# Job relevant basic skills concepts and tools for groups facing particular challenges at the labour market

BAGru-Manual Volume 2

# Good Practice
# Job relevant basic skills concepts and tools

Editors

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Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of innovation

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BAGru – Job relevant basic skills concepts and tools for groups facing particular challenges at the labour market

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## Introduction

**Dieter Zisenis**

## Our understanding of concept, programs and tools

The Innovation transfer project, BAGru – Berufs- und Arbeitsnahe Grundbildungskonzepte und -tools für Gruppen mit besonderen Schwierigkeiten auf dem Arbeitsmarkt , like the LEONARDO DAVINCE – project, was to establish vocational training and further education. The program assists the European commission in improving the employment opportunities for groups with special difficulties in the labour market; such as those with low or in inadequate qualifications, or long term unemployed.

## Characteristics in Innovations transfer project

The characteristics of the Innovations transfer project used to lie in the temporally overlapping of two projects: the joint project „GiWA – Basic education in Economy and work – multi-perspective", representing the original project, and the European project BAGru, representing the transfer project / successor project. This situation allowed direct communication between the respective stakeholders and salvaged the chance, BAGru – with the philosophy to fulfil life. Therefore, this philosophy went out, that an innovations transfer, is a two-way alternating communication exchange program and not a simple translation developed concept and material in respective national context. A further characteristic lay in that the innovations transfer lay less in the field of methods and instruments, but in developed concepts and their realisations. A further aspect lay in that the innovations joint project was a joint research project and out of the results came actual empiricisms like for example, changing structures at work places for low – qualified workers – and the BAGru consortium gave discourses to compare lands in the drive of all ranks of society and guided the job market's changing trends and there consequences on basic education.

## GiWA as innovations project work relations

The innovations transfer offers German national joint project, GiWA , continued focus,( BMBF / Federal Ministry of Education and Research ) „research and development in alphabetisation and basic education for adults" from 2007 to 2010 when research and development projects were realised. The joint project, GiWA, basic education in economy and work – more perspective, had the target, to develop and test the effects of work related basic education concept and to follow up the outcome on an individual and organisational level. The component of the GiWA unity, working with people, who were partly in gainful employment partake accordingly, in measures to professional (re)integration:
The project component, '*new occupational perspective for those with low qualifications, in small and middle sized businesses, through basic education and alphabetisation*' deals with three specific areas, context of action, work relations, basic education. Transfer society (SGB111) work opportunities / AGH-MAE- measures (SGB11) and an average sized business of the automobile industry. In this part of the project, the objec-

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tives of accomplishment were, in the framework from subject orientation and in the respective frame of terms and conditions, averaged accomplishments of education and structure, to an acquisition of work and professional relevant basic competence in these specific areas. In this part of the project, '*advancement, work relations, communicative competences with Migrants in the old age care ,* developed and tested a transferable concept of a communications based basic training which focuses on these low qualified personnel with a migration background.

Also in this competence bundle of this part of the project, everything in basic training in the health sector, was established in old age care. Herein lies the focal point of the development, testing and implementation, of cross linked basic training for occupations (German as mother tongue) in these low qualified work positions.

A further specified section of this part of the project was '*A chance for those who speak two languages – competence based basic training for migrants'.* In this project, the development of a basic training concept that built up the specific (transfer-) competences and joined these with work related aspects. Finally, this part of the project developed 'communication, training, chances' the target group, adequate access for people who have severe physical handicaps and communication impairment, in order to support communicating people through a work related basic training perspective, giving regard to gainful employment and to open up occupational chances. The joint project was directed from the bbb office for professional training strategy. The project component 'Scientific involvement' was led through a base line study to change work advancement, and carried out a formative evaluation of the project component process. (Further information visit [www.giwa-grundbildung.de](http://www.giwa-grundbildung.de))

**The innovations partner in BAGru**

In the three transfer components of BAGru there were, respectively several perspectives, experience, knowledge and material adapted out of GiWA in specific national educational systems and institutional activity:

The Slovenian project partner, Papilot, took the roll of employer and the management level in view and developed special methods of needs analysis for internal education arrangements especially for low qualified occupations.

The Swedish partner, *Folkuniversitetet,* had a longer tradition in projects for long term unemployed, migrants, older unemployed people, socially disadvantaged groups and those rehabilitated, in cooperation with the work administration, the public authorities, health insurance and private employers. Folkuniversitetet used GiWA results for the further development of a certain „loyal" approach that recognised and valued the individual life style of long term unemployed and the participants as the actual 'experts' of their own lives.

The French project partner *IRFA Sud,* finally followed the approach of the development of access to management, other organisations and trainees through IRFA Sud targeted transfer especially on occupations in old age care in the Perpignon region.

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**Project background and -idea BAGru**

The Leonardo da Vinci innovations project, BAGru, had duration from October, 2009 to September 2011. The consortium partners were from Germany, France, Austria, Scotland, Sweden, Slovenia and Poland.

The back ground for the developments of the project were that in the last years, it became apparent that occupational chances had sunken for those with low qualifications. In relation to school dropouts or early school leavers, the situation in Europe had worsened. As well as in the framework of training for socially disadvantaged and youths who are slow learners, also in combination with further education for those with low qualifications, there therefore, exists a need for the development and cooperation of realisation of basic education- learning settings. Targets were the following, to take into consideration – concepts to develop and reset the basic training – to insist on the concept of literacy– to understand social practice and the world of life, for example, to consider the work environment in the establishment.

The development concept and learning settings are therefore, especially labelled through consistent trainee-, worker- and life orientation as action principals labels and targets in the integration of groups with special difficulties in the job market in training/ education and occupations.

Also in the EU-Initiative „new skills for new jobs" will consider special challenges for those with low qualifications – especially in basic skills – and points out essential requirement for basic skills.

Those in the BAGru – project acquired understanding and a framework concept for a work based basic training/ education, out of which came Principals resulting from these activities, which will be introduced in a further manual entitled „Basic education in context with Work and community" the decision maker, and training manager in municipality, establishments, employment agencies and training/ education institutes.

The involved project parties in BAGru – consortium decreed that the most experienced in the respect of national context in jobs with low formal qualified occupations, those not-working, especially long term unemployed and others groups with difficulties in the job market and, over the past years, have brought in international exchange- and development processes.

The interest in Leonardo da Vinci Innovations- and Innovations transfer projects were described from all partners as an outstanding performance in possibility, to place own concepts curricula, methods and material and simultaneously, to seize further development in the own work and motivation and model good practice from colleagues out of other European lands.
An innovations project, „transfer" means, hence, to bring competences/ skills, knowledge, experience of all project partners in a respectful exchange at eye level.

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**Understanding of basic education in BAGru**

Also in BAGru, agreement struggled with a mutual understanding of alphabetisation and basic education for adults and developed itself by encountering joint projects and with bilateral visits in understanding of innovations transfer. At the beginning of the BAGru innovations transfer project, there was also GiWA – a part project, with special evaluations, not yet completed – the results and modules of good practice.

Included in, GiWA – concept, models method and materials were developed in very different and specific context, so that the innovations transfer, in BAGru, was merely a spoken translation achievement, from German to be understood by perspective spoken languages. The transfer could not be like a one-way street from the German system of professional training and further education described into the national system of partaking partner lands, but should be formed when mutual work processes, in which all their expertise and competences can be positioned. The material, introduced by GIWA was, in this respect, an invitation to the three transfer partner, that they generate their own connections and their own advantages. They were then asked, which comparisons – and also which different challenges and questions were identified and which strategies and comparable pragmatic steps could be undertaken, in the named target groups, to open new possibilities in the job market and in society. Not in the final step of GiWA – transfer, in this respect, also a re-import of new innovative approaches, concepts, methods, instruments, and material in the German system of vocational training and further education. This intended re-import, realised itself, for example, in the involvement of BAGru in the last publication of GiWA-united projects. (Klein, R./Reutter, G./Zisenis, D. (Hg.), 2011: Bildungsferne Menschen – menschenferne Bildung? Grundlagen und Praxis arbeitsbezogener Grundbildung. Göttingen)

Based on the special field of work related basic eduction were worked at the same time in all of the following principals:

- Basic education of adults and youths in transit from school and profession, accounted for life perspective of the subject and their basic educational needs and (changes) comparable to the requirements in profession and workplace.
- Basic education is education and in fact, to have in mind enlightenment. Basic- education as education has an intelligent and emancipatory character asks after the terms and possibilities of self education and self determination of the adult trainee.
- Basic education will not be realised as a standardised entrance card for a social participant who must attend. The basic education concept must establish a varied biographical sections, especially with groups of long term unemployed, always conditioned by societies demands and individual resources in new tight fitting forms.
- The work (place) related basic training/ education avoids stigma and attributes from society with access through using values, respect and conversational methods. They don't follow a paradigm especially for those disadvantaged, but is first and foremost with and for the adult trainee.
- Basic training/ education focusing not on deficiencies, but on existing development, often hidden skills/ competences

