

Basic Competence in Working Life Programme (BCWL), Norway

Introduction:

Basic skills are a necessary component to actively participate in the working life. The skills help individuals to acquire new knowledge, benefit from opportunities and be prepared for changes. The lack of such skills may put adults at the risk of not being able to participate in working life.

In order to address this concern, the BCWL programme has been designed specifically at increasing the competence of employees with low levels of education. Through this programme, the government helps prevent people being excluded from an increasingly knowledge-based working life and society due to a lack of basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and use of ICT.

The programme was implemented in 2006 and the implementing organisation is Vox, Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning - An agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

Intervention:

The BCWL programme targets working adults who wish to improve their skills in the workplace. Course providers are trained to ensure that the course contents are relevant to the professional development of the workers. Any business in Norway, public or private, can apply for funding from the programme, but only those whose project meets a certain number of criteria defined by the Ministry of Education and Research are eligible for financial support.

All providers are required to design their courses based on a framework put in place by Vox. The Framework for Basic Skills for Adults, approved by the Ministry in 2007, establishes national standards for reading and writing, mathematics, ICT skills and oral communication. A description of the competence goals for each of the basic skills is divided into three levels.

- Level 1 comprises the absolute basic skills needed in everyday life
- Level 2 describes the competence needed to complete tasks in the workplace reliably
- Level 3 comprises various skills, multi-tasking and the ability to think critically and work independently.

The Key educational tools used by Vox are:

- Maths Aid: Maths Aid is a digital learning tool consisting of tasks with topics from adult everyday life.
- ABC PC: ABC pc is an interactive training programme for basic PC skills.
- InterAct: InterAct is a web-based model based on role play and problem solving. The aim is to motivate learning at work. The activity is relatively short-term (lasting four to six weeks), giving various learning outcomes and creating a starting point for more learning.

Vox has developed a set of test tools to help measure learning outcomes. Most participants have improved their performance in basic skills and are motivated for further learning.

Impact/ Learnings:

Nearly 700 enterprises benefit from the grant, which included industries that are part of clusters. The number of participants has steadily increased, and since 2006, more than 30,000 people had participated by 2013. It has been seen that most participants improved their performance in basic skills and were motivated for further learning. The ICT courses proved to be popular and useful to the participants. Participants also shared that the learning was adapted to their individual needs and participants highlighted experiencing boost in self-confidence and confidence in making use of new technology to take on new tasks.

Government of India may consider similar model to focus on building or refreshing numeracy and communication skills of the workforce along with vocational skills. The short-term skill training programs should build in basic mathematics and communication skills. These will help improve the basic skills of labour force in India as well as increase their productivity in their domain.

Source: The Basic Competence in Working Life, Norway. (2013) UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning