solving their life problems that demand to be literate.

The two teachers of this group were very experienced not only in literacy teaching, but they were familiar with the Roma's problems too. They related learning in literacy courses with public work that help some of the Roma villages to improve life conditions. Together with municipality and Roma people from the village they were learning by doing necessary infrastructure of the village – i.e. water supply and canalization. Those two teachers support the villagers with teaching and help them when they need to express their attitudes and views in negotiation with partners in public work, when they need to understand what is going on in their village. On the other hand they closely cooperate with the people from the municipality and employment agency. They advocate for their learners in one hand, but on the other hand they help people when problems need to be clarified. Both teachers act like facilitators or counselors. They create learning lessons according to the literacy course's learning outcomes but in the relation with concrete public work that was going on in the village and was extremely important for their learners.

In my proposition I do the same. In the learning project that I am presenting here there are elements of potential literacy learning that my happened when one search for social housing. I come out from reality of public tenders. I use real documents, laws and documentation that is needed in this process. I relate the subject of learning project with concrete learning outcomes that are predicted in curriculum of literacy courses that are running out in Slovenia. This learning include the learning content of elementary school (e.g. calculating square dimension), but it is set in the life context of adult literacy students. This shall be starting point of every learning project that is happening in literacy and basic adult education.

2 The Aim of the project

The learning project shall help people in their striving to improve their housing conditions. At the same time they improve their literacy skills. They improve their communication: speaking, writing and reading, ICT skills, calculating, learning skills, decision making skills etc. The learning project has enabled them to use their competences – skills, knowledge, values and attitudes in the concrete problem situation. In this way they can evaluate their knowledge in the way what they have already know, what they need to learn and what they actually have learned. And finally how useful is their knowledge in resolving concrete life problems. They need to organize their learning environment within the problem situation and around the learning sources that are accompany the problem situation. This “meta knowledge” or we can say “learning about learning” might help people in every new problem situation; even the learning content will be different.

3 Learning Outcomes

Competency/skills	Learning outcome	Key standards	Learning sheet
Communication	Read with understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine the reading purpose, - Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose, -Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose 	No2 No 4 No 8 No 12
	Writing with the purpose	Determine the purpose of communication. Organize and present information to serve the purpose, context and audience. Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of the communication	No 6 No 7 No9 No 11 No 13 No14
	Speak and be understood	Determine the purpose of communication. Organize and relay information to effectively serve the purpose, context and listener. Pay attention to conventions of oral Slovenian language and of social context of communication (formal/non- formal)	No 1 No5 No 4 No 6
	Listen actively	Attend the oral information. Monitoring comprehension, adjusting listening strategies to overcome barriers to comprehension.	No1 No2 No 5 No 6
	Observe critically	Attend visual sources of information, including television and other media. Determine the purpose for observation and use strategies appropriate to the purpose. Monitor comprehension and adjust strategies. Analyze the accuracy, bias and usefulness of the information.	No 2 No 4 No5 No 6 No 8
Interpersonal skills	Cooperate with others	Interact with others in ways that are friendly, courteous, and tactful and that demonstrate	No 4 No 5 No 6

		respect for others ' ideas, opinions and contributions. Seek input from others in order to understand their reactions and actions. Offer clear input on own interest and attitudes so others can understand one's action and reactions.	No 7/p3,4 No1
	Advocate and influence	Assess interest, resources and potential for success. Define what one is trying to achieve. Gather facts and supporting information and takes into account attitudes of others.	No1 No7 No8/homework
	Resolve conflict and Negotiate	Acknowledge that there is a conflict. Identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Generate options for resolving conflicts – win-win.	No 6 No7/p3,4
Lifelong learning	Use information and communications Technology	Use computers and other electronic tools to acquire, process and manage information. Use the Internet to explore topics, gather information, and communicate.	No 1 No4 No5 No6
	Learn through research,	Pose questions to be answered. Use multiple lines of inquiry to collect information.	No 1 No2 No 4 No 5 No6
	Reflect and evaluate upon one's knowledge and skills	Assess what one knows already, what ones want to learn and relevance of what one has learned.	No2 No 15 No8/homework
	Take responsibility for learning	Establish learning goals. Identify own strengths and weaknesses and seek out for opportunities for learning. Become familiar with range of learning strategies to acquire knowledge. Monitor progress toward goals and modify strategies if needed. Test out new learning.	No3 No 15 No8

Decisions making skills	Use Math to solve problems and communicate	Understand interpret and work with pictures, numbers and symbolic information. Define and select data to be used in solving the problem. Solve problem using appropriate quantitative procedures and verify that results are reasonable.	No7 No 11 No 12 No 13
	Plan	Set and prioritize goals. Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives.	No 2 No7 No 11 No 12 No 13

4 Learning and Teaching

We search for active learning and explicit knowledge. Students shall observe themselves how knowledge helps them in solving problems. In short period of learning in literacy course they shall be exposed to the learning experiences through which they are able to resolve literacy problem in every day life. In this way they will internalize “knowing how” to approach to the problem and how to behave in problem situation. They internalize some of the learning and basic skills and develop their learning and other key competences. In this way they slightly become independent learners that are able to learn through life and thus competently resolve their life problems. We could call this as literacy learning in action. Reflection upon action means learning experiences. We may say what John Dewey has put long time ago “a lot of things have happened in people’s life, but if they are not reflected, people don’t learn from their experiences.” The learning projects are this kind of experiences. We don’t believe in “banking” knowledge, i.e. it is not possible to learn at one period of life for the whole life, but it is possible to learn, how to learn.

Learners do not learn in isolation. Learning is a social activity where other entities than the isolated learner emerge – in our case learning organisation, teacher, other learners, Municipality Non-profit housing organisation and others. All the activities, tasks, functions, and understandings that are related to these do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. “These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations...To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities.” (Lave & Wenger ; see in Tutor Guide to accompanying young adults in developing their ePortfolio; 2006). Literacy as such is a clear social phenomenon that changes all the time due to the scientific, social and economical development. It is consequence and the motors of development at the same time. From this point of view learning is a creative and innovative process that changes current practices and habits, thus also changing social reality.

Learning is not only acquisition of knowledge, but the increasing participation in a community of practice. Learning literacy thus means learning to be and learning to

participate in the community. Learners are actively involved in their own learning. The communication between teacher and learner and other involved in learning project shall be open and constructive.

Active learning methods, i.e. discussion, group work, peer group presentations, fieldwork, tutorials prevailed.

5 The role of teacher

Teaching methods shall stimulate learning competences towards self-reflected learner. Teachers helps students through whole learning process from defining learning problem, setting learning goals, creating learning environment, searching for learning sources, evaluating and assessing learning. They help students giving them rope to the important other in society and act as a models in transforming everyday 'problem' s situation into learning situation and thus act in the way of students empowerment. Teacher helps student in identifying her learning needs. Teacher's role is especially important when learning content and standards shall be articulated, because students usually are not able to define them by themselves. Teacher acts as a facilitator during the learning crises, when students are tired of learning – when their motivation goes down and may not be able to see their own learning progress.

Teacher is not transmitter of knowledge, but more counsellors, facilitator or mediator of student's learning. Her role is important in formative, continuous and summative assessment.

On the other hand literacy teachers and teachers in basic adult education are important intellectual force that may argue for lifelong leaning and rights of adults in this context. Through learning projects they demonstrate and expose opportunities for learning in every day life. In this way they importantly influence people's understanding of learning and extend importance of non-formal learning and learning in several different contexts.