- Basic training/ education is not a completed curriculum, or completed list of individual skills and qualifications; strategies and contents from basic training/ education were put into context and developed in the process.
- Basic training / education has to be in context from specific milieu and person goals, for example complex-advantaged calculation of adult trainee development. The reflection of trainee biographies, social reality and the individual learn and development goals and motive is a pre-condition for successful basic training/ education.
- Acceptance from the establishments and colleagues for basic training/ education in the economy and work needs 'anker' and 'connection'. The rate of return must add up – for the establishment/ the assignment institution as well as for the trainee.
- Having this in mind basic training/ education understanding must be developed, and in the same manner, identify the possibility of a „basic education system", about the work environment and establishments or the everyday world of the trainee. Differentiated basic training concept asks accordingly, what the established trainee and the everyday world .of basic training/ education for the individual should be design and how it can be successful.
- Basic training/ education accounts for a wide area of interests (business / work place / institutions of education / public places in the local community / other situations in everyday life etc). Learning in the basic training/ education concept lends its self to realistic work and communication processes. Learning will be developed out of the context of actions by the trainee.
- Work related basic training/ education developed versatile settings and accounted for a versatile repertoire of methods, instruments, that were always learning oriented. Next to their design of the leaning situation in groups, came the individual and group related process, counselling, decided meaning.

**In this Manual**

In this manual directs the special councillors, trainers and teachers who are active in the context of different professional and further education provided for adult learners, who for different reasons, until now, do not have the basic competences needed for the job market even for alleged positions for those with low qualifications of today.

The following case histories from three transfer partner countries, (France, Slovenia and Sweden) describe clearly how tested and evaluated concepts methods and materials out of the German project unity, GiWA in the respective work connections, integrate and in doing so, simultaneously, and have already developed further associated used tools in other EU-projects.

In conclusion to the three case studies, will finally, on the enclosed CD, a choice which in the project used Methods and instruments are placed at your disposal.

**Case Study on Work Related Basic Skills Provision in Sweden**

Tord Hansson

**Introduction**

Folkuniversitetet in Kristianstad, Sweden, has worked for some time in a programme initiated by the Public Employment Service to get long-term unemployed people back into the labour market. Within this programme we work with two groups of unemployed, long term unemployed (FAS 1) and *very* long term unemployed (FAS 3). The basis of our work is the same for both groups but we discovered quite early in the programme that we had to develop different ways to work with those groups of individuals. We have concluded that we cannot treat those people as groups but only as individuals preparing for the labour market.

Some features of the programme are mandatory due to the assignment to the Public Employment Service regulations and some are voluntary. What we could see happening was that every one of the participants, regardless of group, participated in the mandatory parts of the programme with a greater or lesser level of enthusiasm. Almost no participants from the group of very long term unemployed, FAS 3, participated in the voluntary components.

Our main interest for some time has been finding out what can be done to reach those participants that do not want to participate, to understand the underlying causes for them wanting to be left alone and what can be done within the programme to encourage participation. What is it that drives people to continue in a certain way of life, what are their fears and what can be done to overcome them? How do we deal with bitterness and negative attitudes so that there will be some development and sustainability?

We needed some new input, because it is easy to get stuck in your own way of doing things, and also in what you think others would want from you. So we started to find new, additional ways to professionalize and expand our work.

**Background**
In Sweden preparatory education covers programmes directed to people that need to prepare themselves for either vocational education or the labour market. The programmes cover basic skills (core subjects and ICT) or opportunities to try new trades in „on-the-job training programmes" to help participants decide about entering new vocational education programmes. Other programmes include vocational language training, how to start your own business and programmes to raise motivation and social skills (how to cooperate, the importance of being on time, etc).

Preparatory education is also conducted within programmes people who have been unemployed for a long time (JOB and UGA). In these programmes the definition of basic skills is even wider and involves personal behaviour, dress codes, how to interact with other people, how to apply for a job etc.

Folkuniversitetet is an educational and cultural institution run as a foundation. Folkuniversitetet have a long tradition working in projects for the long term unemployed, migrants, elderly unemployed, socially disadvantaged groups and rehabilitation. In our network we cooperate, amongst others, with the Public Employment Service, Social Office, Health Insurance Office and private employers. Together with the Public Employment Service (PES) we run two different programmes for long term unemployed, aiming to prepare the participants for a re-entry into the labour market. The two programmes are named FAS 1 and FAS 3 in the „Work and Development Guarantee" (Jobb- och utvecklingsgarantin). The content in the two programmes differs, but they have some topics in common.

The most important topic is basic skills related to work. Besides ordinary features like how to apply for a job, how to prepare for an interview etc. we work a lot with raising motivation, self esteem and self confidence. This is mainly done on an individual basis, in coaching sessions designed to meet the participants' needs.

**Our approach**
To gain access to the labour market it is essential to establish networks within the labour market. Those networks include not only employers but also trade unions, employer organizations, PES and other VET-providers. Those networks have to be based on honest relations. It is crucial to have a completely honest approach when „marketing" this target group since they may not be seen as highly attractive by the labour market.

Many of our participants have a long history of unemployment and they are holding on to a labour market that no longer exists. Their skills and competence are obsolete on the labour market of today. Therefore one of our main tasks is to acquire „on the job" training possibilities for our participants through our network of employers who are willing to provide this for our participants. It is important to make sure that the employers know what is expected of them and that this is about training and not about production or cheap labour. It is very important to have regular follow-ups with the providers of on the job training.

**Assessing individuals' basic skills**

This is done in several ways. The process starts with a mapping of the participants formal and non-formal skills. We work with three sets of basic skills: one that is formalized by the Swedish education system (Skolverket), one from our own experience and one that is demanded by our external network, including PES, employers and other authorities. The task for us is to match our participants with those skills depending on the participants' needs and the needs of the labour market.

In this process we use different sets of tools. One is quite traditional and is composed of mandatory activities that aim at finding the shortest and quickest way to a new job. Another focuses on developing a new and relevant job-application according to today's standards, so requires finding out needs our participants have in terms of basic education. We also work with group activities to raise motivation and self esteem.

But most of our work is done on an individual level with the participants and in this process the need for raising motivation and self-esteem is apparent. In these situations it is most important to gain trust from our participants and to make them feel confident enough to be able to express their barriers, their problems and their needs in terms of taking steps and action towards their real goals, and not the goals they think they have to achieve. Depending on the individual we use a variety of tools, like the Life Curve, SWOT-analysis, Case Method and GROW (Coaching tool orientated on the structure of Goal, Reality, Options and Will) individually or in combination. The core principle is that the individual participant owns the process. Our role is to provide the necessary support to allow the participant utilize his or her expertise on their own situation.

## Learning settings, tools and methods

The learning settings are of two major types:
1.  semi-selectable lectures and seminars from a menu
2.  individual coach sessions.

From the mapping interviews an action plan is established and a programme is made for each individual, and here it is also determined which lectures are mandatory and which are optional. The participants have a variety of lectures and seminars to choose from, some that are mandatory and some indentified in the participant's action plan. (resource 1)
We also make an agreement with the participants regarding scheduling a coaching programme based on an estimation of how many sessions would be beneficial. Those schedules are not rock-solid and can be either cut short or prolonged as the process continues. On average, there will be ten coaching sessions of one hour each to reach the participants goal. (resource 2)

We also meet our participants on an individual basis every other week, to follow up on their efforts, what have they achieved since the last meeting and on what will be their next steps. If needed, we make the necessary adjustments in the action plan.

In the evaluations completed by our participants it is quite clear that they appreciate these frequent individual meetings. They feel that there is someone that cares about them and their situation. They also claim that they need some „pressure" to perform the tasks they have planned themselves, it gives them a better self-confidence in the process.

## Work related skills

The work-related skills we cover depends on the situation and the needs of the participant. Most often we have to focus more on social basic skills, both as group activities and on an individual level. By using „on-the-job" training our participants get a chance to actually learn a trade or profession on site, if possible, and they do it in a real context with real tasks at the work site. This can also stimulate further education, often vocational in focus, after discovering what is needed for this specific profession and actually seeing the benefit and use of a particular education.

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## Learning „success" – reflections and main challenges

For our target group, the most important feature is trust. Many of our participants have had bad experiences from previous education and from their time in other programmes, where they often felt dependent and inferior. This arises partly from the rigorous set of government regulations regarding unemployment.

