

Rural literacy programme for adults in Slovenia

Introduction:

Rural population faces a challenge of lack of skills that can facilitate participation in society and labour market, which may result in high unemployment rate in rural areas. Also, this could be due to lack of enough learning opportunities, despite their motivation and aptitude for learning.

Rural literacy programme for adults in Slovenia was inceptioned to tackle the above state challenge, in 2005 by Ljudska univerza Velenje (Adult Education Centre Velenje). Its aim is to improve basic skills and competences (in literacy, numeracy and ICT) and social skills, to promote lifelong learning and develop active citizenship among unemployed and low-educated people in the countryside.

The programme offers opportunities to learn self-sufficiently and uses project work as a pedagogical approach, embedding basic skills within the topics of sustainable development and entrepreneurship by initiating an economic activity that is environmentally friendly. The programme is part of Slovenia's active employment policy, where the unemployed participants are entitled to maintenance support in the form, for example, of a living-costs allowance and a contribution to travel costs.

Intervention:

The rural literacy programme is a non-formal, 120-hour training programme that takes place, for the most part, in adult education centres or in venues in rural communities. The starting point for planning project learning is that learning is considered successful if the learners actively participate in all phases of learning from the selection of topic, planning, carrying out, monitoring and evaluation of learning. Each group is made up of between 12 and 16 participants who meet twice a week for four or five months and are mentored by two teachers who give the classes together. The groups focus initially on motivation, with a view to encouraging participants to get to know each other and assessing individual learning needs. An assessment of learning needs helps create an open and negotiated curriculum and supports the development of individual learning plans.

The programme curriculum includes basic literacy and numeracy skills, communication and social skills, learning to learn, active citizenship and ICT skills. This is a basic framework. The exact content depends on the characteristics of local communities and the needs and interests of the learners

Impact/ Learnings:

It has been observed that approximately 500 low-educated adults from rural areas participated in the rural literacy programme between the year 2010 and 2013. The participation was free of charge. Further, through a national level evaluation of the adult literacy programmes in 2010 it was found that the literacy programme contributed significantly on various aspects. For example, approximately 76 percent of participants between 2005 and 2010 felt that they came to know better about their living environment, 83 per cent felt that their chances of succeeding in their local community increased and around 87 per cent found new opportunities for themselves. Additionally, teachers notice that participants acquired new skills, such as communication, social and interpersonal, in addition to knowledge, skills, self-determination and motivation.

A similar model maybe evolved in India in line with the bottom-up approach of the Slovenian model, wherein local skills requirements are factored in. India's NSQF needs to build in adequate flexibility in terms of curriculum and training hours needed for varied geographies and local requirements. A flexible top-up training module with additional training hours maybe explored in alignment with existing course curriculum. Basic literacy, numeracy skills, communication and social skills maybe included in the top-up

training modules.

Source: Challenges of the Countryside – a Rural Literacy Programme for Adults in Slovenia, Slovenia (2016) UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning