

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

Module 5: Learning Counselling in Literacy and Basic Education

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1. Title / subject: Learning Counselling in Literacy and Basic Education
2. Description of target group
3. Aims and objectives
4. Rationale
5. Description of content
6. Methodological and didactical aspects/considerations
7. Key learning points and recommendations
8. Results
9. References

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1. Title / Subject: Learning Counselling in Literacy and Basic Education

The way pedagogues see themselves and the way they regard their tasks changes: they become counsellors, moderators and facilitators. The aim of the module “learning counselling” is to enable tutors to support and accompany their participant’s learning processes.

2. Description of the target group

The course is directed at practitioners, tutors or teachers in the field of literacy and basic education. The participants of the seminar should already have experiences in the work with students. In addition they should have attended further training sessions which should have included an introduction in literacy and basic education of adults. They should be prepared to reflect their pedagogical occupation, their didactical planning and acting in a critical way. They should have joy and interest in the further development of their work, in transfer considerations of their situation in everyday life and in quality assurance of the course results.

3. Aims and objectives

The aim of the module “Learning Counselling” is to enable practitioners to support and accompany their students. As students in literacy courses must be advised as to the possibilities for learning which exist in overcoming learning difficulties counselling requires a tutor with extensive knowledge of education, social and educational psychology as well as personal qualities. The module focuses on teaching counselling skills and is designed in such a way that learning is possible both via theoretical insight as well as practical experience in order that practitioners gain as much practical competence as possible.

The participants of the seminar should be able to

- Explore the basic principles of learning counselling.
- Experience themselves as a person enabled to learn.
Regarding the significance of self experience, one participant in the course said: “I think if one works with people of our target group one has to be prepared to take part in educational programmes specifically tailored to the needs of students, in order to empathize with the situation of the participants. I would even go so far to say that colleagues who are not prepared to do this, are not suited for this occupation.” (Tröster, 2000, Page131)
- Develop an awareness of one’s own abilities, behaviours and attitudes.
- Perceive progresses in learning and to “reveal“ them in the dialogue with the students.
- Support and to accompany the students in their process of learning.
- Improve the perception, recognition and comprehension of learning problems.

The practitioners should be qualified and supported in their competences and abilities regarding aspects like reflection on one’s own role, dialogue and reflection, change of perspectives.

Different manifestations of these aspects should be examined and corresponding strategies and aid possibilities for the support of the participants of basic education should be developed.

4. Rationale

The need for counselling is increasing. Counselling is in fashion. At first sight this is less a phenomenon, and more a feature, a characteristic: in times of labour-market changes, and upheaval in society the need for counselling is in high demand. In this context it is interesting that, as opposed to the conveying of knowledge, counselling of tutors is gaining in importance. This is accompanied by a change in the way pedagogues see themselves and in the way they regard their tasks: tutors are taking over more and more a mediatory role – they are mediating between students, specialized knowledge and the changing requirements of society. They become counsellors, moderators and facilitators which results in a changing of the former communication and interaction of the tutoring and study conduction. For students and practitioners alike this means uncertainty and reorientation.

Even for those who are occupied in literacy and basic education, it is a great challenge to initiate and organize successful learning processes. The hurdles in this field are especially high because they work with students who have had extremely negative learning experiences.

Since reference to the concept of learning counselling will be made several times in the following items there will be an excerpt describing the concept at this point:

“The learning situation of the individual is characterized by his present situation and learning history that resulted in a particular self-image and image of the world. These images, the product of encouragements and discouragements, and the present standing in life shape unconscious patterns of behaviour which contribute to the success or failure of learning. If learning is successful, there is hardly any need for making a point of this unconscious blueprint of action; whenever learning problems arise, however, it becomes necessary to take up this subject. One must proceed from the situation and background of the individual student and see how he relates to them in his daily actions. This is the synchronic level. On the other hand, this behaviour can only be understood, if one is familiar with the individual’s ways of looking at things and with his patterns of behaviour that he acquired in the course of his biography, and thus includes the diachronic level.

Among the frequently encountered learning problems mentioned by tutors of literacy courses are: lack of progress in learning, learning deadlock, passivity, insufficient concentration, late arrival, skipped classes, clinging to old methods of learning, negative self-descriptions such as “I’ll never learn that!”, inability to understand linguistic structures. If these learning difficulties are to be classified at the synchronic level, they can be roughly divided into three groups:

- *learning problems based on the personality of the student;*
- *learning problems resulting from interaction in the group;*
- *learning problems connected to the topics of learning and the way they are conveyed, hence problems that are related to the teacher as well.*

Counselling sessions, be they group discussions or person-to-person talks, lend themselves to unravelling this tie between the synchronic and diachronic level. These counselling sessions that accompany the learning process – all generalized under the

term learning counselling – may take many different forms, yet all of them aim at one thing: to make successful learning possible.

Learning counselling is of great significance in terms of prophylaxis as well: it can prevent failure of the new learning process. In this context, counselling is not only understood as a discussion to solve problems; rather, the point is to integrate elements of counselling into the general work of transmitting knowledge; this may, for example, take the form of regular “talks about learning”.