In the learning process it is important to get our participants involved to an extent were they can see the benefit of learning and gaining knowledge about topics related to their desired work situation. In order to learn they must see the value of communication skills, of being able to use certain programmes connected to ICT, and of the skills involved in calculating percent, reading and understanding a blueprint, etc.

The main challenge for us is finding ways to a support a change in attitudes with individuals who have accepted unemployment as a way of life and adapted to „lesser" circumstances in terms of private economy, social life and high levels of dependence.

## New approaches

Given the questions in the introduction to this chapter, and reflecting our professional commitment to developing of work-related basic skills we are always interested to learn more about our work. This process was supported by being partner in a European Innovation-Transfer-LEONARDO-Project called BAGru (www.bagru.eu). This allowed us to import some tools that had previously been used in Germany in order to support development of our practices and work towards some helpful insights.

The main conclusion we arrived at was that the experts on these questions are the individuals that participate in the program themselves, even though they do not really know this themselves. But with a little help from a trained coach this might be changed.

Applying the BAGru approaches began by recruiting volunteers to try out the new tools. In order to obtain information from people in this group about their personal attitudes it is important to build up confidence and trust, otherwise the information will be of no interest and of no use. Therefore we decided that it should be voluntary to participate. We committed to presenting the „new approach" of the project in a very transparent way by being clear about the ideas we had about the process, the results we expected and what activities we planned. We also emphasized that all results would be anonymous and only used for the project BAGru (no feedback to the Public Employment Service or other institutions, which is very important!). In the groups, we started to inform participants about the project and to get a positive feeling. We had discussions with the participants about their thoughts, views and ideas about the project and if they were willing to participate as experts in this project.

Not all were positive about this, with some stating that they already had seen it all and that this would be of no use to them. We did not put any effort in trying to persuade them to participate because this could have had a negative impact on the group that were willing to participate and were really interested in doing so.

The next step was to create a schedule for the work and the interviews, both in groups and individually. This was done together with the participants as part of the process.

In the work with the groups we formed a basis for what was to be done more concretely, what was their opinion on what the problems were, what could and should be done, what were their goals and how could they achieve them. There were lots of discussions in the group sessions, and we had a very open structure built only around the initial questions. These sessions were also a good platform to strengthen the confidence and trust between the participants and the coaches involved—confidence and trust goes both ways in this kind of work.

From here we started the individual work, based on a questionnaire made initially by the coaches and developed in collaboration with the participants in the group sessions. The questionnaire (table 1) was made for the participants to fill in semi-narrative questions, but when we got the answers in return it was quite obvious that the participants had answered very briefly, often with just a few words, which did not give us what we felt we needed.

| **BAGru – Questionnaire** |
| --- |
| 1. Has there been any change in your life style during your unemployment? |
| 2. Do you have any hobbies or other interests? |
| 3. Have you started any new activities during your unemployment? |
| 4. Do you have daily routines? |
| 5. How do you spend your time being unemployed? |
| 6. Has unemployment become a new life style for you? |
| 7. In what ways have there been changes and what has been the reason? |
| 8. How would you be able to change this pattern, this way of life? |
| 9. Are you happy/ content with your situation? |
| 10. Have you created other activities now? |
| 11. What are your strategies for a change in your situation? |
| 12. Has unemployment changed your view about yourself and has it affected your self esteem? |

Table 1: The individual questionnaire

The next step was to start with individual sessions, using the same semi-narrative questions to get more information. We emphasised the importance of getting the participants' true answers on how they perceive their situation, what they think are the causes for them still being in this situation and what they feel they need to get a change in their lives.

Those more in-depth interviews were spread over a period of time, mainly to let a process start and to let the participants have some reflections of themselves and the process. It is important that this kind of work allows each participant to have the time they need, that the sessions are focused on results and that professionals show that they are treating the participants seriously. This also led to some participants continuing to reflect more about themselves and their situation even after this formal sessions ended. Comments from participants included that they now really understood that „individuals are experts

on themselves" and one stated „I haven't been thinking about this before."

**Conclusion**

One longer-term benefit from this work has been that many, not all, participants have developed some degree of will and a clearer view of the possibility of making their own decisions in matters that affect their lives. They also have got some tools to consider for themselves. They no longer have to rely on others to make the decisions for them and they are also up to the responsibility that goes along with this decision making.

The next step in this process will be to find a way to keep our participants developing and learning, making their effort continue after the time they spent with us. They stay with us for a maximum period of six months, and during this period we can keep the processes going through input of various kinds, depending on individual needs. By introducing the concept of BAGru to other stakeholders involved, such as the Public Employment Service, and including training for counsellors and trainers in the concept, we would most likely achieve a continuous process with the participants, and attain even better results.

**Resource 1: Lectures and seminars offered by Folkuniversitetet**

**Knowledge about the labour market (Arbetsmarknadskunskap)**
1. How to apply for a job! (Hur söker man jobb?)
2. Different channels (Vilka olika kanaler finns det?)
3. Visible and non-visible jobs (Synliga och osynliga jobb)
4. From an employer's point of view (Hur gör arbetsgivaren när de söker ny personal?)
5. Your network (Ditt nätverk)
6. Links (Olika länkar)

**CV**
How to create a CV that evokes interest. Your CV is your ticket to an interview with the employer: get some tips on how to write it and useful links for inspiration.

**Personal letter (Personligt brev)**
Employers usually do not have much time for the recruitment process and lots of applications to read. They will scan the applications and only stop when they see something that catches their interest. Your letter has about 20-30 seconds to give an impression. Get some useful tips on to be successful.

**Interview (Anställningsintervju)**
What to think about before, during and after the interview:
1. What is needed to be called to an interview?
2. How do you prepare for an interview?
3. What to think about!
4. The most common questions

**Obstacles/Concealed jobs (Jobbsökningshinder / Dolda jobb)**
What are the obstacles you may face in your job seeking process and where can you find so-called „concealed jobs"? Get some more knowledge about the recruitment process and how you can stay focused with your applications.

**Occupations (Yrkesgrupper)**
Get knowledge about different occupations and tip about how you can build your own brand. We map characteristics and criteria for different occupations, we also help you to find them.

**Presentation technique (Presentationsteknik)**
How to become a good lecturer. How to reach the listener.

**The telephone call (Telefonträning)**
Do you feel insecure or do you want to be even better when making a telephone call to an employer? Learn how to control your calls through a simple structure.

**Self-presentation (Säljpresentation)**
1. What do I need to think about when contacting an employer?
2. What do I need to think about before an interview?
3. How can I control the interview?

**Sales technique (Säljteknik)**
1. Analysis of needs
2. Facing objections
3. Argumentation
4. Negotiations
5. End the interview
6. Tools needed to be a good sales person!

**Service and communication (Service och komminikation)**
What does service mean, and how can we adapt the way we meet different peoples' needs, including employers?

**How to strengthen your self esteem (Hur du stärker din självkänsla – 1)**
The difference between self esteem and self confidence. Find your strengths and dare to show them.

**How to strengthen your self esteem (Hur du stärker din självkänsla – 2)**
How to say no, and to manage your fear and worries. Self-perception. Body language.

**Stress management (Stresshantering – 1)**
Fears and worries give you stress. What happens to you, identify the signals. Mental training.

**Stress management (Stresshantering – 2)**
Different methods to manage stress, recovery-relaxation.

**Positive thinking and happiness (Positivt tänkande och lycka)**
The optimist and the pessimist. Positive thinking and psychology.

**Create visions and make them a reality (Skapa positiva visioner och få dem att bli verklighet)**
Do you want a change in your life? With mental training and clear goals we can affect our life in the direction we want.

**Health (Bli hälsomedveten och må bra)**
Health and life style.

**Social competence (Social kompetens)**
What is it? How does it affect me?

**Motivation (Motivation)**
What are my drivers? How can I reach my goals and dreams?

**Luck (Tur (Serendipitet)**
How can I affect my destiny?

**The potential of others (Andras potential)**
Networking and how can I benefit from connections with other people?

**Self –confidence (Självförtroende)**
How can I improve my self-confidence?

**Outside the box (Utanför boxen)**
Creative thinking.

**To choose joy (Att välja glädje)**
Can you decide for yourself?

**Rhetoric (Retorik)**
How to „win" a discussion and the power of language.

**Basic computing (Data grund)**
1. Find your way on the internet
2. Create a Word document and write an application
3. Create an account for
4. Send an email
5. Attach a document to an email

**Project (Projektarbete)**
1. Job hunt
2. Arrange recruitment meetings

**In addition (Extra)**
1. Language
2. Mathematics

**Resource 2: GROW**

Developed by Graham Alexander (www.alexandercorporation.com) A great deal of learning will take place during this process.

