

Empowerment through non-formal education

Experiences and impacts with vulnerable individuals, groups and communities

From Warsaw to Oporto: the project's visits

Liverpool (September 16th-19th 2013)

In the Liverpool visit in particular, after an extensive presentation of CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) North Liverpool and Walton branches activities (roles, different experiences of accessing advice services, impact of empowerment in advice and training activities), the main work of the group consisted in systematizing the discussion on measuring the Impact of empowerment. A visit to Women's Organization (while "inspecting the venue, at the same time, as potential venue for the project's ending seminar), and to the project called



New Direction, were the occasion of keeping on in the activities of exchanging experiences with different organization, in order to gather and share knowledge about the different ways of intending

and applying empowerment techniques. In particular, New Direction is a project partnership among 4 advice agencies, that works with 13 'registered social landlords'. An innovative project that supports people on a one-to-one basis to better manage their finances, especially in relation with housing issues. A session reserved to the mid-term evaluation reporting (positive aspects + problems/ barriers of the project, strategies to overcome difficulties) closed the visits' program.

Oporto (January 14th-15th 2014)

The fourth visit of the project, held in Oporto, was the occasion for an update of the project and an overview of the programme so far. The visit programme then focused on starting the second part of the "country diagnosis" reserved to the challenges, obstacles and constraints to the promotion of empowerment (individual presentation by each participating partner, Q & A, debate and systematization of conclusions to build final recommendations). The systematization work on the constraints issues, as debated by the partners, is still in the working phase and it will be finalized by the end of February.

The part of the visit programme related with the exchange of experiences and models based on empowerment included the meetings with the staffs that in APDES are working in sex work field ("Sex work is work" – Actions for the social and political recognition of sex work), and with CASO, the first drug user's organization in Portugal. To visit was concluded with a presentation of the ongoing activities related with the video production (see below).



Challenges and constraints on the promotion of empowerment

The impact of empowerment is hard to measure. Some problems can occur at the very beginning of evaluation process, due to the difficulties in defining empowerment as a "concept". Therefore, we can measure results of our actions and interventions, but seldom is a measurement of the impact of empowerment in itself, rather than a quantification of the outcomes of an entire process. The concept of empowerment is not easily materialized in actions or indicators.

It is also difficult to understand what changes can be attributed, directly and indirectly, to our activities. We recognize effects as a result of our work, but actually they are usually consequences of many other factors.

One of the main obstacles regarding measurement of impact is the lack of resources. There is a great focus on interventions and project implementation, while evaluation is often not seen as a priority; a requirement needed to complete a project's frame-

work, and not a potential source of knowledge, change and development. Organizations lack not just funds and time, being usually overloaded with the burden of their activities, there are no skilled and qualified people in staffs, who could take responsibility of evaluating and investigating the impact of empowerment activities.

It is important to find and maintain balance between our expectation towards evaluation and its' ability to be adequate.

VIDEOPOWER: video as an empowerment strategy

The short video under construction is one of the two products of this Grundtvig partnership, meaning that video should add an audiovisual contribution. Earlier, we did some research about partners' expectations regarding the video (goals, targets and use) and found that the

to capture the attention of a wider population, addressing vulnerable population targets.

The strategy chosen to arrive to this product was a video contest, open to individuals or groups, over 18 years old. The dissemination of the contest was oriented for video and multimedia students and schools. The information made available at APDES website comprised several documents:

- The contest regulation that asks for a universal short video and defines the contest rules;

- Testimonial approach - pursuant to the empowerment methodologies we collected some information about the perspective of service users from partner organizations, especially on how people picture and feel the empowerment and disempowerment.

- Definition of empowerment.

The short questionnaire collected answers from 20 persons from different countries and needs, asked to reflect about empowerment in their lives, with some major themes: areas or moments feeling empowered and disempowered, reaction to own rights disrespect, way of dealing with difficulties and images associated to empowerment and disempowerment. This strategy

allowed to achieve the point of view of service users and to introduce the dimension of participation of target populations, albeit in a modest way.

The idea is to disseminate it together with the recommendations, so it can be used in both formal and non-formal training situations, with target populations, staff and volunteers, and shared through websites and social networking with other organizations that deliver education to the same/similar communities in the partners' country and the wider lifelong learning community across Europe.



video is expected to be used mainly with project's populations and families; and also with project's workers/volunteers, and project's stakeholders. It has three main goals:

1. To raise awareness on the dynamics of empowerment of vulnerable populations, contributing to the increase of their civic participation, decision-active voice and autonomy;
2. To create awareness among the general community, and professionals, about the importance of empowering vulnerable groups and involving them in the interventions and policies that impact their lives, as key stakeholders in this process;
3. To work as one more tool to promote discussion and debate in training courses and workshops designed for vulnerable groups, families, professionals and volunteers, as a way to underline the importance of leading an empowered life and to motivate these publics to do so.

The video shall therefore be an instrument of awareness and education of adults, calling for the empowerment of vulnerable populations, raising their civic participation, decision-active voice, the power of choice and autonomy. While the recommendations are addressed to professionals working with vulnerable groups, the video is intended



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