EFFECT

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COUNTRY GROUP ANALYSIS: Estonian experience
(OÜ Kasvulava and OÜ Loome)

Overall overview

Two of the three training conducted in Estonia, took place in adult education institutions - one in an adult secondary school (Pärnu Täiskasvanute Gümnaasium) and the other in a vocational school (Räpina Aianduskool), which in addition to undergraduate education, also organises wide range of training for adults. These training groups gathered teachers from a particular school and served as in-service training. The third pilot training took place in an open group. A total of 32 adult educators completed the pilot training in Estonia, from which 27 finished it with a certificate.

Most of the training days were conducted by Kadri Kõiv, Kristel Jalak, Mari-Liis (Loome OÜ, DevelopDesign®), a couple also by Mai Timmi (Kasvulava OÜ). Shorter online sessions (90 minutes, already planned in the curriculum), were conducted under the guidance of one trainer, all other training sessions under the guidance of two trainers at the same time.

The pilot training took place in difficult circumstances. Due to the COVID-19 situation in Estonia, only one of the groups was able to meet according to the initial plan. We had to adjust the second two pilot training groups to the current situation, so we conducted the last training module via Zoom, not in contact training as it originally was agreed on main principles of curriculum. The trainers also made minor changes to the training plan and applied homework during the training based on the concrete group learning and group processes.

Achievement of learning outcomes

Despite the above described adjustments, most of the planned learning outcomes were achieved and training sessions were provided according to agreed principles. This was possible due to the long-term experience of our trainers in the field of active learning methods and the ability to make the training in Zoom active and engaging for the learners.

The main limitation of the curriculum was the lack of time to achieve all learning outcomes. When planning the curriculum we were too optimistic. It would have taken more time to achieve learning outcomes 4 and 5. Although all the agreed topics were covered, the time limit forced us to set priorities and take into account the learning needs mentioned by the learners. In order to acquire learning outcomes 4 ja 5 fully, it would have been necessary to carry out practical tasks in which each adult teacher would have planned, collected, analysed and summarised the feedback from their own learners.

Recommendation 1: In the future, we recommend supplementing the curriculum and planning all contact learning modules for 12 academic hours (instead of the current 10). This would give extra time for practical approaches to feedback themes. So the total training duration would be at least 26 academic hours.

As mentioned above, most of the learning outcomes were achieved by most learners. They demonstrated them in the last module of the training when they all had a chance to partially conduct mini-trainings to their group members. The mini-training was challenging for the learners, but it was very good to see that even in a short time limit, most of the teachers were able to demonstrate the attitudes, approaches and methods that are suitable for working with adult learners. It was seen that they were consciously and successfully applying what they had learned during the training sessions, for example principles of brain-friendly learning, methods that support group communication and collaboration etc. Teachers were very interested in self-analysis and analysing their own teaching practice.

Learning process and group process

We received good feedback from the learners about the teaching methods we used. Paper-pencil materials worked well (instead of using powerpoint). In the future, the materials shared with learners in the training sessions could be supplemented and even more visuals could be used.

The atmosphere in the training groups supported learning, learners were interested in receiving and giving feedback and highly valued the opportunity to share experiences and learn from other adult educators.

We received confirmation that if the learners meet in contact lessons and after that there will be online sessions, they will be more active in online training. Therefore we recommend starting contact learning and if this is not possible, plan more time for virtual training to build a group and create a climate of trust and cooperation. This time investment ensures deeper and more effective learning for the group.

Other observations and recommendations

The created curriculum framework and the training plan based on it are relatively universal, which means that it is suitable for the training of teachers/adult trainers working with adults in very different environments. Thinking about the final beneficiary of the project - an low-educated and/or low skilled adult learner - it is clear that it is not an homogenous group of learners. The needs of this target group can vary. **Recommendation 2:** In future, training sessions could be added to address specific learning barriers in relation to the target group's specific need. For example going deeper with topics like, e.g. learning attitude (growing and fixed mind-set), etc.

A good example was the cooperation between a special needs educator and a teacher who participated in one training group from the same organisations (school). This combination influenced the training positively, they jointly reviewed the tasks/methods/approaches used by the trainer and adapted them more to the special needs of the learners.

Recommendation 3: Cooperation between special education professionals and teachers is particularly important for this target group. For future training, we definitely recommend

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several people from one educational institution to participate in the same training together as teams. This raises the possibility of making changes in their training practice.

We noticed that teachers focused better on training in a neutral training setting, outside the workplace (school). We recommend finding possibilities for that when planning future training.

We involved the participants in creating the project's second output - the toolkit. The teachers got along well with this activity, we collected a lot of teaching methods. Methods that are valuable and well described are available to everyone in the toolkit.