**Four steps + one initial step: Topic, Goal, Reality, Options, Way forward**

**Topic**
- Establish contact, get a feeling that you are „in" the situation. This is about motions, feelings and trust.
- Decide on a topic for the dialogue, a) knowledge- or competence development in some specific area, b) to get some understanding about how certain issues are connected or constructed, c) a problem regarding work, social life, private life, health etc.
- Make a plan for the dialogue or sessions of dialogues.

**Goal**
- Decide about what is to come out from the dialogues: a) an action plan for knowledge- and competence development, b) a preliminary or definitive solution of the problem, c) highlight the problem using mentoring, d) make an action plan on how to solve the problem.
- Document the expected result, which should be equivalent to the goal, and it should also be SMART (specific, measurable, adapted, relevant and time set) to be able to follow up on how you are progressing.
- Express your aim or *what you want to gain* by reaching your goal or goals.

**Reality**
- Talk about different aspects of the present situation. The coach confirms that he or she understands (by being „in" the situation), put in questions for clarification. The coach doesn't contribute teaching, guidance or counselling.
- Do not use standardized questions. When questioning this should be done in the context of the dialogue. Questions could be formulated according to the Case method (see resource 3).

**Options**
- This section of the dialogue is about finding ways and options to reach the goal. The ideal situation is when clients come up with their own solutions. Different approaches could (should) be tested, and then the action plan should be formulated.

**Way Forward**
- Finally the client chooses a way to reach the goal. You examine different alternatives discussed in section O (options), and keep those that rise during the process.

**Resource 3: Case method**

This is an adapted version of case method developed at Harvard Business School in the 60's as a learning approach. It's designed to be a practical way to put together experiences, difficulties and solutions into an action-plan for future work. It involves the whole group of trainers or participants in the process at the same time, and provides the group with analysis and an action plan derived from their shared concrete experience. This is also a good method for workgroups and other groups of people to solve problems or handle difficult situations and at the same time increase their competence. The method can be summarised in the graphic below, with the boxes completed from top to bottom:

| Here you write suggestions on problems/situations to handle in a list, and letter them a, b, c. In this context a problem/situation i is something you don't know how to handle in a practical way. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Facts** about the situation (which have the problem as described above) | **Strengths** or resources within the situation | **Weaknesses** or barriers with the situation | **Recourses** in the environment to help solve the problem | **Barriers** and difficulties in the environment to help solving the problem | Further necessary information about the problem |
| Here you write down suggestions/solutions for an action plan and the purpose with the action plan. Mark the suggestions with the same letter as for the problem suggestions the list. | | | | | |

This is a method that focuses on solutions made by the people involved in the situation that needs attention. It is a good idea to use a whiteboard, or similar, when working with the case method so that everyone can follow the progress and also feel more involved in the process. This method is suitable for individuals or groups from 2 up to 80 people. When using this method for the first time it is useful to follow the steps in the model quite strictly to get a good understanding about the way it works. When you are getting more used to this method you can put in data in the box they belong as they appear.

**Case Study on Work Related Basic Skills Provision in Slovenia**

Špela Reš

**Introduction**

Why should basic education be an important subject for personnel development in medium-sized and small enterprises? Will it be of a value for the employees and the employer? What should the content be? How do educational organisations build effective links with employers? These are some of the questions we faced some time ago when we set out to take a closer look at the situation and develop strategies for working with companies in our field. In this chapter we pass on what we learned.

**Background**

Papilot institute was established in 1995 in response to new challenges arising from Slovenian independence (such as overnight unemployment, changes of life-style and evolving value systems). It is a company with several local units, a large number of different fields of work and diverse staff profiles. Our main activities are focused on education, training and guidance for unemployed people and other vulnerable groups.

Our basic activities are occupational rehabilitation, sheltered employment, social inclusion programmes, active employment policy programmes, a help centre for the victims of criminal deeds, day-care centres for elderly people, and provision of soft skills and other training. We also provide educational programmes for individual organisations and companies in national and international projects in the field of social economy, vocational education, social inclusion, unemployment and equality of rights. Papilot is active in South East Europe (Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia), mainly Active policy programmes in the private sector as well as development and implementation of work rehabilitation orientated programmes.

In Slovenia the education system enables provision of basic education and literacy for all Slovenes. The Slovenian understanding of the term „basic skills" refers mainly to basic literacy-reading, writing and numeracy. Other skills such as communication, functional literacy, assertiveness etc. are understood as soft skills.

In the Papilot Institute, we remain committed to an idea of *Basic learning needs* (BLN) that derive from, and relate to, the *basic needs* of individuals, groups and societies. Basic needs – and thus BLN – vary according to age, gender, context, and culture, and also according to individual interests, motivations and preferences. Both basic needs and learning needs change with the passing of time. Thus, the specific content and modalities of satisfaction of BLN must be decided for each specific purpose, context and moment in time.

*Literacy* remains a key BLN, as it relates to many other human satisfactors. It is also essential for meeting several other BLN. The concept and scope of literacy, as well as the needs for literacy in the life of individuals and groups, have changed and expanded con-

siderably over time. It is necessary to change the conventional way of expressing adult literacy/illiteracy rates in terms of numbers, or seeing the process of „becoming literate" within an individualistic perspective.

**What makes basic education important and relevant for companies?**

Education and learning are not objectives in themselves. They are means for personal, family and community development, for active citizenship building and for improving the lives of people. Lifelong learning implies an inclusive education and learning model that includes all – children, youth and adults— both as learners and as educators. At the same time, all actors have a role and a responsibility: governments, civil societies, the private sector. Adult education cannot be viewed in isolation; it is essential that learning takes place continuously, in conjunction with work. Basic skills should be developed in conjunction with work occupations and work activities.

From the employers' point of view, more effective performance is the main expectation of education. An adequate definition of performance is likely to encompass multiple traits and behaviours, such as effective communication with colleagues, technical competence and the physical capabilities of employees. For example, a survey (Bloom & Lafleur, 1999) of Canadian employers providing workplace education programmes identified a number of distinct dimensions to the impact on performance, many of which seem applicable to different work contexts:

- improved quality of work,
- better team performance,
- improved capacity to cope with change in the workplace,
- improved capacity to use new technology,
- reduced time per task,
- reduced error rate,
- better health and safety record.

There are three main areas in which lifelong learning is currently expected to make an impact. The first is information technology. Between 1997 and 2001, the proportion of workers for whom computers are an essential part of work rose from 31 per cent to 40 per cent, and the proportion for whom they are not important at all fell from 31 to 21 per cent (Wolf, 2005). Longitudinal research shows that individuals with poor basic skills are among those most likely to be excluded from the digital revolution. Parsons and Bynner found that 48 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women with basic literacy did not have a computer in their home compared to 16 per cent of men and 17 per cent of women with higher literacy (Parsons & Bynner, 2007). This research suggests that improving basic skills learning is, at least potentially, a means of increasing the engagement of employee with information technology. Increased familiarity and confidence with information technology is, in turn, likely to enhance operational performance.

The second area is coping strategies. Research suggests that individuals with poor basic skills often develop practical coping strategies, such as relying on memory or social networks, to get by when faced with basic skills challenges in their working and personal lives (Krahn & Lowe, 1999; Kamp & Boudard, 2003). However, basic skills prob-

lems are still likely to have a negative impact on performance, by limiting the flexibility of personnel: „if someone is relying on a colleague to read or explain orders to them they are unlikely to be able to respond flexibly in uncertain situations of the type that are reported as becoming more common in the current theatres of operation" (Hanlan et al., 2004). It is important that training produces personnel who are able to respond to new challenges and to adapt to different ways of working.

Finally, employees are expected to demonstrate trainability, meaning the extent to which personnel are willing and able to engage effectively with the task of acquiring new skills and knowledge. Education, including basic skills learning, is seen as underpinning and supporting training, as well as developing learning and analytical skills. A strong case for the connection between basic skills and trainability has been made at the policy level.

Engaging employers in basic skills education is not straightforward. One survey (Frank & Hamilton, 1993) found that around 94% of companies in the North West of England said that reading and writing skills were important in manual tasks, yet only 61% of them saw a need to train their workers in these skills. Larger firms may have the resources at their disposal to support training but what about smaller firms. How realistic is it to expect them to train their workforce? Amongst the main difficulties with basic skills provisions in the workplace are to:
- link delivery to the „bottom line" concerns of businesses,
- raise employers' awareness that a problem may exist amongst their staff,
- convince employers of their responsibility to address skills shortfalls that may be regarded as failures of the compulsory education system.

Issues affecting employers' willingness to invest in the skills of their workforce are, of course, not limited to basic skills provision. Particular problems, however, arise in the case of basic skills as these are not perceived by employers as job-related. The European Union, however, is in no doubt as to where responsibilities lie. They include employers amongst the social partners having the main responsibility to provide for developing the competences of their workforce.

