



What

Who

Why

How



Guidelines with lifelong learning strategies for adult learners



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I. ARGUMENT: A MOTIVATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

According to The Department of Education and Science in Dublin, lifelong learning is the ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.

This term is not confined to learning in a classroom or at the workplace for a certain period of time, instead it takes place in a range of situations and lasts throughout life. **This learning is available at different times and in different places, that's why it is flexible and diverse.**

Due to the constant scientific and technological innovation and the changes on the labor market, learning either in school, at the workplace, or from our daily interactions with others and with the world, is seen as something necessary, which enhances social inclusion and personal development, competitiveness and employability.

2. WHY SHOULD WE CONTINUE OUR STUDIES? ARGUMENTATION

It is natural for everybody to ask this question and to think about the future. Entering the workforce or continuing studies are the main choices available. Those who finished school, or not and those who work may be looking for a chance to resume or continue studies to learn something new.

There are many personal reasons for seeking educational programs, but there are also some common reasons:

- studying opens your eyes and mind and helps you see things in a different perspective; it develops skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, self confidence, teamwork and communication, flexibility and creativity;
- completing your studies can open up more career opportunities in an ever changing and challenging work market; theoretical knowledge in the field you are

interested in gives you an advantage over other candidates with no studies;

- continuing your studies in the field you are interested in provides you experience and knowledge, gives you access to new technology, helps you learn new methods, acquire skills which will help you do a better job at your workplace;

- knowing that you are capable of more, showing what you are worth will raise your self-esteem;

- it is common knowledge that people with degrees make more money than people with no education or minimal education; knowledge, skills and theoretical background are compensated with higher salaries;

On the other hand, according to recent reports, in the EU, poverty, social exclusion and demographic changes are becoming an increasing problem for all the member states. These changes will entail a new challenge for the European social model. There has been a fall in the number of young people who enter the labor market. It is clear that adults' education is a necessary way to achieve

an improvement in the involvement of more and more young people in the world of work, but also a way to take adults back to work-life. Therefore lifelong learning for adult citizens has to play a key role in the struggle against social exclusion and school drop-out. As for the migration phenomenon, lifelong learning could be favorable both for the migrant worker and the host country to compensate for the progressively ageing population. Lifelong learning is necessary to increase workers' efficiency but also for reasons of equity; it will produce not only more efficient workers, but also more active and well-informed citizens, contributing to enhance their own welfare.

3. STRATEGIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

Effective teaching and learning have become a central focus of educational reform movements. According to researchers, there are some principles of effective learning that the teacher should take into account.

- Students learn more when they are engaged actively in an instructional task, so when planning the lesson the teacher should allocate time for instructional activities, combining different methods, such as simulation, investigation, cooperative learning.

- High and moderate success rates are correlated positively with student learning outcomes, and low success rates are correlated negatively with student learning outcomes. As a result, ineffective learners need to be engaged in overlearning tasks and may require continuous assessment of their skills to increase their potential.

- Students can become independent, self- regulated learners through strategic instruction. Strategic instruction is designed to teach students “how to learn” effectively, it doesn’t teach content, it enables students to use their existing knowledge in an optimal fashion when learning content.

- Students can become independent, self- regulated learners through instruction that is explicit. Researchers suggest that teachers can make the instruction more explicit by engaging in daily reviews, thus facilitating linkage between prior knowledge and new material, making explicit their goals and objectives for students, engaging students in guided practice, providing feedback to the students, engaging them in independent practice and checking the information learned by weekly and monthly reviews.

- By teaching sameness both within and across subjects, teachers promote the ability of students to access potentially relevant knowledge in problem solving situations. In this respect educators should devote more

attention to defining common elements both within and across subjects.

- Another important aspect is to use new technologies in learning. Technologies connect teachers and their students. Classrooms with digital learning tools increase student motivation and accelerates learning. It supports learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and builds 21st century skills.

- Effective teachers often use unconventional methods (group training methods, brainstorming, project development). The current training program enables the application of innovative techniques that encourage students' independence, logical thinking, active participation in the educational process. Today's schools must develop a person, and not just to convey his knowledge.

- In order to be helpful and effective, adult learning should take into account principles such as assuming responsibility in learning or seeing practical value in the educational

process. Adult learners need to believe that they are taking the maximum benefit from their learning experiences. That's why the best strategy in adult teaching should be based on a combination of getting adult learners' motivation and stimulating their intellectual abilities.

- An efficient learning is merely the result of a good teaching, that's why in order to improve adult learning, trainers and counsellors should accept students as unique, different, with personal ways of learning and create learning situations that recognize diversity. They should also provide experiences in which students are challenged to think, promote interactions between students and interdisciplinary activities.

4. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (TEACHER-STUDENT/STUDENT-TEACHER), A KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

There is a clear link between communication and teaching: in the complex process of teaching/ learning, the teachers are senders of information and the students are receivers. If the communication is less effective ,for example the receiver/student does not understand the message, the teaching/ learning process is affected.

- To be successful, teachers have to minimize the barriers to communication by a two-way communication, which involves not only teacher-student, but also student-teacher communication.

-The teacher makes sure that he gets regular feedback from his students in order to check if they are understanding what he is trying to put across. Moreover, according to Geoff Petty, the students tend to construct their own version of what is being taught based on their previous knowledge and background.

Students need confirmation that they do well and how to improve, that is why feedback is so important.

- An important element of effective communication in teaching is what Geoff Petty calls active teaching. “What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I know” . The teacher sets students challenging activities so they apply and check their learning.

