

## **EU PROJECT TRAIN – Final conference**

### **PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION – EU TRENDS**

#### **Training and professional development of adult literacy teachers – the case of Slovenia**

##### THE SYSTEM

From the very start in 1992 training of adult literacy tutors in Slovenia has been organised as accredited non-formal training and part of professional development of teachers. There are no specific under-graduate or postgraduate studies on adult literacy in Slovenia nor specific formal adult literacy teacher training qualifications. The development and provision of the training has been funded by the state similarly as adult literacy programmes. The adult literacy teacher certificate is a formal requirement for verification of providers of publicly funded adult literacy programmes and one of the conditions required for public funding of the literacy provision.

The adult literacy training programme was developed and is carried out by Slovenian Adult Education Institute in co-operation with the University of Ljubljana and involvement of some other institutions depending of the target group in the literacy programme (e.g. Ministry of labour, family and social affairs; national employment

agency; Ministry of agriculture; Chamber of Commerce; trade unions and few others).

The public funds for literacy provision in Slovenia are limited and are distributed on the basis of public tender, they are not sufficient for regular employment of the teaching staff, therefore majority of adult literacy teachers in Slovenia are part time teachers or they work as literacy teachers as part of their regular work.

The legal base for the adult literacy lays in the Law on adult education from 1996, Law on system and organisation of education in Slovenia from 1996, National adult education master plan from 2004, National adult literacy strategy from 2005 and National lifelong strategy from 2007.

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entry requirements for teacher candidates are: university degree, pedagogical or adult education and professional exam<sup>1</sup>. Initial interview with the teacher candidate is the next step before enrolling in the training. In general educators that have or want to gain experience in teaching, counselling and other socio-cultural work with less educated adults, with positive attitudes towards lifelong learning and positive attitudes towards educationally, socially and economically disadvantaged people are preferred as adult literacy teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> The professional exam is a national exam which a person takes after one year of working. It is made up from three different topics: Slovenian language, Slovenian constitution and Slovenian law regarding adult education.

## DURATION

The whole training lasts around 130 hours – depending on which literacy programme the teacher wants to work in. The training consists of 2 parts; basic training and training for teaching in one of the 5 different literacy programmes. After completing basic training teachers can continue with one or more of the specific parts of the training. The basic training consists of 92 hours and the specific ones vary (from 20 to 40 hours).

## KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES OF ADULT LITERACY TEACHERS

Adult literacy teachers in Slovenia are expected to develop skills, knowledge and competences in the three inter-related fields: in the field of professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills and abilities and professional values and commitment. Therefore the training provides teachers with an understanding of the concept of literacy, literacy related problems, characteristics and needs of the target groups, methods of motivating and supporting participants to join and stay in the programme, understanding the aims of the programmes, teaching methods for reaching the programme's goals, the importance of networking, advocacy and counselling ... The teachers realize the significance of psychological and social background for the development of basic skills. They understand the philosophy of learning as a social process and furthermore the aims and methodologies of project work. They also learn how to plan, supervise and evaluate teaching sessions, individual or group learning and participants' accomplishments.

## TEACHER TRAINERS

Teacher trainers are experts (university teachers, researchers, counsellors) which do development, research or counselling work in areas, related to the target group. Each time the trainers (with their top-level expert knowledge and their openness towards people) create with the participants an interesting, applicable and purpose oriented experience.

## METHOD

Teacher training is carried out in a form of lectures and workshops, field work and presentations, all in which the participants take an active part. The training is adapted regularly to the background knowledge, experience and needs of the participants.

## THE CERTIFICATE

Teachers get a certificate for adult literacy teacher when they:

- attended the training (at least) 80 percent of the time,
- prepare and perform satisfactory the small field research on the situation and learning needs of the specific target group in the local environment in which they are going to teach,
- prepare and perform satisfactory a teaching and learning sequence using project work and active learning methods,
- get a positive opinion on the level of their active participation throughout the training,
- get a positive mark on the final essay which is a programme plan in which they show the necessary understanding of the needs of the target group, skills and abilities to plan relevant leaning sequences throughout the learning programme, using variety of learning and teaching approaches and taking into account all the areas of basic

competences (basic skills of communicating, reading, writing and numeracy, learning to learn, active citizenship, social skills, ICT).

### ON GOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SIAE is funded by the Ministry of education for monitoring adult literacy programmes and for providing further professional development of adult literacy teachers. In the process of monitoring adult literacy teachers needs are assessed and annual training programmes is established in negotiation with teachers. Teachers get credits for participation in (mostly) one day workshops. Once a year workshops are organised dedicated to organisational issues and evaluation and exchange of practical experiences and examples of good practices. This is an opportunity for teachers to share examples of good practises, explain about the difficulties they experience with realisation of the programmes, and anything else they feel is important to share and discuss with other teachers and literacy experts.

### ADVANTAGES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SYSTEM

The advantages of the present training system are several but there are also several disadvantages which hinder the further development and also quality of teaching and learning in adult literacy programmes in Slovenia.

The positive aspects of the present system are:

- rather regulated publicly funded system of literacy teachers training organised on a national level, with set standards and requirements for teaching,
- regularly monitored system, constantly adapted to the teachers needs,

- high profile and accredited training programme,
- positive transfer of new methodologies, knowledge, skills and experiences from non formal adult education system to teaching in schools,
- high educational level and high profile of the teaching force which guarantee rather high quality of teaching,
- on going professional development provided for teachers,
- flexible teaching working force which can be mobilised according to the extent of annual funding of literacy scheme.

The disadvantages of the present system are the following:

- there is no undergraduate or post graduate formal literacy teacher training qualifications in Slovenia, the present training is non-formal which reinforces its marginal position within the educational system,
- limited interest of trained literacy teachers for further professional development and training in the field of adult literacy because teaching in literacy provision is not their main job and vocation,
- irregular funding of adult literacy provision creates uncertainty for providers and teachers and programme developers, there are periods when funding is blocked (for example in 2008) and there are no opportunities to work and to develop skills, to maintain the level of skills and knowledge and to get experiences in adult literacy,
- no regular quality control system implemented in the literacy provision (however, the Ministry of education allocated funds for evaluation of the whole adult literacy scheme in 2009).

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