**Access paths to employers: cooperation and contracting with employers**

In 2010 Papilot Institute participated in a European transfer project allowing us to develop a new procedure for contacting employers. BAGru was a Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation programme which transferred innovations and results from GiWA project. We have used approaches and methods from AlphaKU, GiWA subproject and then adapted it to our needs.

The procedure is as follows, demonstrated by the methods and instruments we practiced. All these early steps are immensely important in showing professionalism and gaining trust. We will not show the complete checklists in this article, but just describe outlines of the approach by means of interviews for clarification of tasks, framework conditions and contracts (cf. also Winkler, 2004).

> **Initial approaches to employers – What should be the approach like?**
> - Important to have a good knowledge of the company and their products, services and topics
> - Have a contact person and know the position they hold in the company
> - Have a prepared reference and make sure to supply contact details
> - Take an open approach, but have an established plan
> - The idea about the price of the training / consulting we offer

The first discussion consists of questions for establishing contact and analysing initial problems:
- Is there a reason for any kind of planned change?
- What are the possible reasons for the current situation?

After that we focus on solutions:
- What solutions and operations have already been addressed?
- Which were already planned?

Next steps are setting the timing, defining the client's needs and clarifying the financial frames (see Resource 1). Referring the development of tailor made education programmes we are guided on the following core belief.

**Access paths: motives and interests of the learners**

To motivate someone to learn is to provide them with an incentive to engage in the act of gaining knowledge. In traditional instructional design practice, motivation is often considered as a preliminary step in the instructional process. Intrinsic motivation in learning, however, focuses on the development of motivation throughout the entire instructional process. Though traditional instructional design practice focuses on a less integrated approach, developing life-long learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual curiosity, find learning enjoyable, and continue seeking knowledge after their formal instruction has ended have always been major goals of education.

Looking at the effort expelled during the learning process will help determine whether learners are motivated. For effort to even occur, there are two necessary prerequisites: the person must value the task and the person must believe he or she can succeed at the task. In any given instructional situation, the learning task needs to be presented in a way that is engaging and meaningful to the student, and in a way that promotes positive expectations for the successful achievement of learning objectives. To help understand motivation in instruction we can look at the ARCS Model of Motivational Design as developed by John Keller (Slim, 2002). The ARCS Model identifies four essential strategy components for motivating instruction:

**[A]ttention strategies for arousing and sustaining curiosity and interest.**
- Learners are more motivated when the instructional design generates curiosity and interest about the content or learning context.

**[R]elevance strategies that link to learners' needs, interests, and motives.**
- Learners are more motivated when goals are clearly defined and align with learners' interests.

**[C]onfidence strategies that help students develop a positive expectation for successful achievement.**
- Learners are more motivated when challenge is balanced in such a way that the learning process is neither too easy as to bore the leaner, or too difficult such that success seems impossible.

**[S]atisfaction strategies that provide extrinsic and intrinsic reinforcement for effort.**
- Learners are more motivated when there are rewards for correctly executed actions.

Chan and Ahern (Slim, 2002) suggest Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (1990) as a way to understand and develop motivation. Flow describes an experience people may have when they reach a state where there is a perfect balance between challenge and frustration, and where the end goal becomes so clear that hindrances fall out of view. Flow Theory is a theoretical bridge between the concerns of instructional design and motivational design theory. Consistent with the ARCS model, applications of this theory focus on providing the learner with appropriate challenge, setting concrete goals, structuring control, and providing clear feedback . To learn, students need to be motivated, and an appropriate level of challenge combined with a clear and attainable goal is highly motivating. Since flow experiences share these key aspects of motivational design, they can be described as intrinsically motivating.

**Learning Environments**

Instructional designers can utilize game environments that support flow and enable learning. Learning environments have been largely limited to the classroom model: the teacher stands in front of the class and transmits knowledge to a listening group of students. To support a flow state, the learning environment must closely match each student's skill level, and provide tasks with clear goals and immediate individual feedback. Houser and De Loach (Slim, 2002) review Donald Norman's seven basic requirements of a learning environment:
1. Provide a high intensity of interaction and feedback.
2. Have specific goals and established procedures.
3. Motivate.
4. Provide a continual feeling of challenge that is neither so difficult as to create a sense of hopelessness and frustration, nor so easy as to produce boredom.
5. Provide a sense of direct engagement, producing the feeling of directly experiencing the environment, directly working on the task.
6. Provide appropriate tools that fit the user and task so well that they aid and do not distract.
7. Avoid distractions and disruptions that intervene and destroy the subjective experience.

These characteristics of effective learning environments closely match the characteristics inherent in flow-like experiences and motivational design.

Houser and Deloach conclude that if we accept Norman's requirements for a learning environment, then we must acknowledge that learning is integrally related to games. Games make learning look so much like fun that they mask the large amount of learning required to play them successfully.

In assessing learning through these processes, performance-based assessment can be very useful. The goal of this process is to provide a more accurate and authentic assessment through actual demonstration of skills. Its aim is not only to test what a student *knows,* but whether the student can *use* his or her knowledge and skills appropriately. There are a number of different types of performance-based assessment, including performances, portfolios and group projects. Each type of performance assessment also depends on the definition of specific skills to be observed and criteria for evaluation. While judgment may be involved in rating a performance, the definition of clear and explicit criteria can provide a high degree of consistency and reliability for those judgments.

**Learning formats**

The training program consists of different modules, for example a psycho-social and motivational module, a skills module and a practical module. All the participants study some modules together in groups, but the activities of other modules will be chosen according to the goal of each individual.

Working in small groups accelerates positive psychological climate and positive group dynamic. When working in small groups, especially in the form of experiential learning, the outputs of participants are the highest, as are learning experience and learning ability. The reason for using this method is to ensure active participation of all members of the group, extraverts as well as introverts. Social learning is one of the most important results of working in small groups and it results in better self image and self-confidence.

To ensure the individuality and individual adaptability of the program, we use individual interviews, as well as individual counselling and support, in all three modules of training programmes and in the support activities. The psychological interview is also used for example for the purpose of assessment of candidates or for defining the individual employment or other activities plan.

The participants also participate in the field work experiences. Based on the activities, they get in contact with for example employers, educational organization, or other relevant organization, and contact them personally in the field focus work.

Workshops are one method of the small group working. The idea leans on experiential and problem based learning, where participants are the centre of activities and the lecturer is more like a mentor who focuses the group on a common goal. In workshops the participants will be the active, not passive, creators of the group work. Some parts of the

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education can be set as seminars, especially for the theoretical themes. This is an opportunity for connection, exchange of knowledge and good practices, flow of information etc.

**A case study: work related basic education at VDC Novo Mesto-Slovenia**

VDC is a public social welfare institute, which has been independent since 2000. The organisation started in 1981 when persons with mental and physical development challenges were offered accommodation in workshops for the first time. Today in the context of protection work VDC offers a programme of institutional care program management, care and employment under special conditions and activities to raise the quality of life. The users of its services are adults with intellectual disabilities and physical development challenges. Novo Mesto is a centre for protection adult people with special needs, mostly with intellectual challenges.

VDC offers day care, guidance and job placement eight hours a day, five days a week and is open throughout the year except public holidays. They offer users an protective environment and management in the context of institutional care. A range of staff with high levels of expertise in a range of areas, including social work, defectology, psychology, social and special pedagogy, work with participants. Even well-trained and experienced staff can find the participant group challenging and demanding. Besides the highly educated experts, a large number of lower skilled staff are also employed. This group can also find the work challenging at times.

Because of the work demands at VDC and the special needs of target group, Papilot institute decided to offer special need analyses for the expert workers in VDC. Based on the results, Papilot designed special tailor made programmes for developing the basic skills of experts in coping with stress and with aggressive users. The program was led by Papilot experts social educator Doroteja Volovec and psychologist Ktarzyna Karpljuk.

In the first phase, we used the transferred methods of approaching the employers as discussed above. We used the „targeted interview with manager" and related techniques to detect the needs, interests, goals and challenges of the VDC. We also observed non-verbal communication, working space features and communication between employees. Later on, we used a specially designed survey about work stress, coping with users, coping with aggressive users and related topics.

Based on these initial results, we prepared workshop programmes for developing the basic skills of experts regarding working with users, with emphasis on working with difficult and aggressive users. We used the method of working in small groups with 14 participants in the VDC work place with a facilitator guiding discussion. We also used the techniques of role playing and the three chairs (Klein & Zisenis, 2009).

The feed back from VDC experts as well as from VDC management was very good, so we have extended our cooperation. We agreed to continue with some basic skills development also for employees with lower education.