- The use of pictures, diagrams, written postcards overhead projectors and other teaching aids are particularly useful as they make the lesson more attractive and allow the teacher to transmit information in a more effective way.

-During the lesson, teachers should encourage students to discover new, unknown things, let them make mistakes and correct their mistakes.A single method is not sufficient, it is important to combine more. Not all methods are the same in terms of educational value, they are chosen according to students' characteristics (age, motivation, learning and previous results) and the training objectives.

-The teacher must be able to recognize the student as someone who has a rational freedom and other rights belonging to him.

-An effective communication is the main instrument to obtain both an effective teaching and education. Teachers don't have to evaluate the proficiency based only on knowledge transmission, but also through different kinds of circumstances, which could influence students' successes or failure. Teachers have to work to gain the confidence of students, as a consequence students will gain a better self-confidence; in this way the teachers have the opportunity to shape the students' life.

5. TIPS FOR IMPROVING ADULT LEARNING

Adult learners are fundamentally different than their younger counterparts in many ways.

-Adults are independent and motivated. The teacher should encourage them to participate actively in the learning process, engage them in dialogues, explain them why certain actions are taken and how, as well as show them the available resources.

-Adult learners come with a theoretical background and a rich life experience and the teacher can make use of this experience and knowledge by finding out what they already know and anchoring new learning in past experiences.

- Adult learners are goal oriented, so they constantly need clear feedback to know if they are progressing towards their goals.

-Adults seek relevance, meaning that what they learn can be applied at work and that is why the content of the lesson should be based on the perceived needs of the

student. The student should be allowed to choose among different projects the one which best reflects his/her own interests.

-Adults learn through doing, so they can be involved in many practical activities, demonstrations, which means not only reading about or assisting procedures, but doing them.

-Adults know why they need to learn and what can be applied to life situations. They are independent and self-image can steer and control their own learning.

-Unlike young students, adults are motivated by external factors (a better job, promotion, money) and internal factors (job satisfaction, quality of life).

6. EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION ON A LABOUR MARKET AFTER RESUMING STUDIES

The successful integration is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, caused by the many interacting subjective and structural elements, such as demographic, socio-cultural, economic factors , the labor market and education system, community, family and individual characteristics.

In our school in Brasov we have many examples of learners who entered the workforce and decided to resume their studies because of job requirements. They attend evening classes, completing their studies and do their job at their workplace. They are aged between 19 and 50, some of them have children in our school. Their main reason for resuming studies is finding a better job on the labour market.

The Italian example refers to the case study of “Vittorio Emanuele III”, Upper Secondary Technical

School of Palermo. The school has 1500 students and about 160 attend the evening classes.

The adult students which decide to resume their studies can be grouped at least into 4 target groups according to their initial motivations: students aged between 18-20, who failed 1-2 years of school and return to education attending evening classes, students aged between 20 and 25 who abandoned school because of their school performances or for economic reasons due to the family conditions and want to improve their job competences to have better job opportunities, students over 30, unemployed who aim at taking the diploma in order to find a job or reenter the labor market with more opportunities and students over 45 who are mainly working but as a personal challenge want to complete their studies.

From the school we got several interesting examples of students who resumed studies and successfully entered the labor market. The average percentage of adult students who successfully enter the labor market after attending evening classes and gain the diploma is of 20% - 30%. One of the most interesting cases which reflects also the nowadays Italian social reality is the story of a student from Bangladesh arrived in Italy with his family when he was a teenager. He decided to

attend the evening classes at "Vittorio Emanuele III" in Palermo, when he was 26 years old. He worked during the day as a packman/ pitchman and after 5 years of evening classes he got the diploma, improved his linguistic skills and acquired new knowledge and professional skills and a year later he was hired by "IVECO" , one of the Italian leaders in mechanical industry.

Lithuania holds annually a series of events for graduates, called "Be seen". The campaign is intended not only to accelerate the integration of graduates into the labor market, but also for advice and help in finding the best career opportunities, to introduce job-search methods to encourage young people to manage their careers, develop personal qualities and skills. During the campaign employers can directly select suitable candidates. Many graduates have been successfully employed. The main criteria for recruitment is the desire to work and knowledge, not experience. Knowledge and sincerity helped many young people to find their first job according to their qualifications and the employers were given subsidized wages for the graduates employed, everything being part of the new project called "Employment Support".

One of the successful methods used at Vasile Lovinescu College is the re-integration of former students (now adults) who left school at an early age, in the educational system through evening school classes and reduced frequency classes, which allow working students to attend high-school courses. Most of these adult learners are early school leavers. They left school because of material and financial problems, working now abroad or within the country, but without having the possibility to attend every day classes. Another impediment for them is their age; they are over 19 years old, most of them being parents themselves, and the only suitable solution for them is this kind of education. In the same measure, this system offers them the specific high-school education, providing them, at the same time, a formation which is adapted to the requirements of an adult (and parental) learning and training.

Putnok, Hungary

Examples of successful integration on the labour market after resuming studies

Putnok is part of a region where most of the coal mines, which used to assure many jobs to the population from this area, have been closed. A lot of young unemployed miners, studied, after the closure of the coal mines, in our school and received an agricultural education, which helped them to achieve a profession in this field. This new profession offered them the opportunity to find different jobs in

agriculture and to re-integrate, this way, on the Labour Market. Also, after having finished their professional re-conversion in agriculture, many of these former unemployed miners, started their own businesses in the field and became, this way, self-employed persons. The success achieved with these re-conversion classes, attracted many other adult learners and unemployed to school every year, motivating them to complete their education.

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