The aim of these talks is to gradually improve accurate perception of oneself and of others and to gradually bring about increased awareness of oneself and better mutual understanding and comprehension of processes in order to create a positive atmosphere for learning which allows both for cooperative efforts and individual learning.

The qualification of the tutor is the decisive prerequisite for the success or failure of counselling sessions. Besides possessing theoretical knowledge and being familiar with counselling methods, the tutor must have reappraised his own learning history. Otherwise there could be the danger that he unconsciously transfers his own principles of action and expectations concerning relationships to the participants, or that he might not recognize what expectations actually having to do with other people or circumstances are being transferred by individual students to him or the entire class.” (Fuchs-Brüninghoff 1987).

5. Description of content

Content:

- Background theory of counselling
- Principles and aims of counselling
- Methods of counselling and basic counselling skills
- Verbal and non-verbal communication in course and counselling situations
- Reappraisal of one’s own learning history
- The adult literacy learner: individual learning strategies, learning styles, learning problems
- Cooperative case counselling
- Learning counselling.

Statements concerning learning counselling are compiled and reflected in the context of didactic, history, theoretical classification, principles, methods, qualification, further development and reception.

In different exercises basics related to counselling competence are tested and reflected step by step. In verbal communication exercises (listening, asking questions concerning this matter) and non verbal communication exercises (recognizing signs, posture, expression on somebody's face etc. (cf. Fuchs-Brüninghoff, 1991, Page 11) on this exercises respective counselling competences are built, tested and reflected.

In another block pertaining to theory, testing and transfer, the topic of grounds and processes of learning counselling is dealt with. In a case work in which the entire group is included, abilities acquired in former steps and their different application, e.g., listening, assuming, perceiving, identifying, are summarized in a change of perspectives over several steps.

The counselling competences developed in the seminar's course are the basis for testing different counselling situations and their transfer in the professional everyday life. A part of the exercises is based on the further education "DIE-certificate counselling" which is planned and conducted by Elisabeth Fuchs-Brüninghoff. With the help of gained experiences of the EU – project "Training module for the qualification of trainers who work with people with lower levels of basic education" (TAGG) different aspects of the complex term "learning problems" in relation to possible reasons, their possible form of appearances and possible help and/or solutions shall be experienced and investigated with the help of single examples and be developed according to learning counselling situations.

6. Methodological and didactical aspects/considerations

Learning methodologies and didactical approach

This module will consider different learning and teaching methods and will include:

- Presentation/Lecture
- Group Discussion
- Group Activities
- Case-Study
- Role play
- Exercises in sensitivity training
- Counselling demonstrations
- Cooperative counselling

Due to the fact that the approach is "person-related" the choice of methods as well as the didactic considerations, that topics and institutional questions are suited to the individual person. "Person-centered mediating work focuses on the establishment of a connection between a person and a topic according to a personal relevance-filter. The subjective relevance filter has a strong influence on which information is taken up and made into behaviour-relevant knowledge" (Fuchs-Brüninghoff 2000, Page 87).

The emotional cognitive process: The methods are not theoretically presented but experienced in ones own acting and then afterwards reflected upon.

The experience and reflection of the change of perspective. Regarding this method, different ways of looking at things can be perceived and experienced. Through the adoption of changing roles the participants are encouraged to consider a topic from many different angles. They experience in so doing, on the one hand the limits of their own way of thinking and on the other hand the chance, to resolve a chronic blockage of thought, and to set forth in new ways (cf. Peter Senge 1996, page 318).

Non-verbal communication and perception: In dealing with students in this context, it is important and necessary to intensely consider the non-verbal, and to become perceptive to signs and signals.

7. Key learning points and recommendations

The module learning counselling is planned as a three-day seminar which will take 24 hours altogether. It can be assumed that the teachers already have practical experience regarding courses so that they have specific expectations and questions for the seminar, at which this will be tied in thoroughly.

On the first day the concept learning counselling will be presented to the teachers from the fields of literacy and basic education. Since this deals with a person related approach, theoretical conducting will be linked with practical implementation. Thus it is primarily about verbal and non-verbal communication in course and counselling situations in order to train and sensitise the perception. Finally learning aided and learning inhibiting factors will be identified and balanced out of ones own learning experiences in order to obtain important indications concerning learning accesses.

On the second day manifestations of learning problems will be discussed and constituent elements of counselling will be presented. This forms the basis of the concrete processing in case management and role plays to test learning counselling.

On the third day a cooperative counselling will be instructed, tested and evaluated on the basis of concrete cases. In a step further to this the participants will plan specific transfer steps to apply learning counselling concretely as a didactical principle in the teaching and learning process.

At the end of the module the participants will have gained foundations in learning counselling – related to the theoretical knowledge as well as to the necessary instruments.

The seminars should be conducted by experts who have both, a field competence in the area of literacy and basic education and a qualification in counselling.

8. Results

The participants of the seminar will improve their knowledge and their competences with regard to the following fields:

- Acquisition of counselling competences
- Acquisition of communication skills
- Collection of material-/ and methods for the qualification in learning counselling
- Guide for the test and conduction of learning counselling
- Conversation guide for learning counselling conversation
- Elements (criterias) for the creation of learning arrangements
- Models /elements for a person centered didactic.

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