**Interview to analyse the state of the firm**

- What is the request / problem / challenge from the perspective of Mrs / Mr XY?
- How is the problem seen-the point of view?
- Known and suspected causes / reasons for the problem
- What has already been done? What of it worked well and what less?
- What would be done better if problem didn't exist? How could we notice that the problem is minimized?
- What are the study objectives derived from this analysis? What do you want, as a responsible person, with that, as consultants / contractors turn us to achieve?
- Further steps and arrangements for cooperation?
- Information about the world of workers?
- Information about the workers?
- Who amongst the employees is to be included in the interview / advice? Individual or joint interview?
- Upon whom does our knowledge depend?
- What would be particularly important for you to find out?

## Looking forward

Based on the positive VDC experience, Papilot Institute widened the target organization list for implementation of new approaches and methods for basic skills development. With our new experiences and transferred knowledge, we can aim for better employment opportunities as well as improving the employment situation for experts and lower educated employees of VDC and other organizations. To sensibiliser enterprises to the education needs of the low qualified employees it is necessary in collaboration with the management and the staff to analyse the initial situation and to develop a tailor made activity plan. For this purpose the within the framework of BAGru developed so called snapshot methods are very useful.

In the future we will spread the BAGru voice to other firms, with an emphasis on organizations which employ people with disabilities. We also want to develop and widen the Slovenia basic skills concept from literacy, mathematics and reading to include the basic social skills which are indispensable for bettering the job opportunities of less educated and less skilled.

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**Resource 1: Personal interview with a view to a more detailed description of the cooperation**

The personal interview includes these components:

1. Definition of the situation and problem in terms of management
2. Desired solutions and client modes
3. Analysis of the major objective of people and energy carriers of the project
4. Final and measurable success criteria
5. Roles and impacts of the contracting authority
6. Degree of involvement and knowledge involved
7. Used methodology
8. The organization and supervision of the project
9. Financial and time Frames

> **How to create relationships with the employers?**
> Tips for the interview, the interviewer
> - Keep questions focused on goals, situation, the people involved
> - Approach: warm-up, ask open questions (client to interpret their aspirations and expectations), actual ideas (what are the objectives?)
> - Questions should get the exact definition of the results
> - Repetition and summary in the end
> - Utilising the first ideas
> - Aim for a broader time frame and specific time limits within it

The major aim of the personal interview is to come to conclusions about:
- What is the problem?
- What to we want to change?
- Who will make the changes?
- With what methods?
- In what time and for how much money?
- And who will be the boss of the project?

During or after the interview it is necessary to check as well the principles and how the project is realized. We used the following questions to describe the adoption of the contract:
- Are the expectations of the adviser or provider of education clearly presented?
- Is the perceived willingness of the parties to fulfil their responsibilities in the realization of the project?
- What are reasonable ways of action?
- Does qualification program ensure achieving the desired objective?
- Is the larger process of development the right answer for the current problem, or it may be necessary to consider other measures (e.g. reducing the number of employees to fill new jobs)?

After the oral interview some written agenda or contract should me made. The main questions, on which contract should answer are:
1. Project objectives
2. Roles, tasks and the effect of consultant or training provider
3. Roles and functions of the contracting authority
4. Modes of operation and action
5. Scheduling
6. The exact arrangements in respect of continuing work
7. Conditions

**IRFA Sud's transfer project – Our concepts and activities**

Gilles Rives, Denis Rouquié

## Introduction

IRFA Sud is the French project partner of the Leonardo Innovation transfer project BAGru. Established in 1974, the organisation specialises in developing access paths for learners into companies and other private and public institutions. Due to its extensive collaborative network within the care sector, IRFA Sud decided to limit its transfer activities to methods and approaches relevant to the care sector's requirements in the Perpignan region of France. Consequently, a range of programmes aiming at responding to the needs for basic education and transferable competencies was incorporated into IRFA Sud's formally accredited vocational training courses. This was achieved through individual assessment of participants' backgrounds, qualifications and competences paired with assessment of the requirements for employment opportunities currently available in the labour market.

## Background

France is one of the European Union countries that was struck badly by the 2008 financial crisis. Countless bankruptcies of small and medium size businesses juxtaposed with numerous redundancies in public services resulted in a substantial increase in numbers indicating unemployment statistics. In March 2011 there were approximately 3.6 million people without a job across the country. The worst situation is among youth below 25 years of age and among women. The unemployment level is two and a half times greater for unqualified individuals than for those with a tertiary education qualification. Consequently, the number of job-seekers registered for more than two years has increased by 38 percent, while the number of those registered for three years and more increased by over 18 percent.

Today, statistics indicate a slow increase in recruitment. According to market research, 18 percent of 428,400 employers intend to hire a minimum of one person in the course of the coming year. The level of recruitment, however, varies among different market areas, with agriculture and private services (especially the care sector and farming) becoming the leaders in generating new employment opportunities. Nevertheless, employers point to a growing dichotomy between the skills presented by individuals and the demands of the labour market. This is accompanied by a disparity in education levels, insufficient work experience, apathy and lack of motivation. Vocational training courses, therefore, become an important means of addressing gaps in the participants' working style and education.

A variety of actors are involved in the design and implementation of vocational training schemes. On average 4.5 million adults enter such training programs each year, among which around 700,000 are unemployed. All the training is financed either by the State, the regions or the Public Employment Service, with the regions subsidising almost 50 per cent of training programmes for the unemployed.

IRFA Sud is an employment training institution that specialises in establishing links between jobseekers and various public and private sector organisations. Established in 1974, IRFA Sud is active in two regions: Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi Pyrenees (10 departments) – a place that has been recently struck by galloping unemployment rates (45.9 per cent among females, and almost 22 per cent among youth under 25 ). Placed in such a context, IRFA Sud offers training and support classes for unemployed, socially under-privileged, disabled, and employed with low basic skills. For IRFA Sud's purposes basic skills are defined as the capability to read, write and speak in a given language, as well as possessing numeracy at the level allowing to fulfil employment obligations. A minimum knowledge of IT, as well as social skills such as team-working, self-management, and non-problematical communication are also included in this working definition. Additionally, IRFA Sud specialises in providing training courses addressed to employed individuals wishing to obtain new qualifications. These include vocational training for: retail, business, and administration; child and elderly care; housekeeping; catering and tourism; as well as IT courses. With its extensive base of 200 trainers and counsellors, IRFA Sud reaches approximately 10,000 trainees per year.

IRFA Sud works in close partnership with social services and specific working sectors, such as care provision or agriculture. This has resulted in a series of specially crafted vocational training programmes aimed at the labour needs of particular employers. The spectrum of courses reflects these needs. It is based on an approach involving a set of interviews and questionnaires conducted at IRFA Sud's training facilities, followed by suitably allocated business apprenticeships. Consequently, the development of this close partnership between IRFA Sud and private and public sectors' representatives influenced the design of our vocational training curriculum – a crucial factor in our success.

Over time IRFA Sud has observed an increasing lack of interest in traditionally run vocational courses. Developing new methods of vocational training has become a major goal for institutions such as IRFA Sud. Consequently, as of 2010 a new open „e-learning platform" specific to IRFA Sud, has been established and implemented. Since that time it has provided a wide spectrum of vocational courses, targeting:
- written and oral communication
- numerical skills
- professional writing
- ability to locate itself in its professional environment
- team-working and social relations
- new technologies
- ability to carry out a collective project
- initiative and autonomy
- sustainable development

Individual tutoring sessions designed especially for participants living in rural areas became one of IRFA Sud's specialities. Overall, the new courses were designed to improve participants' individual abilities to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form, as well as to help them to succeed in the maze of the contemporary labour market demands by utilising our dense network of business collaborators. Nevertheless, use of such novel approaches involves various challenges.

These include adaptation of new methodologies and developing informal training activities involving interactive methods.

Apart from courses in creativity and competence assessment, IRFA Sud specialises in training aimed at self-empowerment and improvement of confidence levels among participants. Successfully conducted, they highlight positive abilities and skills instead of deficiencies either in education or employment history. It is important, therefore, that the trainers have at their disposal a wide range of tools for enhancing the training experience.

One area where our close collaboration and partnerships with the care sector representatives resulted in the establishment of programmes targeting development of basic skills appropriate to the demands of the contemporary labour market. As a result, vocational training courses commence with an overview of participants' skills and competences relevant to obtaining employment in the care sector. At this stage it is important to establish a friendly rapport between participants and IRFA Sud's staff members, as many of learners suffer from loss of confidence and low self-esteem. The most common issues identified at this stage include:
- problems with a clear communication in a native language
- insufficient numerical, literacy and IT skills
- lack of „learning-to-learn" competences
- inadequate knowledge of professional conduct
- poor team working abilities

Next, the information is shared with our business partners, who allocate participants to the most suitable apprenticeship available in the sector.

**IRFA Sud's transfer project**

In the fall of 2009 IRFA Sud was approached to become a transfer partner in the international knowledge transfer program, BAGru. This European Commission funded project aimed at improving the employment opportunities of groups facing particular difficulties in the labour market. The BAGru ideas stemmed from the research program GiWA, which constituted of five independent, projects of three years duration run in various locations in Germany. Inspired by the results of GiWA, IRFA Sud implemented two training methods derived from the KOMBÜSE project in Düsseldorf: „helpful mentoring" and „transversal competencies."

The „helpful mentoring" technique applies an individual, non-judgmental approach to analysis of participants' training progress. It was utilized during a five months long *Fédération des Particuliers-Employeurs de France* (FEPEM) qualification course run by IRFA Sud. After each apprenticeship period (lasting approximately two weeks) participants were asked to attend a group meeting where each of them had an opportunity to express their opinions on the training received and the work-related problems encountered. The tool proven exceptionally successful in stabilizing trainee-trainer power relations as it provided the participants with control over the learning process. It also encouraged new approaches to data recording and archiving (see the box for details).

**Helpful Mentoring**

With the aid of the helpful mentoring job-related problems and questions can be deliberated and discussed in a small circle of co-workers. There is no „expert" present in order to activate the groups' potential for problem solving through self-organized and self-determined, praxis-oriented mentoring in a helpful (and preferably non-hierarchical) atmosphere.

In helpful mentoring the focus lies on the analysis and solution of individual questions. Both positive and critical job-related aspects are picked up as a central theme. It is important that there should be no judgement if something is right or wrong, but rather the possible effects and outcomes of actions be depicted.

Helpful mentoring has a defined flow chart which structures the conversation in a special way so that all the involved have clear talking and listening phases and thus the conversation systematically leads to a solution. For a failure-free communication it is reasonable to adhere to single phases of mentoring.

*For more details, please refer to the BAGru Toolbox.*

The other method utilized by IRFA Sud during the BAGru transfer project involved the identification and assessment of „transversal competencies" (a brief explanation can be found as resource 1; for full details please refer to the BAGru toolkit) of low qualified young adults (16-25 years of age). The tool used was based upon the combined experience of KOMBÜSE and other European projects. It involved a two-fold appraisal of participants' skills and competences at the training centre and during the apprenticeship period at the company. As the appraisal differed in form, as well as in the situational context, it provided diversified feedback on participants' capabilities. Assessment of participants is conducted through self-evaluation (when learners evaluate their own skills and abilities) and by means of external assessment (conducted by a tutor or a peer). Both formal and informal approaches are utilised to wholly appraise the vocational abilities of the learners. The process cumulates in a final interview highlighting their competences and containing suggestions for a further career path in a care sector.

The two methods were chosen as ways to develop new and innovative strategic partnerships, as well as to improve the effectiveness of the care sector's training programs. It was hoped that through such cooperation the trainees would gain the new skills necessary to analyse different life circumstances and work related difficulties, as well as to turn the feedback received from trainers into social capital potentially leading to suitable employment. Many of the training activities had already been implemented in this field, and it was hoped that new training methods would be directly transferred into IRFA Sud's everyday practice.

At this stage our main goal was to provide a clear understanding of the transfer process, as well as methods and terms applied. This resulted in a series of weekly three hour training sessions for our trainers, lasting for a period of four months. With their help the transfer project was adapted to fit within regional specifications and requirements, re-

flecting local labour market settings. Our internal messaging system was utilized to disseminate the results among parties involved, including information about the novel vocational programs, ways of attracting new target groups, new methodologies tested, an introduction to novel VET and qualifications courses and information on generating solutions to problems posed by daily training practice.

**Outcomes and implications**

The evaluation of the first subproject (helpful mentoring) suggested that there were few problems during the transfer phase. The data emphasised the importance of establishing a friendly, enthusiastic atmosphere allowing participants to openly address their daily struggles with job searching and loneliness. The process identified two specific issues faced by people working in the care sector. The first was the challenges of dealing with the emotions of the people receiving care and respecting their dignity (such as aspects of the body or personal problems). The second was difficulties with sustaining professional conduct. These were important insights for future training:

- in terms of applying the methods, recommendations include
- introduce the method before the working period to allow participants to get used to the idea
- limit the number of participants in a group to 12 maximum
- moderate feed-back sessions carefully so that all the participants can express their view points.

The second transfer activity (transversal competencies) was spread over a period of one month and was organised in three stages. It commenced with a self-evaluation exercise on the participants' transversal competences. The skills were later verified by an assigned tutor during the apprenticeship stage, as well as during the final evaluation stage, where the participants received also an individual feedback highlighting their achievements. Such knowledge was later utilised in individual and group discussions on professional careers in the care sector. During these activities it emerged that participants had difficulty identifying professional skills and abilities. In addition, time constrains preventing tutors from providing adequate written appraisal, delaying the feedback analysis intended as part of the last stage.

Recommendations for this activity include that:
- the introduction of any transfer method should be based upon a positive experience of similar vocational programs implemented in other regions or countries, e.g. KOMBÜSE
- the aims of the new transferred method should be related to the KOMBUSE main objectives, especially regarding basic education and links with actors in workplaces

**Recommendations for implementing transfer projects**

Based on our experience with the BAGru transfer project we have learned that the following factors required detailed consideration before the project is implemented:
- structures needed
- potential costs and constraints (administration, staff, budget)

- obstacles and opportunities perceived
- the course's organization and agenda
- necessary partnerships between training institution and the business sector
- evaluation and dissemination of the results (report writing, etc)

Implementing novel transfer activities requires provision of clear organizational guidelines to trainers and tutors, as presented in the table below:

| Area | Key questions |
|---|---|
| Aims | what will determine the success of this new experience?<br>does our action plan fit with the project?<br>what indicators we will have to choose to assess the results?<br>what extra benefits are also expected? |
| Practice | who will be involved to do what, how, and where?<br>what conditions are necessary to organize an effective training provision including the new methods (especially financial factors)?<br>what will be our analysis and report about the changes provided by this new transfer method?<br>how we will improve our education learning methods (including training opportunities for the trainers)?<br>what do we see as threats or barriers to a successful transfer?<br>how will we manage coordination, evaluation of different aspects of the transfer project? |
| Links | what will be the links with the learning provided by the other trainers or tutors involved and how will we combine the different courses and assess the pedagogical results?<br>how will we communicate and disseminate about the activities? (usual network of partners in the working sector). |

It is also essential to have clear indicators to be applied to evaluation of the transfer activities and their outcomes, as in the following table:

| Personnel | Key Indicators |
|---|---|
| Trainers | creation of a positive atmosphere<br>clear allocation of duties between the training organisation's staff members and business partners<br>no organizational difficulties<br>improvement in the rate of failure and drop out due to stronger self esteem and avoidance of discrimination<br>better respect of the rules and criteria of the work placement |
| Trainees | exercises that really fit with their interests<br>easier learning of basic skills |

| | |
|---|---|
| | understanding of the potential of team work and cooperation<br>identification of useful skills for work |
| Managers | development of ideas for improving the transfer process<br>reduced contradiction between employment practice and the project's aims<br>close collaboration with the administration and network of support services<br>effective coordination of the different modules of the course<br>possibilities of sharing the experience with new partners and plans to offer possibilities of training the trainers<br>possible adaptations of existing products<br>understanding of what models are replicable and what are the opportunities to transfer the methods |

**Conclusion: What IRFA Sud learned from this project**

IRFA Sud learned a great deal about transfer projects from involvement in the BAGru project, and believe that these lessons are useful to bear in mind whenever tools developed in one context are applied in another. The key point is clarity. It is important to all parties involved to present the project's objectives clearly and understandably to avoid unnecessary confusion. Examples of clear project description include:

- What do we know about the project (description of goals, general information, background, philosophy).
- What do we know about the partnership (who are the partners, their roles and our own role).
- What we can predict about the outcomes (what products have been provided by the previous project and what could be done on this new one).

Clear identification of target groups is necessary as well, and it is important to have a clear idea of the final beneficiaries. The potential stakeholders can be considered in broad categories including the training organization, business associates, and the participants. Questions must be asked regarding what the transferred tools will bring to each of these groups.

Transfer projects begin with a project description. If is important that the background available at that point in time includes:

- information on ways of including the transfer products into vocational courses
- information for the policy makers and stakeholders supporting implementation
- information for employers, representatives from professional sectors, trainers, tutors, educators, advisors, coaches who work with the final beneficiaries.
- The work that had to be done by IRFA Sud to make this project effective included:
- rewriting and translating the transfer project for the national context
- verifying the national policies and different educational options necessary for running programs involving under-qualified adults and youth

- communicating our experience with funding and implementation of different training programs
- drawing on our experience of running previous innovative projects in the area
- implementing our analysis of conditions for motivating target groups.

Overall, a clear information exchange was crucial to the success of this transfer project as it enhanced the quality of working relations among partners. There can be little doubt that the project effectively enhanced the strategies available to IRFA Sud in working with a range of difficult to reach target groups.

## Resource 1: Transversal competencies (extract)

| | |
|---|---|
| Descriptive title | Transversal competences assessment in workplace or training place context |
| Key competencies | Communication in first language<br>Social and civic competences<br>Learning to learn |
| Skills list / learning objectives | Basic skills<br>Social Skills<br>Gathering and using information<br>Assessment of oneself behaviour in workplace<br>Identifying useful competences and soft skills in Care Sector<br>Collaborating with a tutor to work towards common goals and needs with sector needs<br>Responding positively to necessary change |
| Abstract | This assessment workshop consists of the learners analysing their own transversal competences in a working situation, together with a tutor and the trainer. The beginning will consist of define and explain in a group together with the trainer, a list of useful competences required at work in Care context. During the working period the tutor will assess the trainee behaviour with the prepared form. Results will be analysed individually during an interview. |
| Equipment – materials – Instruments to be used | Blackboard where the list of competences is shown. Transversal competences assessment form to be filled up by tutors. (attached document) |
| Minimum level of knowledge of beneficiaries | Basic communication skills |
| Step by step instructions | 1. The trainer writes or shows on the blackboard to the learners, a list of transversal competences that will be assessed by a tutor during a working period. Then organizes a debate. Ask for personal examples and life experiences to support all of these questions. Every learner will leave a form with the competences list to a tutor, the first day of the working period.<br>2. During the working period, in a company, the tutor is asked to fill up the assessment form and give written comments. The trainer organizes a meeting at the end of the period with the learner, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | the tutor, on the spot at the work place to analyse together the results and further goals or links with jobs.<br>3. Back at the centre, the trainer makes individual interviews based on assessment results to define, together with every learner, some learning goals or specific project aims. Decisions are recorded on an individual report. |
| Methods | Guided group discussion<br>Collaboration with tutor in workplace |
| Measurement / Assessment | Assessment form writing by tutor and individual analysis with the learner |
| Follow up | Based on the assessment results, some learning goals or specific project aims are defined and decisions for further steps or actions are recorded on an individual report. |
| Recommended duration | Depends on the working period duration |
| Notes / important information / remarks | Explain to the tutor that not all the given items on the form are supposed to be assessed. |

**Resource 2: Example of a recording and discussion form**

| Behaviour assessment | ++ | +- | -- | Specific comment if necessary Relevance in Care sector |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| COMMUNICATION | | | | |
| does not give opinion as it's always difficult to find good arguments | | | | |
| even if he/she has a different opinion expresses the difficulty in defending | | | | |
| can discuss and challenge ideas that did not seem fair | | | | |
| can find the right arguments to convince | | | | |
| reads and writes correctly a few words or phrases in his/her mother language | | | | |
| reads and writes in complete sentences, with many faults | | | | |
| reads or writes a short text with occasional errors | | | | |
| reading and writing did pose no particular difficulties in daily lives | | | | |
| never takes notes | | | | |
| sometimes takes notes, but it's not difficult | | | | |
| takes notes with relative ease, when the situation requires | | | | |
| takes notes quickly and easily | | | | |
| at work, prefers not to mention the difficulties he/she may encounter | | | | |
| tries to keep for him/herself when has a difficulty, and rarely speaks | | | | |
| hesitated to seek advice and talk about his/her difficulties | | | | |
| alerts his/her supervisor, colleagues, friends when encountering a difficulty | | | | |
| does not hesitate to seek advice | | | | |

**Toolbox**

Dieter Zisenis

How to use the toolbox

This manual comes with a CD Rom comprising a selection of tools in relation to work related basic educational work.

In the same manner as the BAGru partner organisations have selected appropriate concepts, methods and tools in relation to their specific work environments, and have developed and adopted them accordingly, we are now providing the same tools to practitioners such as adult educators, trainers, teachers and consultants. These tools may be an inspiration to foremost reflect about your own working practices, which boundaries are determined through practical learning and working environments as well as which considerations are required to be given to the interests of the stakeholders and involved parties, and the way in which the participants specific life circumstances, desires and goals are acknowledged.

In a similar manner it is vital to examine which successful and established strategies and methods can be meaningfully linked to new innovative concepts and tools in the specific working environment. We assume, as in the BAGru project, that diverse experiences and competences exist within all institutions working with target groups of low-level employees and the long term unemployed. The tools that are presented on the CD Rom are therefore an invitation to try and test these tools, to expand, combine and link them with proven practical work. The LEONARDO DA VINCI transfer of innovation projects therefore offer exciting and really helpful design and presentation opportunities. The wheel does not have to be reinvented again each time. The transfer of innovation meets already established good practise in different contexts. Innovations do not develop in a dead end situation, but rather grow out of many diverse sources and resources. As a result, the tools that have been tested in the BAGru project and/or in other environments provide many diverse suggestions.


**Attachment**

CD (Toolbox)

**Annexe**

**BAGru – brief description**

About the project

The BAGru project that runs between October 2009 and September 2011 is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and is funded by the European Commission to improve the employment opportunities for groups facing particular challenges at the labour market e.g. insuffiently qualified persons.

BAGru, with its transfer activities, is based on the outcomes of the project consortium „GiWA – basic skills in labour and economy" of the research programme "Research and Development for Alphabetization and Basic Education" (http://www.giwa-grundbildung.de) supported by the German Ministry of Education and Research (September 2007 to October 2010).

As has been demonstrated through the EU initiative „New Skills for new Jobs", there is a distinct lack of developments which focus on furthering the literacy capabilities of socially unprivileged and slow learning adolescents.

The coordinator of the project is „bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung" from Dortmund, Germany and the partnerships to enable the progression of this project involve the collaboration between these European countries: Austria, UK, Sweden, Slovenia, Poland and France. The three transfer activities which the BAGru project focuses on include the potential end users (diverse groups with special difficulties in the labour market), the diverse contexts of education (vocational education, pre-vocational qualification measures, programmes for disadvantaged, operational continuing education) and instructors, teachers, trainers and advisors as multipliers.

With this in mind, the BAGru project builds bridges between the individual from these countries and the companies, labour administration and institutions of learning there within to improve qualifications and confidence when seeking employment opportunities. This progress is adapted accordingly by taking into consideration the unique living and working environments which these target groups are subject to and in view of that supporting their education, training and employment developments.

For further information on the BAGru project please see the official project website:
http://www.bagru.eu/

**BAGru – consortium**

bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung, Dortmund (DE) – www.bbb-dortmund.de

BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH, Wien (AT) – www.best.at

University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences, Glasgow, Scotland (UK) – www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences

Folkuniversitetet Kristianstad (SE) – www.folkuniversitetet.se

Papilot Zavod za vzpodbujanje in razvijanje kvalitete življenja, Ljubljana (SI) – www.papilot.si

Akademia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna w Łodzi, Lodz (PL) – www.ahe.lodz.pl
IRFA Sud Formation professionnelle en Languedoc Roussillon et Midi Pyrénées, Montpellier (FR) – www.irfasud.fr

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**Špela Reš**, Psychologist. Project manager for international projects and leader of project activities at Papilot institute in Lubljana, Slovenia. Long year experiences in informal education, professional rehabilitation and active policy of employment as well as in counselling the marginalized groups of people. Implementation of employment policy reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Besides: Volunteer in the woman safety house as a facilitator of psycho-social group. External expert in local university for informal education.

**Gilles Rives**, Biologist managing activities in agronomy sector. Specialist in human resources and training methods. Since 1987 at IRFA Sud in training activities with unemployed trainees and people at work. Coordination and administration of local training courses for young and adults and also with a head of mission of European projects for IRFA Sud „Pyrénées orientales" department. Previous working experience as a teacher in Brazil and before owner of a greenhouses farm in the 80's.

**Denis Rouquié**, Psychologist, clinical and human resource. Since 1992 with IRFA Sud in training activities with unemployed people and low qualified trainees, coordination and administration of European projects. Experience in multicultural environment. Creating tools and methods using electronic data processing. Software particularly adapted for competence portfolio, especially the French „bilan de competénce".

**Dieter Zisenis**, studied educational sciences and graduated with a diploma in pedagogical studies, self employed organisational consultant, partner in the bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung Dortmund. Main activities: concept development and project management in vocational education and training, consulting service for local authorities and enterprises in the social economy, career and learning counselling.